



2023

# Counties Connecting Communities: **Broadband in Florida**



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FLORIDA  
ASSOCIATION OF  
COUNTIES  
*All About Florida*

2023

# Counties Connecting Communities: Broadband in Florida

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*This guidebook is a compilation of information resourced from our peers at:*



# The ACCESS 67 Initiative

In 2020, the Florida Association of Counties began its ACCESS 67 Initiative to implement a comprehensive approach to empower Florida's counties to deliver affordable, reliable high-speed internet to all Floridians. Counties play a crucial role as policymakers, funders, data aggregators, conveners, and partners in pursuing sustainable solutions to broadband access, affordability, and reliability.

**Affordable and reliable, high-speed internet access is:**

- Essential for Floridians to be prosperous, compete in a global economy, and achieve a high quality of life.
- As fundamental as acquiring electricity in the first half of the 20th century
- Can be cost prohibitive for many Floridians further accelerating the Digital Divide

**FAC recognizes that the absence and/or lack of high-speed internet impacts small, medium and large counties, both rural and urban, and hinders:**

- Equitable educational opportunities for school children and workforce development;
- Access to telemedicine to improve health outcomes without demanding travel and transportation needs;
- Rapid communication between the public and law enforcement agencies;
- Economic competitiveness limiting business investment, job growth, and career opportunities;

The comprehensive approach of the ACCESS 67 Initiative is based on the underlying principles of the Association's mission; Advocacy, Collaboration, and Education. The work continues with the Presidential Select Committee on Broadband to prioritize the adoption of affordable and reliable, high-speed internet access. The Select Committee will:

## Advocate

for the adoption, as well as, the implementation of state and federal policies that contribute to the development of solutions that address the lack of ACCESS in our local communities.

## Collaborate

with key stakeholders who share a common goal in developing solutions to address the lack of ACCESS in our local communities.

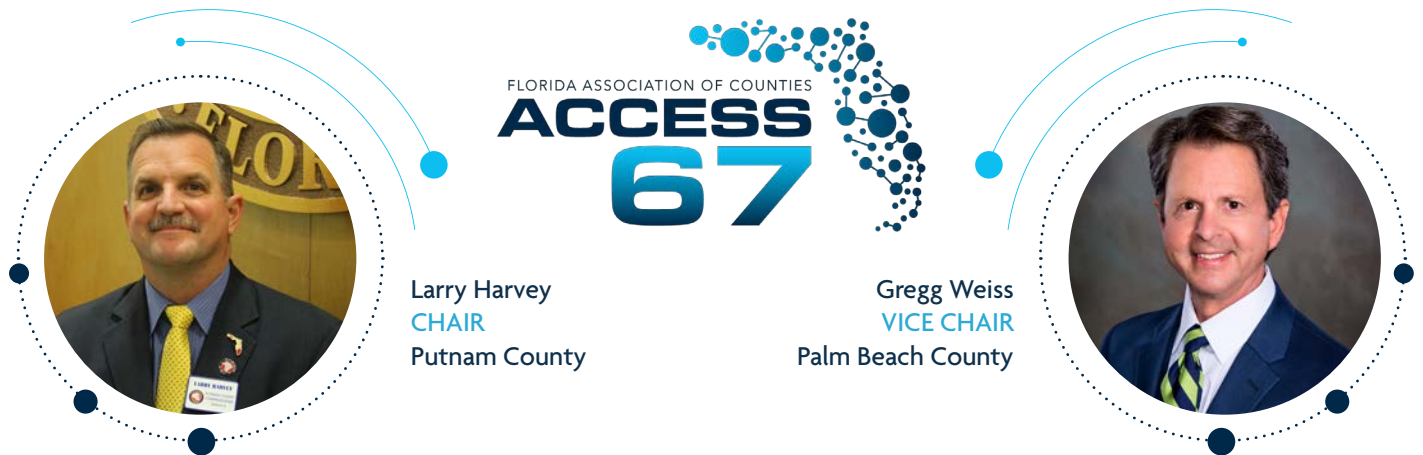
## Educate

our members with local solutions by sharing best practices among Florida's counties and similar communities and organizations from around the country.

