



The Town of Provincetown, MA

Broadband Best Practice

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EOTSS | Executive Office of Technology Services & Security



Image: Provincetown Town Hall¹

Introduction

In May 2016, the Town of Provincetown became an active member of the Community Compact Cabinet; an initiative created through Governor Baker's first Executive Order to strengthen relationships between state and local government. Through the Community Compact, Provincetown requested assistance from the State in implementing Information Technology best practices in their community. The Town expressed interest in exploring technology options to determine how they could enhance broadband services for constituents. The Town chose this best practice to promote economic development and job creation, and to cater to their technologically savvy population. In March 2016, the Office of Municipal and School Technology (OMST) contacted the Town to discuss their current IT state and overall goals for the program. During their engagement, the State provided support to the Town by facilitating discussions and identifying stakeholders in the process to help the Town gauge the feasibility of providing high-quality broadband service to residents and visitors.

¹ Thomas Stromberg. "Provincetown Town Hall." *Flickr*. Accessed on January 20, 2018.
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/helixblue/368438658/in/photolist-yykYE-eUNWZ2-eV1eJG-ahFsjE-ahFtzA-bQ5R9Z-eV1iYu-eV1fH9-eV1dC9-eV1hNm>

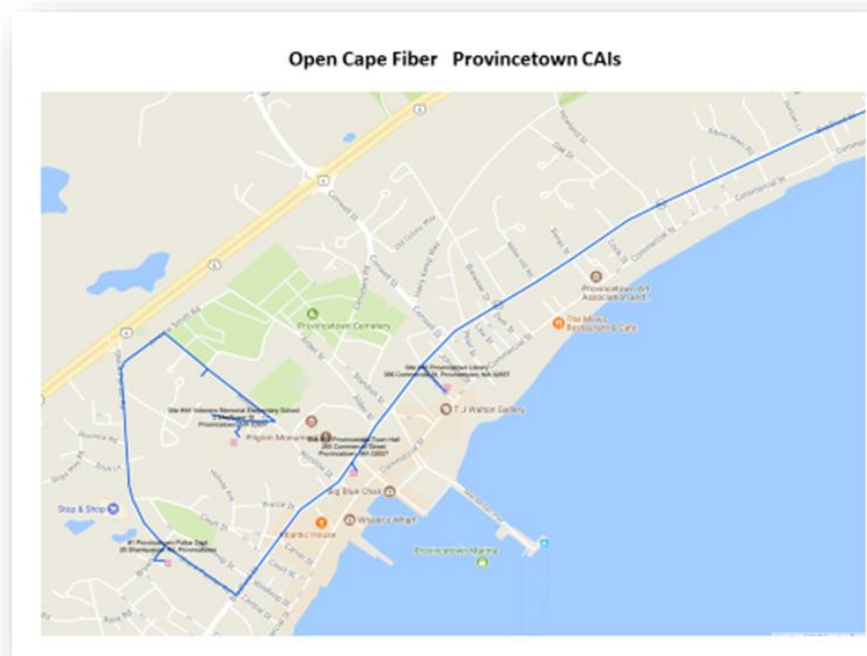
COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Town of Provincetown is a small coastal town located at the tip of Cape Cod, in Barnstable County, Massachusetts. The Pilgrims first arrived in Provincetown with the Mayflower in 1620 before eventually settling in Plymouth. In 1727, the Town became an incorporated municipality and became one of the great whaling ports of the country. Modern-day Provincetown, or “P-town”, is best-known for its beaches, artist and tourism industries, and strong influence in the LGBTQ community. The Town has a year-round residential population of approximately 3,000 with over 65,000 in the summer months.

Project Process

ENGAGEMENT WITH OPENCAPE

In the early stages of their Community Compact initiative, the Town of Provincetown informed the OMST of their relationship with OpenCape, a Grant-based initiative that brought the fiber optic network from Boston through the Cape (as seen in the maps below). OpenCape's main focus was to install the fiber and connect municipalities and educational facilities to the network; essentially providing first mile fiber. Shortly after this was established, the new focus became getting businesses and residents onboard. At the time, CapeNet was the internet service provider and network operator. Eventually OpenCape took over management and operations of the infrastructure.





CROWDFIBER CAMPAIGN

In June 2016, Town leadership and the OMST met with OpenCape to discuss their objectives for the Cape communities. At the time, they were implementing a CrowdFiber marketing campaign, to see which Cape community showed the most interest in better broadband connection. Provincetown wanted to promote the CrowdFiber website to constituents via social media but needed assistance with creating compelling content. In support of their efforts to promote the CrowdFiber tool, the OMST offered Provincetown the following guidance and marketing tools to boost citizen engagement on their social media channels. Several of the examples below leveraged popular events in August 2016, like celebrity singer/actress Cher's appearance in Provincetown and the Annual Carnival Parade, to increase engagement online.

