2026

usignite

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

OUR MISSION

US Ignite works closely with communities, military bases, startups, and researchers to solve their toughest economic development and technology innovation challenges.

Operating like a high-tech startup, our nonprofit organization delivers customized results through stakeholder engagement, technical expertise, and targeted tools.

In collaboration with our partners, **we deliver project outcomes** that include breakthrough technologies while creating innovative new jobs, startups, and services.

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO, DR. NICK MAYNARD

This year brought tough challenges for communities across the country, from shifting funding landscapes to growing demands on local leaders and institutions. But when strong partnerships come together with a shared sense of purpose, innovation continues to move forward.

Throughout the year, US Ignite remained focused on connecting emerging technologies to real-world outcomes that improve lives. Our work in places like Harris County (Houston, TX) demonstrated what is possible when local leadership, technical expertise, and committed stakeholders align to create momentum and support progress. In San José, CA, partners advanced a road-safety pilot exploring how AI can help better understand street conditions. These efforts reflect a broader commitment to responsible, community-informed innovation that builds trust and creates replicable models for other communities.

At the same time, we strengthened work that supports mission-ready operations and quality of life at military bases. At Fort Benning, we helped demonstrate how data-driven applications can improve operational awareness and decision-making, reinforcing how smart installation capabilities can deliver tangible value on the ground.

Looking forward, we are excited to launch new efforts that support regional innovation through Supporting U.S. Regional Growth & Entrepreneurship (SURGE), a new initiative designed to help regional coalitions turn innovation strategies into positive economic outcomes. We call on regional innovation leaders across the country to **connect with us** to learn more about this exciting opportunity.

As always, thank you for your continued support, and we hope you will join us as we carry this work forward in the year ahead.

2025 HIGHLIGHTS

The U.S. National Science Foundation awarded US Ignite $3.9M to support a new initiative, **Supporting U.S. Regional Growth & Entrepreneurship (SURGE).** The program targets regional coalitions poised for research-driven economic growth.

The **Platforms for Advanced Wireless Research (PAWR)** Project Office welcomed the Houdini project to the portfolio, adding a further research focus on the development of an open-access software-defined radio system that will simultaneously support multiple radio modules and a wide array of frequency bands.

The **Smart Bases** team successfully demonstrated key capabilities in public safety, energy management, and operational logistics at Fort Benning. This testbed is helping to develop scalable, successful models for the entire Army enterprise, and in January 2026, US Ignite secured an additional $1.8M for the testbed's next two-year phase.

OUR TEAM

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Lizzette Arias

Jonathan Beam

Kyle Compton

Aloizio Da Silva

Lee Davenport

Sayed Elham Zewari

Ryan Guild

Erin Hill

Nancy Jemison

Domenick Lasorsa

Arnold Liyai

Mojdeh Mahdavi, Ph.D

Nick Maynard, Ph.D

Glenn Ricart, Ph.D

Ram Rohan

Mari Silbey

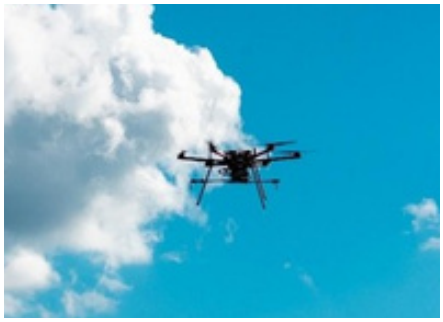
William Wallace

Eric Werner

OUR PROGRAMS

Communities - We convene a national network of local leaders to exchange insights, navigate emerging challenges, and strengthen decision-making. Through collaboration across sectors, the program helps communities turn innovation into economic and social value.

Smart Bases- We work with military bases to develop, test, and implement smart technology solutions that meet operational needs. These Smart Base Programs bring together government, academia, and industry experts.



