

Connected Nation Texas

Killen City Council

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WHAT IS BROADBAND?

Broadband Defined

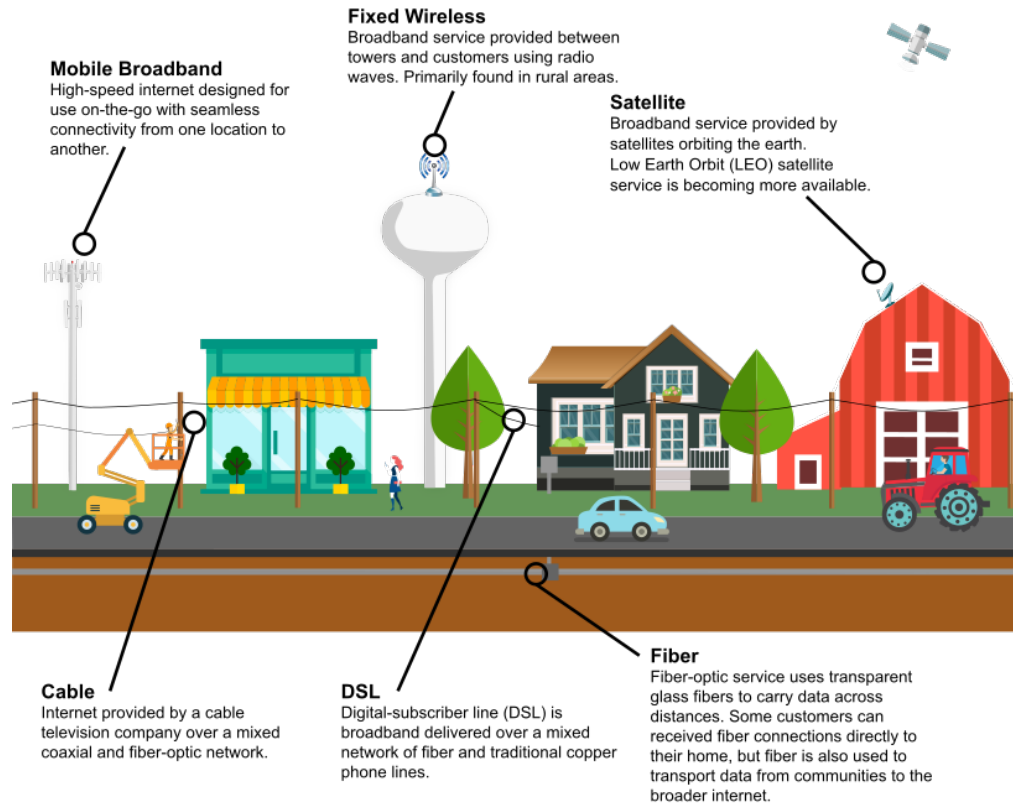


Broadband: More commonly referred to as high-speed internet access, technically, broadband is any kind of connection other than dial-up. Connection is always on.

Fixed, terrestrial broadband: Service designed for permanent, stationary use at a home, business, or institution

Mobile broadband: Wireless internet service designed for continuous use on a portable device

The current definition of broadband is 25/3 Mbps (set in 2015 by the FCC). The current average in the US is 151/21 Mbps.



Broadband Defined



Estimated time to download 2 GB file:	 10 Mbps 29 minutes	 25 Mbps 11 minutes	 1 Gbps 17 seconds
Devices Supported:	 1 or 2	 3 to 5	 10+
Activities Supported:	Web surfing, e-mail, & moderate HD streaming	Heavy HD streaming, video conferencing, large file transfer	Extreme HD, real-time streaming, frequent & huge file transfers
Primarily used by:	Homes & Some Businesses	Homes & Businesses	Businesses & Some Homes

Broadband Defined



Access

Physical connection to high-speed infrastructure.

Adoption

Recognizing the value in broadband and subscribing either at home, work, and/or via public institutions.

