



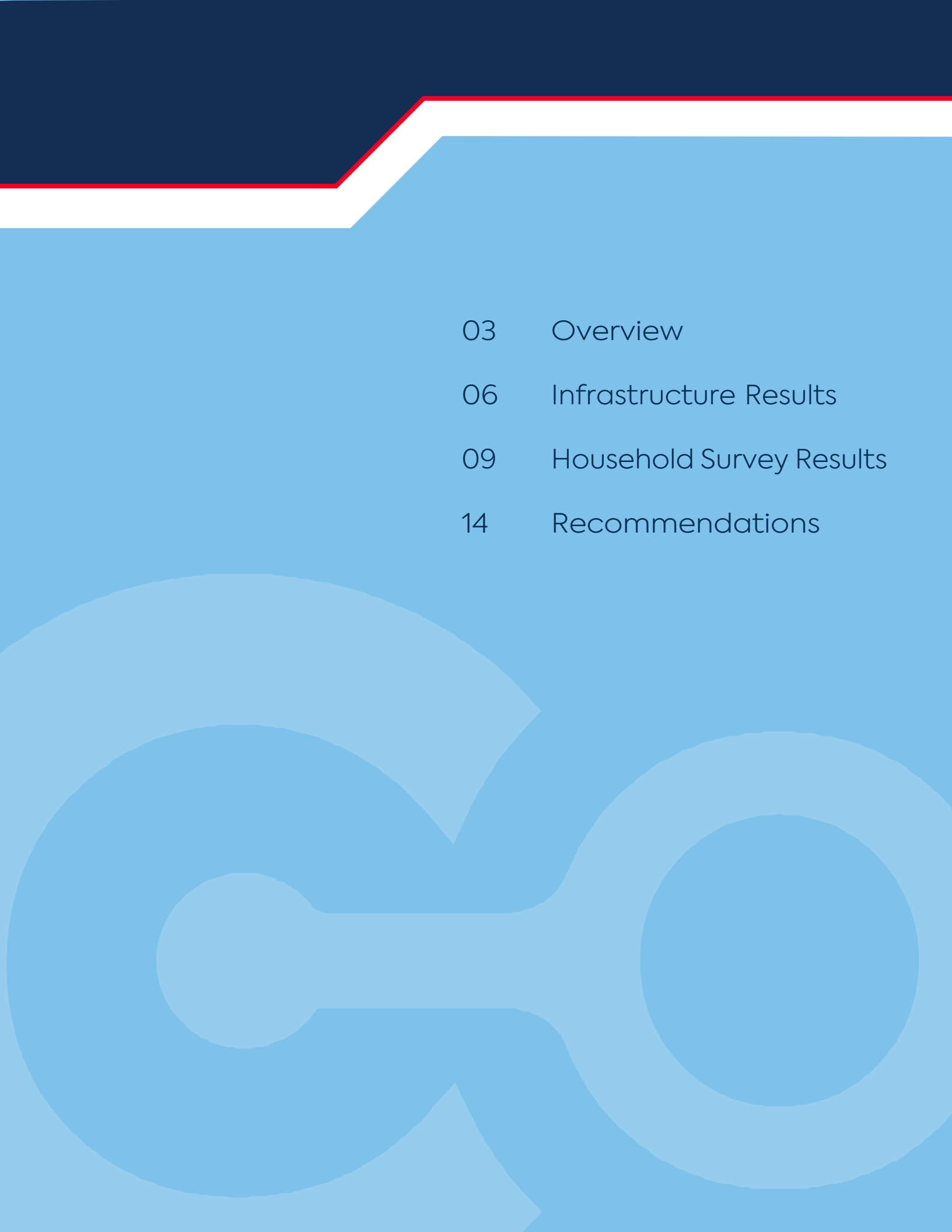
Connected
A CONNECTED NATION Initiative

Addressing Your Community's Unique Needs

Cottle County, Texas Executive Summary

February 2023

**CONNECTED
NATION** 
connectednation.org



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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, Cottle County stakeholders partnered with the Connected Nation Texas (CN Texas) 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 and October 2022, Cottle County conducted a comprehensive survey of broadband technology access and adoption across the community that collected responses from 40 households. CN Texas staff also met with county 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 Cottle County. This document provides a summary of that assessment, as well as recommendations for improving broadband and technology access, adoption, and usage. Additionally, CN Texas created an interactive map. To access that map, please click [here](#).

COTTLE COUNTY, TEXAS

QUICK FACTS

Population

1,380

Households

654

Median Household Income

\$43,654

Poverty Rate

23.0%

Adults with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher

19.6%

Hispanic or Latino

23.7%

Households with Broadband Access¹

93.08%

Source: [Cottle 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 Connected Nation Texas and last updated in January 2022. <https://connectednation.org/texas/planning/>



77.5%

of households in
Cottle County
report subscribing
to fixed internet
service



For households that do not subscribe to home internet service, the top barrier is the **cost of internet service**.

89% of households in Cottle County have access to internet service at speeds needed to run many modern applications (100 Mbps downstream and 10 Mbps upstream). Statewide, **93.6%** of households have internet access at these speeds.

Nearly 3 out of 4 employed survey respondents in Cottle County (**73.1%**) report teleworking in some capacity. Of those, **21%** telework every day and **16%** telework at least once per week.

