OKLAHOMA
Broadband Office

2022 Annual Report

December 29, 2022

During 2022, the state made significant progress to provide reliable, affordable high-speed internet service to all Oklahomans. From transformative state legislation establishing a framework to effectively oversee expansion, to the assurance of substantial state and federal financial support, the vision is on its way to becoming reality.

After receiving no opposition in either the House or Senate, House Bill 3363, the Oklahoma Broadband Expansion Act, was signed into law and took effect on May 9, 2022. The measure, codified in 74 O.S. 9200 et seq, establishes the Oklahoma Broadband Governing Board (OBGB), creates the Oklahoma Broadband Office (OBO), and reconstitutes and renames the Oklahoma Rural Broadband Expansion Council as the Oklahoma Broadband Expansion Council (OBEC).

With a stated goal of providing access to broadband service to 95 percent of Oklahomans, the pieces are falling into place to ensure success.

Oklahoma Broadband Governing Board

The OBGB is composed of nine members; three appointed by the governor, two by the Speaker of the House and two by the Senate President Pro Tempore, the lieutenant governor and the state treasurer. The board oversees the Oklahoma Broadband Office and its executive director, who, with the approval of the board, creates and implements an annual budget and implements grant incentive programs. Additionally, the board oversees the development of the State Broadband Plan, which describes how the state will achieve 95 percent high-speed internet coverage by June 2028.

Members of the board include:

- Katy Boren, CEO, Oklahoma City Innovation District, Inc. – Oklahoma City
- Mike Erhart, Managing Partner, Erhart & Associates LLC – Oklahoma City
- Mike Fina, Executive Director, Oklahoma Municipal League – Oklahoma City (Chair)
- Fob Jones, Attorney, Fob F. Jones Law – Sulphur
- Randy McDaniel, State Treasurer – Oklahoma City
- Jim Meek, District 9 Director, Oklahoma Farm Bureau, Inc. – Okmulgee (Vice Chair)
- Matt Pinnell, Lieutenant Governor – Oklahoma City
- Lyle Roggow, President, Duncan Area Econ. Dev. Foundation – Duncan
- Russ Teubner, Distinguished Engineer, Broadcom – Stillwater

The board is tasked with managing and updating the Broadband State Plan, as well as creation and updating of a state map of available high-speed internet services. The map is to include all relevant serviceable locations as well as coverage, speeds, and carrier information. Each year, the office is to

collect coverage information from internet service providers with the submitted data implemented into the state map.

Oklahoma Broadband Expansion Council

The OBEC acts in an advisory capacity to both the OBO and the OBGB. The council is composed of community leaders, tribal leaders, and industry professionals to provide a well-rounded and forward-thinking viewpoint. Specifically, the OBEC advises the OBO on the State Broadband Plan to ensure industry and community perspectives are considered.

Members of the council include:

- Mark Argenbright, Director, Public Utility Division & Consumer Services, Oklahoma Corporation Commission - Oklahoma City
- Michael Berube, VP, Field Engineering & Operations – Central Region, CoxCom, LLC - Oklahoma City
- Darlene Brugnoli, Vice President Governmental Affairs, Verizon
- Jason Constable, Director, Regulatory Affairs, AT&T Corp. - Oklahoma City
- Patrick Grace, CEO, Oklahoma Electric Cooperative - Norman
- Mike Hilliary, Chief Administrative Officer, Hilliary Communications - Lawton
- Ernie Martens, Mayor, City of Sallisaw - Sallisaw
- Roger Neal, VP/Chief Operating Officer, Duncan Regional Hospital, Inc. - Duncan
- Billy Frank Staggs, President, Chickasaw Holding Company - Sulphur
- Daniel Webster, CEO, Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative - Vinita
- Jerry Whisenhunt, General Manager, Pine Telephone Company, Inc. - Broken Bow
- Dr. Brian Whitacre, Professor of Agricultural Economics, Oklahoma State University - Dept. of Ag. Economics – Stillwater (Chair)
- Tribal Representative – temporarily vacant
- OBO Executive Director – temporarily vacant

Oklahoma Broadband Office

The OBO is charged with fulfilling the mission of statewide broadband expansion by developing a comprehensive plan, managing grant applications, processes, and procedures, making formal grant awards, and overseeing the subrecipients of the grants. This includes grant agreements, monitoring, compliance, and federal reporting requirements. The office is responsible for keeping policymakers apprised of progress towards successful implementation of the plan.

Although the board was unable to place any employees on the payroll for the office until October 2022, a great deal of progress has been made since then. An interim executive director, Kirk Martin, was appointed by the board. He then hired Edyn Rolls as Director of Broadband Strategy and Tim Allen as Director of Policy and Communications. This trio has gone about establishing the office and completing all required duties.