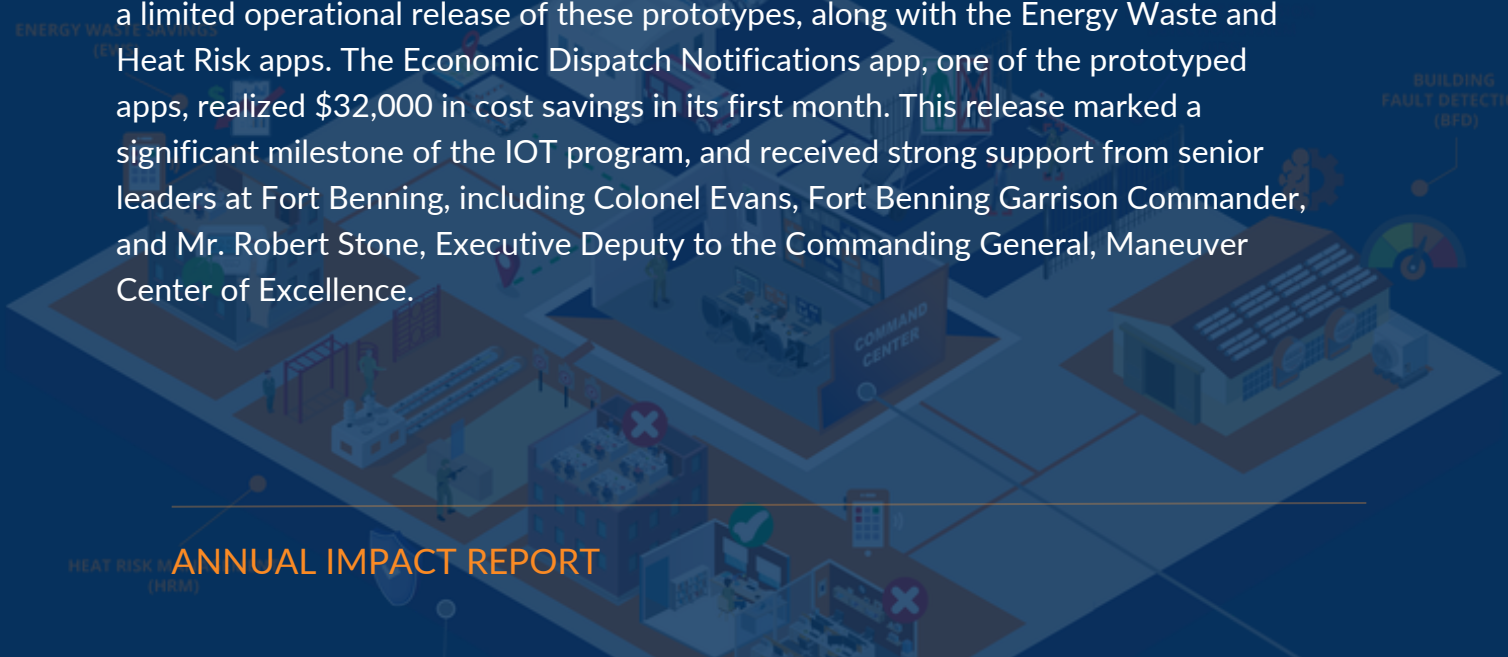
Platforms for Advanced Wireless Research (PAWR) - The four PAWR platforms serve as living laboratories for wireless research and experimentation in topics ranging from 5G and emerging 6G technologies to AI-driven networking, spectrum sharing, communications with unmanned aerial systems (UAS), and rural broadband connectivity. The newly added Houdini project expands the portfolio with an open-access software-defined radio system research focus that will simultaneously support multiple radio modules and a wide array of frequency bands.

US Regional Growth & Entrepreneurship (SURGE) - Our newest National Science Foundation–backed program helps regional coalitions amplify ongoing innovation efforts through actionable tools, trusted expert guidance, and a powerful national peer network.