Recommendations for Social Media Engagement

Use consistent hashtags in your twitter posts – When choosing hashtags for your social media posts, be sure to use ones that correspond with the information in your post. For example, if you are tweeting about visiting Provincetown to see Cher, you will want to incorporate popular hashtags like #Ptown and #Cher in your post.

Create official Government Facebook page – Provincetown’s Facebook page is currently listed under the name “Town Talk: Provincetown”. The page is a great resource where residents can share information about community projects; however, it is listed as a “Public Group” which may cause some users to overlook it, especially if they are looking for the town's official Facebook page. If at some point in the future Provincetown would like to change the name of their Facebook page, they can do so by going through the simple step-by-step process mentioned in Facebook’s Help Center². Currently, the twitter handle for Provincetown is @TownofPT, which is catchy and easy to remember. Giving the Facebook page a similar name, such as “TownofPT” or “Town of Provincetown”, would maintain consistency across social media platforms.

Example Materials for Social Media Campaign

Provincetown considered the following social media content for inclusion in their OpenCape CrownFiber Campaign, and to highlight prominent groups in the community. Each contained a link to the CrowdFiber website where residents, visitors, and business owners could place their vote for better connectivity.

<i>Facebook: Example Post</i>
<p>If you live in Provincetown -- year-round or just for part of the year -- you probably know that Internet service is hit-and-miss out here. Not everyone has access via cable TV, and there are fewer providers than you can find in a city. OpenCape is trying to change that -- it's a nonprofit company that's bringing fiber-optic Internet service to the Cape, as well as to other parts of eastern Massachusetts. OpenCape wants to expand its services in residential areas; but because of the high cost of stringing fiber, the company needs to know that enough customers would be interested in signing up, before it can proceed with wiring a neighborhood. If you think you might be interested, you can fill out a survey with your contact information, and also test your current Internet speed, at OpenCape's website -- this doesn't commit you to subscribing to OpenCape's Internet service; it's just to let the company know you're interested: bit.ly/2bnwuzm.</p>
<i>Facebook: For Visitors Renting Residential Homes or Other Housing Units</i>

² Facebook Help Center. “How do I change my Page’s name?” *Facebook*. Accessed on February 1, 2018. <https://www.facebook.com/help/271607792873806/>

If you're visiting from out of town, you've probably found that Internet service in Provincetown isn't as consistently fast and reliable as you're used to. This is partly just a fact of life in a remote town with a seasonal economy. But a nonprofit company called OpenCape is working to change the picture, by providing fast, reliable fiber-optic Internet to Provincetown and other parts of Cape Cod and eastern Massachusetts. The company is trying to gauge the level of customer interest in its expansion effort. They have a website where you can tell them you'd like to see them in your neighborhood; you can also test the speed of your current Internet connection right from the same site. To find out more, visit OpenCape at bit.ly/2bnwuzm and sign up for updates on the company's progress toward providing another Internet option for Provincetown.

Facebook: For Telecommuters

Provincetown is home to a lot of telecommuters -- people who live here but work off-Cape and do most of their work remotely. This reduces traffic on the Mid-Cape Highway, the Bourne and Sagamore Bridges, and other critical roads. But for people who do data-intensive work, Internet speed and reliability limit how effectively they can work remotely. A nonprofit company called OpenCape is working to fix this problem by wiring the Cape with fiber-optic cable capable of providing Gigabit-plus Internet speed. Before OpenCape can wire a neighborhood, though, the company needs to have a sense of how many residential and business customers it's likely to have. To that end, OpenCape has a website that lets you register your interest in their alternative Internet service, and also test the speed of your current connection. Signing up on the site doesn't commit you to subscribing to OpenCape's Internet service when it becomes available -- but it does help the company gauge the community's level of interest, so it can prioritize its capital investment in laying fiber. If you think you might be interested, you can visit the site, provide your contact information, and test the speed of your current Internet connection: bit.ly/2bnwuzm.

Facebook: Another General-Interest One for Residents and Visitors

Provincetown and all of Cape Cod are a great place to visit -- and an even better place to live. But the region's strong seasonal draw puts a lot of strain on its data infrastructure -- cell service and Internet speed suffer during the summer, because of heavy usage. A nonprofit called OpenCape has helped improve phone service by constructing a fiber-optic backbone from the mainland of Massachusetts out to Provincetown; last year, CapeNet, which operates the OpenCape network, hooked up 51 cell towers

on the Cape. The next step is to improve land-based Internet service -- OpenCape plans to lay more fiber-optic cable, to reach residential and business customers in Provincetown and other towns on the Cape, providing Gigabit-plus speeds in a region where bandwidth has been limited and service unreliable. But OpenCape needs to know how many customers will be interested in enhanced Internet service, in order to prioritize where to build out the network. If you want to learn more, you can visit the company's website, provide your contact information, and test the speed of your current Internet connection: bit.ly/2bnwuzm.

