

2022 Broadband Plan Summary



Fact	Observations	Actions taken to date	Future Area of Focus	Target Completion Date	Anticipated Outcome
<p>2.8 million Texas households do not have access to high-speed broadband.</p> <p>5.6 million households do not have quality internet.</p>	<p>36% of statewide survey respondents reported a lack of high-speed broadband at their residence.</p> <p>78% of surveyed elected officials ranked access as the top priority for their community.</p> <p>FCC maps are not an accurate representation of the served, underserved and unserved areas in Texas; however, as of June 2022, this data remains the most universally accepted.</p>	<p>The BDO established an interagency council of state agencies to coordinate broadband initiatives across state government. State agencies developed capital development plans to expand broadband access through their networks.</p> <p>The BDO solicited feedback from local communities, local officials and ISPs through surveys, roundtables and regional townhalls.</p> <p>Since May 2022, the BDO has hosted monthly ISP roundtable discussions to help ISPs understand federal funding requirements, facilitate mapping data requests, expand community involvement, encourage Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) enrollment information and provide a platform for industry to report areas of concern to the BDO.</p>	<p>Establish federally-compliant grant programs, including advocating for capital projects proposed by other state agencies.</p>	Late Summer 2022	<p>The BDO will request application approval from U.S. Department of Treasury for broadband grant program. If approved, Treasury will distribute \$500.5 million in CPF funds for use in Texas.</p> <p>However, Treasury recently updated its CPF guidance which includes significant restrictions and limitations on eligible projects. The BDO is exploring how these federal restrictions could constrain broadband expansion efforts in Texas, including putting added pressure on an already strained supply chain by prioritizing a single broadband technology (fiber optic) and asking local governments to contribute a 25 percent match to access funding. If the certain agency plans are not eligible for federal funding, these plans could establish a framework of shovel-ready programs for state funding.</p>
			<p>Develop a map identifying broadband availability to Texas households and businesses.</p>	January 2023	
<p>3.8 million Texas residents face digital literacy challenges.</p> <p>4.9 million Texas residents over 25 do not have a high school diploma.</p> <p>3.8 million Texas adults are over the age of 65.</p>	<p>Low digital literacy is more common in elderly individuals and those in communities with lower educational attainment. A sizeable portion of this population may need mentoring to improve digital literacy.</p>	<p>Comptroller Hegar and the BDO developed a partnership with AARP to provide older Texans with connectivity and digital literacy support. Comptroller Hegar participated in a tele-townhall with AARP members to discuss the BDO's efforts.</p> <p>Comptroller Hegar and the BDO partnered with First Lady Cecilia Abbott to promote the R.E.A.L. Friends Don't nationwide campaign; Using awareness and education, the campaign focuses on protecting children from harmful online content.</p> <p>Understanding that communities in unserved and underserved areas may not have access to online media, the BDO deployed local radio spots, newspaper advertisements and direct mailers to reach unconnected Texans.</p>	<p>Develop additional partnerships with state agencies, nonprofits and associations that service residents with digital literacy challenges.</p>	Ongoing	<p>By identifying key stakeholders with existing networks to reach communities in need, the BDO can expand its digital literacy outreach efforts and identify new opportunities for federal and state support.</p>
			<p>Request federal funding to develop a digital equity plan</p>	July 2022	
			<p>Develop a State Digital Equity Plan.</p>	Summer 2023	
			<p>Utilize Digital Equity funding to implement the state plan.</p>	January 2024	
<p>3.6 million households may experience affordability challenges with HSBB services.</p> <p>4.4 million households in Texas are served by only a single internet provider.</p>	<p>54 percent of statewide survey respondents reported that their internet connection is not affordable.</p> <p>ISP competition contributes to high-quality internet and service affordability. Lack of competition impacts access in many regions in the state.</p> <p>Half of the Texas Comptroller economic regions have a median household income of less than \$55,000. For those families, an internet bill of \$70 a month can be unaffordable.</p>	<p>The ACP, which was created under the bipartisan infrastructure bill signed in November 2021, provides eligible households a discount with participating providers of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. The BDO has made available information about the initiative through various outreach efforts.</p>	<p>Work with the BDO Board of Advisors to define "low cost service", which is a requirement for entities to participate in federal funding programs.</p>	July 2023	<p>Affordability is a barrier to adoption in both served and underserved communities. Developing programs to assist residents with the greatest need will improve access to and adoption of broadband services.</p>
			<p>Develop additional partnerships with state agencies, nonprofits and associations that serve residents with affordability challenges.</p>	Ongoing	
			<p>Identify opportunities for additional state support for communities in need.</p>	Ongoing	

