



Connected
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Addressing Your Community's Unique Needs

Wichita County, Texas Executive Summary

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Overview

Wichita 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, Wichita 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 October 2021 and February 2022, Wichita County conducted a comprehensive survey of broadband technology access and adoption across the community that collected responses from 1,141 households. CN Texas staff also met with community 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 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 Wichita County. This document provides a summary of that assessment and recommendations for improving broadband and technology access, adoption, and usage. Additionally, CN Texas created an interactive map. To access that map, please click [here](#).

WICHITA COUNTY, TEXAS

QUICK FACTS

Population

129,350

Households

48,538

Median Household Income

\$49,710

Poverty Rate

17.4%

Adults with a Bachelor's Degree
or Higher

23.1%

Median Age

34.6

Households with
Broadband Access¹

99.99%

Source: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?q=0500000US48485>
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/>



67.9% of surveyed households in
Wichita County report subscribing
to fixed internet service



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

*In Wichita County, **96.1%** of households have access to internet service at speeds needed to run many modern applications (100 Mbps downstream and 10 Mbps upstream). Statewide, **93.55%** of households have internet access at these speeds.*

*More than half of employed survey respondents in Wichita County (**58.5%**) report teleworking in some capacity. Of those, **34%** telework every day and an additional **22%** telework several days per week.*

*Countywide, **41.4% of households and 41.5% of businesses** reported that they were dissatisfied with their current internet service. The top reasons for dissatisfaction were slow speeds, high prices, and unreliable connections.*

*Nearly 9 out of 10 surveyed households (**89.4%**) 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, virtually all households in Wichita County (99.99%) 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 Wichita County is distributed throughout the county.

Below is the list of internet service providers (ISPs) in Wichita County.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE QUICK FACTS

Unserved Households (25/3 Mbps)
4

Households Served (10/1 Mbps)
100%

Households Served (25/3 Mbps)
99.99%

Households Served (50/5 Mbps)
99.91%

Households Served (100/10 Mbps)
96.10%

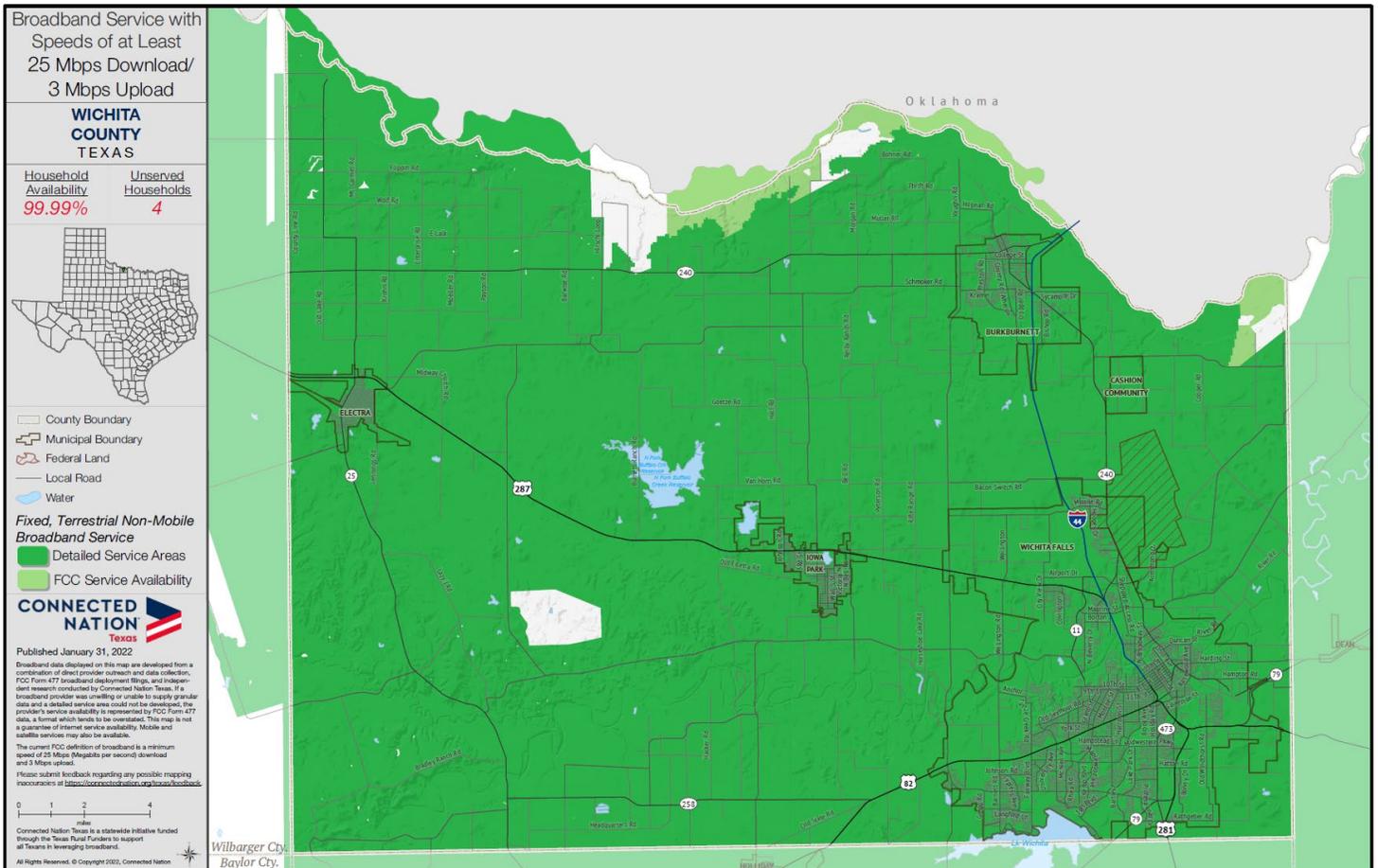
*Broadband data released by CN Texas in January 2022:
<https://connectednation.org/texas/mapping-analysis/>*

