

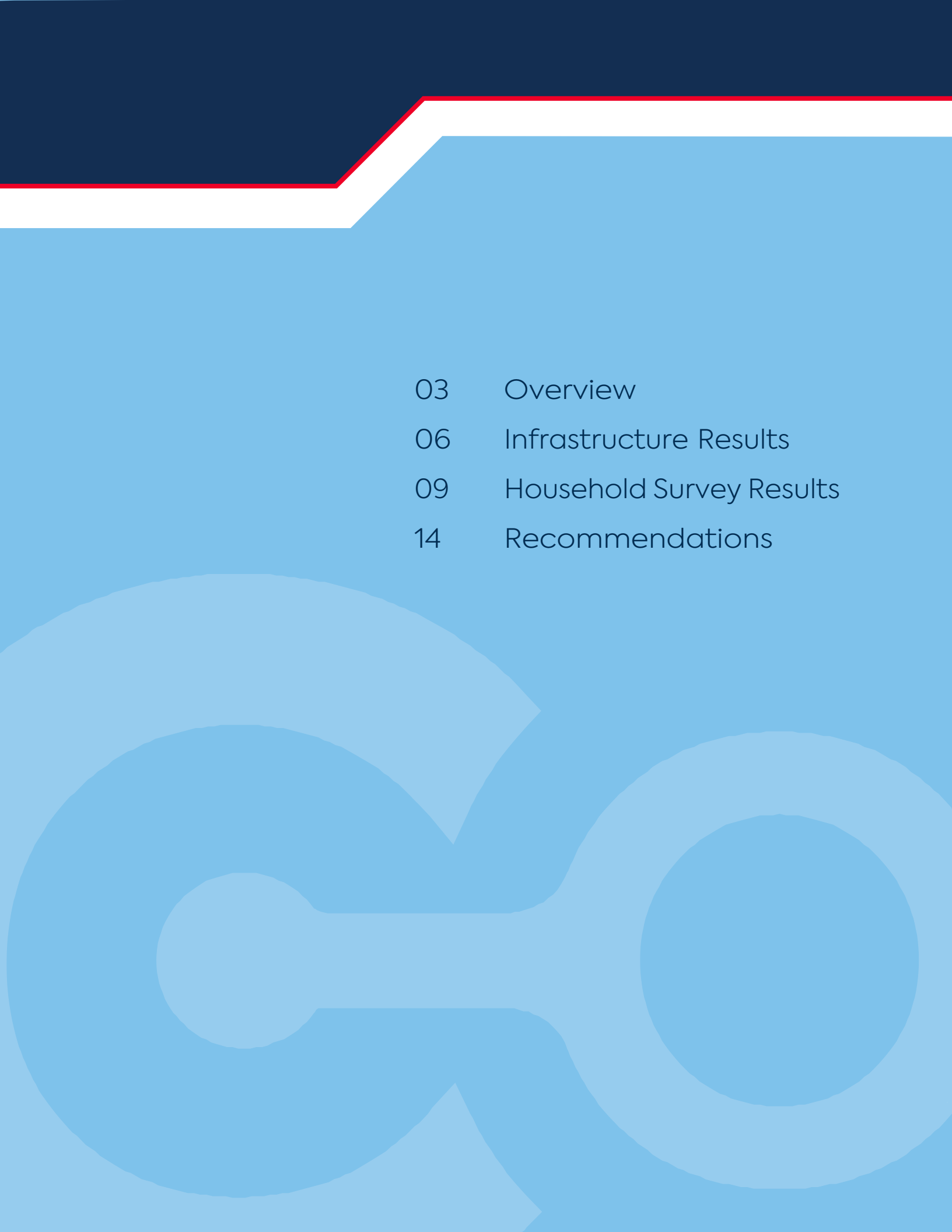


Addressing Your Community's Unique Needs

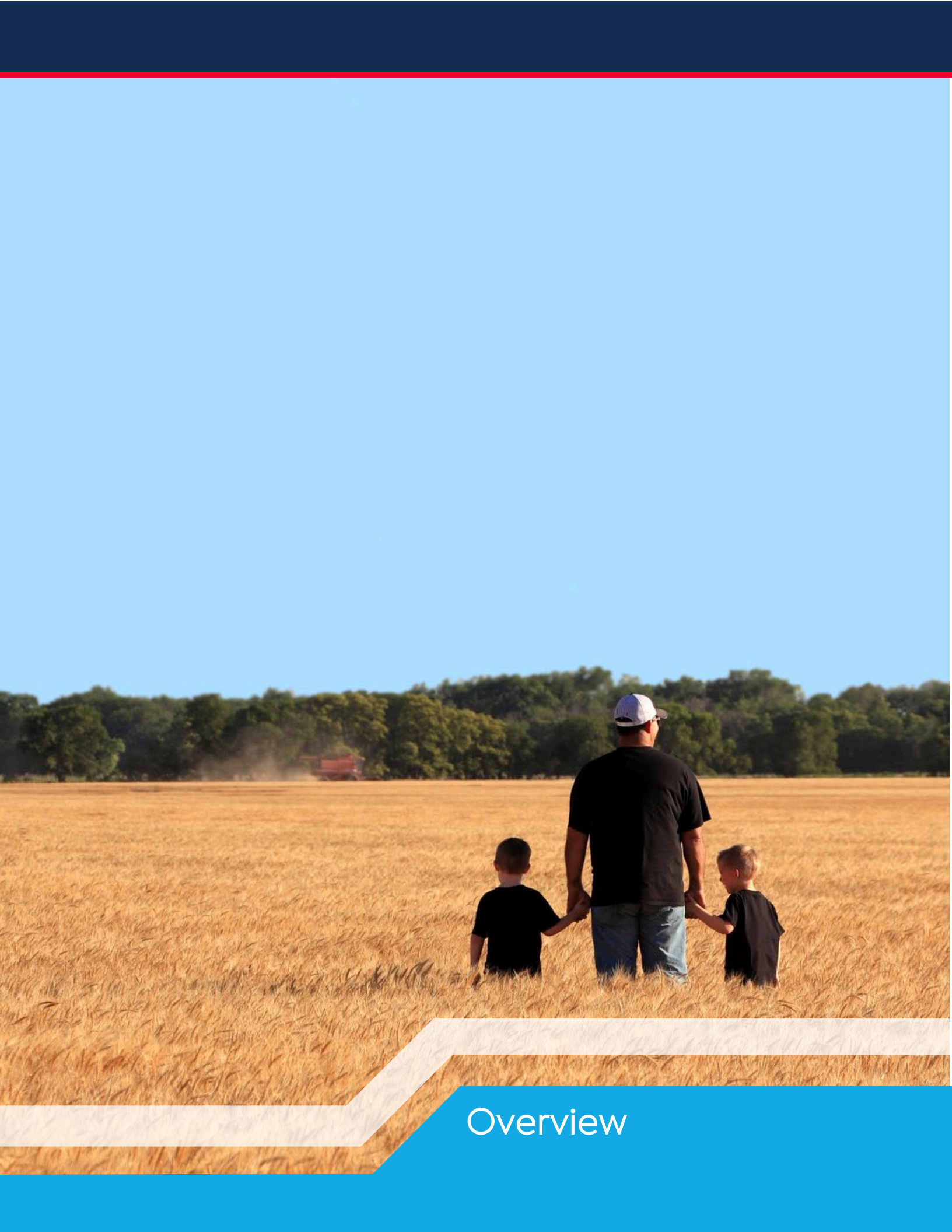
Jackson County, Oklahoma Executive Summary

January 2024





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Overview

Jackson County Overview



Today, technology plays a pivotal role in how businesses operate, how institutions provide services, and where consumers choose to live, work, and play. A community's success has become dependent on how broadly and deeply it adopts technology resources, which include access to reliable, high-speed networks, the digital literacy of residents, and the use of online resources for local business, government, and leisure.

As such, Jackson County stakeholders partnered with Connected Nation's Connected Community Engagement Program to conduct a study designed to determine the availability of broadband infrastructure, how county residents are adopting and using broadband services, and what action steps would have the greatest impact toward improving broadband access, adoption, and usage across every local sector.

Pursuant of this goal, between September 2023 and January 2024, Jackson County conducted a comprehensive survey of broadband technology access and adoption across the community that collected responses from 15 households. CN met with local officials to determine community needs and gather qualitative data for consideration in the study.

This study approached broadband holistically – focusing on the quality of life offered when residents and community leaders alike access, adopt, and use broadband in a productive and meaningful capacity. With this approach, the assessment identified issues and action opportunities necessary to close the local Digital Divide.

Data collected as part of the engagement played an integral role in developing a unique, locally informed action plan for Jackson County. This document provides a summary of that assessment, as well as recommendations for improving broadband and technology access, adoption, and usage. Additionally, CN created an [interactive map](#).

JACKSON COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

QUICK FACTS

Population

24,785

Households

9,835

Median Household Income

\$60,954

Poverty Rate