## FAC Presidential Select Committee on Broadband

ACCESS 67 and the Select Committee on Broadband are focused on:

- Identifying community needs, assets, and barriers necessary to meet the goal of universal access to high-speed Internet through the development of Local Technology Planning Teams and collaboration with stakeholders
- Leveraging resources with state and federal partners to deliver cost-effective broadband solutions which provide a return on investment to both the public and private interest



Larry Harvey  
CHAIR  
Putnam County

Gregg Weiss  
VICE CHAIR  
Palm Beach County

## ACCESS 67 County Champions

- **County Champion** for broadband will have their “eye on the ball” on current developments to improve internet access and serve as county lead for the Department of Economic Opportunity’s (DEO) Local Technology Planning Teams (LTPT)
- ACCESS 67 **County Champions** will encourage the use of broadband, especially in the rural, unserved, and underserved communities of the state.
- Each county should designate a county staff person that will assist their local effort in matters related to the ACCESS 67 Broadband Initiative.
- FAC staff will regularly communicate with the ACCESS 67 **County Champions** on news, state & federal legislative updates, and coordinate with the Office of Broadband.
- FAC will keep a communication network consisting of the designated **County Champions** and the supporting staff person to facilitate collaboration with stakeholders, both private and public.
- Through the ACCESS 67 Initiative, FAC identified **County Champions** for broadband to assist DEO with the Local Technology Planning Team process. FAC hopes to serve as a vital collaborative partner bringing together local counterparts in education, healthcare, economic development, as well as Internet Service Providers to bridge the internet deployment gap.

## ADVOCACY & POLICY

### Legislation Supporting Access 67

**In the 2020 legislative session,** HB 969 was signed into law which designated the DEO as the lead state entity to facilitate the expansion of broadband, established the Florida Office of Broadband and encouraged expansion of broadband services in unserved and underserved areas.

**In the 2021 legislative session,** FAC supported the Florida Legislature in passing HB 1239, the "Florida Broadband Deployment Act of 2021".

- Required the state to complete a strategic plan for broadband by June 2022
- Provided resources to develop a state broadband internet service map to identify connectivity gaps to end users
- FAC has stressed that the strategic plan be based on up-to-date and location-specific mapping that identifies broadband internet speeds at a granular, census block level to accurately assess internet access needs of the public and private sector.

**In the 2022 legislative session,** FAC successfully advocated for additional resources and staffing for the Office of Broadband, additional funds for the Rural Infrastructure Fund (includes broadband), and a pause to ensure the state/DEO focused on its current mission/tasks.

## ADVOCACY & POLICY

### FAC Select Committee on Broadband Adopted Policies 2022-23

#### STATE DIGITAL EQUITY GRANTS

- FAC SUPPORTS funding for State Digital Equity grants to include digital navigator programs at the local level.

#### STATUTORY REVISIONS TO THE BROADBAND OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM

- FAC SUPPORTS the following statutory revisions to the state broadband grant program, Broadband Opportunity Program:
  - Removal of the Federal funding prohibition
  - Inclusion of waiver of match & rural considerations in grant review
  - Removal of challenge processes that result in grant blocks
  - Inclusion requirements for local involvement & strategic plan alignment
  - Clarifying definitions to align grant final rule & statute



# Broadband's Impact



**EDUCATION:  
REMOTE  
LEARNING**



**HEALTHCARE**



**ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT  
AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE**



**AGRICULTURE -  
MODERN  
TECHNOLOGY**



**MOBILITY  
EXPANSION**



**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:  
REMOTE MEETINGS,  
LIVE STREAMING  
SERVICES**



**PUBLIC SAFETY-  
IMPROVED EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

# Collaboration

## Florida Office of Broadband at Department of Economic Opportunity

The Florida Office of Broadband was established 2020 by the Legislature. The Office works with local and state government agencies, community organizations and private businesses to increase the availability and effectiveness of broadband internet throughout the state, specifically in small and rural communities. Through these partnerships, the Office encourages investment in grant funding opportunities for the broadband program that focus on the expansion of broadband.