PROVIDER	TECHNOLOGY	MAXIMUM DOWNLOAD SPEED (Mbps)	MAXIMUM UPLOAD SPEED (Mbps)
AMA TechTel Communications	Fixed Wireless	50	3
AT&T Southwest	DSL	18	1.5
Cobalt Ridge	Fixed Wireless	60	15
Electra Telephone Co.	DSL	50	3
Nextlink Residential	Fixed Wireless	100	100
Santa Rosa Telephone Cooperative	Fiber DSL	1000 50	1000 10
Spectrum	Cable	940	35
Suddenlink Communications	Cable	400	40
Texhoma Wireless	Fixed Wireless	15	5
TGM Pinnacle Network Solutions	Fixed Wireless	50	5
T-Mobile	Fixed Wireless	25	3
Valor Telecommunications of Texas LP	DSL	200	200
Vexus	Fiber	1000	1000

Below is Wichita County's (25/3 Mbps) map. To access the full map, go to



<https://connectednation.org/texas/county-maps/> and select Wichita County from the list. Portions of the county are served by ISPs offering slower advertised speeds, and those areas are not shown on this map.



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

The first step in understanding the status of broadband infrastructure in Wichita County and statewide is having accurate maps. Accordingly, CN Texas works with providers 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 provider outreach and data collection, FCC Form 477 broadband deployment filings, and independent research conducted by CN Texas. If a provider was unable or unwilling to supply granular data and a detailed service area could not be developed, the provider's service is represented by Form 477 data alone, a format that tends to overstate the service territory.

To access the map as a PDF, click [here](#).



Household Survey Results

Household Survey Results



WICHITA COUNTY SURVEY QUICK FACTS

Fixed Home Broadband Adoption
67.9%

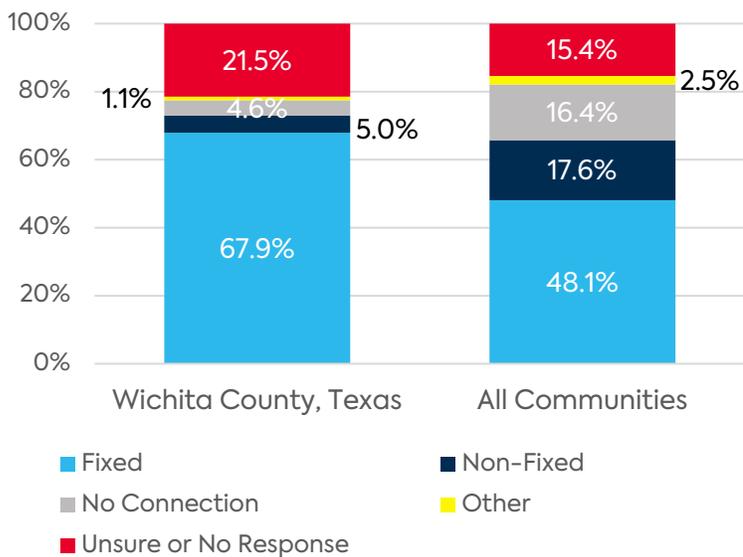
Average Monthly Internet Cost
\$76.08

Average Download Speed
49.3 Mbps

Households Satisfied with Service
58.6%

The following section provides an overview of results from a broadband survey conducted in Wichita County between October 2021 and February 2022. Altogether, CN Texas received 1,141 completed surveys from households across the county; respondents provided insights into their internet connectivity or lack thereof. Data from Wichita County are compared to data from other rural Connected communities that participated in the program across Michigan, Ohio, and Texas to benchmark and identify areas for improvement.

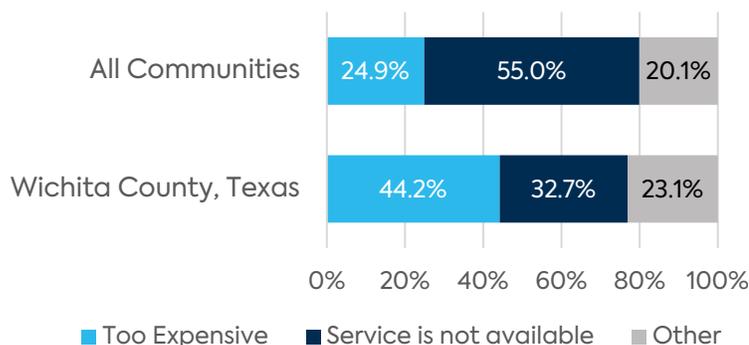
Home Broadband Adoption



ADOPTION

In Wichita County, 67.9% of households that took the survey subscribe to fixed broadband service delivered via a cable, DSL, fiber, or fixed wireless technology, while 5% indicate they have internet service delivered via dial-up, satellite, or a mobile wireless service. Nearly 5% of respondents said they do not subscribe to internet, while an additional 21.5% of respondents said they were unsure what kind of service they have or gave no response.

Primary Barrier



Among those without a home internet connection, 44.2% said they did not have broadband because it was too expensive. An additional 32.7% said service is not available at their address. Like many other communities, cost and access are primary barriers to home broadband adoption.