14.5%

Adults with a Bachelor's Degree
or Higher

24.2%

Hispanic or Latino

24.0%

Households with
Broadband Access¹

90.64%

Source: [Jackson County U.S. Census Profile](#)

¹The current FCC definition of broadband is a minimum of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload. These data are derived from the [FCC National Broadband Map](#) – with numbers as of June 2023.

58%

of households in
Jackson County
report subscribing
to fixed internet
service



For households that do not subscribe to home internet service, the top barriers are a **lack of broadband service availability** and the **cost of internet service**.

88% of households in Jackson County have access to internet service at speeds needed to run many modern applications (100 Mbps downstream and 20 Mbps upstream). Statewide, **84.9%** of households have internet access at these speeds.

More than 3 out of 5 employed survey respondents in Jackson County (**62.5%**) report teleworking in some capacity. Of those, **40%** telework several days per week and an additional **20%** telework at least once per week.

A quarter of households surveyed (**25%**) reported being dissatisfied with their current internet service. The top reasons for dissatisfaction were slow speeds, unreliable connections, and high prices.

4 out of 5 households (**80%**) said they would like to have improved or additional options for home internet service.



Infrastructure Results



A ccording to FCC broadband data updated in June 2023, 90.64% of Jackson County households have access to broadband of at least 25/3 Mbps – the current definition of broadband set forth by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Broadband service in Jackson County is distributed throughout the county.

Below is the list of internet service providers (ISPs) in Jackson County. Please contact your ISP for the most up-to-date information on speeds, prices, and service areas.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE QUICK FACTS

Unserved Households (25/3 Mbps)

920

Households Served (10/1 Mbps)

94.37%

Households Served (25/3 Mbps)

Households Served (100/20 Mbps)

88.02%

These data are derived from the FCC's latest national broadband map, which can be found [here](#).