ADVANCING SMART INSTALLATION CAPABILITIES AT FORT BENNING

In 2025, US Ignite moved the 'Heat Risk Management' and 'Energy Waste Savings' apps originally built for Fort Benning, GA, into the Installation Operations Tool (IOT). The Installation Operations Tool is built on PTC ThingWorx, a market-leading industrial Internet-of-Things solution that offers a low-code/no-code solution for rapid capability development using Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) technology. This migration brought the Heat Risk and Energy Waste apps in line with the DoD's focus on COTS solutions and the Army's prioritization of low-code/no-code tools. As a result, these apps now have an adoption pathway across installations if the Army scales the Installation Operations Tool.

US Ignite also matured more than six other prototypes on the Installation Operations Tool platform, such as emergency vehicle tracking, intelligent intrusion detection, and power price spike notifications. In September 2025, the Smart Base team issued a limited operational release of these prototypes, along with the Energy Waste and Heat Risk apps. The Economic Dispatch Notifications app, one of the prototyped apps, realized $32,000 in cost savings in its first month. This release marked a significant milestone of the IOT program, and received strong support from senior leaders at Fort Benning, including Colonel Evans, Fort Benning Garrison Commander, and Mr. Robert Stone, Executive Deputy to the Commanding General, Maneuver Center of Excellence.

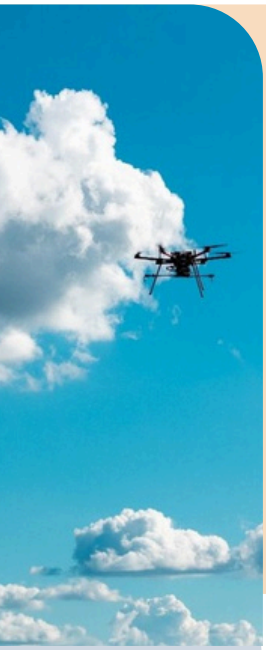


A MAJOR STEP TOWARD ENTERPRISE SMART INSTALLATION OPERATIONS

The Smart Bases team also conducted a comprehensive design study for the US Army Corps of Engineers, Engineer Research and Development Center (USACE-ERDC), to explore how to integrate the Installation Operations Tool with the Installation Resilience Operations Center (IROC). IROC is a platform to quickly and securely connect to Operational Technology (OT) developed for the Air Force at Tyndall Air Force Base, and brought to Fort Benning in collaboration with ERDC. Currently, there are related requirements emerging for a “Virtual Toolbox for Installation Mission Effectiveness” (VTIME) assigned to the Army’s office for enterprise systems (PEO Enterprise), with potential use at over 60 installations.

By combining IROC’s secure connectivity with the IOT platform’s flexible, low-code analytics, US Ignite and its partners created the first complete design of a potential solution for one of the two primary VTIME components, the “Smart Installation Virtual Operations Center” (SIVOC). The SIVOC design, which uses both IOT + IROC, now has the potential to be integrated and receive formal Army cyber approval (Authority to Operate) in 2026, positioning it for rapid expansion across Army bases in the future if the Army chooses.

PAWR Project Office



US Ignite leads the project office for the Platforms for Advanced Wireless Research (PAWR) program created by the National Science Foundation.

Its four outdoor wireless testbeds listed below – plus the newly added Houdini project supporting development of an open-access, frequency-diverse, software-defined radio – enable advanced network research with a focus on 6G and beyond.

POWDER

As a highly programmable platform for wireless research, Utah-based POWDER has a rapidly growing base of testbed users. Researchers have developed network digital twins, explored low-latency use cases for the power grid, tested spectrum management technologies, and more. In 2025, POWDER launched the CyberPowder program for research and workforce training. That program continues in 2026 with students from more than 20 universities around the country.