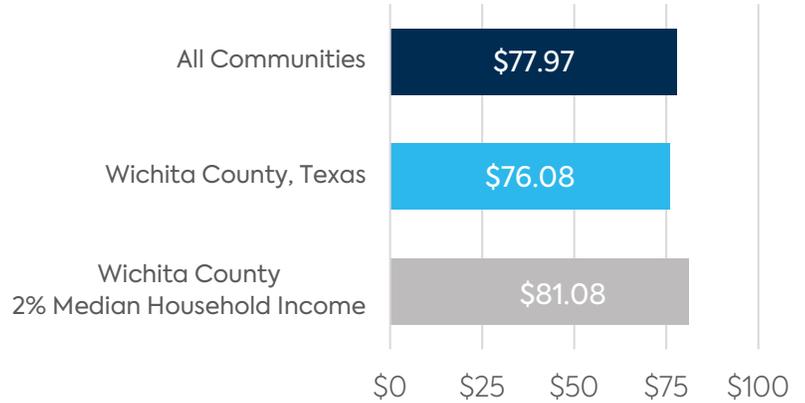
Household Survey Results



CONNECTION DETAILS

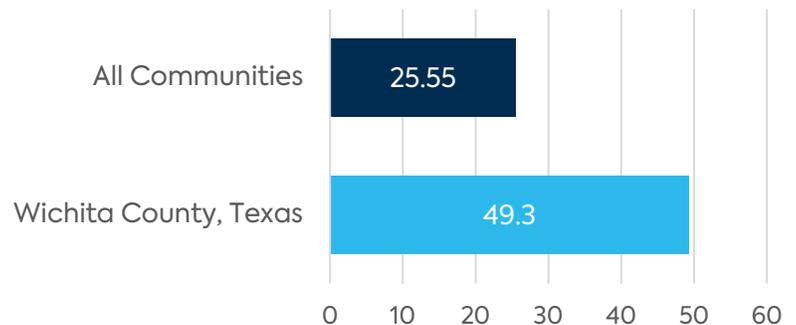
Two percent of monthly income is a recognized standard for measuring the affordability of a home internet connection. Survey respondents indicate that on average, their internet connection costs about \$76.08 per month. Comparatively, two percent of the median household income in Wichita County is \$81.08 per month.

Average Monthly Cost

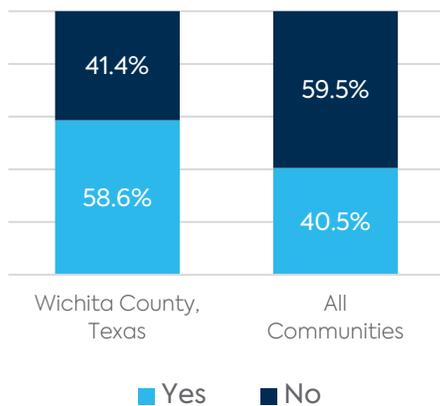


The FCC currently defines broadband as an internet connection with a download speed of at least 25 Mbps and upload speed of at least 3 Mbps. The average reported download speed among households in Wichita County is 49.3 Mbps.

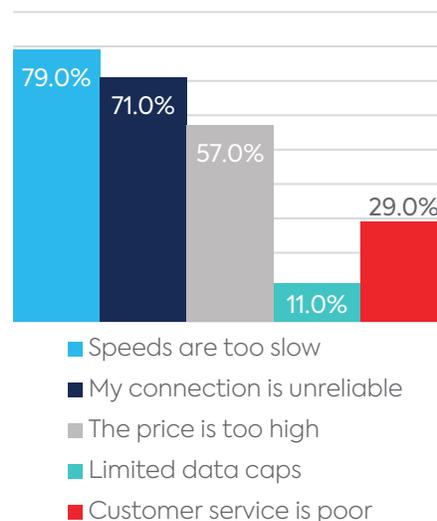
Average Speeds (Mbps)



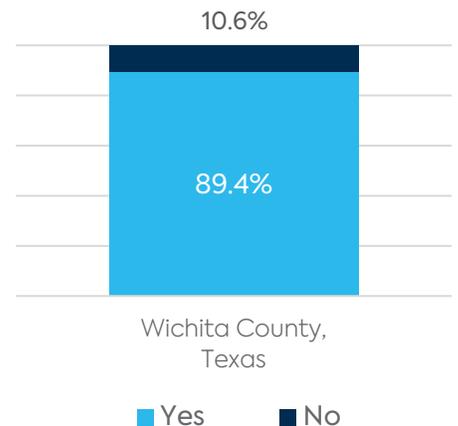
Does Your Internet Meet Your Needs?



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. About 2 out of 5 responding households (41.4%) indicate that their internet connection does not meet their needs. This is a lower rate of dissatisfaction than among households in other communities (59.5%).