PROVIDER	TECHNOLOGY	MAXIMUM DOWNLOAD SPEED (Mbps)	MAXIMUM UPLOAD SPEED (Mbps)
AT&T Inc.	Fixed Wireless	25	3
AT&T Inc.	Copper	10	1
Bluepeak	Fiber	5000	5000
Dobson Fiber	Fiber	1000	1000
Nextlink	Fixed Wireless	500	20
Santa Rosa Telephone Cooperative	Fiber	1000	1000
Southwest Oklahoma Telephone Co.	Copper	25	3
Sparklight	Cable	1000	50
T-Mobile	Fixed Wireless	25	3
U.S. Cellular Corp.	Fixed Wireless	25	3
Verizon	Fixed Wireless	50	5



Household Survey Results

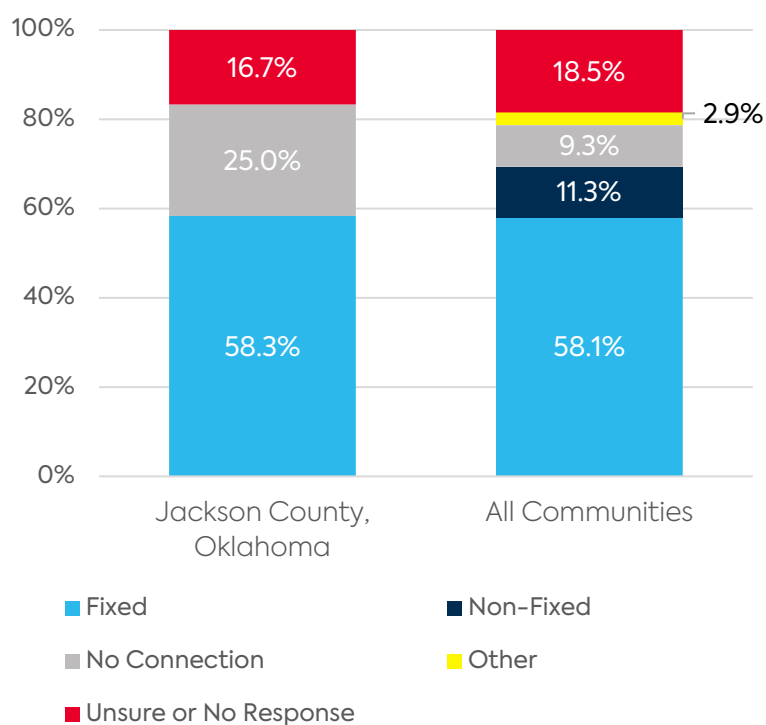
Household Survey Results



The following section provides an overview of results from a broadband survey conducted in Jackson County between September 2023 and January 2024. Altogether, CN received 15 survey responses from households across the county; respondents provided insights into their internet connectivity or lack thereof. Data from Jackson County are compared with data from hundreds of other rural Connected communities that participated in the program across Texas, Michigan, and Oklahoma to benchmark and identify areas for improvement.

ADOPTION

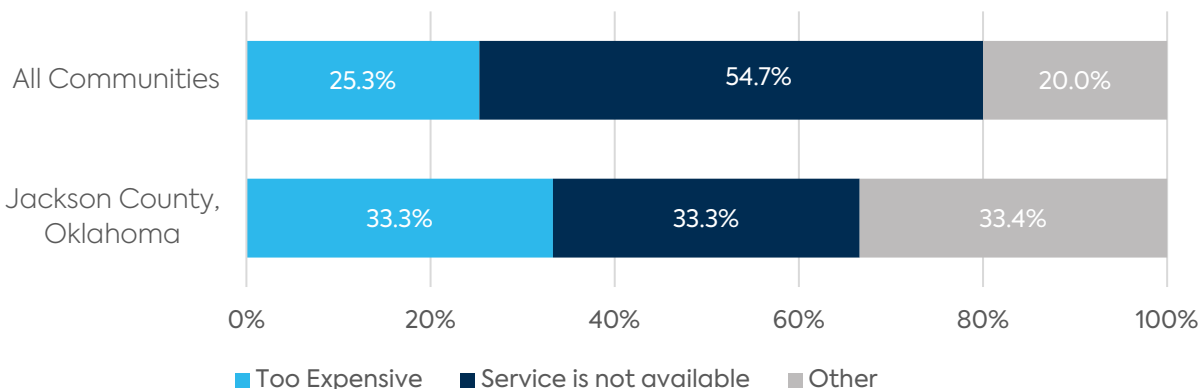
Home Broadband Adoption



In Jackson County, 58.3% of households that took the survey subscribe to fixed broadband service delivered via a cable, DSL, fiber, or fixed wireless technology. Another 25% indicate they do not have internet service. This leaves 16.7% of survey respondents unsure of what service they have or provided no response.

Among those without a home internet connection, 33.3% said they did not have broadband because it was too expensive. An additional 33.3% say service is not available.