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The digital divide prevents Texans from accessing services necessary to health, education, employment and safety.	<p>Broadband access drives opportunities for nearly all Texans – opportunities for education, health care, workforce and business development, infrastructure, public safety and much more.</p> <p>General lack of awareness about local, state and federal opportunities to expand and improve broadband access.</p>	<p>The BDO developed a Broadband Toolkit for local community leaders to engage in broadband expansion planning and development. The BDO will continue to expand the toolkit as additional needs are identified or greater awareness is required.</p> <p>Since January 2022, the BDO has published a monthly newsletter to push direct updates and other news to stakeholders, promote transparency, and generate awareness of the BDO's mission to close the digital divide. As of May 2022, the newsletter serves more 4,200 subscribers.</p>	<p>To close the digital divide, promote resources to expand access to and adoption of broadband to communities in need.</p>	Ongoing	<p>IJJA funds will require states to conduct extensive outreach and coordination with local communities. Broadband offices must demonstrate that state and local plans are aligned.</p> <p>Local communities expressed significant concern about barriers to broadband expansion, including limited resources and staff expertise. By promoting available resources and developing new ones, BDO can support local communities in developing local plans, launching partnerships and increasing broadband access in unserved and underserved areas across the state and close the digital divide.</p>
		<p>The BDO staff frequently attend engagements around the state to provide information and updates to local communities.</p>	<p>Execute a technical assistance contract to facilitate low-cost technical services for local community leaders to support the development and implementation of local broadband action plans.</p>	Summer 2023	
		<p>The BDO has a dedicated outreach coordinator who works with stakeholders and local communities.</p>	<p>Continue to publicize the resources available to eligible entities via staff outreach, the BDO website, digital media and other distribution channels.</p>	Ongoing	
Unknown amount of federal funding available to Texas	<p>Only 11% of elected officials surveyed indicated that they have the financial resources necessary to meet their community's broadband needs.</p>	<p>BDO established weekly coordination meetings with federal agencies to better understand the complex federal requirements for programs under both CPF and IJJA.</p>	<p>Submit plans and other necessary deliverables required to access federal broadband funding.</p>	Late Summer 2022	<p>The first step to access federal funding is submitting a successful application. The BDO is working closing with Treasury and NTIA to craft plans that conform to strict federal requirements and state law.</p> <p>If it becomes clear that federal and state compliance requirements are not compatible, the BDO may recommend legislative action on how to improve access to and use of federal funding.</p>
		<p>BDO participates in a national network of state broadband offices to learn from and coordinate with other state offices on program development and implementation.</p>	<p>Identify where state legislative action is recommended.</p>	January 2023	
Additional state funding is needed.	<p>49% of elected officials who responded to the survey indicated that their entity has a broadband plan in place or is currently developing one.</p> <p>The IJJA requires matching funds of not less than 25 percent of project costs to be provided by eligible entities, subgrantees or provided in concern with its subgrantees.</p>	<p>The BDO is evaluating potential funding needs based on regional observations, future broadband availability mapping and federal funding restrictions.</p>	<p>Identify opportunities for additional state funding to support local communities and maximize access to available federal funds.</p>	February 2023	<p>The digital divide is great and will require continued financial support from the state legislature, including assistance with the IJJA match requirement.</p> <p>State, local and business plans are the framework upon which development decisions can be prioritized and funded.</p> <p>IJJA funds will require states to conduct extensive outreach and coordination with local communities. Broadband offices must demonstrate that state and local plans are aligned.</p>
		<p>The BDO is gathering broadband expansion plans and programs developed by state agencies, counties, cities and other local entities to understand the framework of plans and proposals.</p>	<p>Improve coordination and partnering with state agencies, local communities and stakeholders to identify future funding opportunities.</p> <p>Solicit input from the BDO Board of Advisors regarding the expansion, adoption, affordability, and use of broadband service and the programs administered by the office.</p>	Ongoing	