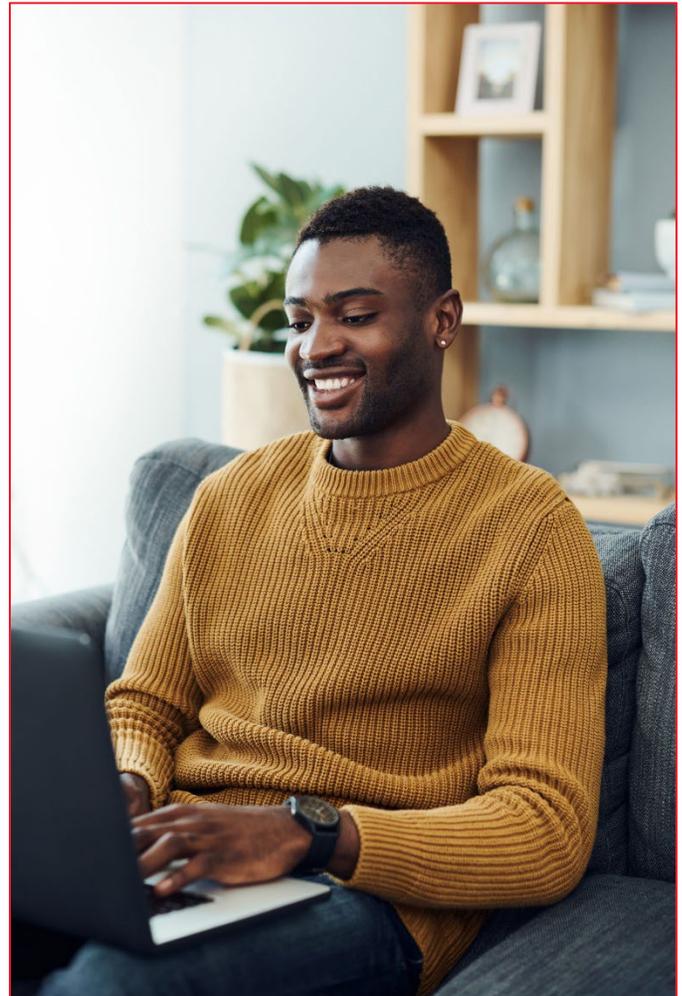
When asked why their connection does not meet their needs, 79% of dissatisfied households indicate that their speed is too slow, 71% say their connection is unreliable, and 57% indicate that the price is too high. Respondents could choose more than one reason for dissatisfaction.

Finally, 89.4% of all respondents indicate that they are interested in additional internet choices for their home.

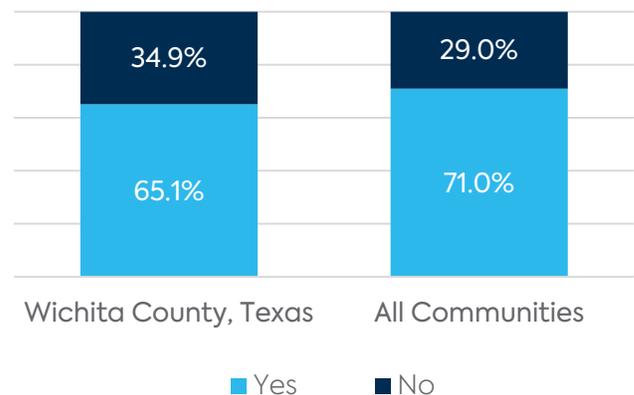
MOBILE CONNECTIVITY

65.1% of households reported that they subscribe to mobile internet service, which they access via a smartphone or similar mobile device. This is lower than in other Connected communities (71.0%).

Among those mobile-connected households, 15.3% report that they either rely on their 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



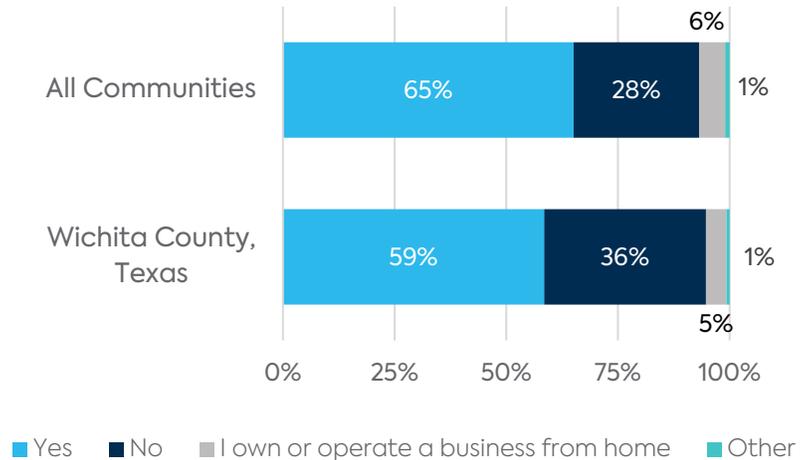
TELEWORK

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.

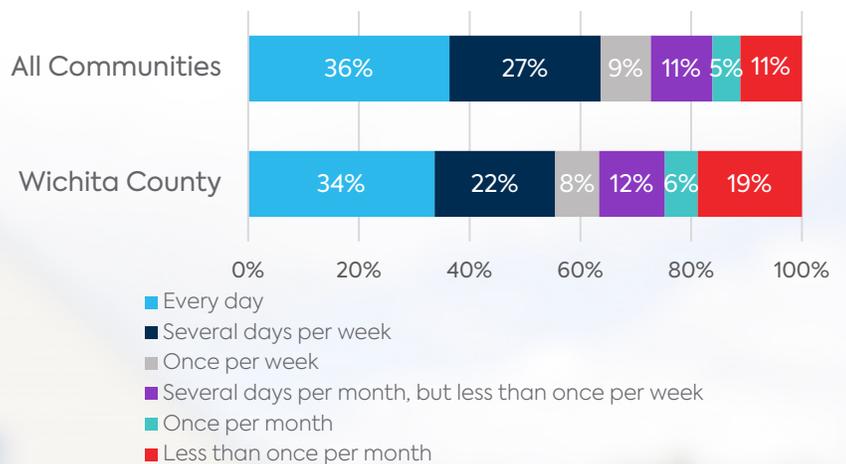
Teleworking is quickly becoming a critical part of growing a local economy because it represents an opportunity to attract and retain employees even when employees are not located in the same community as their employers. However, this only works if those employees have access to advanced broadband infrastructure.