Primary Barrier



Household Survey Results

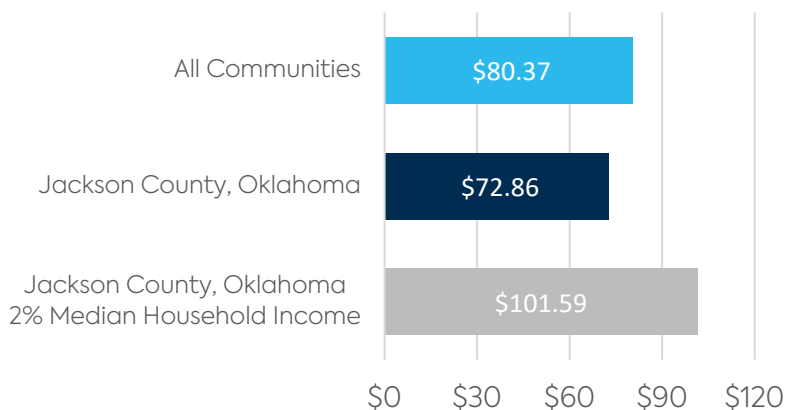


CONNECTION DETAILS

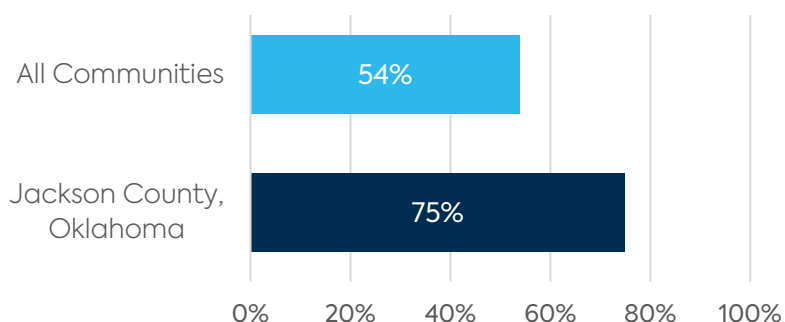
Two percent of monthly income is a recognized standard for measuring the affordability of a home internet connection. Respondents indicate that, on average, their internet connection costs about \$72.86 per month. This is lower than the monthly cost in other communities (\$80.37). Two percent of the median household income in Jackson County is \$101.59 per month.

The FCC currently defines broadband as an internet connection with a download speed of at least 25 Mbps and upload speed of at least 3 Mbps. On average, respondents indicate that their connection's advertised download speed is 318.6 Mbps. In Jackson County, 75% of internet-connected households subscribe to download speeds faster than 25 Mbps.

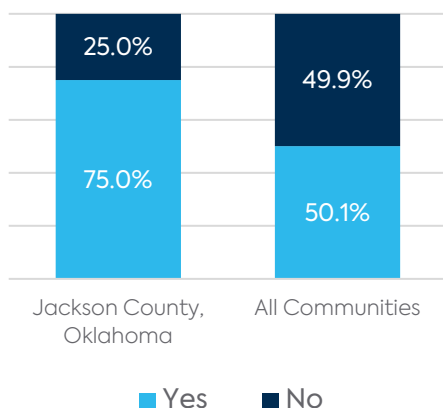
Average Monthly Cost



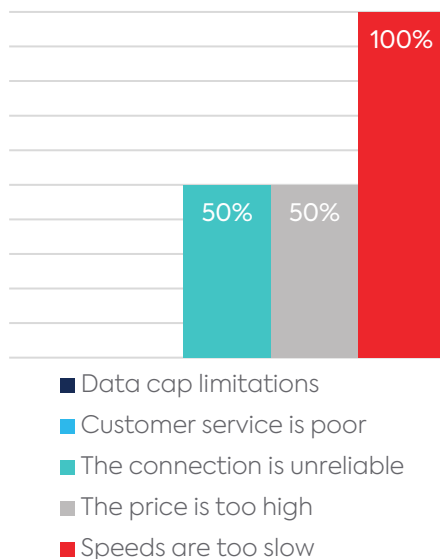
Percentage of Respondents with at Least 25/3 Mbps



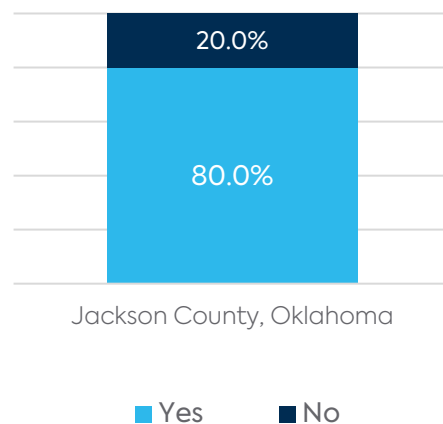
Does Your Internet Meet Your Needs?



Why Doesn't Your Internet Meet Your Needs?



Are You Interested in More Choices at Home?