Around 1 out of 10 households surveyed (**9.7%**) reported being dissatisfied with their current internet service. The top reasons for dissatisfaction were slow speeds and high prices.

More than 3 out of 4 households (**75.8%**) said they would like to have improved or additional options for home internet service.



Infrastructure Results



According to CN Texas broadband data initially released in January 2022, followed by additional public feedback, field validation, and provider input, 93.08% of Cottle 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 Cottle County is distributed throughout the county.

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

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE QUICK FACTS	
Unserved Households (25/3 Mbps)	45
Households Served (10/1 Mbps)	93.08%
Households Served (25/3 Mbps)	93.08%
Households Served (50/5 Mbps)	88.97%
Households Served (100/10 Mbps)	88.97%

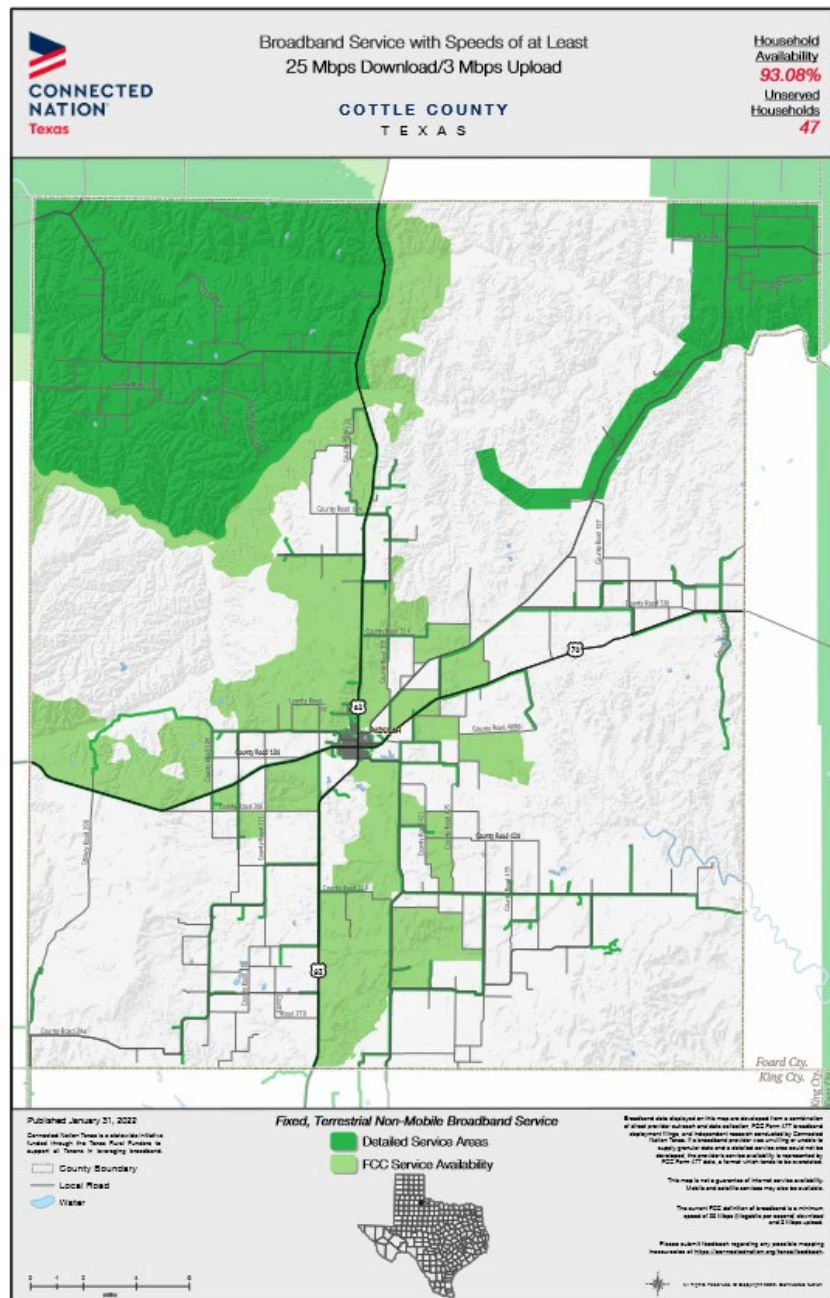
*Broadband data released by CN Texas in January 2022:
<https://connectednation.org/texas/mapping-analysis/>*

PROVIDER	TECHNOLOGY	MAXIMUM DOWNLOAD SPEED (Mbps)	MAXIMUM UPLOAD SPEED (Mbps)
Cap Rock Telephone Cooperative	Fiber	100	25
Mid-Plains Communications	Fiber	200	100
Santa Rosa Telephone Cooperative Inc.	Fiber	1000	1000
Santa Rosa Telephone Cooperative Inc.	DSL	50	10
Suddenlink Communications	Cable	400	40
T-Mobile	Fixed Wireless	25	3



Below is Cottle County's (25/3 Mbps) map. To access the full map, go to <https://connectednation.org/texas/county-maps/> and select Cottle County from the list. Portions of the county are served by ISPs offering slower advertised speeds. Those areas are not shown on this map.