To date, the OBO has applied for and been awarded $558,209,835 to improve broadband around the state:

- **$2,000,000** – committed by the Oklahoma Legislature per House Bill 1123 to help the OBGB create a statewide broadband map to assist in determining where service is needed. Additionally, the map will be used to challenge federal maps to ensure that Oklahoma is receiving the greatest amount of federal funding possible. Since the funds were provided, the OBGB, with the assistance of the OBO, has contracted with App Geo and Connected Nation to create and maintain the Oklahoma state map. The map is in development and will be released to the public early next year.
- **$500,000** – appropriated in Senate Bill 5 for initial administrative costs of the OBO. Items such as rent, a copier, and laptops are funded from this source. A full budget was approved by the OBGB in August 2022.
- **$382,144,000** – funded in House Bill 1101 to standup a broadband grant program. The first program approved by the board from these funds is detailed below. In the coming months, the OBO will release separate a Notice of Funding so that community organizations may apply for the remaining grant funds.
- **$167,683,747** – earmarked via House Bill 1101 from the Coronavirus Capital Project Funds for establishment of another broadband grant program by the OBO to be used exclusively for fiber optic cable projects. By federal requirement, these funds cannot be used to support any other broadband related technologies. This program will be monitored directly by the United States Department of Treasury and will be subject to its requirements and requests.
- **$5,000,000** – awarded via the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) for creation of a Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. These planning funds will be used to create a five-year BEAD plan to be approved by NTIA. Additionally, once the initial plan has been created and submitted, a formula will be used to determine another funding opportunity that will support the submitted five-year action plan. It is anticipated that Oklahoma will receive this second round of funding in late summer 2023.
- **$882,088** – awarded by NTIA to Oklahoma for Digital Equity Act (DEA) planning. These dollars are to be used to develop a digital literacy program that will be used to educate individuals of all communities. With the deployment of statewide broadband infrastructure, it will be vital to educate individuals on the ways that internet access can be used to provide improved quality of life.

The state anticipates receiving approximately $1 billion in additional funding in the coming calendar year to be used on broadband build-out and programing. The office, with the assistance of the board and council, is further developing the comprehensive broadband plan and will begin deploying funds for infrastructure construction.

The OSU-IT Advanced Fiber Technician Training Program was the first broadband project to be awarded per House Bill 1123. Some $365,068 from the American Rescue Plan Act was appropriated to fund this program to provide essential job training to increase the talent pipeline of fiber technicians in Oklahoma with an emphasis on rural areas.

In November, the OBGB approved a Department of Public Safety project partnering with Motorola as the second program to be funded totaling $19,997,955. The Oklahoma Wireless Information Network (OKWIN) will update emergency responder radio systems across the state. The new system will enable first responders to act more quickly and efficiently in emergency situations.

With the extensive grant opportunities from the federal government, NTIA has hired Federal Programs Officer Kevin Blake to be a conduit from the federal government in Oklahoma. Mr. Blake will work directly with the OBO to ensure federal deadlines and requirements are met, the office has support through the planning and grant period and ensure the closeout process is done correctly.

Consultant firms and the OMES Office of Grants Management have played a significant role in broadband expansion efforts to date. Guidehouse assisted with grant applications and financial reporting requirements. The grants management division was instrumental in securing access to funding. Applied Geographics (AppGeo) is assisting with broadband mapping, including bulk challenges to the FCC national broadband map.

In early October, the office unveiled a website, https://broadband.ok.gov, which is frequently updated to provide a one-stop resource for all broadband meeting documents, announcements, and grant information. Additionally, Facebook and Twitter accounts have been created to post real-time updates and to serve as an easy bridge to the public.

Conclusion

State policymakers recognized the need for a governance and management structure that could fully realize the once-in-a-generation opportunity to provide reliable and affordable high-speed internet service throughout Oklahoma. The overarching structure of Oklahoma's broadband expansion efforts combines prudent, unbiased, and independent oversight with an effective implementation structure.

However, standing up a new, independent state agency has not been without significant challenges. The infrastructure required of each state agency has had to be created from scratch for the OBO. This included gaining access to appropriated and awarded grant funds, establishing payroll and financial services, securing legal services, locating and leasing office space, and acquiring computers and other office equipment. Additionally, the search for a permanent executive director has proven more time consuming than originally anticipated.

During 2022, the broadband potential in Oklahoma has grown exponentially. Broadband efforts are significantly buoyed by widespread bipartisan support from the legislative and executive branches. From grant funding to federal support to industry involvement, Oklahoma has unprecedented resources available for internet infrastructure development.