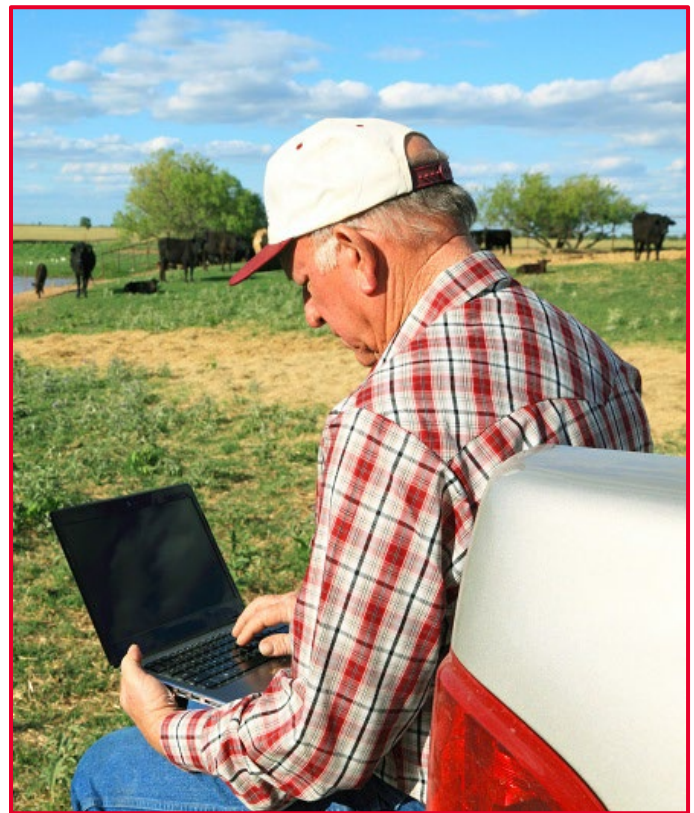
Household Survey Results



Competition provides residents with choices for service, allowing households the ability to switch providers if their current service does not meet their needs. Three-fourths (75%) of responding households indicate that their internet connection meets their needs. This is a higher rate of satisfaction than among households in other communities (50.1%).

When asked why their connection does not meet their needs, 100% of dissatisfied households indicate that their internet connection is too slow, 50% report that the cost of their service is too high, and 50% indicate that their connection is unreliable. Respondents could choose more than one reason for dissatisfaction.

Finally, 4 out of 5 respondents (80%) indicate that they are interested in additional internet choices for their home.

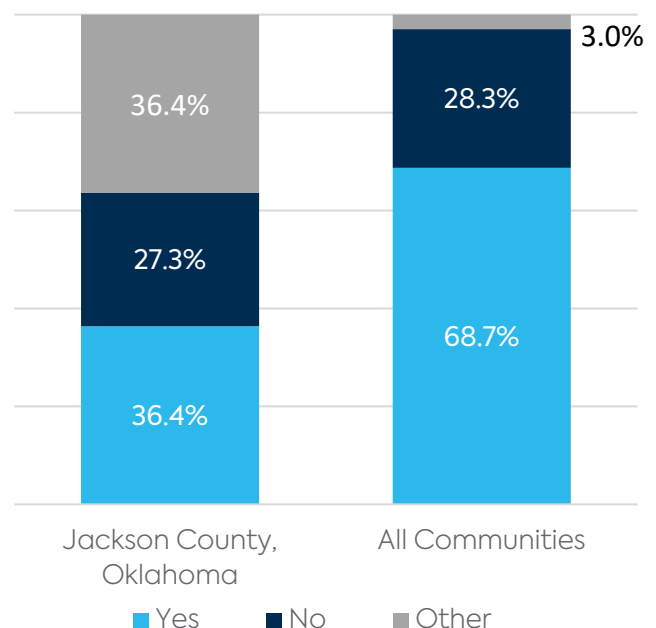


MOBILE CONNECTIVITY

More than 1 out of 3 households (36.4%) reported that they subscribe to mobile internet service they access via a smartphone or similar mobile device. This is less than what is reported in other Connected communities (68.7%).

Additionally, 25% of mobile-connected households report that they either rely on those mobile connections as their primary source of home internet connectivity or use mobile service to connect other household devices to the internet.

Households Subscribing to Mobile Internet Service



Household Survey Results



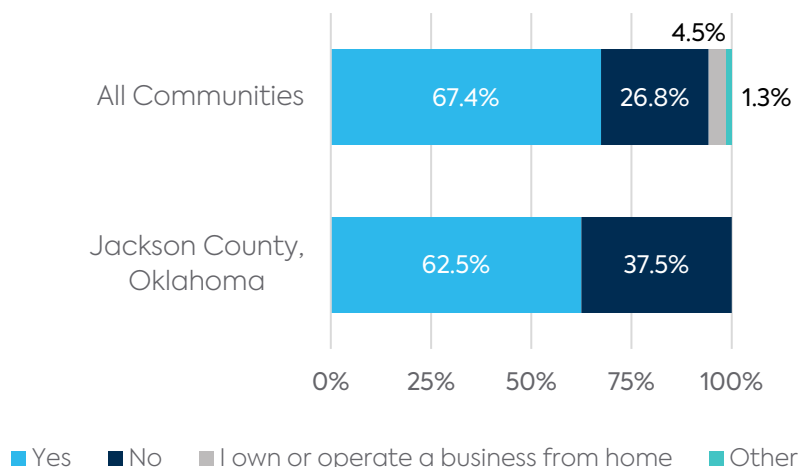
TELEWORK

Teleworking, or telecommuting, refers to working outside of the conventional workplace by way of telecommunications or computer-based technology. The COVID-19 pandemic forced many organizations to allow their staff to telework.

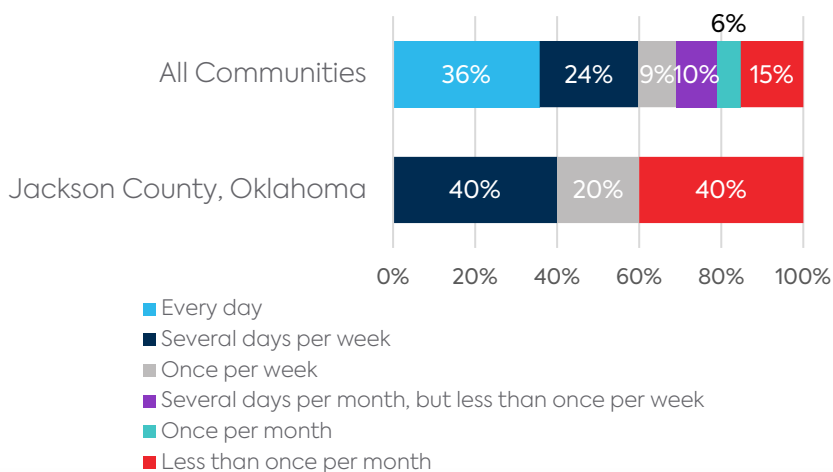
Teleworking is quickly becoming a critical part of growing a local economy because it represents an opportunity to attract and retain employees even when employees are not located in the same community as their employers. However, this only works if those employees have access to advanced broadband infrastructure.