Approximately 59% of employed respondents in Wichita County indicate they telework in some capacity.

Do You Currently Telework?



How Frequently Do You Telework?





Recommendations



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

Wichita County survey results reveal a community with higher-than-average internet speeds, adoption rates, and device ownership. In the long term, Wichita County should capitalize on state and federal funding opportunities, public-private partnerships, and local leadership to bring quality programs to residents, businesses, and community institutions that will sustain economic growth, business retention, workforce and community development, scholastic achievement, public safety preparedness, and health care advancements. Armed with local data purporting the connectivity and digital education needs and wants of residents, Wichita County is equipped to institute immediate and long-term solutions to bridge the Digital Divide.

Goal 1: Establish central leadership in Wichita County as a tool for economic advancement and community development

From October 2021 to February 2022, Wichita County stakeholders, in partnership with Connected Nation Texas (CN Texas), collected surveys across nine community sectors to assess the connectivity, affordability, and general technology needs of Wichita County residents. The local broadband team, led by County Judge Woody Gossom, brought together community stakeholders spanning education, government, health care, business, and technology. With Judge Gossom's upcoming retirement in December 2022, it is paramount that Wichita County establishes a dedicated, and long-term, broadband team to ensure work completed as part of this community engagement is carried forth, and that the community stays up to date on state, local, and federal broadband happenings.

Objective:

Establish a broadband team in Wichita County that can serve as the point of contact for questions, meetings, and projects.

Actions:

Action 1 – Create a Wichita County Broadband Committee with leaders from each community sector. Wichita County should establish a local network of leaders who are passionate about improving broadband throughout the community. A standing group of leaders has already been active in the broadband space — it's a matter of making this team official as survey results are published and grant opportunities arise. This group should function as an overseer of broadband progress, ensuring realistic timelines, budget, and connectivity speeds are being achieved and maintained.



The Broadband Committee could have representation from the following community sectors:

- **Health Care:** Local physicians or hospital staff: Electra Hospital, Red River Hospital, VA Medical Clinic, Community Healthcare Center of Wichita Falls, local physicians serving in private practice (e.g., veterinarians, dentists, primary care), and others
- **Government:** County Judge, County Commissioners, Mayor, City Council, County IT Director
- **Education (K-12):** Superintendents, School IT Directors: Iowa Park CISD, Burkburnett ISD, City View ISD, Electra ISD, Wichita Falls ISD, private and charter schools
- **Education (Higher Education):** Midwestern State, Vernon College, Wayland Baptist University
- **Public Safety:** Sheriff's Office, Police and Fire Departments, Emergency Management
- **Agriculture:** County Agriculture Agent, leading agriculture producers
- **Business:** Local chamber of commerce and economic development centers
- **Community At Large:** A local resident who is interested in furthering the broadband agenda of Wichita County

Action 1A – Determine ongoing responsibilities of the Wichita County Broadband Committee.

Assigning the local committee specific duties will help ensure long-term success.

The committee's responsibilities should include:

- Stay up to date on state and federal broadband legislation
- Apply for applicable state and federal grant programs
- Ensure digital engagement in Wichita County in all community sectors (telehealth, telework, online learning, Wi-Fi in businesses, etc.)
- Attend workshops, webinars, meetings, and general training that discuss broadband specifically and telecommunications generally
- Provide digital literacy and digital skills assistance to at-risk populations in the community
- Hold regular meetings. The committee should meet at least once a month. Meetings can be held virtually, in person, or in a hybrid capacity to accommodate the needs of its members. 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 Wichita County.

Action 2 – Create a technology portal or website to promote local broadband resources. The website should serve as a one-stop resource for broadband providers, residents, and local leaders. The website should include resources related to digital literacy, digital skills, reduced-cost broadband offerings in the county, public computing centers, and other relevant information for residents and internet service providers (ISPs). Resources could be added to an existing county or city website.

Action 3 – Track state and national broadband policy. The Broadband Committee should remain informed and up to date on any publications, events, and policy briefs published by the (1) Governor's Broadband Development Council (GBDC) and (2) Broadband Development Office (BDO). The BDO is



guiding broadband efforts at the state level. More information about the office can be found in the Resources section below. The committee should coordinate ongoing community outreach efforts and initiatives in accordance with the long-term objectives of the aforementioned entities. Local broadband teams should mirror the successes and objectives laid out by the state.

Responsible Parties:

Community anchor institutions: libraries, schools, businesses, nonprofits, etc.; internet service providers; local units of government; community residents

Timeline:

Since Wichita County already has leaders identified in most community sectors, the next step is to begin building out the network to include other interested community contacts.

Resources:

[Municipal Boards: Best Practices for Adoption Technology](#)

[Smart Cities Readiness Guide](#)

[Texas Broadband Providers by County](#)

[Becoming Broadband Ready](#)

[Texas Broadband Development Office](#)

[How states are expanding broadband access: New research identifies tactics for connecting unserved communities](#)

[Connected Nation: What we do for you](#)

[BroadbandUSA: Federal Funding Guide](#)

[Letter: Do your part on broadband](#)

Goal 2: Increase broadband speeds across Wichita County to accommodate modern applications, such as digital streaming, online gaming, and teleworking

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) defines broadband as a minimum of 25 Mbps download speed and 3 Mbps upload speed. In Wichita County, survey results indicate 54% of internet-connected households subscribe to download speeds faster than 25 Mbps. Residents reported their average download speed to be 49.3 Mbps. While this is nearly double the federal standard, this speed only supports about five to seven devices at a time. For homes relying on multiple digital devices, including smart TVs, gaming consoles, laptops, and cell phones, five to seven is a relatively small (and limiting) number. On average, households that subscribe to the internet in Wichita County report having 15.5 internet-connected devices in their homes. With telework, telehealth, remote learning, online gaming, and television streaming, the need for a fast and reliable home internet connection is in high demand.



