

NACo Broadband Taskforce Overview

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NACo Broadband Task Force and Advisory Council

Four Subcommittees

- Preparing for Broadband
- Barriers to Buildout
- Digital Divides/Digital Equity
- Future-Proofing the Economy

Three Directives

- Short-Term Goals
- Intermediate Goals
- Long-Term Goals

Shared Goals (Force Multipliers)

1. Minimum Standard of Broadband
2. Dig Once
3. Fiber v. Cell v. Satellite
4. Local Engagement
5. Homework Gap
6. Removing Bans on Municipal Broadband
7. Grants/Loans Warehouse
8. Regulating Broadband as a Utility
9. Broadband Data/Mapping and Analytics

Two Directives

- Best Practices
- Policy Recommendations

Proposed Platform Changes – NACo Telecommunications And Technology

1. Encouraging competition and development of new technologies

- a) Federal, State and Local resources should promote competition providers and support the development of new technologies for both government and public use to address the unique factors contributing to the digital divide.

2. Rights-of-Way

- a) Dig once policies
- b) Federally funded transportation projects should incorporate state and local broadband plans

3. Broadband deployment and adoption

- a) Policies to help counties rapidly expand public-private partnerships and to attract affordable, abundant, redundant and reliable high-speed broadband services that meet or exceed federal broadband speed definitions regardless of population or technology used

Proposed Platform Changes– NACo Telecommunications And Technology

1. Right-of-Way Issues

- a) Assist with the future deployment of fiber-based networks through effective dig-once policies and practices
- b) Ensuring scalability by accommodate fiber lines with a minimum of 438 strand bundles along with a multi-duct variety ensuring separation of providers assets
- c) Local dig-once polices should be supported by federal and state resources
- d) Federally funded transportation projects should incorporate state and local broadband plans
- e) If service provider are not interested in installing conduit when counties are doing street work, counties should install county owned conduit which can be leased back to service provider.

Proposed Platform Changes– NACo Telecommunications And Technology

1. Broadband Deployment and Adoption

- a) Streamlined federal ROW and permitting processes for structures on lands controlled by any federal agency;
- b) Provides access to federally owned dark fiber for use by government or quasi-governmental organizations;
- c) Creates location maps and open access to broadband infrastructure deployed with public funds;
- d) Mandates middle-mile broadband systems to be open networks;
- e) Enforces a fair refusal of service process requiring incumbent providers to provide service within 180 days at the same level as a new deployment or release the rights to the proposed service area;
- f) Requires coordination between local governments and ISPs with an emphasis on locally collected and verified data;
- g) Encourage the utilization of fiber optic broadband infrastructure where public funds are used by implementing a sliding scale of awarded grant funds with fiber projects receiving the most;
- h) Demand a minimum broadband speed requirement of 25Mbps down and 3Mbps up but incentivizes 1gbps symmetrical network by implementing a sliding scale of awarded grant funds with Gigabit networks receiving the 100% funding;

Proposed Platform Changes– NACo Telecommunications And Technology

1. Broadband Deployment and Adoption

- i) Provides tax credits to telecommunications providers that develop broadband in rural and underserved communities;
- j) Provides for broadened eligibility and additional federal agency loan authority to deploy broadband in rural communities;
- k) Creates a graduated distribution model for federal grants/loans/subsidy programs based on performance (speed, latency, and cost).
- l) Allows for local control of franchise agreements for providers operating within their communities to ensure that customer service standards are upheld and that access to service is consistently available.
- m) Additionally, broadband is as essential to our health and wellbeing as water or electricity. Therefore, NACo believes broadband should be classified as a Title II Utility allowing the Federal Communication Commission to ensure common carriers provide affordable and reliable service by preventing price gauging and discriminatory deployment practices. Unbundling local networks and price regulations would open access and allow other service providers to provide competitive and affordable service alternatives to residents.

Proposed Resolutions– NACo

Telecommunications And Technology

1. Support Federal Solutions to the “Homework Gap”

- a) **Issue:** Given the ever-increasing need for digital connectivity for children to successfully complete their schoolwork, the “homework gap” is leading to inequities in education in counties across America, which negatively impacts child development, the success of our economies and the quality of living in our communities.
- b) **Proposed Policy:** To address internet affordability and adoption issues in K-12 education known as the “homework gap,” NACo urges Congress to establish a permanent program providing high quality, subsidized and discounted internet and computer access to low-income K-12 students through a shared cost formula spread between providers, families, and the federal government.

Proposed Resolutions– NACo

Telecommunications And Technology

1. Support a Permanent Federal Broadband Assistance Program

- a) **Issue:** The digital divide disproportionately impacts low-income households, who, due to affordability issues, have lower rates of technology adoption and access to broadband internet at home. This disparity creates additional barriers to accessing public benefits, employment opportunities, digital learning, telehealth services and opportunities for civic engagement, negatively impacting county economies, health outcomes and quality of life.
- b) **Proposed Policy:** NACo urges Congress to establish a permanent program that helps low-income families afford internet service. A permanent broadband benefit program must include measures holding Internet Service Providers accountable to increasing access and providing affordable service to qualifying households. Additionally, such a program should incorporate relevant data, best practices and any key policy lessons learned during the Federal Communications Commission's implementation of the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program established under the American Rescue Plan Act.