




Connected
A CONNECTED NATION Initiative

Addressing Your Community's Unique Needs

Haskell County, Texas Executive Summary

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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. That includes 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, the Haskell County Broadband Committee 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 2021 and January 2022, Haskell County conducted a comprehensive survey of broadband technology access and adoption across the community that collected responses from 82 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 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 Haskell 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](#).

HASKELL COUNTY, TEXAS

QUICK FACTS

Population
5,416

Households
2,162

Median Household Income
\$48,955

Poverty Rate
15.4%

Adults with a Bachelor's Degree
or Higher
16.7%

Hispanic or Latino
25.4%

Households with
Broadband Access¹
96.11%

Source: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?q=0500000US48207>

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/>



61% of households in Haskell County report subscribing to fixed internet service

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

*Only **83.3%** of households in Haskell County 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 this speed.*

*About one-half of employed survey respondents in Haskell County (**51.4%**) report teleworking in some capacity. Of those, **26%** telework every day, and an additional **16%** telework several days per week.*

*About **42.4% of households and 40% 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.*

***84.8%** of households 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, the majority (96.11%) of Haskell 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 Haskell County is distributed throughout the county.

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

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE QUICK FACTS	
Unserved Households (25/3 Mbps)	89
Households Served (10/1 Mbps)	99.96%
Households Served (25/3 Mbps)	96.11%
Households Served (50/5 Mbps)	94.66%
Households Served (100/10 Mbps)	83.30%

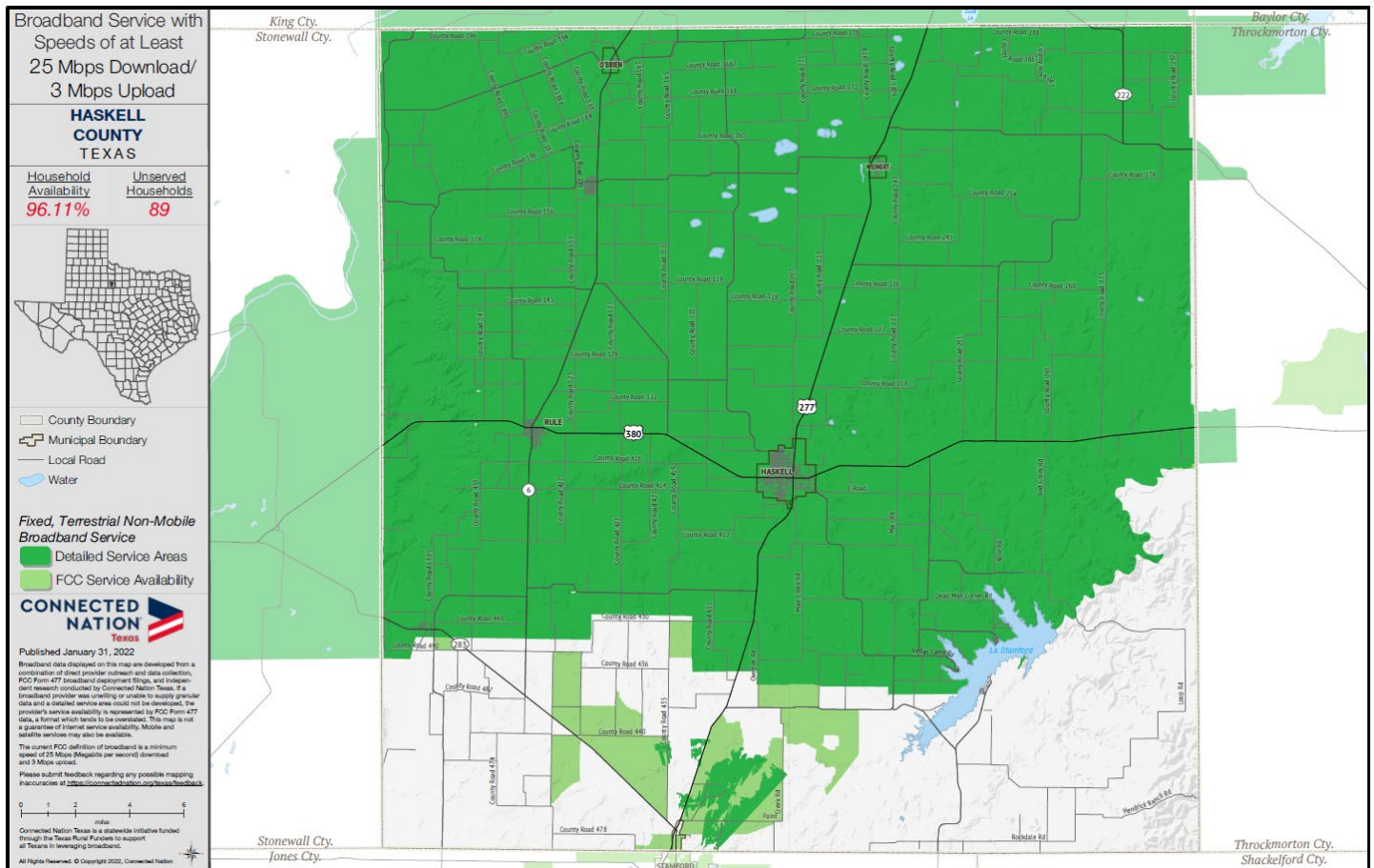
Broadband data released by CN Texas in January 2022:
<https://connectednation.org/texas/mapping-analysis/>