### LOCAL TECHNOLOGY PLANNING TEAMS (LTPTs)

The Office has been designated to build and facilitate local technology planning teams representing cross-sections of the community, which may include, but are not limited to, representatives from organizations, industries, local governments, and more (Section 288.9961(4)(b), Florida Statutes). Specifically, they are directed to:

- Work with rural communities to help the communities understand their current broadband availability;
- Locate unserved and underserved businesses and residents;
- Identify assets relevant to broadband deployment;
- Build partnerships with broadband service providers;
- Identify opportunities to leverage assets and reduce barriers to the deployment of broadband Internet services in the community; and
- Teams must be proactive in fiscally constrained counties in identifying funding opportunities and providing assistance with applying for federal grants for broadband Internet service.

### FLORIDA BROADBAND STRATEGIC PLAN

- The Florida Broadband Strategic Plan lays out the vision of the Office of Broadband, the roles for state and local participants, and the strategies to undertake as Florida works towards a fully connected citizenry, both economically and socially.
- In June 2022, DEO submitted the Florida Strategic Plan for Broadband to the Governor, the Speaker of the House, and the President of the Senate.
- Lays out the vision of the Office of Broadband, the roles for state and local participants, and the strategies to undertake as Florida works toward a fully connected citizenry, both economically and socially.

- 3 Sections and 25 Strategies identified to accomplish state deployment goals
  1. Availability—State & Local Roles
    - Stakeholder cooperation essential through LTPTs
    - Identification of unserved/underserved areas of the state
    - Overcoming obstacles in deployment and grant programs
  2. Adoption and Use
    - Bridging urban/rural divide
    - Digital Equity Plan development
  3. Accountability
    - Establishing efficient methods and capacity through grants
    - Ensure state programs receive public feedback
    - Monitor other state efforts

## 2022 Office Achievements & ACCESS 67 Collaboration

Completed The Florida Broadband Strategic Plan—lays out the vision of the Office of Broadband, the roles for state and local participants, and the strategies to undertake as Florida works towards a fully connected citizenry, both economically and socially.

- ACCESS 67 provided feedback throughout the strategic plan development process as well as additional areas for consideration in future planning efforts
- LTPTs to play critical role of identifying local needs
- Held workshops and webinars on the Broadband Opportunity Program—\$400 million in grant funding to deploy broadband
- FAC/DEO webinar on grant program development
- 3 counties hosted DEO on regional workshops for grant rule development FAC and County Champions provided extensive comment to strengthen local coordination requirements in state grant program
- Launched the Prosperity Through a Connected Florida—five-year plan for broadband
- Awarded \$5 million for an Initial Planning Grant to create the 5-year action plan for the submitted proposal.

Created the Faster Florida Broadband Map—Identifies census blocks as unserved, underserved, served, and no fixed internet service. The map also identifies Florida geographic boundaries, community anchor institutions, grant funding opportunities, and information on the speed tests taken through the Florida Broadband Availability Map.

- FAC continues to educate members on Mapping Challenge process
- Submitted State Capital Projects Fund Grant Plan—\$366 million
- FAC offered comment on program direction and need for local coordination
- Awarded \$2.4 million for their Digital Equity Planning Grant
  - FAC adopted support statement for buildout of Digital Navigator programs at the local level



# Broadband Mapping

## Florida's Broadband Availability Map and Internet Speed Test

The Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) has developed Florida's Broadband Availability Map to identify broadband internet service availability throughout the state. The Broadband Availability Map identifies a location's speed, connectivity, and access to broadband services. These insights allow the state of Florida to better identify and reach unserved and underserved areas of the state. The map will be an asset to local communities and internet service providers to assist with broadband planning efforts.

Section 288.9961, Florida Statutes, directs the Office of Broadband to develop a map of broadband internet service availability throughout this state that identifies:

- Where broadband-capable networks exist.
- Where service is available to end users.
- Gaps in rural areas.
- Download and upload speeds.

As part of DEO's efforts to encourage public participation collaboration and ensure a high level of transparency, the Florida Broadband Availability Map will be continuously updated on this webpage. Please note that the map is not complete and will continue to be updated as more data is added and changes in broadband availability are identified.

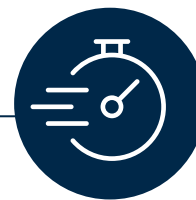
DEO is enlisting the help of the public to take an internet speed test to assist in further developing Florida's Broadband Availability Map. Your participation will help the state of Florida identify gaps in high-speed internet service in order to advance the state's overall broadband infrastructure expansion goals.