While the current federal definition of broadband is 25x3 Mbps, many funding programs are now requiring ISPs to provide speeds of at least 100x20 Mbps to qualify for funding. This greater threshold provides for more connected devices at a single time and greater digital opportunities. To attract businesses, retain skilled workers, and encourage community and economic development, Wichita County should bring 100 Mbps connections to all community institutions, ensuring quality internet connection for all. [Ian Greenblatt](#), Managing Director of J.D. Power’s Technology, Media and Telecommunications Intelligence business unit, says it best: “Without broadband, you might see lower property values, decreased job and population growth, lower rates of business formation, higher unemployment rates. These are all part and parcel of a geographic inability to access the internet.”

Objective:

Bring 100x20 Mbps connectivity to Wichita County residents in partnership with broadband providers and community stakeholders.

Actions:

Action 1 – Review current and planned broadband deployments in the county. The first step to increase broadband speeds across Wichita County is meeting with local broadband providers, including those who have been allocated funding through the FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction to determine the community’s infrastructure needs (i.e., what needs to be updated or replaced, costs, and obstacles). Many of these conversations were already started at the March 29th Wichita County Provider Meeting. As new funding sources become available, the county should touch base with providers to determine the best use of monies, and to determine areas of the community that will benefit the most from improved (or new) infrastructure.

Wichita County RDOF Phase I Winners

- Charter, 139 locations (\$43,046)
- LTD Broadband, 49 locations (\$52,818)
- NTS Communications, 5 locations (\$4,273)
- Resound Networks, LLC, 454 locations (\$384,334)

Providers in Wichita County (data published January 31, 2022, CN Texas)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| - AMA TechTel Communications | - Suddenlink Communications |
| - AT&T Southwest | - Texhoma Wireless |
| - Cobalt Ridge | - TGM Pinnacle Network Solutions |
| - Electra Telephone Co. | - T-Mobile |
| - Nextlink Residential | - Valor Communications of Texas LP |
| - Santa Rosa Telephone Company | - Vexus |
| - Spectrum | |

Action 1A – Provide survey results and interactive map to providers. When meeting with ISPs, it is important to share the results of the survey and provide an overview of the interactive map. More than 2 out of 5 residents who do not subscribe to broadband (44.2%) said it was because service was



too expensive. This highlights the need for affordable options in Wichita County. ISPs should be asked what supplemental programs they can promote or offer throughout the community to bridge this gap. Of those who do subscribe to the internet, 41.4% said their current service plan does not meet their needs. This granular local data paints a unique picture that should be used to enrich the quality, type, and location of services offered throughout the community.

Action 2 – Consider public-private partnerships. Public-private partnerships (P3s) take many forms, depending on the needs and resources of each community. The strength of these partnerships is that each party brings something important to the table that the other lacks or cannot easily acquire. For example, Wichita County can offer infrastructure (e.g., publicly owned buildings, light poles, towers, other vertical assets for mounting fixed wireless or wirelines infrastructure) for the deployment of a network, and guarantee committed anchor tenants and possible funding sources.

1. **Model 1: Private Investment, Public Facilitation** — Make available public assets, share geographic information and systems data, and streamline permitting and inspection processes. Offer economic development incentives to attract private broadband investment.
2. **Model 2: Private Execution, Public Funding** — Identify revenue streams that can be directed to a private partner. Funding may include appropriated payments from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds established by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund, Reconnect Loan and Grant Program, and several others listed on Connected Nation's [website](#). New revenue streams are likely to become available from the FCC and/or state government.
3. **Model 3: Shared Investment and Risk** — Evaluate how to best use assets to attract private investment, evaluate funding new assets to attract private investment, evaluate building new broadband assets to businesses and/or homes for leasing to private ISPs.

Action 2A – Develop a strategy to attract profitable partnerships and maximize grant opportunities. When seeking providers to partner with, the community should think long term. The landmark Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, signed into law in November 2021, promises \$65 billion for broadband. These funds will be used in a variety of ways, but the biggest chunk of money is designated for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD). BEAD funding will be allocated to states, which will then be responsible for doling it out according to a set plan. As the Wichita County community plans for these funds, it is important to consider reliable partners, matching funds, and long-term technology solutions. Additional commentary from technology and policy experts has been linked in the Resource section below.

Action 3 – Prepare sample grant applications and supporting documents for upcoming funding opportunities. Wichita County should monitor funding sources at the state and federal levels that promise money for broadband expansion and improvement projects. Application windows are historically very brief, and application reviews are very competitive. Therefore, it is very important for



communities, especially rural ones, to have smart, well-written applications with supporting data ready to go. It is not only important to be prepared in advance of an application window, but it is important to prioritize forward- and long-term-thinking when applying for funding. Wichita County residents will continue to need broadband for telehealth, telework, communication, public safety, and entertainment. As demand rises, infrastructure will need to support varied and broad uses.