The first step in understanding the status of broadband infrastructure in Cottle County and statewide is having accurate maps. Accordingly, CN Texas works with ISPs to develop a variety of broadband maps at the state and county level. Data shown on this map are derived from a combination of direct ISP outreach and data collection, FCC Form 477 broadband deployment filings, and independent research conducted by CN Texas. If an ISP was unable or unwilling to supply granular data and a detailed service area could not be developed, the ISP's service is represented by Form 477 data alone — a format that tends to overstate the service territory. [A PDF of the map is available here.](#)





Household Survey Results



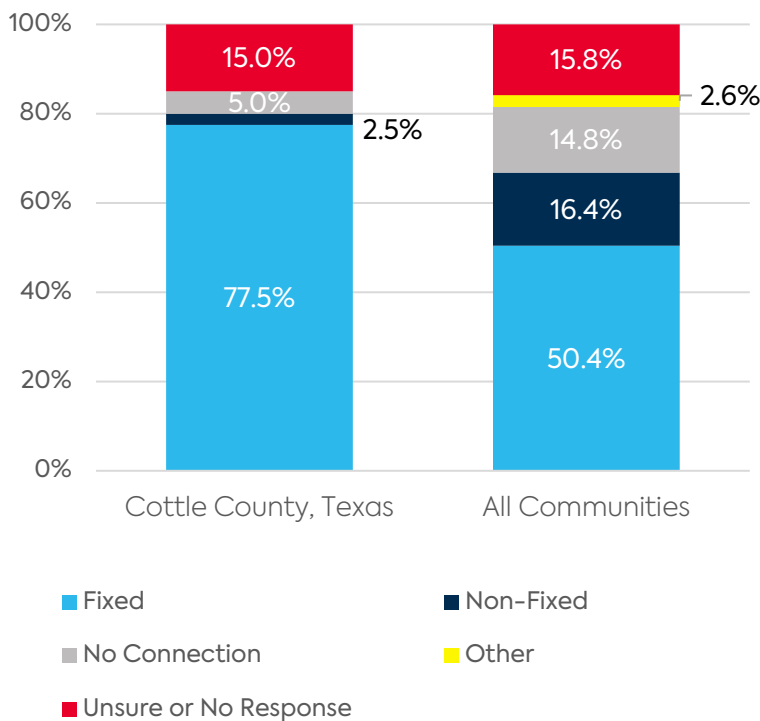
The following section provides an overview of results from a broadband survey conducted in Cottle County between September and October 2022. Altogether, CN Texas received 40 survey responses from households across the county; respondents provided insights into their internet connectivity or lack thereof. Data from Cottle County are compared to data from hundreds of other rural Connected communities that participated in the program across Michigan, Ohio, Texas, and Pennsylvania to benchmark and identify areas for improvement.

ADOPTION

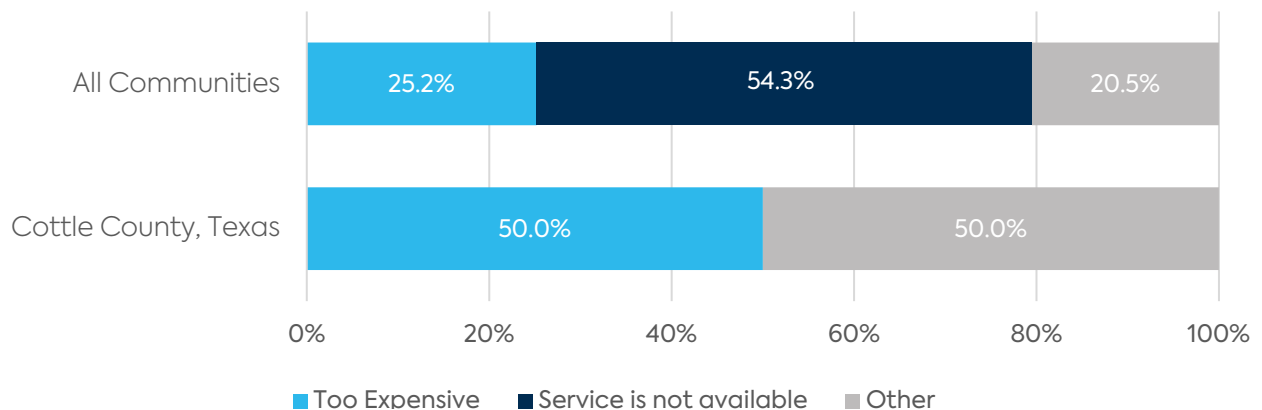
In Cottle County, 77.5% of households that took the survey subscribe to fixed broadband service delivered via a cable, DSL, fiber, or fixed wireless technology, while 2.5% indicate they have internet service delivered via dial-up, satellite, or a mobile wireless service. This leaves 5% without internet and 15% of survey respondents unsure of what service they have or provided no response.

Among those without a home internet connection, 50% said they did not have broadband because it was too expensive.