### "Faster Florida" Broadband Map

Launched in June 2022 to provide ArcGIS capabilities, allowing the user to layer speed test data with congressional and legislative districts, environmentally sensitive areas, and anchor institutions such as schools, hospitals, colleges and universities, and libraries.

[VIEW THE STATE MAP HERE](#)



### "Faster Florida" Speed Test

Launched in June, this is the statewide broadband Internet speed test campaign to assess the need for broadband Internet service expansion throughout the state.

[TAKE THE SPEED TEST HERE](#)

## Federal Communications Commission (FCC) National Broadband Map

On November 18, 2022, the FCC released the draft of the National Broadband Map. The National Broadband Map displays where internet services are and are not available across the country. The map includes data submitted by providers, challenges from third parties and the public, and verifications and audits by the FCC, which together will continually improve and refine the broadband availability data relied upon by the FCC, other government agencies, and the public, as required by the Broadband DATA Act. It is important that the FCC National Broadband Map be as accurate as possible. Funding through the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment program will be based on the final FCC map.

Floridians are encouraged to visit the [FCC National Broadband Map](#) and enter their home or business address to view a summary of the FCC's broadband Internet data for that location. For information on how to use the map and how to submit a challenge if the information for that address appears to be incorrect, please visit the [FCC Broadband Data Collection Help Center](#). Challenges received by January 13, 2023, will be prioritized and will continue to be accepted on a rolling basis.

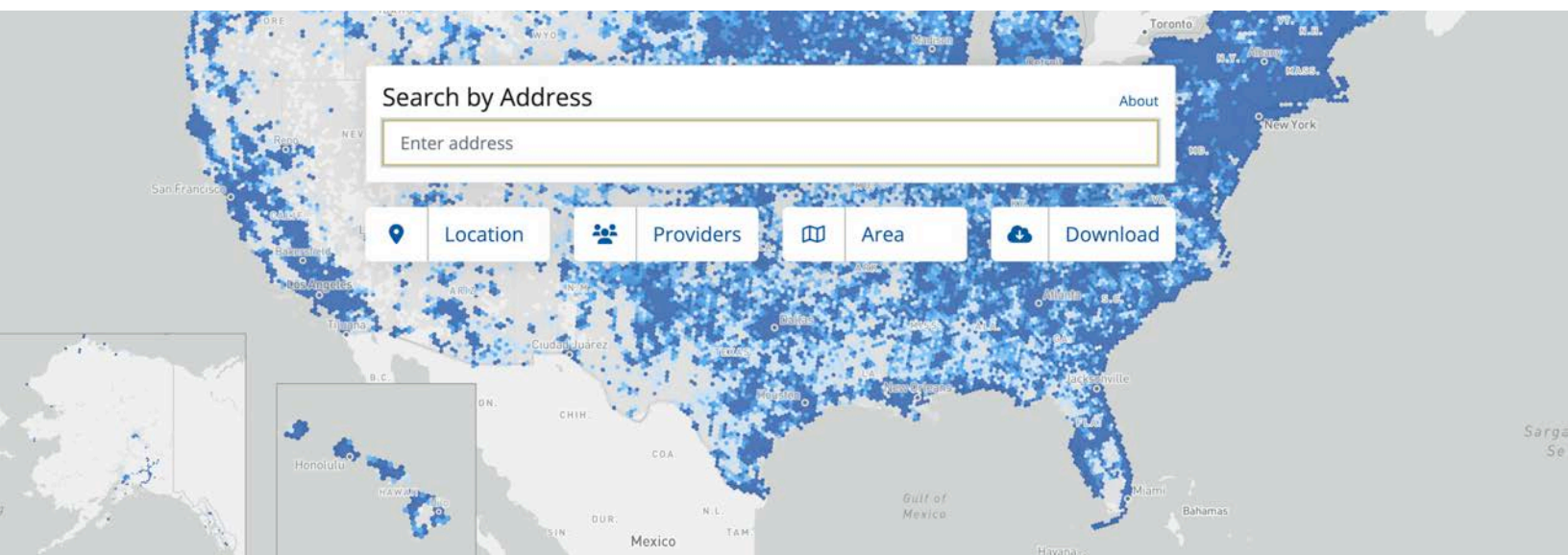
Floridians without a fixed (wired) or mobile broadband connection are especially encouraged to participate. A mobile phone, a friend or family member's computer, or a public access site (a school, community center, or public library) can be used to enter a home address, review, and if needed, challenge the FCC's national broadband map.

