

# Co-ops Connect FYI

By Jonathan Chambers • Dec 30, 2022

Smart Brevity® count: 4 mins... 1022 words

Updates and insights for electric cooperatives considering or operating rural broadband networks.

## Thank You for Reading



**This weekly newsletter has been an experiment.**

- On the first Friday of 2022 and every Friday since, I have published a short piece in a style intended to be read quickly in email.
- Mostly, I have written about broadband policy, focused on the intersection of government funding and rural access to these essential services.

I have not missed a week's writing, but I'm feeling a bit lazy this final week of the year. My older son, home from college, told me of a classmate who had turned in a school paper using the new AI chatbot, ChatGPT. I thought I'd give it a try.

---

## The ChatGPT Experiment, Round 1



To see whether I could use an AI-generated article, **I queried ChatGPT about rural broadband policy.** It responded with:

*Rural broadband policy refers to the policies and initiatives implemented by governments and other organizations to increase access to high-speed internet in rural areas. These policies may be implemented at the national, regional, or local level, and they can be focused on a variety of issues, including infrastructure deployment, market competition, and adoption of broadband technology.*

*One of the main goals of rural broadband policy is to bridge the “digital divide” between urban and rural areas. Many rural communities lack access to high-speed internet, which can limit their ability to participate*

*fully in the digital economy and may also have negative impacts on economic development, education, healthcare, and other key areas. By increasing access to broadband in these communities, governments and other organizations aim to ensure that all residents and businesses, regardless of location, have the opportunity to benefit from the many advantages that the internet offers.*

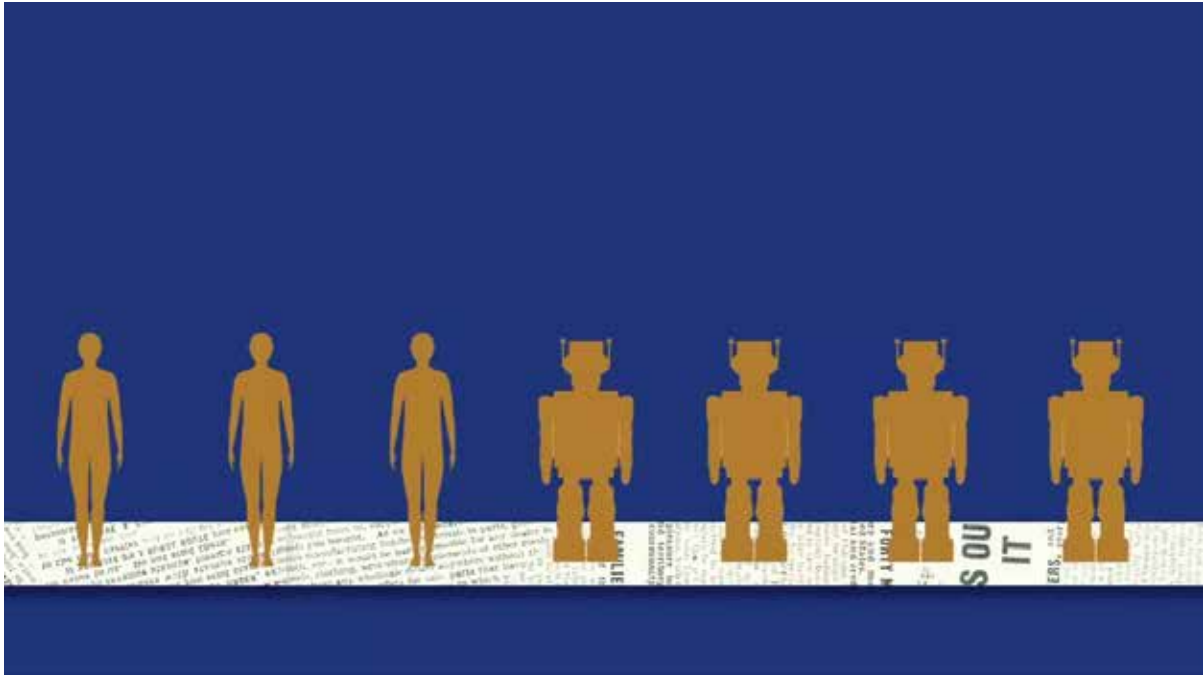
*Rural broadband policy can take many different forms, and the specific approaches used will depend on the needs and challenges of each individual community. Some common strategies that may be included in rural broadband policy include:*

- Funding for the deployment of broadband infrastructure, such as the construction of new broadband networks or the expansion of existing networks into underserved areas*
- Incentives or subsidies to encourage private companies to invest in broadband infrastructure in rural areas*
- Measures to increase competition in the broadband market, such as requiring incumbent telecommunications companies to open their networks to other providers, or by auctioning off spectrum for use by wireless broadband providers*
- Initiatives to encourage the adoption of broadband technology in rural areas, such as providing training and technical assistance to help individuals and businesses get online, or by offering discounted or low-cost internet service to low-income households*

*Overall, the goal of rural broadband policy is to ensure that residents and businesses in rural areas have access to high-quality internet services, in order to support economic development and improve the quality of life for people living in these communities.*

**In short, though accurate and on point, the passage is almost unreadable.**

## The ChatGPT Experiment, Round 2



**I wasn't ready to give up on the chatbot.** Since the topic of rural broadband is irredeemably dull, I thought I'd ask ChatGPT for something more creative.

**I suggested ChatGPT write a few lines on the uncertainty of human fortunes.** It returned:

*Human fortunes are often uncertain and can change unexpectedly. No matter how successful or wealthy a person may seem, there is always the possibility that they could experience setbacks or challenges that affect their financial or personal circumstances. Similarly, people who may seem to be struggling or facing difficult circumstances can experience unexpected turnarounds and achieve success or prosperity.*

*This uncertainty can be a source of stress and anxiety for many people, as it can be difficult to plan for the future or feel secure in one's circumstances when the future is uncertain. However, it can also be seen as a reminder to be prepared for the unexpected and to focus on building resilience and adaptability. By being open to new opportunities*

*and being prepared to adapt to changing circumstances, it may be possible to navigate the ups and downs of life more effectively and find ways to thrive despite the uncertainty of human fortunes.*

### **Not much better.**

When I entered the second query, I had this passage from Ecclesiastes in mind:

*“I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happens to them all.”*

**Not a fair fight to compare a chatbot** with such poetry. Perhaps one day AI will produce passages to rival Solomon or Shakespeare or Dostoevsky.

**Not today** — and I hope never to see that day.

---

## The Final Word (of 2022)



**Thus ends my experiment with ChatGPT.**

**I am not entirely satisfied** with the style of writing we used in this newsletter in 2022.

- As a short, email, bullet-point format, it conforms with society's shortened attention span.
- Yet, it isn't a style I admire.

**For my new year's reflection on improving my writing**, I've reread an essay from my favorite political writer, George Orwell, who advises all writers:

*i. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.*

*ii. Never use a long word where a short one will do.*

*iii. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.*

*iv. Never use the passive where you can use the active.*

v. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.  
Feel free to forward this **Go-ops Connect FYI** to colleagues who want to stay in the know on all things broadband! Subscribe to Conexon's weekly newsletter [here](#).  
vi. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

**The bottom line:**

This newsletter is powered by

**AXIOS HQ**

**Thank you for reading.** And special thanks to Kate Blackwelder and Cindy Parks for editing and formatting the newsletter each week. I would

thing without their help.

Like this email style and format?

It's called Smart Brevity®. Hundreds of orgs use it — in a tool called [Axios HQ](#)

improve next year. Welcome, 2023! Goodnight, 2022.