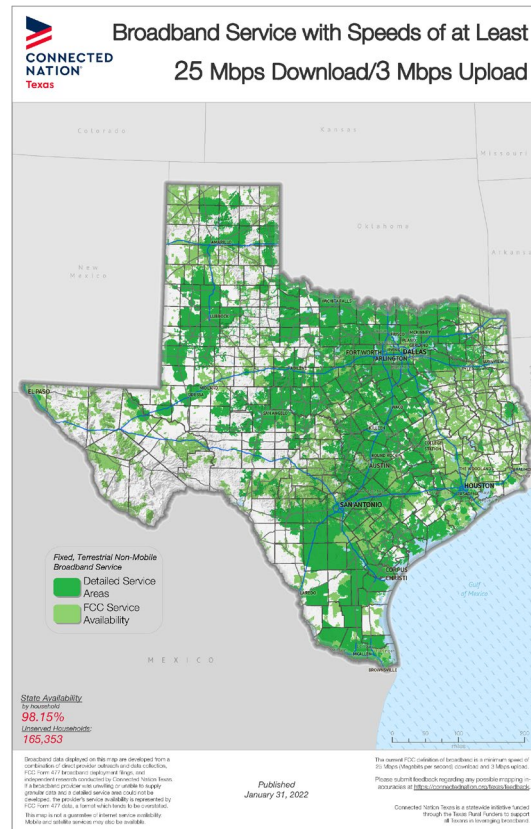
Use

Having the skills necessary to utilize and leverage broadband and related technologies across sectors.

Broadband Access in Texas



- 98.15% of households in Texas have access at 25/3, leaving 165,353 households unserved at the minimum speed considered broadband.
- Of note, 141,730 of these homes are in rural Texas.
- This means at least 478,595 Texans (409,061 who reside in rural Texas) do not have access to broadband at home to attend school, visit a doctor online, or work remotely.

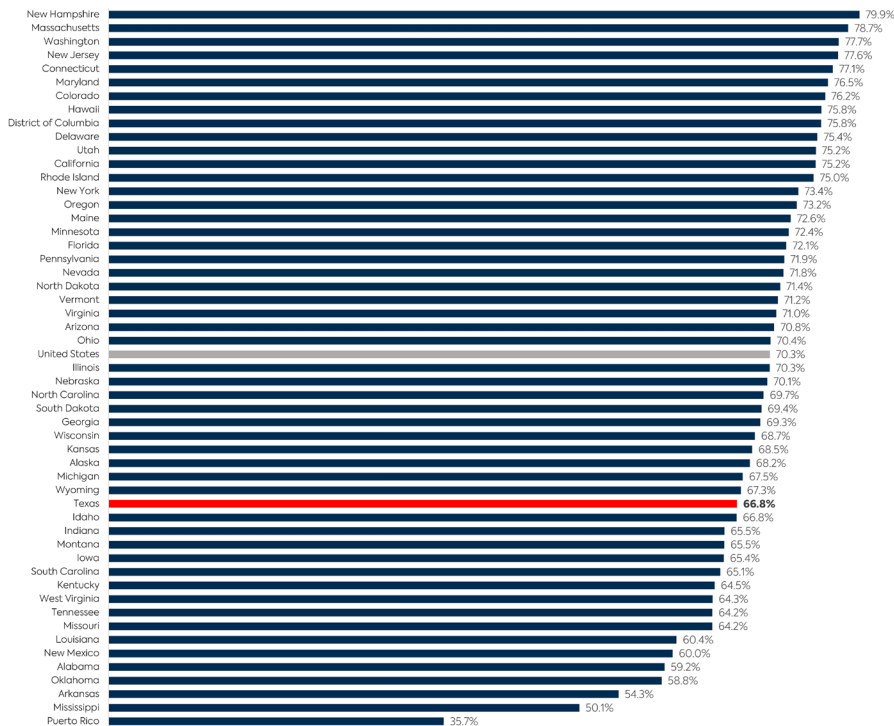


Broadband Adoption in Texas



- **33.2%** of Texas households do not subscribe to fixed, terrestrial broadband service such as cable, fiber optic or DSL.
- Texas is **36th** in adoption among other states and territories.
- Texans subscribe at a lower rate than the US as a whole.

Adoption Rate:
Households with Broadband Subscriptions by State
(Rates include households that may or may not have access to broadband)



Broadband Adoption in Texas (Cities)



The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) ranked 623 communities with populations of 65,000 or more by:

- percentage of households without “wireline” broadband subscriptions (cable, fiber or DSL)
- percentage of each community’s households that lacked broadband Internet subscriptions of any type, including mobile data plans



Pharr (1st)

Brownsville (2nd)

Tyler (4th)

Harlingen (5th)

Beaumont (18th)

Bryan (33rd)

Longview (68th)

Killeen (71st)

Mission (75th)

Odessa (77th)



INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act



On August 10, 2021, the U.S. Senate voted 69-30 to pass a \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure package that took months of negotiation. The House voted 228-206 to send the bill to the President's desk on November 5th and it was signed on November 15th. The infrastructure bill contains **\$65 billion in broadband funding**. Key elements of that funding include:

- \$42.45 billion for states to work with localities and service providers to improve broadband networks, administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) within the Department of Commerce. **All states receive a minimum of \$100 million and larger states can expect to receive much more than that minimum amount**
- \$1 billion for middle mile funding
- \$14.2 billion to make the Emergency Broadband Benefit program permanent, changing the program's name to the Affordable Connectivity Fund (up from \$3.2 billion that funded EBB during the pandemic). The permanent benefit will subsidize \$30 per month of an eligible household's broadband costs
- **\$2.75 billion for Digital Equity Act competitive grant programs**



BROADBAND EQUITY, ACCESS, AND DEPLOYMENT (BEAD) PROGRAM

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program



Who is Eligible for Equity, Access, and Deployment Program Grants?

Each of the 50 U.S. states is eligible for Equity, Access, and Deployment Program support as are the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the United States Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

What are Equity, Access, and Deployment Program Grants For?

- broadband deployment to unserved and underserved areas,
- connecting eligible community anchor institutions,
- data collection, broadband mapping, and planning,
- installing internet or Wi-Fi infrastructure or providing reduced-cost broadband within a multifamily residential building (priority given to unserved households or locations with high concentrations of families with incomes below 150 percent of the poverty line),
- broadband adoption (including providing affordable internet-capable devices), and
- additional uses determined necessary by the NTIA.

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program



Broadband Network Quality of Service Requirement

Subgrantees must use the funds to deploy broadband networks that provide service:

- at a speed of not less than 100 megabits per second for downloads and 20 megabits per second for uploads;
- with a latency that is sufficiently low to allow reasonably foreseeable, real-time, interactive applications;
- with network outages that do not exceed, on average, 48 hours over any 365-day period; and
- provide access to broadband service to each customer served by the project that desires broadband service.

Low-Cost Plans

New networks will also be required to offer **at least one low-cost broadband service option** for eligible subscribers.

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program



By mid-May 2022, NTIA will issue a notice of funding opportunity to states, informing them of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program and the **minimum amount of financial support will be made available to each state**. At that time, NTIA will outline the requirements for applications, including standards, developed in consultation with the FCC, for how states will assess the capabilities and capacities of a prospective subgrantee (that is, any entity that receives BEAD grant funds from a state to carry out planning, broadband infrastructure deployment, data collection, broadband mapping, providing affordable internet-capable devices, etc.).

Networks built with BEAD program funds are required to offer low-cost service plans for low-income consumers. NTIA will consult with the FCC to create a website that allows a consumer to determine if they are eligible to receive a federal or state broadband service subsidy or for a low-income plan on a BEAD-supported network.



BEAD program money will not flow until the FCC has made public new maps showing where broadband service is and isn't available!

The FCC is in the process of updating its current broadband maps with more detailed and precise information on the availability of fixed and mobile broadband services. The [Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability \(DATA\) Act](#), signed into law in March 2020, requires the FCC to change the way broadband data is collected, verified, and reported. Specifically, the FCC must collect and disseminate granular broadband service availability data (broadband maps) from wired, fixed-wireless, satellite, and mobile broadband providers.

To do this, the FCC is required to establish the [Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric](#) (a dataset of geocoded information for all broadband service locations, atop which broadband maps are overlaid) as the vehicle for reporting broadband service availability data. Additionally, the FCC must put forth specified requirements for service availability data collected from broadband providers, and it must create a [challenge process](#) to enable the submission of independent data challenging the accuracy of FCC broadband maps.

In November 2021, the FCC awarded the contract for Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric development to CostQuest Associates. But an unsuccessful bidder filed a post-award protest and the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has 100 days to issue a decision on the protest. The FCC must wait on the GAO decision before moving forward on Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric development.

Importance of State Broadband Data



States with their own maps and data will, where necessary, be able to challenge the new federal broadband map in development by the FCC. The FCC has established a formal process to receive input from states and other stakeholders, and those states that have their own robust data collection and mapping programs will be best positioned to help the FCC refine its data.

This will ultimately influence how much federal funding Texas and other states receive for expanding broadband, as the NTIA will be required to utilize the FCC's map to allocate funding.



AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

Affordable Connectivity Program



The Emergency Broadband Benefit is now the Affordable Connectivity Program

How does this affect consumers?