AERPAW

The wireless drone testbed in North Carolina supports field testing of unmanned aerial and ground vehicles, integrating SDRs, multiple RF sensors, COTS user equipment (UEs), and an Ericsson 5G base station. One of the biggest highlights on the platform in 2025 was the AERPAW Autonomous Data Mule (AADM) Challenge. The multi-phased student competition included 16 hours of field experiments supporting 33 UAV flights.

PAWR Project Office

ARA

ARA offers a comprehensive, rural-focused wireless research platform in Central Iowa that integrates commercial and programmable wireless technologies across a hybrid RAN and a robust multi-hop mesh backhaul. Among the novel research supported in 2025, ARA successfully demonstrated the interoperability of its commercial Ericsson radios with an open source mobile core, creating a one-of-a-kind deployment pairing open source software with commercial equipment.

COSMOS

Located in New York and New Jersey, COSMOS enables ultra-high-bandwidth and ultra-low-latency wireless communication through deep integration with multi-layer edge cloud computing, high-capacity fiber backhauls, software-defined radios (SDRs), and advanced millimeter-wave (mmWave) phased-array hardware. Among recent additions to the platform, COSMOS now supports experimentation with SDRs in the 7-24 GHz range, otherwise known as FR3, or the upper mid-band.

*The SDR technology is enabled by a collaboration between **COSMOS** and Pi-Radio. Pi-Radio designed the RF frontend for the SDR, providing 2×2 transmit and receive capabilities.*

SURGE
SUPPORTING U.S. REGIONAL GROWTH & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

How regional coalitions turn innovation strategies into results

The U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded US Ignite funding to establish Supporting U.S. Regional Growth & Entrepreneurship (SURGE), a national initiative designed to help regional coalitions turn innovation strategies into positive economic outcomes. SURGE will provide actionable tools, trusted expert guidance, and a powerful peer network to strengthen a region's ability to secure funding, attract investment, and grow emerging technology sectors that create jobs.

The official program launch is planned for Spring 2026. Leaders interested in learning more should sign up for updates at us-ignite.org/surge-interest-form.

SURGE will:

Strengthen regional coalitions committed to innovation

Expand growth in AI, energy, and other emerging fields

Foster collaboration across academia, industry, and local government

Position communities for sustainable funding and competitiveness

US Ignite Communities: Where emerging technologies become real-world progress.

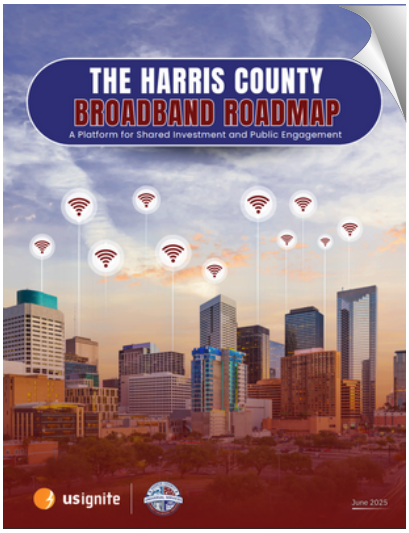
Our team helps local leaders tackle persistent challenges with practical solutions that improve resident's lives. From expanding Internet access to piloting smarter, safer streets, we work alongside municipalities, counties, and regional partners to translate innovation into measurable outcomes.

FEATURED PROJECTS

Harris County Broadband Roadmap

Harris County Universal Services and US Ignite collaborated on the Harris County Broadband Roadmap to strengthen connectivity, affordability, and digital opportunity through a county-wide strategy grounded in stakeholder input.

As a direct result of the roadmap, the Harris County Commissioners Court unanimously approved the creation of the Broadband Task Force to guide strategy, coordinate partnerships, and track progress toward closing the digital divide.



FEATURED PROJECTS

San José Road Safety Conditions Pilot

San José's Road Safety Conditions Pilot, supported by the Toyota Mobility Foundation and with US Ignite's support, demonstrates how cities can responsibly explore AI and computer vision to improve street safety. Over the past year, San José made meaningful progress strengthening its approach to data collection, model development, and cross-sector collaboration to support safer mobility for all road users.