### TIMING

- The filing window for availability Data "as-of" June 30, 2022 ended on September 1.
- The first set of maps became available in Fall 2022.
- The FCC began accepting challenges to the broadband availability data reported by service providers.
- The next BDC filing window will begin on December 31 and end on March 1, 2023, and availability data collections will occur every six months thereafter.

### CHALLENGE PROCESSES

- Two distinct categories of data will populate the new broadband maps, both of which will be subject to challenge in the BDC system:
  - Fabric Data
  - Availability Data
- Each opportunity allows for both individual and "bulk" challenges.



# Florida's Broadband Snapshot

More than 80 federal programs across federal agencies have been allocated funding that can be used for broadband-related purposes, including E-Rate (FCC/USAC), Reconnect (USDA), Community Connect Grant Program, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF), and more.

In 2020, the Broadband DATA Act required the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to collect granular service availability data from wired, fixed wireless, and satellite broadband providers. The new broadband coverage map data direct the allocations for upcoming federal grants.

On November 18th, 2022, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released the first draft of its new National Broadband Map, a comprehensive, location-by-location view of high-speed Internet availability across the nation. The map is a more detailed and precise reflection of the availability of fixed and mobile broadband services in all 3,069 counties, parishes and boroughs. The new map can be accessed [here](#).

## **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA):**

### **STATE AND LOCAL FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS (SLRF) (TREASURY)**

- \$350 billion to states, cities, counties
- Allowable use includes broadband infrastructure
- Many counties have allocated these funds towards broadband projects



## **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Broadband Programs:**

### **IIJA THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE BILL:**

- Signed by President Biden on November 15, 2021, provides \$973 billion from Fiscal Years 2022 to 2026. The bill includes \$550 billion in new investments for all modes of transportation, water, power and energy, environmental remediation, public lands, resilience, and broadband State Funding.

### **BROADBAND EQUITY, ACCESS AND DEPLOYMENT (BEAD) PROGRAM (NTIA):**

- \$42.45 billion to states for broadband infrastructure
- Each state will receive a minimum allocation of \$100 million with additional funding to be distributed upon completion of mapping

### **DIGITAL EQUITY ACT (NTIA)**

- \$2.75 billion to promote digital equity and inclusion grant programs for the 21st Economy

### **MIDDLE MILE PROGRAM (NTIA)**

- \$1 billion designated to reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas. Middle mile infrastructure broadly refers to the mid-section of Internet infrastructure that carries large amounts of data at high speeds over long distances

## **Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)**

- FCC benefit program that helps ensure that households can afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare and more.
- The benefit provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands.
- Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if they contribute more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price.
- The Affordable Connectivity Program is limited to one monthly service discount and one device discount per household.

# Funding

## State Programs and Funds

### OPPORTUNITY GRANT PROGRAM

- \$400 million in FY 22-23 award grants for the installation or deployment of infrastructure to benefit unserved areas
- Grant funds directed to provide broadband where ISPs have not deployed service to an unserved area.
- ISPs are required to engage LTPTs for documented support of projects
- 109 applications submitted by December 2022 deadline
- Grant awards are expected in early 2023

### RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (RIF)

- In FY 2022-23, \$31.6 is available to initiate the planning, preparing, and financing of infrastructure projects in rural communities which will encourage job creation, capital investment, and the strengthening and diversification of rural economies.

### DIGITAL EQUITY PLANNING GRANT (DEPG)

- The DEPG identifies barriers to Digital Equity (defined as the condition in which individuals and communities have the information technology capacity necessary for full participation in society and the economy) within the state and creates strategies for overcoming them. This is done by promoting digital equity, supporting digital inclusion activities, and building capacity for efforts related to the adoption of broadband.
- In November 2022, the DEO Office of Broadband was awarded \$2,407,223.57 by the NTIA.
- This funding opportunity provides the state with the resources necessary to fully research and create a plan to reduce or eliminate these barriers through crafting a comprehensive map and data-driven Digital Equity plan (or Florida Digital Adoption and Use Plan), aligning with the Florida Strategic Plan for Broadband, and the BEAD 5-Year Action Plan.

