

Connected Nation Texas

**2022 Rural Texas Symposium on
Healthcare and Economic
Development**
June 9, 2022

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WHAT IS BROADBAND?

Broadband Defined

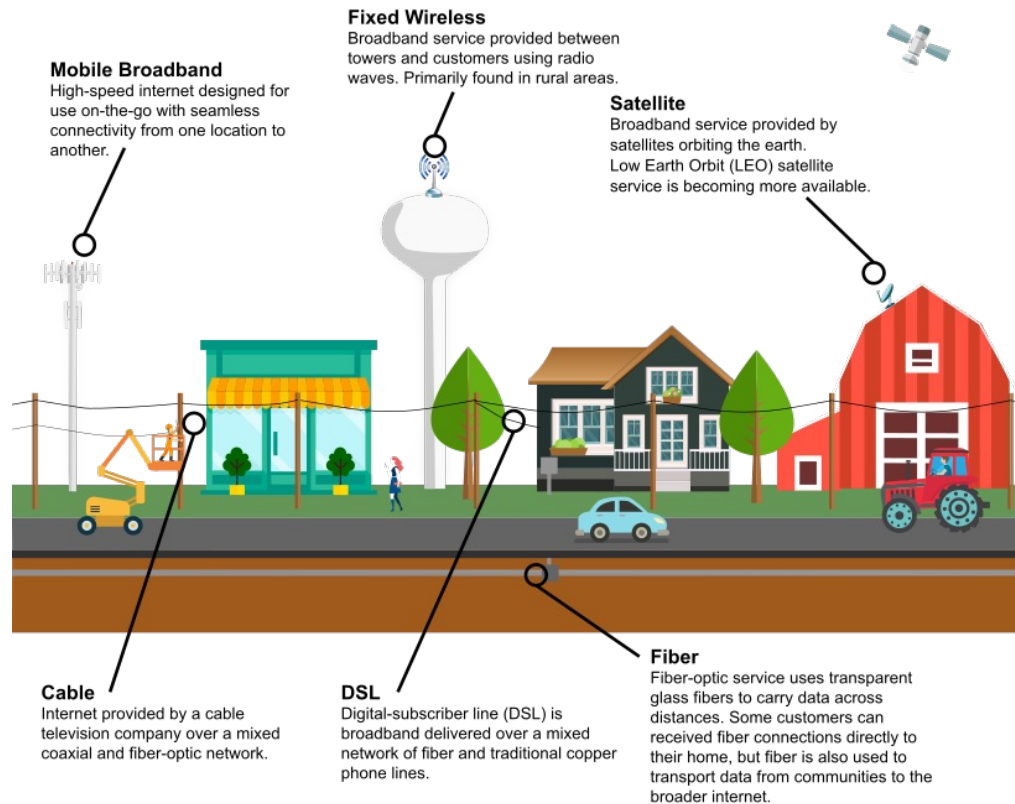


Broadband: More commonly referred to as high-speed internet access, technically, broadband is any kind of connection other than dial-up. Connection is always on.

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




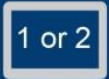


Mobile broadband: Wireless internet service designed for continuous use on a portable device