Alongside the technological advancements, the pilot emphasized community-informed implementation through webinars, surveys, and in-person outreach at events like Viva CalleSJ, ensuring resident perspectives helped shape both the opportunity and the safeguards needed for future deployment.

With strong partners and growing momentum, this pilot is also well-positioned for replication, with a clear opportunity to expand similar deployments to additional communities in the near future!

FEATURED PROJECTS

InnovateSLC: Accelerating Economic Development

This year, US Ignite celebrated the successful completion of InnovateSLC, a multi-year effort designed to help founders and small businesses build the readiness to implement innovative ideas and secure funding. Delivered in partnership with Kinect Capital and Salt Lake City stakeholders, InnovateSLC combined two tracks: an Urban Innovation Accelerator for startups and a smart-city training program for small businesses.

Across the program's life, InnovateSLC supported 207 unique participants across 76 industries, strengthening the region's innovation ecosystem and expanding access to meaningful entrepreneurial support.

At the heart of InnovateSLC was a commitment to preparing entrepreneurs for what comes next. Collectively, participating startups achieved measurable outcomes, including $3.17M in capital raised, $1.27M in SBIR funding, and $350K in earned revenue.

Looking ahead, the insights from this work will continue through US Ignite's Supporting U.S. Regional Growth & Entrepreneurship (SURGE) program. This new NSF-backed initiative that will connect regional coalitions to resources and funding to produce place-based sustainable economic growth.

207
ENTREPRENEURS

$3.17M
CAPITAL RAISED

$1.27M
IN SBIR AWARDS

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Affordable Broadband for Cleveland and Detroit

Through its long-standing partnership with DigitalC, US Ignite continued advancing community-rooted solutions that expand affordable, high-quality internet access. Over the past year, DigitalC reached major milestones by deploying a next-generation citywide fixed wireless network and launching Canopy, a high-speed home internet service designed to meet Cleveland's connectivity needs. Since launching in January 2024, the initiative has already connected over 7,000 households and has experienced steady quarter-over-quarter subscriber growth.

US Ignite played an early advisory role in helping strengthen this model, including through Project OVERCOME, where DigitalC demonstrated the viability of community-based connectivity solutions paired with local technical support and device assistance. As the work continues to scale, DigitalC is now expanding the "Cleveland Model" to Detroit, MI, building toward broader impact and demonstrating how locally designed broadband solutions can become blueprints for other cities.

7,000+
HOUSEHOLDS

2
MAJOR CITIES

11,000+
RESIDENTSTRAINED

DigitalC

Cleveland, OH

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Surge Link™

Syracuse, NY

Photo Credit: City of Syracuse Instagram (Syracuse1848)

$10.8 MILLION
EXPANSION

9,200
MORE HOUSEHOLDS

NEW
SEMICONDUCTOR MANUFACTURING CAMPUS

ConnectAll Expansion and Micron Groundbreaking

In Syracuse, Mayor Ben Walsh announced the expansion of Surge Link™, the City's municipal broadband service, extending availability to more than 9,200 additional households in underserved neighborhoods. US Ignite supported the City's early efforts behind Surge Link™, and this $10.8M expansion made possible through Governor Hochul's ConnectALL Initiative emphasizes the continued commitment to digital equity and workforce readiness.

Syracuse's momentum also continued to build as Central New York emerged as one of the country's most closely watched regions for innovation and job creation. That energy was on full display at Micron's megafab groundbreaking, marking a significant step toward building a new advanced semiconductor manufacturing campus in the region as part of the company's $100 billion long-term investment plan. With remarks from Governor Kathy Hochul and Micron CEO Sanjay Mehrotra, the event emphasized the scale of opportunity ahead and the importance of sustained workforce development.

Together, these efforts reflect how Syracuse leaders are positioning residents, workers, and communities to thrive in the industries of the future.

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