Home Broadband Adoption



Primary Barrier



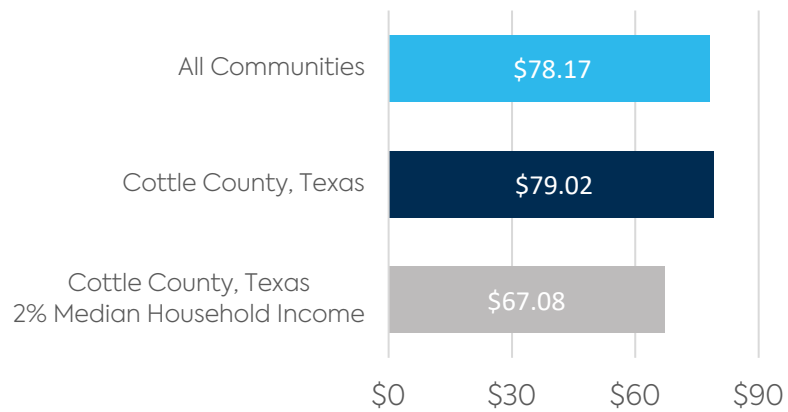


CONNECTION DETAILS

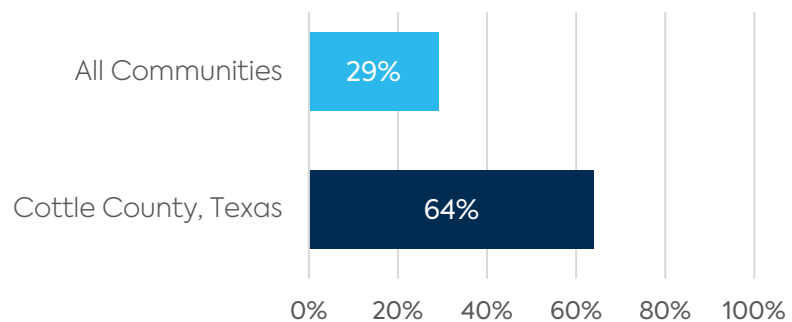
Two percent of monthly income is a recognized standard for measuring the affordability of a home internet connection. Respondents indicate that, on average, their internet connection costs about \$79.02 per month. This is higher than the monthly cost paid in other communities (\$78.17). Two percent of the median household income in Cottle County is \$67.08 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 108.28 Mbps. In Cottle County, 64% of internet-connected households subscribe to download speeds faster than 25 Mbps.

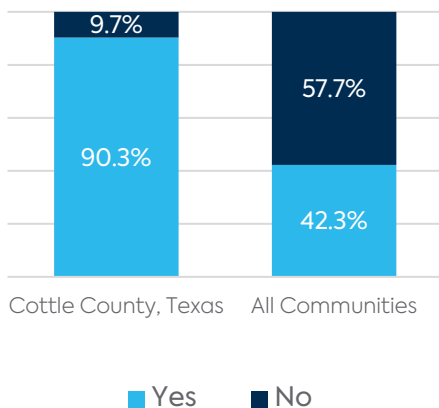
Average Monthly Cost



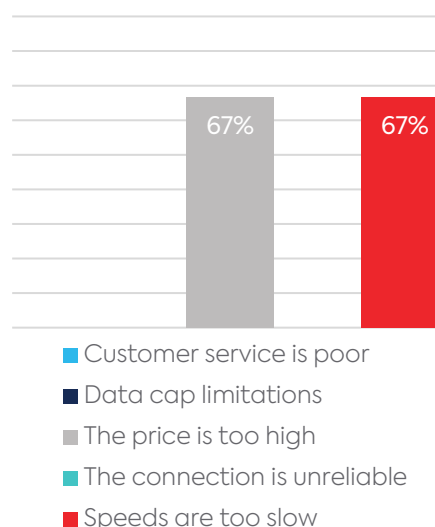
Percentage of Respondents with At Least 25/3 Mbps



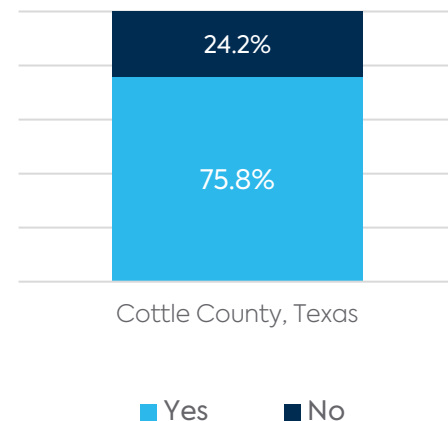
Does Your Internet Meet Your Needs?



Why Doesn't Your Internet Meet Your Needs?



Are You Interested in More Choices at Home?

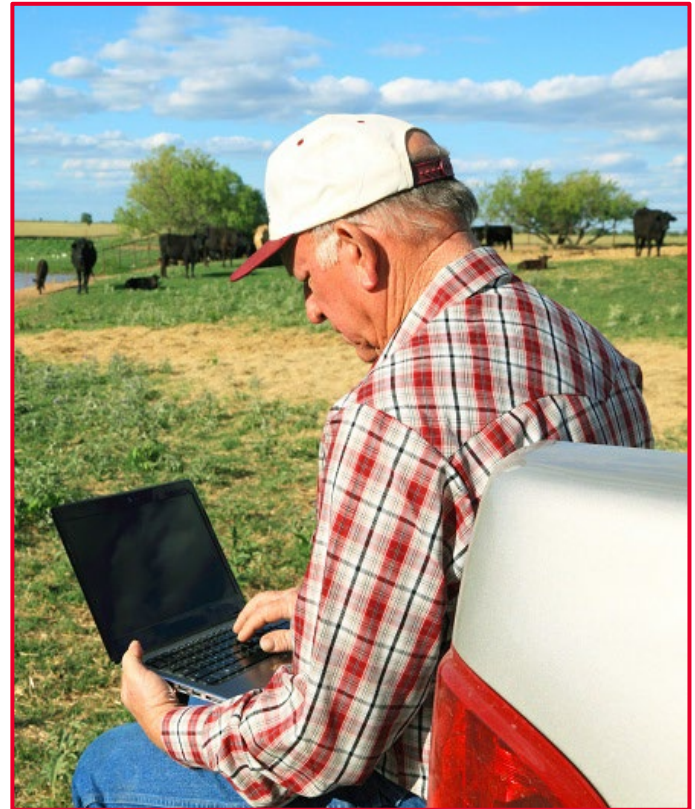




Competition provides residents with choices for service, allowing households the ability to switch ISPs if their current service does not meet their needs. More than 9 out of 10 (90.3%) of responding households indicate that their internet connection meets their needs. This is a higher rate of satisfaction than among households in other communities (42.3%).