Funding sources include:

- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
 - A minimum of \$100 million will be allocated to the state of Texas.
 - The state is responsible for developing and distributing these funds.
- Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds
 - The U.S. Treasury Department issued its Final Rule on January 6, 2022, expanding the use of funds for broadband.
- Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (CPF)
 - Under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the CPF provides \$10 billion to eligible governments to carry out critical capital projects that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring.
 - The Texas State Legislature appropriated all the funding from the CPF for broadband purposes. The Broadband Development Office (BDO) plans to stand up a competitive grant process to support local broadband projects around the state. More information can be found on the BDO's website (linked below).
- Economic Adjustment Assistance
 - The Economic Adjustment Assistance Program, through the EDA, makes \$500 million in grants available to American communities. A wide range of technical, planning, workforce development, entrepreneurship, public works, and infrastructure projects are eligible for funding.

Action 3A – Contract with a grant writer to expedite the application process and ensure that opportunities are not missed. As previously mentioned, grant application windows are short and review processes competitive. Should a community eligible grant be identified, Wichita County should work with a reliable grant writer who can accurately capture the needs and wants of Wichita County residents, businesses, and community leaders in writing. More information on grant writing can be found in Goal 6.

Responsible Parties:

Local units of government; broadband providers; community and regional organizations

Timeline:

Wichita County leaders should begin meeting with broadband providers within three months of receiving this plan. Increasing broadband speeds will increase the number of opportunities for residents, businesses, educators, and community leaders. Grant writing activities should commence as applicable opportunities arise.



Resources:

[The push to expand rural broadband expands across state government](#)

[How much internet speed do I need?](#)

[US Telecom: Preparing your community for broadband success](#)

[The era of the broadband public-private partnership: New trends and opportunities in the wake of COVID-19](#)

[For full effect, broadband expansion will require cooperation](#)

[Texas Broadband Development Office: funding resources](#)

[Texas broadband providers by county](#)

[U.S. Department of the Treasury: Coronavirus state and local fiscal recovery funds](#)

[EDA: Economic adjustment assistance](#)

[Current broadband funding](#)

[Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds](#)

[Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, County Allocation](#)

[Guide to federal broadband funding opportunities in the U.S.](#)

[Auction 904: Rural Digital Opportunity Fund](#)

[FCC: First RDOF default public notice](#)

[The BEAD grant dilemma](#)

Goal 3: Curate local workforce development and digital literacy curriculum to expand economic opportunities among military spouses and Wichita County employees

Digital literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information. It requires both cognitive and technical skills. When answering digital literacy questions on the residential survey, responses ranged from “I need to learn,” and “I know a little,” to “I’m comfortable with this.” Wichita County businesses report that 30.5% of their staff are advanced technology users with high-level digital skills, and an additional 43.2% are moderate technology users. Nearly one-quarter of businesses (22.5%) said that the technology skills of their employees are a poor match for the business’ needs, or only match the needs of the company fairly well. These data reflect the need for residents to focus on increasing their technology skills. Ultimately, technology skills are paramount to competitiveness in the workforce, community development in an uber-digital society, and to general quality of life (e.g., telehealth, teleworking, etc.).



Furthermore, Wichita County has the unique opportunity to provide digital literacy support to the spouses stationed at Sheppard Air Force Base. Life in the military is often hallmarked by change, specifically in the form of moving from base to base and state to state. This revolving door of change can make it hard for military spouses to find steady work outside of the home. Telework is the prime solution if the user has the skills and knowledge to operate a digital device. For their part, the Wichita County Broadband Committee should create a digital readiness program for military spouses. The program should cover telework basics and equip participants with skills necessary for landing a job (e.g., resume building, interview skills, etc.). This program should extend to the full community and include digital skills, digital literacy, and workforce development curriculum to benefit all Wichita County residents.

Objective:

The Wichita County Broadband Committee should partner with local stakeholders to put on community workshops with workforce development and digital literacy focused curricula.

Actions:

Action 1 – Look to other communities for examples of how to get started. Community organizations across the state and the country have worked tirelessly during the pandemic to bridge the Digital Divide, specifically as it relates to digital literacy. Examples include the Orleans Digital Literacy Initiative in Buffalo, N.Y.; the Digital Literacy Coaches and Navigator Program in Wisconsin; Opportunity Las Cruces with the local Economic Development Department and Workforce Development and Career Center; digital literacy certification and computer training in Plainfield, N.J.; and Senior Connect in Austin, Texas. Each of these programs is unique, but their underlying current is the drive to provide free digital training and support to the community. The hope is that residents will be able to use the internet with ease and greater confidence after engaging with one of these local programs. To learn more about any of these initiatives, please see the links in the Resource section below.

Developing curriculum for workforce development and digital literacy courses is under way across the state of Texas and the country. It's likely that organizations in Wichita County already have basic curriculum prepared for such workshops. The Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce offers great programs, such as BOSS and the Circuit, that are enriching the skills (and professional networks) of employees throughout the community.

Action 2 – Partner with community stakeholders for workshop execution. Industry leaders can speak to the importance of broadband in their lines of work, as well as discuss its myriad uses. For example, a banker can discuss the benefits of online banking, while the school IT Director can discuss the importance of online safety. Wichita County already has the resources (both personnel and curriculum) to deliver quality programs to the community.