Nearly 2 out of 3 employed respondents in Jackson County (62.5%) telework at least part of the time. Two out of 5 teleworkers (40%) work remotely several days per week, while an additional 20% telework at least once per week.

Do You Currently Telework?



How Frequently Do You Telework?





Recommendations



The following recommendations are presented to assist Jackson County in expanding broadband access and adoption throughout the community.

A residential survey was deployed in Jackson County between September 2023 and January 2024 to assess the connectivity, affordability, and general technology needs of the county's residents. These recommendations are based on data from a countywide survey, online research, and direct community feedback.

Goal 1: Identify a single point of contact to organize and lead broadband initiatives in Jackson County.

Objective: Identify a community champion who is dedicated to the expansion of broadband access, adoption, and use across Jackson County.

To ensure the success of the community action plan and to equip Jackson County with the necessary tools for broadband growth, the community should centralize broadband expansion and improvement efforts in a single entity: a broadband liaison. Ideally, this broadband liaison will: 1.) promote broadband and technology access, adoption, and use; 2.) serve as the go-to resource for broadband and technology needs for internet service providers and community partners; 3.) seek ways to educate and empower the community regarding broadband and related technology; 4.) take priority action on recommendations from the community action plan and implement other programs that are necessary and beneficial to the growth of the community; and 5.) monitor broadband funding programs and seek beneficial partnerships for the community.

Action 1 – Identify and appoint a broadband liaison for Jackson County.

The broadband liaison will serve the county on broadband matters. The liaison should be knowledgeable about broadband, understand Jackson County's demographics, and be prepared to collaborate with community organizations and ISPs. The liaison should be appointed or approved by the Commissioners Court. It is important for the local government to take ownership of this appointment, as the liaison will be the leading voice on broadband matters.

Action 2 – Identify an agreed-upon list of duties for which the broadband liaison will be responsible in his/her official capacity.

Responsibilities of the broadband liaison could include:

- Serve as the go-to resource for broadband information within the immediate community.
- Educate county leaders and residents on broadband programs, opportunities, and benefits.



- Stay informed on current broadband grant programs at the state and federal levels, apply to programs as they become available, or pursue partnerships as needed.
- Work with community organizations and ISPs on broadband initiatives.

Action 3 – Identify community organizations and county stakeholders who can support local broadband planning efforts.

Much of the work in the broadband space is driven by partnerships. Having a group of trusted community leaders and organizations augment the work of the broadband liaison will be valuable to promoting the community's connectivity goals.

Organizations to consider partnering with:

- Altus Chamber of Commerce
- Altus/ Southwest Area Economic Development Corp.
- Southwest Technology Center
- South Western Oklahoma Development Authority
- Altus Public Library
- Internet service providers

Timeline

A broadband liaison should be appointed as soon as possible to ensure the county can begin organizing efforts for broadband programs and funding.

Responsible parties

Local and county governments, business leaders, community and regional organizations

Resources

Broadband readiness

- [Smart Cities Readiness Guide](#)
- [Next Century Cities Becoming Broadband Ready Toolkit](#)
- [Municipal Boards: Best Practices for Adoption Technology](#)

Broadband leadership

- [Ector County TX forms taskforce to set up broadband office](#)
- [City of Memphis: Broadband Project Manager, Senior](#)
- [Letter: Do your part on broadband](#)
- [The Anatomy of a Community Broadband Manager](#)
- [TARA Leadership: Rondella Hawkins](#)



Goal 2: Increase broadband availability and speeds in Jackson County through strategic partnerships.

Objective: Ensure all residents have access to the internet and speeds that meet their needs for work, education, telehealth, and quality-of-life purposes.

The state of Oklahoma was allocated \$797 million under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) via the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program and the Digital Equity Act. These programs will fund projects that help expand high-speed internet access and ensure Oklahoma communities have the information technology capacity they need for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy by promoting diverse digital advancement projects. This federal funding opportunity is a once-in-a-generation infusion of money that will be administered by the Oklahoma Broadband Office (OBO) and provided to eligible entities via a competitive grant program. As this is a generational funding opportunity, Jackson County must track broadband developments at the state and federal levels to ensure community needs are promptly met.

Action 1 – Establish and maintain open communication and positive relations with internet service providers (ISPs) working or scheduled to work in the county, as well as ISPs interested in expanding in the county.

ISPs are key partners for communities looking to expand broadband access. Checking in regularly with ISPs allows community leaders to stay abreast of construction and expansion progress or plan changes, identify challenges they face, and communicate community goals and objectives. This open communication allows ISPs to better understand community needs and for communities to better understand the obstacles and barriers ISPs face. This understanding can encourage creative problem-solving, which can lead to finding solutions through public-private partnerships. Public-private partnerships are arrangements between public entities, such as local governments, and private entities, such as ISPs, to achieve a common goal. They are often, but not always, funding arrangements.