When asked why their connection does not meet their needs, 67% of dissatisfied households indicate that their speed is too slow, and 67% indicate that the price is too high. Respondents could choose more than one reason for dissatisfaction.

Finally, about 3 out of 4 respondents (75.8%) indicate that they are interested in additional internet choices for their home.

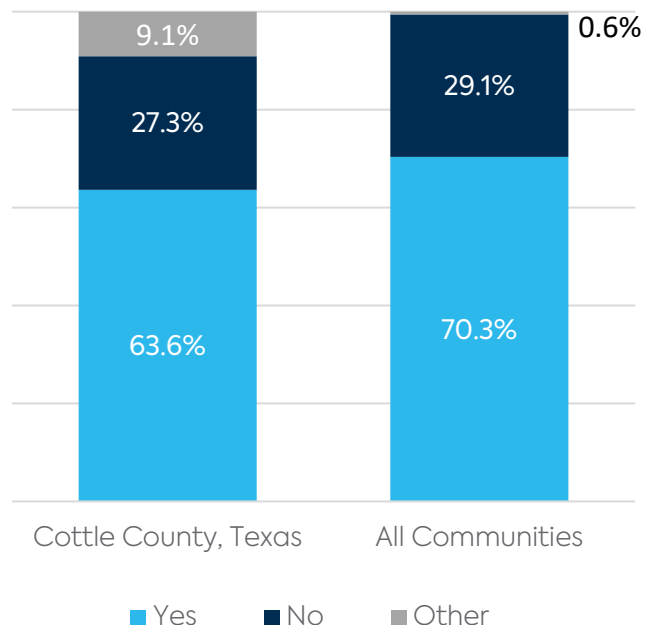


MOBILE CONNECTIVITY

More than 3 out of 5 households (63.6%) reported that they subscribe to mobile internet service that they access via a smartphone or similar mobile device. This is slightly less than what is reported in other Connected communities (70.3%).

Additionally, 19% 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





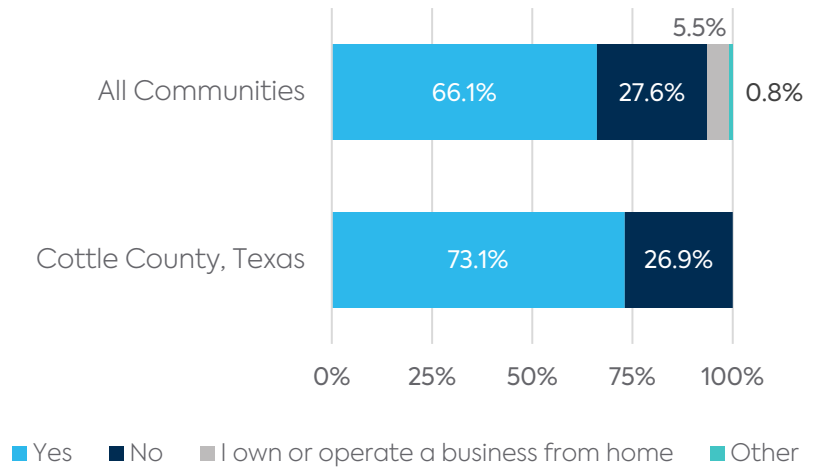
TELEWORK

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.

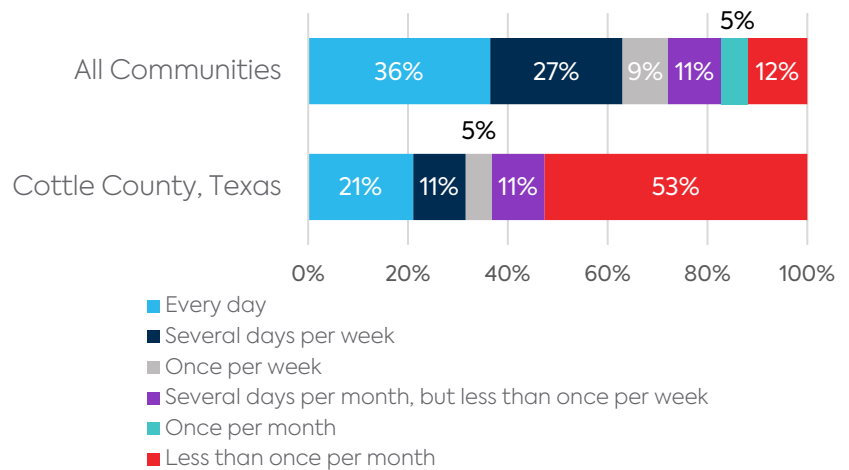
Teleworking is quickly becoming a critical part of growing a local economy because it represents an opportunity to attract and retain employees even when employees are not located in the same community as their employers. However, this only works if those employees have access to advanced broadband infrastructure.