PROVIDER	TECHNOLOGY	MAXIMUM DOWNLOAD SPEED (Mbps)	MAXIMUM UPLOAD SPEED (Mbps)
AMA TechTel Communications	Fixed Wireless	50	3
Mid-Plains Communications	Fiber	200	100
Rise Broadband	Fixed Wireless	50	10
Santa Rosa Telephone Cooperative Inc.	Fiber DSL	1000 50	1000 10
TGM Pinnacle Network Solutions	Fixed Wireless	50	5
T-Mobile	Fixed Wireless	25	3
Transworld Network Corp.	Fixed Wireless	15	2
Valor Telecommunications of Texas LP	DSL	200	200

Infrastructure Results



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



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

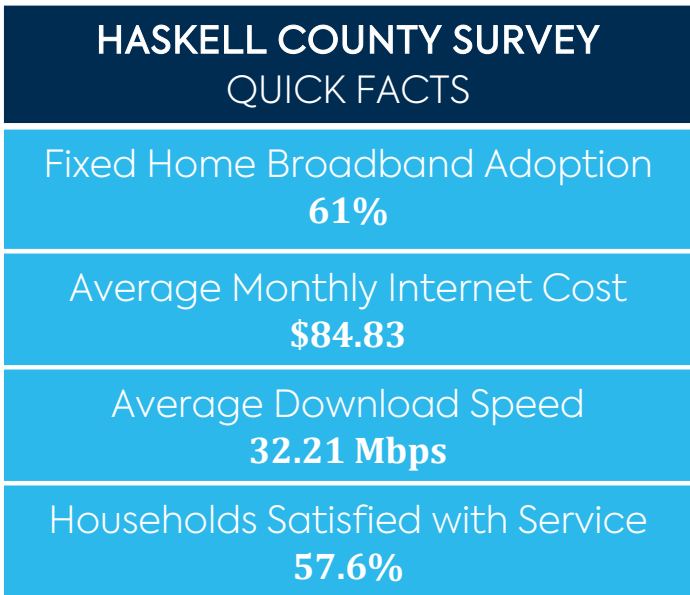
The first step in understanding the status of broadband infrastructure in Haskell County and statewide is having accurate maps. Accordingly, CN Texas works with providers to develop a variety of broadband maps at the state and county level. Data shown on this map are derived from a combination of direct 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](#).



