# Public Comments: TX BDO Strategic Plan Blueprint

The SA Digital Connects partnership appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the Texas Broadband Development Office's (BDO) Strategic Plan Blueprint. As a private-public-community partnership that has worked to advance digital opportunity across San Antonio and Bexar County, we support the BDO's commitment to transparent decision-making, responsible stewardship of public funds, accurate broadband data, and meaningful regional engagement.

Our experience reinforces that broadband infrastructure is foundational, but infrastructure alone does not ensure that residents can fully participate in an increasingly digital economy. The ability to benefit from connectivity also depends on affordability, appropriate devices, digital skills, online safety, and access to essential services. Nonprofits, healthcare providers, libraries, and public-service agencies are central to addressing these interconnected needs. They often serve as trusted points of access for residents navigating healthcare, education, employment, public benefits, and other essential services.

## Comments

*We encourage the BDO to consider strengthening the blueprint in the following areas:*

### 1. Establish a Meaningful Regional Engagement Structure

We support the proposal to designate a BDO point of contact for each Council of Governments region and establish regional working groups. We recommend that these structures include consistent representation from local governments, community-based nonprofits, healthcare systems, public libraries, workforce organizations, education providers, and other public-service institutions, not solely infrastructure providers and government officials.

These organizations bring direct knowledge of community needs, service gaps, and barriers that may not be apparent through broadband availability data alone. Regional engagement should provide an ongoing mechanism for sharing local data, identifying emerging needs, informing state planning, and communicating implementation challenges. Existing regional partnerships and community networks should be leveraged wherever possible to reduce duplication and maximize impact.

### 2. Incorporate Community-Level Data and Ground-Level Experience

We support the BDO's commitment to improving broadband maps, integrating consumer-submitted speed tests, and publishing transparent project information. We encourage the office to expand opportunities for community institutions to contribute relevant information about connectivity gaps and service reliability.

Healthcare providers, libraries, nonprofits, and public agencies regularly interact with residents who may experience unreliable service, unaffordable subscriptions, inadequate devices, or difficulty using online services, even in areas classified as served. Their experience can help identify gaps between reported availability and meaningful access.

We recommend a structured process through which regional partners can submit documented observations and data, with clear guidance on how that information will be reviewed and incorporated into mapping, planning, and challenge processes.

**3. Expand Measures of Success Beyond Infrastructure Deployment**

The blueprint appropriately emphasizes locations connected, cost per location, project milestones, and verified service performance. We encourage the BDO to complement these measures with indicators that help determine whether public investments are translating into meaningful use of broadband.

Potential measures include subscription and affordability trends in newly served areas; connectivity and technology needs among community anchor institutions; and documented barriers involving devices, digital skills, and the ability to access essential online services.

Where feasible, the BDO should establish a baseline and report progress over time, disaggregated by geography and relevant community characteristics where reliable data are available. This would help the state understand not only whether infrastructure has been deployed, but whether it is meeting the needs of the people and institutions it was intended to serve.

**4. Recognize Community Anchor Institutions as Essential Partners**

The blueprint identifies public safety, education, and health as areas for broadband needs assessment. We recommend explicitly recognizing nonprofits, healthcare entities, libraries, and public-service agencies as essential partners in this work.

These institutions increasingly depend on reliable, secure, and sufficient connectivity to deliver services, support staff, facilitate telehealth and digital learning, and help residents access online resources. Their needs should be considered in regional assessments, infrastructure planning, and evaluation of community anchor institution connectivity. The BDO should also consider how regional partners can help identify opportunities to improve access to state portals, telehealth resources, educational services, and other essential digital resources.

**5. Connect Infrastructure Planning With Long-Term Digital Opportunity**

Finally, we encourage the BDO to maintain a clear connection between broadband deployment and the broader goals of affordability, adoption, digital skills, and access to devices. The blueprint's emphasis on taxpayer value is important; measuring value should also account for whether communities can effectively use the infrastructure that public dollars support.

This does not require the BDO to assume responsibility for directly delivering every adoption or digital skills program. Rather, it calls for a coordinated approach that recognizes the complementary roles of state agencies, local government, philanthropy, healthcare, libraries, nonprofits, and private-sector partners. Clear regional engagement, shared data, and coordination with existing community resources can help address these needs while avoiding duplication and unnecessary ongoing state obligations.

**Conclusion**

SA Digital Connects encourages the BDO to build on the blueprint's commitments to transparency, accountability, and regional engagement by ensuring that community institutions have a meaningful role in shaping broadband priorities and assessing outcomes. Ensuring that broadband investment translates into lasting digital opportunity requires a coordinated approach that brings infrastructure together with the community institutions, resources, and services that enable Texans to meaningfully use and benefit from it.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input as the BDO develops its final strategic plan.

In partnership,



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