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

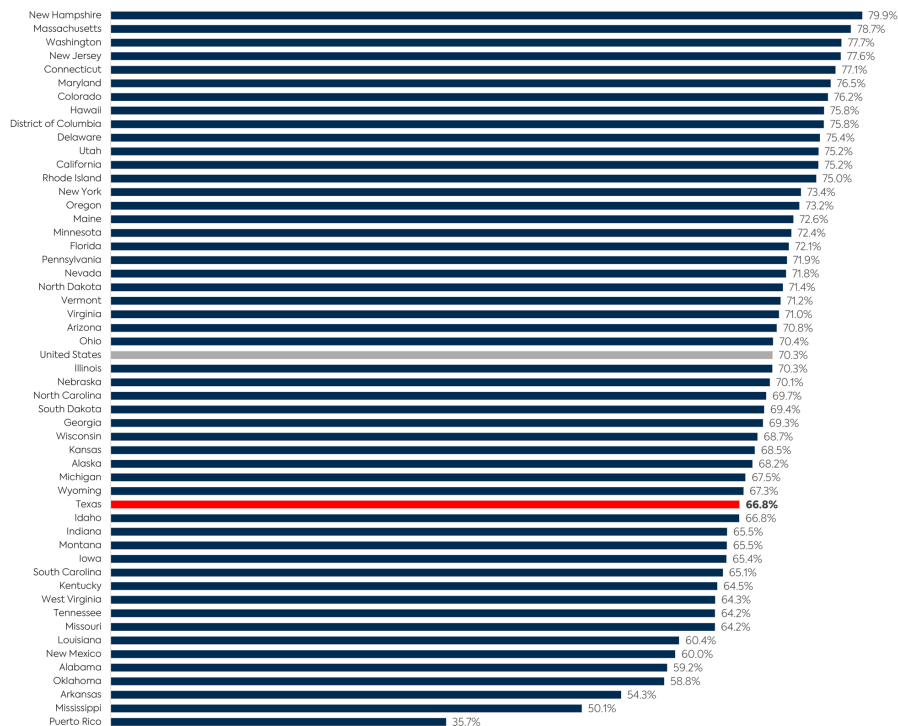
Having the skills necessary to utilize and leverage broadband and related technologies across sectors.

Broadband 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)





BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

(formerly 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



Purpose: To ensure 100/20 Mbps service (with 100 ms latency or less) to all unserved and underserved locations in the U.S. and 1 Gbps service to Community Anchor Institutions

Eligibility: States and territorial equivalents, which will select subgrantees according to an NTIA-approved competitive selection process

Amount: \$41,601,000,000 to states (\$100M initial allocation, with remaining allocations determined by unserved areas on the forthcoming FCC national broadband map); \$5M planning grant to each state; 2% can be used for state grant “administration”

Match Requirement: 25% unless waived; in-kind match allowed; CARES/ARPA funds can be used

Other Key Takeaways: Priority given to fiber-to-the-premises; middle-mile is eligible; areas served by exclusively by satellite or fixed wireless using unlicensed spectrum are eligible for support; states must award funding in a manner that prioritizes service to all unserved locations first, then underserved locations, then community anchor institutions; low-cost program required

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program



Stage	Deadline	Description
1. Letter of Intent	July 18, 2022	States must submit a letter of intent to participate in the BEAD program
2. Request for Initial Planning Funds	August 15, 2022	Eligible Uses: 1) Research and data collection; 2) Providing technical assistance to potential subgrantees; 3) Establishing, operating, or increasing capacity of a broadband office; etc.
3. Five-Year Action Plan	270 days from receipt of Initial Planning Funds	These Plans will inform and should be closely integrated into each state's Initial and Final Proposals
4. Program Fund Allocation & Notice of Available Amounts	On or after date FCC releases broadband maps	Once the FCC releases the updated broadband maps, NTIA will calculate and notify each state of its estimated funding amount
5. Initial Proposal	180 days from Notice of Available Amounts	These Initial Proposals must include identification of each unserved and underserved location in the state
6. Challenge Process	After Initial Proposal submission	All states must administer a challenge process whereby broadband service providers (and others) can challenge a determination made by the state as to whether a particular location or CAI is eligible for funds
7. Subgrantee Selection Process	Upon NTIA approval of Initial Proposal	Once NTIA has approved the state's Initial Proposal, and sometime before submission of the Final Proposal, the state must initiate its subgrantee selection process; must be "fair, open, and competitive"
8. 20% Funding Release	Upon NTIA approval of Initial Proposal	The state may use these funds to fully fund deployment projects that: are Unserved Service Projects; or are located in an area where the percentage of households at or below 150% of the poverty line
9. Final Proposal & Release of Remaining Funds	12 months from NTIA approval of Initial Proposal	Final Proposals may only be submitted after states have already selected their subgrantees



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.

Questions?

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