Nearly 3 out of 4 employed respondents in Cottle County (73.1%) telework at least part of the time. Roughly 1 out of 5 teleworkers (21%) work remotely every day, and approximately 16% telework at least once a week.

Do You Currently Telework?



How Frequently Do You Telework?





Recommendations



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

Goal 1: Improve broadband access, adoption, and use in Cottle County through greater education, participation, and planning.

Objective: Establish countywide broadband leadership and increase buy-in among community stakeholders.

The Cottle County Connected Engagement surveyed residents and key sectors, and convened stakeholders to understand the county's connectivity landscape. These findings indicate that, in Cottle County, fiber-to-the-home exists, internet speeds are good, and residents are satisfied with their service. The data indicate that, while almost 89% of residents have access to speeds of 100 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload, only 64% of surveyed households subscribe to download speeds faster than 25 Mbps. Cottle County households reported an average download speed of 108.3 Mbps.

Community satisfaction rates are high in Cottle County – 90.3% of survey-responding Cottle County residents say their internet service meets their needs. But of those dissatisfied, 67% think speeds are too slow, and 67% find the price to be too high. Even though most residents indicated satisfaction with current service, 75.8% of all respondents would like improved or additional options for broadband.

Action 1 – Establish a permanent Broadband Council to act as advisors to the county and appoint a Broadband Liaison to lead the effort.

Establishing leadership is essential. Having a Broadband Council that represents key community and sector partners allows the county to stay informed of key broadband efforts and opportunities. Having a liaison or champion to spearhead these efforts is also critical. Whether paid or volunteer, part time or full time, this person will be the point of contact for broadband in the county. By staying up to date on broadband policy news, new construction projects in the region, new laws, funding opportunities, and ensuring that local and state policymakers understand the connectivity needs of Cottle County, the liaison and council will serve as important advocates in the work to ensure everyone in the county can access and use the internet. The Broadband Council also will maintain a local presence to keep the community interested and engaged in internet adoption and expanded internet deployment.

Broadband Council advisory members should include representatives from a wide variety of community stakeholders, such as:

- **Health care:** Local physicians or hospital staff
- **Government:** County Judge, County Commissioners, Mayor, City Council, County IT Director
- **Education (K-12):** Superintendents, School IT Directors
- **Education (Higher Education):** University, community college, trade schools or workforce training
- **Public Safety:** County Sheriff's Office, Police Department, Fire and Rescue and surrounding Volunteer Fire Departments, Emergency Medical Services
- **Agriculture:** County Ag Agent, leading ag producers
- **Business:** Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development



- **Library:** Public Library Directors, librarians
- **Community At-Large:** Someone from the community who is interested in broadband

The Broadband Council should meet regularly to discuss broadband opportunities and share information occurring across their respective sectors as it relates to connectivity.

Responsibilities of the Broadband Council should include:

- Staying abreast of state and national broadband policy initiatives and notable broadband news. The council should stay up to date on publications, events, and policy briefs published by the Governor's Broadband Development Council (GBDC) and Broadband Development Office (BDO), as well as monitor notable broadband developments via industry newsletters and focused research.
- Keeping the community informed of projects and progress, and inviting community participation to maintain buy-in and high adoption rates. Getting community buy-in is essential to the long-term success and sustainability of community initiatives. Success of local initiatives requires community support, transparency, and engagement. Not only will this help keep the momentum going but will show ISPs there is true interest for expanded service in the area, which will encourage greater investment in the region.
- Staying up to date on state and federal broadband legislation.
- Applying for applicable state and federal grant programs.
- Ensuring digital engagement in all community sectors (telehealth, telework, education, commerce, etc.).
- Attending workshops, webinars, meetings, and general training that discuss telecommunications generally, and broadband specifically.
- Providing digital literacy and digital skills assistance to the community's at-risk populations.
- Holding regular meetings. The council should meet at least once a month. Meetings can be held virtually, in person, or in a hybrid capacity to accommodate members' needs. These meetings should provide updates on community activities, allow time for guest speakers and presentations, and offer an open forum for discussion about broadband advancements in the county.

Timeline: Establish an official Broadband Council and select a countywide liaison immediately.

Responsible parties: County Judge, Commissioners Court, designated Broadband Liaison

Action 2 – Maintain open communication and positive relations with ISPs working or scheduled to work in the county, as well as ISPs interested in expanding in the county.

ISPs can be 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 changes in plans, to identify challenges they are facing, and to 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 that is 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.

ISPs working in Cottle County, based on January 2022 FCC and CN data, are Cap Rock Telephone Cooperative, Mid-Plains Communications, Santa Rosa Telephone Cooperative Inc., Suddenlink Communications, and T-Mobile.

Timeline: Cottle County Broadband Council should reach out to ISPs for an initial meeting with community stakeholders and decision makers as soon as council leadership is established.

Responsible parties: Local and county governments, Broadband Council

Action 3 – Pursue grants that advance local community development using broadband technologies (e.g., workforce development, telehealth, digital literacy, etc.).

Identifying funding opportunities for programs and projects using broadband and related technologies could be a core function of the Broadband Council. There are many sources of local, state, and federal funding for broadband-related work, including key broadband adoption and usage activities that support affordability of services, high-quality device access, digital skills training, and workforce development.