Facebook & Twitter: Writers/Artists

- Having trouble uploading your image/video files? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape
- Do your blog posts take forever to post? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape
- Are slow internet speeds also slowing down your sales? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape
- Manage your online gallery with ease. Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape #ArtBiz

Facebook & Twitter: Tourists/Renters

- Want access to the same quality internet you have back home? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape
- Stay connected while you're away. Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape
- Enjoy a stress-free vacation in Provincetown with fast, reliable internet. Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape

Facebook & Twitter: Residents/Visitors

- Do you live in P-Town & need fast/reliable Internet? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking for an alternative for fast/reliable Internet in P-Town? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape Telecommuting from P-Town and need fast/reliable Internet? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape Attention P-Town Visitors: Do you need fast/reliable Internet? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape
<p><i>Facebook & Twitter: Businesses/Entrepreneurs</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You probably aren't getting the internet speed you deserve. Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape Slow internet speeds? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape Is your internet fast enough for streaming? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape Want to work at a faster pace? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape Why settle for less? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape Want to be able to share your work with clients? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape Reach new heights by elevating your Internet. Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape No matter the industry, fiber is a key. Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape
<p><i>Facebook & Twitter: General</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is your internet wicked slow? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape Looking for Pikachu in P-Town? For Pokemon Go and more, express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape Visiting P-Town to see #Cher? Don't just "Believe" in faster internet speed, express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape

- Does a long day at the beach mean a long night of uploading photos on a slow connection? No way! Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape
- Is your vacation spent waiting for your favorite show to buffer? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape

Facebook & Twitter: Possible Hashtags

- #Ptown
- #OpenCapeThirdBridge
- #Provincetown
- #PtownCarnival
- #HerringCove
- #RacePoint
- #Cher
- #Beach
- #Capecod
- #MA
- #Massachusetts
- #CrowdFiber

Outcome of the OpenCape CrowdFiber Campaign

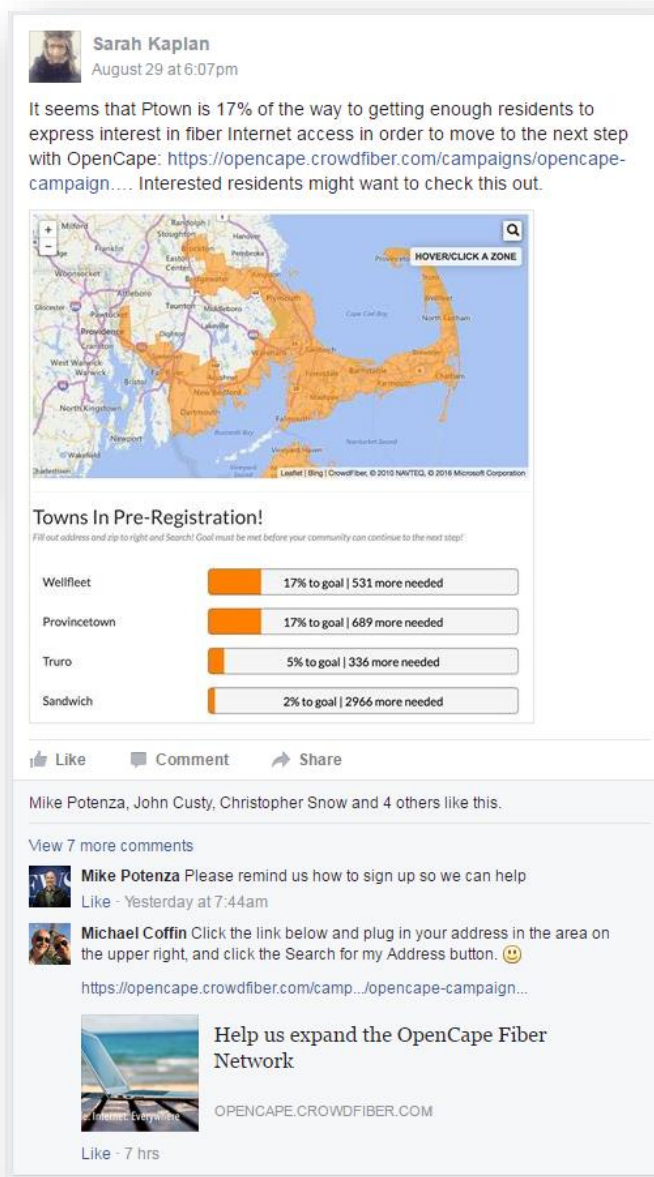
Prior to Provincetown's involvement in the CrowdFiber Campaign, the OpenCape CrowdFiber website showed that the Town displayed a mere 14% interest. By the end of the campaign, that percentage had doubled to 29%. Below are several samples of Provincetown's social media posts during the campaign, and snapshots of their responses from the community.