The biggest change is that the **monthly subsidy is being reduced from \$50 to \$30 per month** for most participants. (Individuals living on Tribal lands will continue to receive a \$75 monthly subsidy under the ACP.)

Individuals currently enrolled in the EBB should automatically be enrolled in the new ACP program by their current service provider. However, there are some exceptions to this rule.

- Households that qualified for the EBB by meeting the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's Covid-19 program will need to requalify for the ACP. This only specifically applies to Covid-19 programs; enrollment in other low-income programs does not require individuals to requalify for the ACP.
- Participants in the EBB who qualified based on “substantial loss of income due to job loss” will be expected to re-apply to the ACP.

Affordable Connectivity Program



ACP has expanded access as compared to the EBB

- ACP eligibility rules allow individuals at or below 200 percent of the poverty level to enroll in the ACP. Under the EBB, eligibility had been limited to individuals at or below 135 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Under the ACP, unlike the EBB, individuals enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) now automatically qualify to participate.
- The ACP also allows individuals to qualify based on their participation in Tribal assistance programs like Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal TANF, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. Under the EBB, participation in these programs was not sufficient to automatically qualify.

Affordable Connectivity Program



What changes for providers?

While new providers wishing to opt in to participating in ACP must currently be delivering services to end users, they are no longer required to demonstrate that they were providing services of December 1, 2020. This change **greatly expands the number of providers able to participate in ACP as compared to EBB, allowing for more nontraditional and newer providers to participate in the program.**

Participating providers are prohibited from:

- Preventing eligible households from participating due to previously missing a payment. Even if the household has been delinquent in the past, they are still allowed to participate in the ACP and providers must provide services.
- Charging early termination fees for ACP subscribers who decide to terminate their contracts early.
- Requiring a credit check as part of a consumer's ACP application.
- Applying the ACP benefit to a household bill in a less-than-timely manner. This is to prevent consumers from experiencing service interruptions due to perceived non-payment that is really just a delay in applying the ACP benefit to the consumer's bill.
- Inappropriately upselling and down-selling services.
- Preventing existing customers from applying for the ACP.
- Imposing any restriction on ACP recipients that prevents them from switching to another eligible ACP provider.



DIGITAL EQUITY GRANTS

Digital Equity Grants



Grants to Develop State Digital Equity Plans (\$60 million available in FY2022)

Beginning in the first fiscal year that begins after the date of enactment (FY2022 began Oct 1, 2021), NTIA will award planning grants to states for the purpose of developing State Digital Equity Plans.

To be eligible for a grant, a state must submit an application to the NTIA not later than 60 days after NTIA has published a notice of funding availability. The application must include a description of the state's digital equity entity and a commitment to develop the state digital equity plan in no more than one year after being awarded the grant.

Each state's governor selects an administering entity to serve as the recipient and administrator of the grant as well as be responsible to develop, implement, and oversee the State Digital Equity Plan.

(The entity may make subgrants in support of the plan or digital inclusion activities.)

Digital Equity Grants



State Capacity Grants (\$1.44 billion total; \$240 million in FY2022; \$300 million each year FY2023-26)

Beginning no later than two years after NTIA starts awarding the planning grants above, it will start awarding capacity grants to support the implementation of State Digital Equity Plans and digital inclusion activities.

States have five years to spend their grant awards. Funds are meant to supplement, not supplant, other federal or state support for these activities.

Grants are to be used for the following purposes:

- Update or maintain the State Digital Equity Plan (no more than 20% of total)
- Implement the State Digital Equity Plan
- Subcontract for assistance implementing the plan
- Pursuing digital inclusion activities consistent with the State Digital Equity Plan
- Report to the state regarding digital inclusion activities
- Evaluate the efficacy of the digital inclusion efforts

Digital Equity Grants



Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program (\$1.25 Billion total; \$250 Million per year in fiscal years 2022-2026)

Grants must support at least one of the following:

- Develop and implement digital inclusion activities that benefit covered populations,
- Facilitate the adoption of broadband by covered populations in order to provide educational and employment opportunities to those populations,
- Implement training programs for covered populations that cover basic, advanced, and applied skills—or other workforce development programs,
- Make available equipment, instrumentation, networking capability, hardware and software, or digital network technology for broadband services to covered populations at low or no cost,
- Construct, upgrade, expend, or operate new or existing public access computing centers for covered populations through community anchor institutions, and
- Other activities NTIA deems consistent with the goals of the program.

Questions?

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