For questions or comments, please contact the Oklahoma Broadband Office at broadband@broadband.ok.gov.

Attachment

- Oklahoma Broadband Plan

Oklahoma Broadband Plan

December 29, 2022

Introduction

Convenient access to broadband internet service has become essential to fully participate in day-to-day activities. From distance learning to remote work, to telehealth and daily communication, broadband has become the foundation for all communication. With the assistance of state and federal funding, the Oklahoma Broadband Office is bringing reliable, affordable, high-speed internet to 95 percent of Oklahomans by June 2028.

Oklahoma Broadband Leadership and Organizational Structure

The Broadband Expansion Act, House Bill 3363, was passed into law on May 9, 2022. The intent of the bill was to establish the Oklahoma Broadband Office (OBO), the Oklahoma Broadband Governing Board (OBGB), and a new name and advisory role of the Oklahoma Broadband Expansion Council (OBEC) while including several deliverables as well as noting resources that are available to the OBO.

The OBGB is composed of nine members; three appointed by the governor, two by the Speaker of the House and two by the Senate President Pro Tempore, the lieutenant governor and the state treasurer. The board oversees the Oklahoma Broadband Office and its executive director, who, with the approval of the board, creates and implements an annual budget and implements grant incentive programs. Additionally, the board oversees the development of the State Broadband Plan, which describes how the state will achieve 95 percent high-speed internet coverage by June 2028.

It is the responsibility of the OBO to manage grant applications, processes, and procedures to score those applications, and make formal grant awards. Once the awards are made, the office is to manage the subrecipients of the grants. This includes grant agreements, monitoring, compliance, and federal reporting requirements. The office is also responsible for developing a set of office processes and procedures for the board to approve. Finally, each year the office will issue a report that will be dispersed among stakeholders which provides a current assessment and plan.

The council acts in an advisory capacity to both the office and the board. The council is composed of community leaders, tribal leaders, and industry professionals to provide a well-rounded and forward-thinking viewpoint. Specifically, the council advises the office on the State Broadband Plan to ensure industry and community perspectives are considered.

Types of Broadband

Digital Subscriber Line (DSL)

DSL uses telephone infrastructure to deliver internet service. DSL connections use twisted pair copper wires to transmit signals. Over the years, DSL has advanced to deliver faster speeds, however it is restricted by distance. Because the telephone network was constructed more comprehensively than the CATV network, some areas that have DSL are unlikely to ever have access to CATV. Where CATV and DSL compete, DSL tends to provide internet service that is less expensive but lower in performance.

Community Antenna Television (CATV)

CATV, also known as cable, internet is currently the most common form of internet access in the United States, serving an estimated 194 million Americans. The latest cable technology, DOCSIS 3.0, can support download data throughput speeds as fast as 1,000Mbps.

Cable technology uses fiber from the central point out to the nodes where coaxial provides the service to the end point. Cable internet uses coaxial cables, composed of a central copper conductor in a sheath of insulating and protective materials. While coaxial cables are made of copper, like the older twisted pair copper telephone wires, their better shielding enables them to transmit more data. Access to cable internet is provided over a shared pipeline and is most common in urban areas.

Fiber Optic

Fiber-optic cable can carry enormous quantities of data using light for transmission and is widely considered to be the next generation technology for communications. Fiber optics can offer internet speeds well over 1 Gbps. While only about 25% of Americans have access to fiber-to-the-home internet (FTTH), fiber dominates the backbone of the internet. When DSL and CATV provide the last-mile connections, they usually rely on fiber to move data most of the distance between source and the destination.

Fixed Terrestrial Wireless

Fixed terrestrial wireless technology achieves last-mile delivery by sending a radio frequency signal from an access point, such as a tower, to a reception device attached to a consumer residence or business. Unlike mobile data, fixed wireless usually involves point to point broadcasting, which enables the provision of far higher bandwidth data throughput than mobile data. Fixed terrestrial wireless employs IEEE 802.11 standards much like a home wireless router. Using advanced antennae technology allows for a Wider Area Network (WAN) type of deployment in addition to Local Area Network (LAN) use.

Commercial Mobile Radio Service (CMRS)

More than three-quarters of American adults now own smartphones, according to the Pew Research Center. Mobile data has the advantage of being available for people on the move. CMRS is currently in its fifth generation, allowing for data throughput speeds of 100Mbps or higher. CMRS is a point to multi-point technology relying heavily on traffic engineering to avoid congestion and oversubscription. The roaming nature of this technology, although convenient, makes it difficult to allocate reliable data throughput speeds on a consistent basis. Most CMRS providers seek to offload their customer traffic to fixed wireless 802.11 access to remedy oversubscription issues.