## Capital Projects Fund Grant Plan

The Florida Office of Broadband published the Florida Capital Projects Fund (CPF) state grant plan totaling \$366 million. The Florida CPF state grant plan aligns with many goals FAC raised during the previous legislative session, summer meetings with Office of Broadband, and the strategic plan development process. The Florida CPF state grant plan was submitted to the US Department of Treasury for approval.

This grant is separate from the state Broadband Opportunity Program (\$400 million)

Highlights of Florida CPF State Grant Plan include:

- Florida received \$366 million from the ARPA Capital Projects Fund for capital projects that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring
- Primary objective to expand last mile access to homes in rural communities
- Priority will be given to Broadband Infrastructure Projects where networks will be owned, operated, or affiliated with local governments, non-profit organizations, and co-operatives. Operated on a non-discriminatory basis
- Prioritize fiber projects to deliver 100/20 Mbps, scalable to 100 Mbps symmetrical service
- Projects must show partnerships between the local governments and ISPs
- Eligible subrecipients include: Local governments, non-profits, private entities (ISPs), co-operatives, and electric utilities
- \$2.5 million in technical assistance funding for potential applicants
- LTPTs play a critical role in identifying community needs for broadband expansion projects

### TOTAL ALLOCATION: \$ 366,036,869

- Administration 5%: \$18,301,843
- Broadband Infrastructure Projects (70%): \$247,761,206
  - The Office will obligate/award all project funds before December 31, 2024, and ensure all projects are completed by Dec. 31, 2026.
- Digital Connectivity Technology Projects (5%): \$13,040,063
  - funds to eligible entities to make devices and equipment necessary to access the broadband Internet available to households who lack such devices and equipment.
- Multi-Purpose Community Facility Projects (25%): \$86,933,757
  - funds to eligible communities to construct or improve Multi-Purpose Community Facilities (MPCF) for the construction of or improvements to buildings designed to jointly and directly enable work, education, and health monitoring, located in eligible communities with an identified critical need for the project.
  - Required to partner with local CareerSource agency

For more information from the [Florida Office of Broadband website](#), please visit the links below:

- [Capital Projects Fund Executive Summary](#)
- [Broadband Infrastructure Program Narrative](#)
- [Digital Connectivity Program Narrative](#)
- [Multi-Purpose Community Centers Project Narrative](#)

## **DEO Legislative Budget Request**

### **BEAD PROGRAMMATIC FUNDING**

#### ***Prosperity Through a Connected Florida***

- Request: \$100 million
  1. Conduct Research and Data Collection
  2. Provide Technical Assistance
  3. Increase Operating Capacity of the Office of Broadband
  4. Perform Asset Mapping
  5. Assist with Local Coordination and Contracted Support

### **STATE DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN**

#### ***Florida Digital Adoption and Use Capacity Building***

- Request: \$12,960,000
  1. Digital Equity Planning Grants to create the Florida Digital Adoption and Use Plan
  2. Digital Equity Capacity Grants
  3. Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program

# APPENDICES



## APPENDIX A:

# Broadband 101: Definitions

**“Broadband”** is short-hand for an “always-on,” high-speed internet connection provided by a company or other entity known as an “internet service provider” (ISP). We say “always-on” to differentiate contemporary internet connections from the dial-up era of the 1990s, when a user had to dial a telephone number through their computer to connect. Broadband is wide bandwidth data transmission which transports multiple signals and traffic types. The medium can be coaxial cable, optical fiber, radio or twisted pair.

Currently, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the federal agency in charge of wired and wireless communications, defines a broadband connection as one with a minimum download speed of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) and a minimum upload speed of 3 Mbps (commonly depicted as “25/3 Mbps” or just 25/3). In July 2022, FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel proposed to raise the minimum speed to 100/20 Mbps.

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**Digital Subscriber Line (DSL)** is the most common type of connection in rural America. DSL is a family of technologies that are used to transmit digital data over telephone lines. DSL service can be delivered simultaneously with wired telephone service on the same telephone line since DSL uses higher frequency bands for data. While relatively ubiquitous, a DSL connection struggles with speed and network congestion. Median download and upload speed of 10/1.