Additionally, in conjunction with the countywide Connected Community Engagement, Cottle County has been allocated funding to pursue grant applications, if identified. For specifics, contact your Connected Nation Broadband Solutions Manager.

Timeline: Community should identify grant opportunities within one year.

Responsible parties: Local and county governments, Broadband Council

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](#)
- [Governor's Broadband Development Council](#)
- [The Texas Statute](#)
- [The 2021 Governor's Broadband Development Council's Report](#)
- [The 2020 Governor's Broadband Development Council's Report](#)
- [The Texas Broadband Development Office](#)
- [The Texas Broadband Plan 2022](#)
- [Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. County Allocation](#)
- [Final Rule](#)
- [CN's list of Current Broadband Funding](#)
- [BroadbandUSA: Federal Funding Guide](#)
- [Guide to Federal Broadband Funding Opportunities in the U.S.](#)

Broadband readiness

- [Texas Broadband Providers by County](#)



- [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: Ensure that Cottle County residents have access to internet, regardless of income level.

Objective: Help Cottle County's low-income residents' get access to the internet through partnerships and connection to affordability programs.

Affordability is a key component to closing the Digital Divide — being unable to pay for an internet subscription is a barrier for some residents. In Cottle County, 5% of survey respondents had no internet at home. Of those, 50% said it was too expensive. The average monthly cost of internet in Cottle County is \$79.02, which is slightly higher than the average cost of \$78.16 in other Connected communities. Based on the standard metric of affordability (2% of monthly median household income), the cost of internet in Cottle County should be \$67.08 or less per month.

Many residents leverage their smartphone and mobile service as their primary connection to the internet, even when at home. In fact, 9.5% of survey respondents said that they exclusively use their smartphones to go online, and 9.5% of respondents said that they use their smartphone to connect other devices to the internet.

Addressing affordability challenges will allow more residents to get online and access education, telehealth, and workforce opportunities.

Action 1 – Cottle County Broadband Council should promote available low-cost internet packages and federal subsidy programs to assist residents' internet adoption.

Information about monthly internet subsidy programs and providers with low-cost subscription packages should be kept updated and shared widely with the community on the county website, at the library, on county social media channels, and through other outlets (schools, nonprofits, etc.) throughout the community.

There are two main federal internet subsidy programs:

- [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.
- 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 provider that offers connected devices. The internet company will provide the discount to the consumer, then seek reimbursement. Find out which providers participate by clicking [here](#).

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

These and other programs can assist low-income residents with the cost of internet, but ISPs must elect to participate in them in order for residents to benefit. Where ISPs do not participate in federal subsidy programs, the Broadband Council should find out why not, and what can be done to encourage them to do so.

Additionally, ISPs often offer their own low-cost options or subsidized programs to consumers at a greatly reduced cost. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) of 2021 requires internet providers that receive federal grant money to offer low-cost service to eligible low-income households.

Free or low-cost internet programs available in Cottle County* by ISP are:

- Mid-Plains Rural Telephone Cooperative Inc.: [Lifeline](#)
- Suddenlink Communications / Optimum: [ACP](#)
- T-Mobile USA Inc.: [ACP](#), [Project 10Million](#)

**Information subject to change, please check with your area providers to stay up to date on offerings.*

Timeline: Broadband Council should share information about affordability programs immediately.

Responsible parties: Local and county governments, Broadband Council

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

Objective: Partner with faith- and community-based organizations, school districts and institutions of higher education, business and workforce development, and other interested entities to provide digital literacy training.

Having the digital skills necessary to navigate the internet is critical for residents to take advantage of applications that support their education, health, and workforce needs. Many organizations and institutions provide digital 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 the adoption and use of the internet in Cottle County.

Action 1 – Encourage Bicentennial City-County Public Library to offer more digital literacy classes, either in person or virtually.



The Bicentennial City-County Public Library in Paducah has a variety of technology offerings, including Wi-Fi and computers available for public use. This important resource should be promoted widely on the county website, posted on social media, and promoted throughout the community.

In addition to free Wi-Fi, the public can access eight computers: five gaming computers for e-sports (including one set up for virtual reality), two workforce computers, and one computer for research. The library strives to be a community center, encouraging residents to use the space for reading, gaming, playing cards, and kids' activities.

The library currently offers only occasional digital literacy classes, focusing on kids' computer classes and training on the use of its 3-D printer. The library recently offered a full day of technology training and information sessions for K-12 and adults, called "Technified" 21st Century technology experiences, showcasing its new technology. It offered sessions on: Virtual Reality, 3-D printing, Coding, Graphic Design, and Gaming. Library officials hope to add more classes, including office software training, and is open to offering more digital literacy opportunities. Hosting a variety of digital literacy trainings that target various levels of digital proficiency would allow more residents to access this information and take advantage of library resources.

Action 2 – Encourage anchor institutions, community organizations, and service organizations to offer web design and online marketing classes for local businesses.

A 2018 study commissioned by Google, "Connecting Small Businesses in the U.S.," found the main reason businesses weren't engaging online was not lack of access, but lack of an understanding of the value it brings. According to the study, small businesses that are active online are three times as likely to have recently hired workers than those that are not.