Satellite

Satellite internet beams a signal from a point on Earth to a satellite in geostationary orbit more than 20,000 miles above Earth's surface, which sends the signal back to the customer. Internet usage via satellite involves four trips between an input and a response, which causes substantial delays, or latency, even though the signals travel at the speed of light. High latency and data caps put geostationary orbit satellite internet at a serious disadvantage relative to other technologies. Satellite internet is mainly used in remote areas where there are no other options.

Historical and Locational Information

Broadband Needs

In 2009, Oklahoma was awarded funding from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to map broadband coverage in the state. The first phase of the Oklahoma Broadband Initiative was the creation of the broadband map for the entire state. This map depicted areas that were served, unserved and underserved as defined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The Oklahoma broadband mapping project was achieved through a partnership comprised of local, state, and tribal governments, non-governmental agencies, private sector, and industry representatives, as well as the educational community including early, common and higher education, career technical training and workforce development. A technical working group reviewed proposals and recommended the selection of a professional firm to collect and compile the necessary data to map broadband accessibility and to submit this data to the NTIA for preparation of the national broadband map.

The second phase of the Oklahoma Broadband Initiative was the formation of public/private partnerships with vendors to deploy infrastructure necessary for broadband access to Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) such as hospitals, universities, libraries, and public safety entities. In this phase, the demand for better access to broadband infrastructure was addressed. The process included:

1) Analyzing the mapping data.

2) Defining the challenges and opportunities to adoption of broadband.

3) Collecting consumer data concerning the use of broadband in underserved and unserved areas, including information technology capabilities.

4) Identifying priorities and strategies for expanding broadband in the underserved and unserved areas.

5) Developing a consumer education and awareness initiative to increase the adoption and utilization of broadband throughout Oklahoma.

In 2010, the state submitted and was awarded a Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant of $74 million from NTIA to construct the Oklahoma Community Anchor Network (OCAN). A key component to this application was the coordination of data, mapping information, strategic focus, and user interests. Leadership from the public and private sectors worked in a collaborative way to combine resources for the expansion of broadband services.

Broadband is a critical cornerstone for daily activities, services, and as a means of communication. In 2021, it was found that 18 percent of households in Oklahoma are lacking a broadband subscription. Proportionally, in smaller, more rural communities, up to 50 percent of households are lacking broadband availability. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the great disparities across the state regarding broadband availability and the need for connection. There are seven main areas where broadband is required to function fully.

The first is education. Amid the pandemic, schools across the state and the country shifted to fully remote learning to slow the spread of the virus. It is vital that students and parents have access to virtual class meetings, assignments, and resources on the material that is being taught in and outside of the classroom.

Next is work and workforce and development. It is imperative that individuals can access their work and training modules, apply for jobs, and upskill both in and outside of a formal office setting.

Healthcare needs are also included in the State's broadband needs. With the increasing implementation of telehealth and remote patient monitoring, broadband is essential.

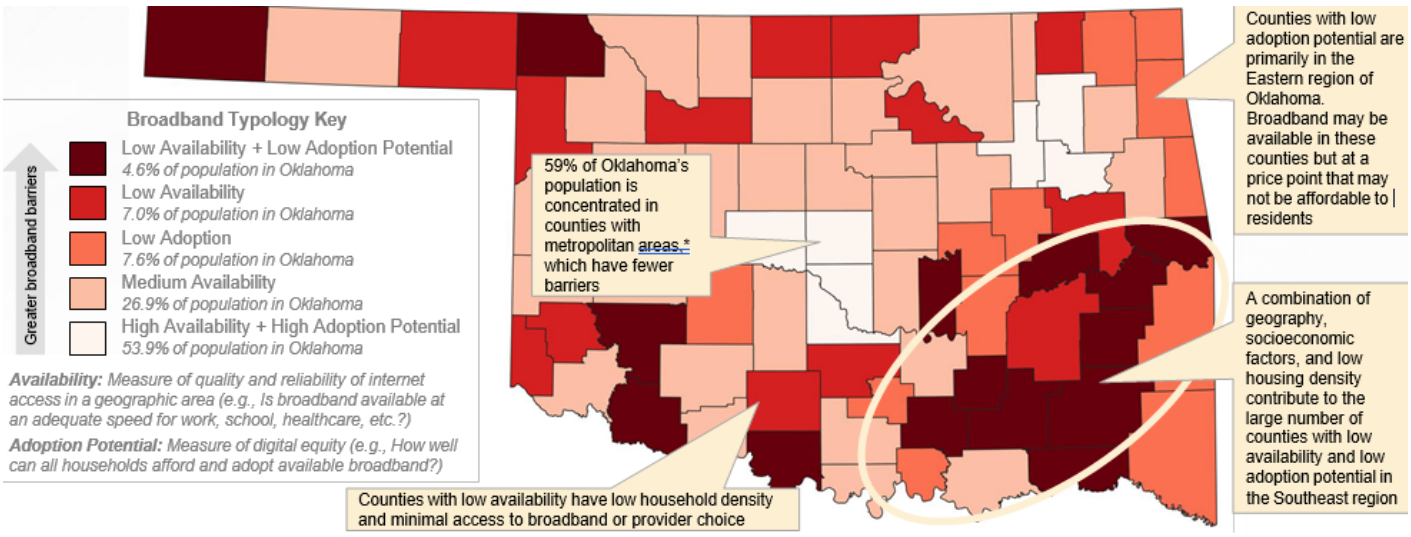
Similarly, emergency services must be able to rapidly dispatch emergency responders anywhere in the state, at any time.