Twitter Post – August 29, 2016:

“Enjoy your vacation in Provincetown with fast, reliable internet. Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape”

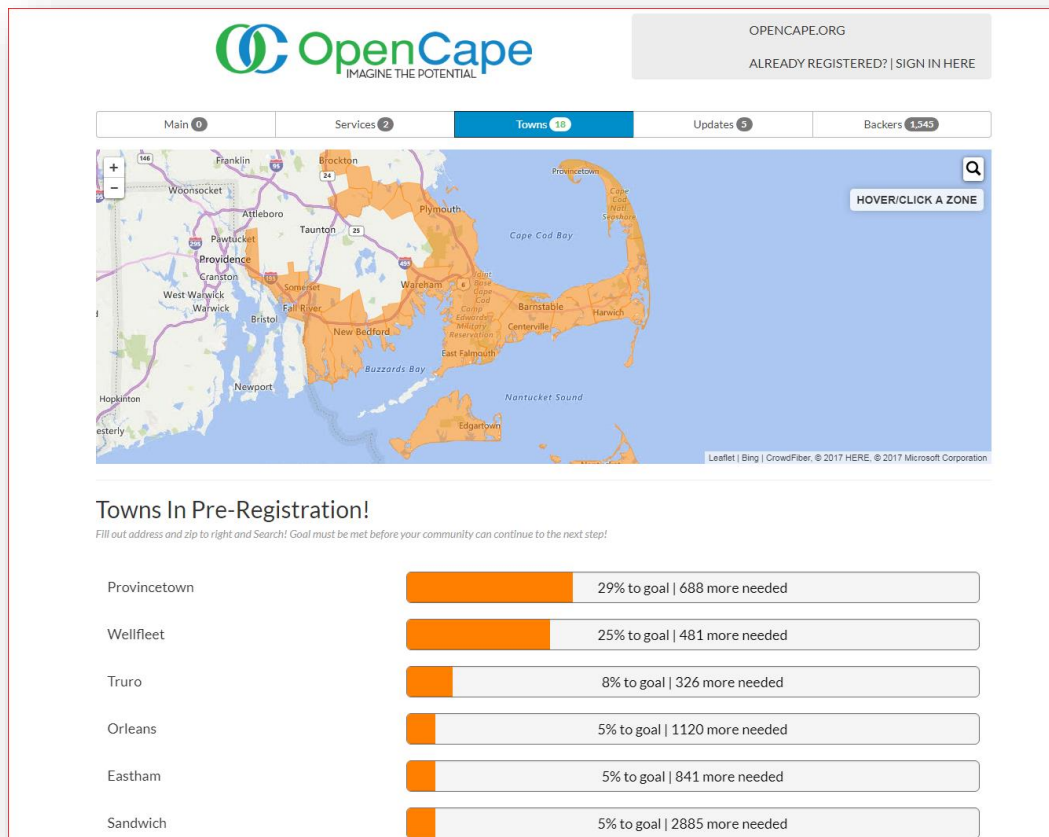
Facebook Post – August 29, 2016:
Crowd Fiber interest grows to 17%



Twitter Post – Having trouble uploading your image/video files? Express interest in #Ptown broadband: bit.ly/2bnwuzm #OpenCape



OpenCape Website – Crowd Fiber Poll results showing interest in Provincetown increased to 29%



GREENFIELD SITE VISIT

Greenfield opened its doors to several communities interested in how they had developed their community broadband. Provincetown as well as several other communities were invited to hear how Greenfield used a hybrid solution to broadband. In 2011, with the loss of a high-tech startup, Greenfield began to explore solutions for the lack of high-speed broadband to the businesses and residents. According to the Greenfield Community Energy and Technology (GCET) General Manager,

“GCET has redefined how homes and businesses connect to the Internet - we call it GreenLight. GreenLight is a combination of our 10Gbps fiber optic core, distribution and access networks, coupled with 900+ 1.7Gbps wireless anywhere/everywhere local access points. The result is a fixed wireless Wi-Fi network that serves both homes and businesses.”

Although Provincetown could not mirror this solution, it was a valuable lesson on how to think outside the box.

BROADBAND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Provincetown has listed the creation of a Broadband Advisory Committee in its FY2018 Goals. The Town has been actively seeking possible candidates for the committee. At this point, a decision needs to be made as to whether it will be an advisory committee appointed by the town manager or something more formal that will require the involvement of another appointing authority, such as the select board or town moderator. The Town hopes to have the Committee in place by Spring 2019.

Conclusion

Through the efforts of the CrowdFiber Campaign, Provincetown was able to gauge the interest in the visitors and residents to improve access of highspeed throughout the town.