Community partners:

- Goodwill Industries of Southwest Oklahoma & North Texas



- Workforce Solutions of North Texas (Wichita Falls Office)
- Nortex Regional Planning Commission
- Chambers of Commerce: Wichita Falls, Burkburnett, Iowa Park, Electra
- Libraries: Wichita Falls, Burkburnett, Iowa Park, Electra
- Burkburnett Rotary Club

Workshop topics to consider:

- Intro to Microsoft Office Suite
 - o **About:** Train employees on the basics of Microsoft Office Suite given its ubiquitous use in companies/industries.
 - o **Who:** Wichita Chamber of Commerce
- How to teleconference
 - o **About:** What is telework, and why is it appealing for employees and employers?
 - o **Who:** Wichita Chamber of Commerce
- Intro to social media and websites
 - o How can an online presence help a business grow and improve productivity?
 - o **Who:** Wichita Chamber of Commerce
- Telehealth 101
 - o **About:** Discuss terminology commonly associated with telemedicine and the benefits of virtual health care.
 - o **Who:** Local hospital/medical professionals
- Just what the doctor ordered
 - o **About:** Discuss how residents can use free and reduced-cost digital services to improve physical and mental health.
 - o **Who:** Local hospital/medical professionals
- Online safety tips and tricks
 - o **About:** Discuss how to keep you, your family, and your information safe online
 - o **Who:** Wichita Falls Police or Sheriff's Department
- Effective online learning and teaching strategies
 - o **About:** Discuss what teachers and students can do to maximize the benefits of online learning.
 - o **Who:** Iowa Park CISD, Burkburnett ISD, City View ISD, Electra ISD, Wichita Falls ISD, private and charter schools
- Continuing-education opportunities
 - o **About:** What programs, courses, and classes are available for students who would like to continue learning beyond the classroom. Discussions can address available resources for residents who would like to return to college, obtain a certification or GED, or complete continuing-education courses.
 - o **Who:** Iowa Park CISD, Burkburnett ISD, City View ISD, Electra ISD, Wichita Falls ISD, private and charter schools



Responsible Parties:

Residents; Local units of government; community organizations; Businesses; internet service providers

Timeline:

Digital literacy and workforce development programs are important in the here and now. Classes should be offered by Fall 2022. Curricula should be reviewed and updated every three to four months.

Resources:

[Improving the Quality of Life in Rural America with Broadband Internet](#)

[Implementing Productive Teleworking with Business-Quality Mobile Communications](#)

[Texas Broadband Providers by County](#)

[The complete guide to digital skills](#)

[Grow with Google](#)

[AARP Joins with Nonprofit to Teach Tech to Older Adults](#)

[Digital Learn: Use a computer to do almost anything!](#)

[National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#)

[5 Reasons Why Libraries are Essential to Have](#)

[How to Create a Public Computer Center](#)

[Northland Public Library](#)

[First -Ever National Study: Millions of People Rely on Library Computers for Employment, Health, and Education \(Bill and Melinda Gates](#)

[Foundation\)](#)

[Senior Connect: Connecting Senior in Central Texas](#)

[Plainfield Public Library to Offer Computer Literacy Training](#)

[Closing the digital skills gap: Opportunity Las Cruces](#)

[Eau Claire County: County starts free digital literacy program](#)

[It Takes a Village: Solving the Broadband Adoption Problem in Rural America](#)

[U.S. Census: Wichita County](#)

[FCC Chairwoman Rosenworcel responds to Rep Mrvan on improving veterans access to broadband](#)

[Orleans County Digital Literacy Initiative](#)

[Mobile Computer Labs, Classrooms Bring STEM to rural schools](#)



Goal 4: Pursue regional planning opportunities with other forward-thinking and broadband-inclusive communities

Action 1 – Host broadband meetings with regional stakeholders. Boasting a hospital, a university, active businesses, and a young population, Wichita County is a hub of activity in the region. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median age in Wichita County is 34.6, slightly lower than the state average. With once-in-a-lifetime levels of funding allocated for broadband in the Infrastructure Bill (IIJA), it is important to think regionally. Just as it is important for Wichita County to have improved connectivity, it is important for neighboring communities to also be connected. There is power and value in community partnerships, especially when those communities share rural Texas values.

All surrounding counties, including Cotton, Archer, Wilbarger, Tillman, Clay, and Baylor counties, have received funding to complete similar community broadband assessments, with more to come. At the conclusion of all county engagements, communities will be able to compare data findings, discuss outreach strategies, and share tips and tricks for improving broadband with each other based upon shared interests and experiences.

Goal 5: Increase broadband adoption and usage among Wichita County residents by providing and promoting low- and reduced-cost internet plans and subsidy programs

Action 1 – Promote and share information about programs that help residents overcome the affordability barrier to broadband adoption, including Lifeline and the Affordable Connectivity Program.

- **Lifeline Program:** This is a government assistance program run by the Public Utility Commission of Texas that provides a discount to qualifying low-income customers who subscribe to voice telephone service or broadband internet access service. The Lifeline discount for qualifying low-income customers may be up to \$12.75 per month, depending on the services a resident subscribes to and the customer's eligibility. Lifeline service is non-transferrable and is limited to one discount per household. More information can be found on the Public Utility Commission of Texas' [website](#).
- **Affordable Connectivity Program:** Once known as the Emergency Broadband Benefit, the Affordable Connectivity Program was made permanent with the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (commonly referred to as the Infrastructure Bill). The program provides a \$30 per month discount for broadband with participating providers. For more information, visit the FCC's [webpage](#).



Goal 6: Identify opportunities for economic advancement in Wichita 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, Wichita County has been allocated funding to pursue applicable grant opportunities. For specifics, please contact your Broadband Solutions Manager.

The goals and actions outlined in this document provide the framework for county leaders to prepare for and pursue applicable funding opportunities and program advancements designed to close the Digital Divide in Wichita County. 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. CN Texas is grateful for the continued leadership and partnership of County Judge Woody Gossom and members of the Wichita County Broadband Team.