Economic development needs broadband to accelerate job growth and attract new businesses, employees, and innovative products and systems.

Social services rely heavily on the ability to effectively connect individuals to government resources and assistance.

Finally, broadband is needed for interpersonal connectivity. Individuals should be able to connect with family, friends, community members, and faith gatherings. Needless to say, broadband has a tremendous impact on all facets of the human experience.

Potential Adoption Rates in Oklahoma



Per the study conducted by Guidehouse in 2021, 14 counties in the state have low adoption and low availability potential. This means those locations have not only the least availability to broadband access but also are the most expensive and the most challenging to serve. This could be because homes are miles apart or because of difficult terrain, just to describe a couple of potential reasons. Regardless of the challenge for availability and adoption, these counties are prime examples of the types of locations to which broadband grant funding will be deployed.

The map above shows that 53.9 percent of the state has both a high potential for availability and adoption. That leaves, 46.1 percent of the state lacking in the capacity to achieve high-speed broadband access. While not all everyone needing broadband would want access, availability and adoption is important for future generations. Therefore, it is vital to build infrastructure that has the capacity to not only serve these locations in the short-term but also in the long-term when the next generation of homeowners live in the more rural areas of the state.

Historical grant information

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Programs

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD)

BEAD is a federal grant program that aims to provide access to high-speed internet to all Americans by funding partnerships between states, territories, communities, and stakeholders to build infrastructure where needed and increase adoption of broadband service. BEAD prioritizes unserved locations that have no internet access or that have access under 25/3 Mbps and underserved locations only have access under 100/20 Mbps.

Digital Equity Act (DEA)

Too many communities lack access to high-speed Internet. Many more cannot afford it or do not know how to use it. The divide between those who have Internet access and those who do not is stark. To create an equitable economy, access to reliable and affordable high-speed internet should be available to all.

The DEA provides $2.75 billion to establish three grant programs that promote digital equity and inclusion. They aim to ensure that all people and communities have the skills, technology, and capacity needed to reap the full benefits of the digital economy.

Middle Mile

Local networks are important for bringing high-speed Internet to communities. But local networks are not enough. They need to connect to robust, high-capacity national and regional networks. Middle mile infrastructure makes this possible. By connecting to major networks, local networks can ensure reliable high-speed Internet service for even the most remote communities.

The Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program provides funding for this vital part of our nation's high-speed network. With $1 billion in funding, the program will reduce the cost of bringing high-speed Internet to unserved and underserved communities.

In July 2022, the OBGB determined the state would not be submitting an independent application. Instead, the board determined it would be best to support ISPs and other potential applicants. To that end, the board signed no less than 10 letters of support for Middle Mile applicants.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding

State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFR)

The SLFRF program delivers $350 billion to state, local, and tribal governments across the country to support their response to and recovery from the Covid-19 public health emergency.

As governments began to deploy this funding in their communities, U.S. Treasury considered feedback provided through the public comment process on the Interim Final Rule and in other forums. Treasury received more than 1,500 comments, participated in hundreds of meetings, and received correspondence from a wide range of governments and other stakeholders. In January 2022, Treasury released the Final Rule, which delivers broader flexibility and greater simplicity in the program, responsive to feedback in the comment process.

Core improvements included in Final Rule are:

- Broader set of uses that are available to respond to the pandemic's public health and economic impacts on households, small businesses, and others, including capital expenditures.
- Major simplification for thousands of recipients through the $10 million revenue loss standard allowance.
- Greater flexibility in eligible broadband investments to address challenges with access, affordability, and reliability, as well as the addition of numerous eligible water and sewer infrastructure investments.
- More streamlined options to provide premium pay through broadening the share of eligible workers who can receive premium pay without additional justification.