Additionally, the county should strive to be an environment amenable to business. This means having easy-to-use websites that allow ISPs and vendors quick access to relevant information, as well as fostering a business environment that rewards open communication and timely resolution of concerns. Fostering open communication with ISPs is critical for broadband development. As part of BEAD applications, ISPs must demonstrate local support; therefore, having relationships with local leaders will be crucial to ensuring successful grants and deployment according to county needs.

Action 2 – Provide survey data to all local providers.

When meeting with ISPs, community leaders should address the survey results, highlighting the need for faster service at an affordable price. It is important for ISPs to understand the



consumer base in Jackson County in order to provide the best customer service experience. Twenty-five percent of households with a broadband subscription report being dissatisfied with their service, citing slow speeds (50%), unreliable connection (100%), and high prices (50%) as the leading reasons for dissatisfaction. Despite the long list of ISPs available in Jackson County, 80% of those surveyed would like improved or additional options for home internet service. Armed with this information, ISPs can strategically address their service areas and improve access and education about services throughout the county.

Action 3 – Pursue state and federal funding for broadband advancement.

As mentioned previously, the infusion of federal funds via BEAD and DEA to the state is an opportunity for Oklahoma communities to support ISPs and other entities that are looking to expand infrastructure, and programs that support robust broadband delivery. Jackson County should explore the best ways to support ISPs that are considering buildouts in the community. This may include engaging with and supporting ISPs looking to secure BEAD and other federal and state funding resources.

In addition, other funding sources, such as the U.S. Economic Development Association or the U.S. Department of Agriculture, promise opportunities for broadband. Funding guides have been linked in the resource section. Capitalizing on this once-in-a-generation funding opportunity will ensure Jackson County residents have faster, more reliable broadband for years to come.

Action 4 – Partner with local ISPs to promote low-cost broadband programs.

In Jackson County, the average monthly cost of internet is \$72.86. Cost is one of the leading factors for dissatisfaction, with 50% of respondents citing the monthly cost as a hefty burden. The county should work with community leaders and institutions to publicly promote programs and opportunities designed to reduce the cost of broadband service.

Below are some programs and resources that are available to residents.

- **Resources to locate affordable internet service or computers:** Using online resources, Jackson County residents can identify local and national ISPs that offer special low-cost services for vulnerable populations, older adults, and low-income families with children. Resources include EveryoneOn (<https://www.everyoneon.org/>), which helps residents locate low-cost internet services and affordable computers by ZIP code and need based on their participation in assistance programs.
- **State and federal low-cost programs:** Two critical programs offer discounts for broadband to eligible households:
 - [Lifeline](#) is a federal program administered through the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) Universal Service Administrative Co. that lowers the monthly cost of phone or internet services for eligible consumers. Consumers can get up to \$9.25 off the cost of phone, internet, or bundled services each month.



Households can qualify based on income or participation in federal or tribal assistance programs.

- o The [Affordable Connectivity Program](#) (ACP)* was created to help households struggling to afford internet service. The ACP provides a \$30 a month credit toward internet coverage (\$75 a month for qualifying residents on tribal lands) and up to \$100 for the purchase of a device. Households can qualify based on income or participation in federal or tribal assistance programs. To receive the connected device discount, consumers must enroll in the ACP with a participating ISP that offers connected devices. The ISP will provide the discount to the consumer and then seek reimbursement. Find out which ISPs participate by clicking [here](#).

The [ACP tool kit](#) is a great resource that communities can use to promote the program to residents.

**The ACP is set to expire in spring 2024 unless Congress appropriates more funds. As this is an expiring program, it's more important than ever for community leaders and residents to partner with local ISPs to provide low-cost broadband programs to bridge the affordability gap so no home is left offline.*

Additionally, ISPs often offer their own low-cost options or subsidized programs to consumers at a greatly reduced cost. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021 requires ISPs that receive federal grant money to offer low-cost service to eligible low-income households. Local advocacy for internet affordability, using Jackson County-specific data, will be essential to ensuring residents can continue accessing online information and virtual resources.

Timeline

The sooner Jackson County can begin infrastructure development and improvement, the better. Residents and businesses benefit when there is good broadband and open communication between ISPs and end users.

Responsible parties

Local and county governments, business leaders, broadband liaison

Resources

- [The FCC High-Cost program: CAF A-CAM](#)
- [The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund \(RDOF\)](#)
- [Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, Allocation by County](#)
- [ARPA SLFRF, Final Rule](#)
- [BroadbandUSA: Federal Funding Guide](#)



- [Guide to Federal Broadband Funding Opportunities in the U.S.](#)
- [ACP Program](#)
- [Lifeline Program](#)
- [Oklahoma Broadband Office](#)
- [Oklahoma Broadband Governing Board](#)
- [The Oklahoma Broadband Expansion Council](#)
- [Oklahoma State Broadband Map](#)
- [HB 3363 Oklahoma State Broadband Expansion Act](#)

Goal 3: Ensure that Jackson County residents and businesses have digital literacy skills to improve digital engagement and improve outcomes in business, public safety, workforce readiness, and quality of life.

Objective: Partner with libraries and community organizations to provide digital literacy training.

Broadband connects people to the world and opens the door to opportunity. Where there is broadband, there is development, achievement, and innovation. In rural Oklahoma, broadband looks like economic development, greater scholastic achievement, advancement in agriculture and farming, connection to telehealth services, infrastructure improvement, and general technological advancements.