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**Cable** is the most prominent broadband technology in urban communities, along with most towns, and county seats. Cable uses a coaxial cable to connect you to the internet. The benefit of cable is that it is fast (a median of 400/20). Cable Internet access provides network edge connectivity (last mile access) from the Internet service provider to an end user. Cable supports data heavy activities such as online gaming. Cable is predominantly available in dense, urban areas and can experience network congestion with additional users.

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**Fiber** or Fiber to the home (FTTH) is considered the “gold-standard” of broadband connections. Fiber speeds can reach 1 gigabit per second up/1 gigabit per second down, also known as gigabit symmetrical speeds. A fiber-optic cable is a glass filament that transmits data through light pulses. Many telephone and electric cooperatives are rolling out fiber to rural America. Fiber can handle a near unlimited amount of data and users, but the problem is that it is expensive to lay down.

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**Fixed wireless**, provided by a wireless internet service provider (WISP), is an internet connection that originates at a tower that transmits connectivity to the user using radio waves, or point-to-point terrestrial wireless links for broadband services. Fixed wireless has proven beneficial for rural and remote America because one tower can transmit a signal as far as 10 miles.

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**Mobile broadband** is available to the 81% of the population who own a smartphone. This service is provided by mobile providers. 4G service is known today primarily for its broadband capabilities. 5G is the new standard for wireless laid out by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU).

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**Satellite internet**, provided by either ViaSat or Hughes, is available to roughly 99% of the American population. Satellite internet is a wireless connection that involves 3 satellite dishes—one at the ISP hub, one in high earth orbit in space, and one attached to your property. Many in rural America subscribe to satellite internet. Satellite connections are extremely slow (around 2/1.3), and are expensive, data caps, high latency (meaning a lot of lag between transmission and reception) and weather disruptions.

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**Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Satellite** is an object, generally a piece of electronic equipment, that circles around the earth at lower altitudes. Newer companies like Starlink offer this type of satellite system. LEO Satellites can offer faster speeds and lower latency than conventional satellites.

## APPENDIX B:

# Florida Strategic Plan for Broadband

The Florida Broadband Strategic Plan lays out the vision of the Office of Broadband, the roles for state and local participants, and the strategies to undertake as Florida works towards a fully connected citizenry, both economically and socially.

## I. Availability

### A. State Role in Availability

- I.1. Develop local and regional partnerships to meet broadband Internet goals and coordinate with those partners to effectively use federal broadband Internet expansion funds in unserved and underserved areas
  - **Strategy 1:** Continue to build and engage Local Technology Planning Teams (LTPT) where possible. In areas where previously organized entities may be able to act as LTPTs, designate them as such if they are willing to take on the LTPT role.
  - **Strategy 2:** Guide, encourage, and where necessary direct, local communities to coordinate infrastructure projects, such as roads and broadband Internet, to reduce overall costs.
- I.2. Collect, maintain, and analyze up-to-date, reliable, detailed data with which to identify unserved and underserved areas of the state
  - **Strategy 3:** Develop an ongoing program to enhance the state broadband Internet dataset. Leverage other broadband Internet data resources, including data collected by LTPTs and local and regional organizations. Ensure the Office of Broadband collects and maintains data through its grant activity.
- I.3. Identify areas of data and methods by which data is used to facilitate and document service expansion plans
  - **Strategy 4:** Use data to identify areas at a more granular level where federal broadband Internet expansion funds have been used or will be used to ensure compliance with state and federal law and to identify unserved and underserved areas.
  - **Strategy 5:** Develop and implement a method by which to acquire information about Internet service providers' broadband Internet expansion plans to understand where, how, and when various Internet service providers will initiate or improve service in unserved or underserved areas.

#### I.4. The overarching economic challenge for making broadband Internet available

- **Strategy 6:** Develop an approach to identify locations where sustainable broadband Internet expansion or improvement will not be economically feasible for providers in the foreseeable future due to low adoption levels or geographic barriers.

#### I.5. Positioning to undertake statewide broadband improvement

- **Strategy 7:** Evaluate all aspects of state and federal funding program requirements and determine the need for and best use of consultants to implement a grant-making process.