Capital Projects Fund (CPF)

The State of Oklahoma is allocating $167,683,747 million (its entire CPF allotment) toward the Oklahoma Broadband Infrastructure Grants (OBIG) Program to incentivize Internet Service Providers (ISPs), local governments, tribal entities, CAIs, utilities, electric cooperatives, and other entities to increase broadband availability in Oklahoma. The broadband office will be responsible for administration of the grant program, including publicizing the program, managing applications, evaluating, and awarding grants, performing project monitoring activities, and supporting all required federal reporting as determined by the U.S. Treasury's Capital Projects Fund Compliance and Reporting Guidance.

HB 3363 sets the stage for Oklahoma's broadband expansion and provides the statutory authority to create a statewide competitive broadband program. The legislation establishes a statewide goal to achieve 95 percent broadband coverage by 2028 and tasks the OBO as the central entity responsible for leading and coordinating state broadband activities, including broadband programs, to achieve this goal.

ARPA Funding Plan

Mapping – $2,000,000

The OBGB was awarded $2,000,000 in HB 1123 to create and maintain a high-level broadband map that is to be used to complete this Statewide Broadband Plan. Additionally, the map will be an assisting mechanism to ensure that the state receives the full dollar amount from the federal government. Per HB 3363, the map will be updated annually with ISP information and will be made available to the public so that they may see the broadband availability in their area.

Administration – $500,000

Senate Bill 5 appropriated $500,000 to the OBO for administrative expenses that are required to create a new state agency. Currently, the office has budgeted these funds for basic needs such as printers, computers, salaries, and other basic expenses. It is the goal of the office to run entirely on federal administrative dollars following this initial allocation made by the Legislature.

Programming – $382,000,000

The Legislature allocated the OBO $382,144,000 for the creation and implementation of a broadband grant program in House Bill 1101. The office intends to follow a similar grant plan, scoring rubric, and implementation process as the CPF plan.

BEAD Funding Plan

The BEAD program will be the largest funding source that the state will have access to that is specifically earmarked for broadband services. Because BEAD funds are available only to states, it is vital that Oklahoma work as a unit that will include the state, tribes, municipalities, and other governmental entities to ensure there is as much broadband coverage as possible.

The BEAD grant program is made up of two main portions. The first is the initial 270-day planning period. All states, including Oklahoma, have received $5,000,000 to create a BEAD deployment plan. This plan will include asset and gap identification, unserved locations, deployment timeline, staffing and consulting needs, and financial needs to deploy the plan. The second portion is the main allocation and deployment of the grant plan. It is anticipated the state will receive approximately $1 billion based on the formula-based allocation process set forth by the NTIA. Oklahoma plans to release a grant application in the fall 2023 to award these funds. The OBO will then evaluate all applications received and work with key stakeholders including the Legislature, tribes, and community leaders to ensure funding goes as far as possible and avoids overbuilding.

BEAD 5-year Program Planning Period

The Oklahoma BEAD Program project is focused on advancing the objectives of the federal BEAD Program, including ensuring all residents of Oklahoma have access to reliable, affordable, and high-speed internet. To do so, the Oklahoma BEAD Program intends to use initial planning funds to execute the five eligible activities listed below. The OBO plans to contract out Activities 2 and 3 and portions of Activities 1, 4, and 5 to consultants, depending on available staff capacity, to support the development of the plan.

Activity 1: Pre-planning Activities and Expenses

This includes developing a detailed final plan and budget for how Oklahoma plans to use initial planning funds to support the remainder of the activities described herein. The plan will be used to measure and track activity progress and completion. Oklahoma additionally intends to use planning funds to cover the costs of any eligible activities. This may include any pre-award expenses, such as legal fees, executing MOUs, contracts, or other partnership agreements, etc., that facilitate project activities.

Activity 2: Research, Data Collection, and Asset Mapping

This activity involves a set of actions that together form a broader understanding of the broadband-related issues facing Oklahomans. Actions will include:

1. Identifying and analyzing unserved and underserved locations consistent with the rules, regulations, and processes the FCC has established for making these determinations in its broadband maps.
2. Developing and implementing data collection strategies for determining what factors are affecting broadband adoption by residents across sub-sets of Oklahoma communities. Data collection strategies may involve, for example, conducting a statewide community survey and speed test to gather on-the-ground pricing and speeds experienced by communities. This survey could also be leveraged to collect additional data on residents and the types of socioeconomic or other barriers impacting their ability to adopt broadband.
3. Mapping broadband-related activities across Oklahoma, includes identifying any existing state-wide activities and assets that can be leveraged to support Oklahoma BEAD Program's planning goals.