In Jackson County, it is important to embrace broadband for how it can both contribute to and improve the current way of life. To engage online, an individual must have the digital skills necessary to safely navigate the internet. It is critical for residents to take advantage of applications that support their education, health, and workforce needs. Many organizations and institutions locally and nationwide provide digital training support to their clients to ensure they can access programs online. Promoting these opportunities and encouraging new partnerships to ensure all residents have the digital skills necessary to participate in the digital world will increase engagement, adoption, and use of the internet in Jackson County.

Action 1 – Develop curriculum for free community workshops.

Community leaders should partner with local and regional organizations to facilitate free digital literacy and digital skills workshops designed to increase digital engagement across the county. Workshop curriculum should be curated using material created by the county and publicly available programs, such as AARP and Digital Learn (resources linked below). Classes could be offered at local facilities, such as the school gym, library, or community center, and be advertised through the local media. The intention is for residents and community leaders to understand the importance of digital engagement and to feel



comfortable using online platforms. The more the community engages online, the more residents will reap the benefits of a digital lifestyle.

These efforts would mirror statewide efforts of organizations and nonprofits working to close the Digital Divide. As evidenced by a 2023 digital asset inventory from the OBO, many organizations currently offer digital literacy classes and programs. The state's Digital Equity Plan highlights the ongoing trend and need for digital inclusion. Visit the OBO's [website](#) for the latest version of the plan.

Workshop topics can include:

- How to teleconference
- Cybersecurity 101
- Microsoft Office skills
- Intro to social media and website building
- Telehealth basics

Connected Nation provides digital literacy training classes to Connected communities free of charge. To learn more, reach out to us today!

Action 1A – Provide varied formats for greater community involvement.

In addition to hosting in-person workshops, the general curriculum should be available for pickup at frequently accessed public locations in the form of paper handouts. Handouts function as a “grab-and-go” resource for residents to take with them to review later. In this way, everyone can benefit from the content in whatever way is most compatible with their schedule and preferred learning method.

Action 2 – Partner with community stakeholders for workshop execution.

Finding broadband champions who can share the impact of technology from their perspective can help class participants understand the broad impacts of connectivity. Industry leaders can speak to the importance of broadband in their respective lines of work. For example, a banker can discuss the benefits of online banking, while the school IT Director can discuss the importance of online safety. Building on local expertise will help drive workshop attendance and meet the unique needs of Jackson County residents. For example, Jackson County is home to Altus Air Force Base. Courses designed for military spouses, such as remote work opportunities, military health care benefits, and virtual meet-and-greets could be helpful given this local population. When you know your audience, you can invite guest speakers, select specific curriculum, and pick class times/locations that are most convenient for the end user that will promote greater engagement.

An integral part of the Jackson County community is the Altus Public Library. In 2023, the library hosted the OBO as part of its summer listening tour. The event yielded valuable



feedback about the connectivity needs of residents of Jackson County and the surrounding communities. The library is an integral part of the community, offering public computers, free Wi-Fi, technical support, community programming, such as chair yoga, and general information support. The Altus Public Library boasts helpful staff, a large meeting room, dedicated space for children, and a robust calendar of events. Augmenting these efforts with community advocates who are likewise dedicated to closing the digital gap would be invaluable to the digital landscape of Jackson County now and in the future.

Timeline

Digital literacy and digital skills workshops for residents and businesses should be available throughout Jackson County by fall 2024. The community should routinely assess the curriculum to determine if updates are needed.

Responsible parties

Community institutions such as businesses, schools, libraries, organizations, local government leaders and elected officials, ISPs, and community residents

Resources

Digital literacy

- [Connected Nation Digital Literacy Workshops](#)
- [Digital Learn – Free courses to learn anything about computers](#)
- [Digital Literacy Curriculum for K-12](#)
- [Free Applied Digital Skills – Google for Education](#)
- [Live, Virtual Classes for Seniors](#)
- [AARP Joins Nonprofit to teach tech to older adults](#)
- [The complete guide to digital skills](#)
- [Grow with Google](#)

Cybersecurity

- [Cybersecurity courses](#)
- [Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency – Cyber Resource Hub](#)
- [Connected Nation Cybersecurity Workshops](#)

Goal 4: Identify opportunities for economic advancement in Jackson County using broadband and related technologies.

Action 1 – Pursue grants to advance local community development using broadband technologies (e.g., workforce development, telehealth, digital literacy, etc.).

In conjunction with the countywide Connected Engagement program, Jackson County has been allocated grant-writing funds to continue closing the Digital Divide. Broadband has far-reaching impacts on community development, including health care, education, business, public safety, and overall economic development. These grant-writing funds are



specific to each county and can be used to further the community's connectivity and infrastructure goals.

Armed with locally sourced data from a residential survey, Jackson County is uniquely positioned to pursue opportunities now — especially as funds flow from state and federal programs. Through countywide partnerships and collaborative efforts, the community can advocate and provide equitable, affordable, and reliable broadband access for all residents, businesses, and community anchor institutions.

Every community anchor institution has a role to play in closing the Digital Divide, and funding opportunities are available to make that happen. For example, local schools may consider opportunities through the U.S. Department of Education, libraries may consider grants through the Institute of Museum and Library Services, while the Chamber of Commerce may consider opportunities through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). For specifics and further information about the grant-writing funds, please contact Connected Nation.