#### I.6. Implement grant development administration processes for providers

- **Strategy 8:** Implement the most effective and efficient means of using broadband Internet grant funds to reach unserved and underserved areas and incorporate that approach into the grant processes for providers.
- **Strategy 9:** In order to avoid situations where the lowest-bid proposal wins award without regard to likelihood of completion of project, long-term viability of service, or scalability of service for future proofing, design a competitive selection process in compliance with state and federal requirements that will enable DEO to identify the most suitable Internet service provider or providers to meet the broadband Internet needs of the unserved and underserved areas of the state.
- **Strategy 10:** In the instance where an area failed to receive competitive bids and the state considers a process to target those unrepresented areas for award, design a negotiated provider-selection process in compliance with state and federal requirements for aspects of the broadband Internet expansion effort. Through this process the state may be able to ensure a particular area or type of area receives consideration for award. This process may be utilized in situations for which there was only a single bidder offering to deploy broadband Internet in an unserved and underserved area or for which there was no bidder.

#### I.7. Need for skilled and specialized workers a critical component of deployment of broadband Internet infrastructure projects

- **Strategy 11:** Prepare the workforce for the jobs that will emerge from the national deployment of federal and state infrastructure projects to ensure continuity of operations.

### B. Local Role in Availability

#### I.8. Capacity for communities to effectively pursue federal and state funding opportunities to support broadband Internet expansion

- **Strategy 12:** Continue to provide technical assistance based on community requests to assist with organizing LTPTs.
- **Strategy 13:** Provide technical assistance to grant applicants that request such assistance.

#### I.9. Attract providers to serve rural, low population density areas

- **Strategy 14:** Develop an approach to increase communities' purchasing power by attracting multiple providers to deploy broadband Internet in rural, unserved, and underserved areas in those communities.

#### I.10. Coordinate infrastructure installation projects

- **Strategy 15:** Encourage local communities to coordinate infrastructure projects, such as roads and broadband Internet, to reduce overall costs.

## II. Adoption and Use

### II.1. Bridging the adoption digital divide

- **Strategy 16:** Expand policymakers' and other stakeholders' knowledge of ways to bridge the adoption digital divide between urban and rural communities.
- **Strategy 17:** Assemble and analyze information gathered by Internet Service Providers, LTPTs, and other regional entities to identify gaps in adoption. Overlay these identified areas with other state data indicating economic and community development indicators to determine potential correlation and use this analysis to better refine knowledge of gaps in adoption and meaningful use of broadband internet service.

### II.2. Insufficient local technical support may limit adoption of broadband Internet-supported services

- **Strategy 18:** Prepare people for emerging information technology jobs and business opportunities and identify ways of using existing positions or volunteers to meet increased end-user needs related to adoption and use of broadband Internet services.

### II.3. Coordinate funding programs with components meant to address adoption and use of broadband internet service.

- **Strategy 19:** Focus at least a portion of state-level digital equity grant administration efforts on broadband Internet education and training programs, raising awareness of broadband Internet-based applications, and providing equipment to schools, libraries, colleges and universities, health care points of access, housing providers, and community support organizations to assist with digital literacy efforts.

### II.4. Ongoing state-specific, adoption-related data collection

- **Strategy 20:** Develop processes for the ongoing collection of data with which to identify emerging barriers to sustainable broadband Internet adoption in rural, unserved, and underserved communities.

## III. Accountability

Accountability means ensuring each grant award and activity delivers results in business growth, job growth, workforce education and job training, healthier Floridians, and workforce housing. Accountability must be built into the process of developing grant programs from the beginning, along with procedures for oversight of grantees.

### III.1. Appropriate methods and capacity to ensure that the state's broadband Internet goals are met by grant recipients

- **Strategy 21:** Ensure the goals of this Strategic Plan – enhancing Business and Job Growth, Workforce Housing, Education, and Job Training, and Healthier Floridians – are being achieved as a result of the Program's activities.
- **Strategy 22:** Develop robust contracts and funding requirements that ensure grant recipients have clear, measurable service commitments to promote accountability.

- **Strategy 23:** Make receipt of funding contingent upon fulfilling reporting requirements and commitments.

III.2. State-level coordination among state agencies using federal funds for broadband Internet expansion activities.

- **Strategy 24:** Enhance state-level capacity to implement broadband Internet expansion and adoption through program governance and agency structure.
- **Strategy 25:** Ensure state programmatic framework considers and adapts from other recent programs to avoid pitfalls and achieve efficiency in state program effectiveness.

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

# Public Policy Team



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