The data and insights gathered across these actions will be integrated to identify resource, funding, and programming gaps.

Activity 3: Stakeholder communication and outreach

This step comprises Oklahoma's approach to stakeholder engagement. Early and frequent stakeholder communication, particularly with tribal entities, local governments, and ISPs, is essential to successfully developing and implementing the plan. Actions will include:

1. Conducting comprehensive stakeholder ecosystem mapping and analysis to inform our engagement strategy. The stakeholder mapping effort will provide an understanding of Oklahoma's current broadband landscape and identify key external and internal stakeholders to include in outreach.
2. Providing publications, outreach, and communications support related to broadband planning, deployment, mapping, equity, and adoption.
3. Performing other community engagement activities whereby the state can collect input and feedback on the Plan through a range of potential methods such as focus groups, community listening sessions, one-on-one interviews, and surveys.

Information collected through stakeholder engagement efforts in this step will be used to validate the technical data analysis conducted in Activity 2.

Activity 4: Broadband Office Capacity Building

This activity focuses on increasing the capacity of the state broadband office and staff responsible for planning and implementing the state's broadband activities. Actions include:

1. Increasing the capacity of the OBO by hiring additional staff members and purchasing materials (e.g., a high-capacity printer, software, etc.) to conduct office activities.
2. Training OBO employees and others through technical assistance workshops, stakeholder engagement, and data management planning. Better informed and prepared staff, partners, and other stakeholders will allow for a more collaborative and cohesive plan.

Activity 5: Sub-State/Local Coordination and Capacity Building

This includes building a coalition of project partners critical to successful development and implementation of the plan. This activity may include any coordination and capacity building efforts to identify and support potential partners. Activities will include conducting listening sessions, meetings, or design sessions with key local and regional stakeholders.

Project Partners

The funds awarded through the BEAD Program will be used to help support the previously mentioned project activities. The OBO is the administering agent for the project and will be the recipient of Initial Planning Funds. The office will be leading this work with the support of potential partners, including OCAN and the Oklahoma Municipal League. Other potential partners may include local governments, tribal entities, ISPs, and CAIs. Oklahoma plans to identify and finalize project partners as part of Activity 5.

Currently, the office is in the process of developing a dynamic and well-rounded program plan. Once the OBO receives full BEAD funding, the program will be finalized and released. The office anticipates it will receive approximately $1 billion in BEAD funding.

DEA Funding Plan

DEA program planning period ($882,000)

The OBO will create a comprehensive five-year statewide digital equity plan that will serve as a roadmap for close the digital divide and meet the requirements established by NTIA in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). This effort will be carried out by the OBO, which will serve as the administering entity for the State Digital Equity Planning Grant and Capacity Grant and overseen by the OBGB.

The State Digital Equity Planning grant will be used to fund:

1. Staff recruitment and program management assistance
2. Community and stakeholder engagement
3. Data collection and analysis
4. Report development and distribution

The office will hire and equip a staff member to lead the digital equity planning process. This staff member will provide regular reports on digital equity efforts to the board and council. The office will also contract with a management consulting firm to support these activities.

The OBO will engage communities and stakeholders throughout the planning process deploying multiple strategies including forming a core planning team composed of a diverse set of stakeholders and partners to lead and advise the plan's development, conducting listening sessions throughout the state, providing multiple feedback mechanisms, and ensuring all written materials are translated into multiple languages reflecting the communities we serve. The office will retain a stakeholder management and event firm to manage these outreach activities. OBO staff will conduct multiple in-person meetings across the state where outreach and discussion materials will be distributed.

The OBO will collect and analyze data on the disparate impacts of the digital divide on the covered populations and Oklahoma residents. The office will collect local digital equity plans developed by local communities to inform the plan's recommendations. The data and local plans will inform measurable objectives and implementation recommendations.

Timeline

The DEA plan development process began on November 30, 2022, and will conclude within one year. The office will develop the plan, provide a minimum of 30 days for public comment, and incorporate comments and responses to comments prior to submission to NTIA.

Deliverables

Deliverables will include: (1) State Digital Equity Plan printed document; (2) a digital version of the plan hosted on the OBO website; and (3) an open access, downloadable interactive online dashboard and map displaying the data collected to inform the measurable objectives.

Development Strategies

Strategy Overview

Community and stakeholder engagement along with data collection will be the core strategies driving the plan's composition. The OBO will employ a mix of strategies, communications channels, and messaging.