Cottle County businesses could benefit from expanded online activity. Survey data indicates that 25.8% of responding residents interact with non-local businesses online daily, and 29% at least once a week. Thirty percent of survey-responding Cottle County residents interact with local businesses online daily, and 16.7% weekly. The data show that county residents are doing business online; this is an opportunity for local business to tap into that space to increase revenue and keep funds local.

Action 3 – Encourage Cottle County public safety entities, library, and community organizations to offer cybersecurity classes.

As more of the world moves to the digital space, cybersecurity, or the protection of networks, devices, and data from unauthorized access, is a critical part of ensuring people can access and use the internet safely. Survey data indicated that public safety organizations in Cottle County do not train (or are not sure if they train) their staff on the basics of cybersecurity and cybercrime, and they do not share cybersecurity and cybercrime resources with the public. Sharing resources and trainings with the public would be helpful for the community. Cybersecurity classes, including how to stay safe while online banking, internet shopping, or conducting other daily online activities, should be offered to county residents. Public safety entities can be great partners in these efforts.

Timeline: Cottle County should begin digital literacy training for residents and businesses within six months.

Responsible parties: Broadband Council, libraries and library boards, community-based organizations, public safety entities, local businesses



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](#)

Cybersecurity

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

Goal 4: Ensure that the Cottle County agricultural community has access to high-speed internet, technology resources, and education to improve efficiency and profitability.

Objective: Improve internet speeds and digital literacy for Cottle County agriculture producers while championing innovation.

Cottle County has an active and robust agricultural community. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) data indicates that the primary agricultural activities are cattle ranching and cotton farming. Additional livestock and animal husbandry practices include raising horses, goats, pigs, chickens, sheep. Additional crops grown are wheat, forage, sesame, and sorghum.

Agriculture is an essential industry, most often located in rural communities, yet it often struggles as a sector to access high-speed internet. While all survey-responding ag producers in Cottle County said that they have Wi-Fi internet accessible across their entire operation, the data indicated that the average internet speed in the ag sector was 33 Mbps, which is considered underserved according to several federal programs.

Where agricultural producers have access to high-speed internet, technology has transformed the way they work — bringing better outcomes, higher yields, and greater efficiency. Technology will play a large role in agriculture of the future, in how we feed ourselves, protect our natural resources, and conserve our land. The Cottle County Broadband Council should coordinate with the ag community to better understand the technology needs of farmers and ranchers and support their success.

Action 1 – Broadband Council should help ag producers and ISPs maintain open communication by scheduling occasional check-ins.

The Cottle County ag sector understands the importance of connectivity and uses it regularly. Most ag respondents are online daily or at least once a week. In fact, 100% of survey respondents text and go online to check the weather daily. They use email, update websites, visit YouTube, research markets, and visit agriculture-related websites at least once a week.

Sixty-seven percent of respondents use ag-related mobile apps, utilize online tech assistance, go online to buy supplies at least once a week, and seek out USDA information at least once a month.



One hundred percent of responding ag producers say their internet meets their needs. This is good news, as ag tech innovations will require high-speed broadband. ISPs working in the county have indicated that they are amenable to enhancing their services to meet customer needs wherever possible. Open communication with these ISPs could lead to additional opportunities to expand ag producers' internet access. Decision makers should be mindful of opportunities to improve ag efficiency and profits when making decisions about long-term planning, to ensure ag interests are represented.

Action 2 – Partner with the AgriLife Extension office to encourage technology adoption by offering ag-specific technology training and digital literacy.

Ag-tech adoption in Cottle County can expand with additional support. Only 33% of respondents currently use GPS-enabled tractors, semi-autonomous tractors, remote integrated displays, and nutrient management systems, while another third are not currently using, but have an interest in, telematic equipment monitoring and connected sensors. Additionally, survey-responding ag producers selected “not interested” in 50% of the ag-tech applications listed in the survey. This shows there is an opportunity for ag producers to become more engaged with technology.

Depending on community interest and participation, education resources could be as simple as sharing links and information about innovations in ag technology on a county broadband resources website or through social media channels. The Ag Extension office could also partner with the public library to offer ag-specific digital literacy training classes. If the community shows interest, agriculture technology speakers could be invited to present workshops or seminars to local farmers and ranchers on technology applications that could benefit their operations (such as a presentation on Smart Ranch technology: cattle tags to track cattle, sensors to let ranchers know when gates are open, or when tanks are dry).

The Cottle County Broadband Council and Cottle County AgriLife Extension office could partner with their counterparts in surrounding counties for ag-tech events to maximize participation. Neighboring counties have also recently engaged in Connected engagements to support broadband planning, including King, Knox, Foard, Hardeman, and Childress counties. Clay County hosted an Ag Tech Summit in May 2022, which county leaders hope will become an annual event, and could be an opportunity for Cottle County to partner.

More connectivity and technology could benefit America's family farms and ranches. The Cottle County Broadband Council should strive to keep the ag sector in mind with all future planning.

Timeline: Broadband Council should begin sharing ag-tech resources immediately and consider scheduling classes within six months.

Responsible parties: Cottle County AgriLife Extension office, Cottle County Broadband Council, Bicentennial City-County Public Library

Resources

- [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)
- USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture [Resources Page](#)
- [The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#)
- [Texas Rural Leadership Program](#)
- [The Farm Journal: Ag Web, technology](#)



- [Free online Agriculture course from universities across the globe](#)
- Ku, Linly. "[New Agriculture Technology in Modern Farming.](#)" *Plug and Play*, October 06, 2021.