The office will gather input from key stakeholders including:

1. Members of the covered populations and historically disconnected communities
2. Oklahoma Department of Corrections
3. State Department of Education
4. Digital inclusion coalitions
5. State and local chambers of commerce or industry associations
6. Regional councils of governments
7. Economic development organizations
8. Higher education institutions
    a) Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education
    b) Community or Technical College System

c) Public and Private Universities
d) Historically Black Colleges & Universities
e) Tribal Colleges & Universities
f) Minority Serving Institutions

9. Career Tech System
10. Local media outlets such as public, educational, governmental and ethnic media

Community Outreach and Engagement

1. Form core planning team:
    a. Four to 10 people representing a diverse set of stakeholders and partners including a member of the OBO, community-based organizations with digital inclusion programs, state agency peers (such as Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, Department of Commerce, etc.), community-based organizations, CAIs, universities and lived experts.
    b. OBO staff will lead and staff the core planning team meetings.
    c. The core planning team will serve in an advisory capacity, providing guidance and support throughout the planning process particularly in supporting the development of a community stakeholder engagement plan.
2. Conduct regional public listening sessions throughout the state where community members and residents may provide the state with the following:
    a. Testimonial experiences of being disconnected
    b. Digital inclusion assets, including current resources, programs and strategies that promote digital equity for each of the covered populations
    c. Identification of barriers to digital equity
    d. Priorities for investments
    e. Ideas for solutions
3. Leverage a diverse array of communications tools to connect and keep community members and stakeholders informed throughout the process. All written materials will be translated into multiple languages reflecting the communities served. Communication tools include:
    a. State websites
    b. Social media
    c. Information sessions
    d. Radio and print notices
    e. Flyers
    f. Sharing information through partner agencies
    g. Other mechanisms to be determined
4. Incorporate public input into the plan:
    a. Gather and incorporate existing local Digital Equity Plans
    b. Publish plan for a minimum of 30 days to gather and incorporate public input
5. Conduct primary and secondary data analysis to identify and document barriers and resources related to digital equity for covered populations and all state residents including but not limited to the following methods:
    a. One-on-one interviews and/or focus group interviews with key stakeholders and lived experts

b. Scientific surveys
c. Analysis of Census and other secondary data sources
d. Statewide digital equity asset mapping

Delivery

Upon completion, the office will submit the plan to NTIA and distribute it to state leadership and residents through the following means:

1. Hold a public event to unveil the contents of the plan
2. Post the plan online

DEA planning is underway with the council leading the effort. Additionally, the Department of Libraries, tribal nations, and OneNet are involved.

State and Local Fiscal Recovery (SLFR) Funding

SLFR funds are earmarked for each state to use for economic and infrastructure recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic. The Legislature has allocated $382,144,000 to the OBO to create a broadband grant incentive program. Broadband-related projects submitted through the ARPA portal may be reviewed for potential funding. Additionally, some of these funds may be used in conjunction with the CPF to create a larger and more competitive grant program.

CPF

The anticipated OBIG Program will subsidize up to 80 percent of costs for broadband infrastructure projects that bring high-speed internet service to unserved and underserved residential and commercial properties. Recipients would be required to contribute a minimum 20 percent match. The OBGB intends for this program to reduce financial barriers for ISPs and other entities to build out broadband infrastructure in areas of the state where infrastructure investment has historically been cost prohibitive.

The OBIG Program will help the state make significant progress toward its goal to achieve 95 percent statewide broadband coverage by 2028. Based on current FCC availability data, it is estimated that more than 20 percent of Oklahomans stand to benefit from this program.

Funds will be made available to ISPs, political subdivisions, tribal entities, non-profits, CAIs, and utilities to improve broadband availability. Applicants will be required to work closely with communities to ensure alignment with local plans and priorities.

Prospective recipients will be required to complete and return an application detailing the project timeline, cost, and details (e.g., areas impacted by the project, the number of people who will be served). A detailed application will be released to the public once it has been approved by the U.S. Treasury.

The OBO will review each application to ensure it adheres to OBIG and Treasury CPF guidance prior to submission to the OBGB.

Conclusion

Funding for broadband expansion has never been higher. The recognition by both policymakers and the public of its importance has never been greater. The benefit of universal broadband availability to families, farms, businesses, and communities is this generation's equivalent of creation of the postal service, rural electrification and building the interstate highway system.

Oklahoma has launched an aggressive effort to ensure fast and affordable broadband internet service is available throughout the state. The broadband office acknowledges the tremendous opportunity and accepts the responsibility that lies ahead.

This plan, which outlines Oklahoma's effort, will continue to evolve to create a comprehensive roadmap for broadband expansion in Oklahoma.