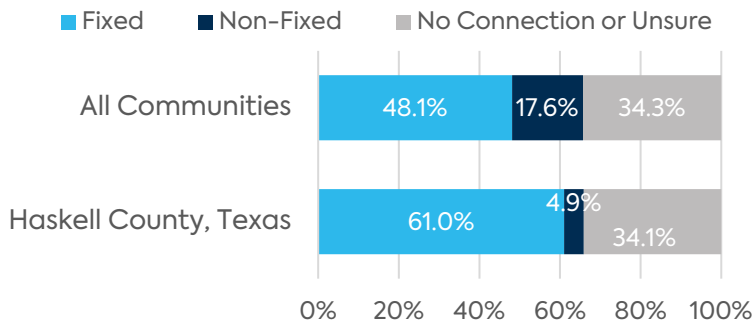
Household Survey
Results

Household Survey Results



The following section provides an overview of results from a broadband survey conducted in Haskell County between September 2021 and January 2022. Altogether, CN Texas received 82 completed surveys from households across the county; respondents provided insights into their internet connectivity or lack thereof. Data from Haskell County are compared to data from other rural Connected communities that participated in the program across Michigan, Ohio, Texas, and Pennsylvania to benchmark and identify areas for improvement.

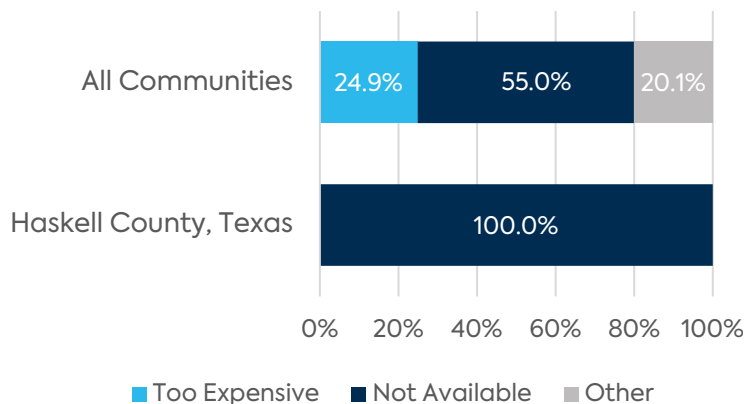
Home Broadband Adoption



ADOPTION

In Haskell County, 61% of households that took the survey subscribe to fixed broadband service delivered via a cable, DSL, fiber, or fixed wireless technology, while 4.9% indicate they have internet service delivered via dial-up, satellite, or a mobile wireless service. This leaves 34.1% of survey respondents without service, or unsure of what service they have.

Primary Barrier



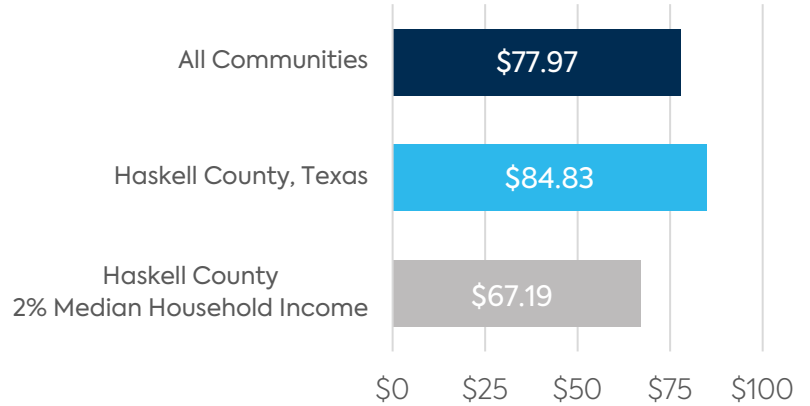
Among those without a home internet connection, 100% said they did not have broadband because it is not available at their address.



CONNECTION DETAILS

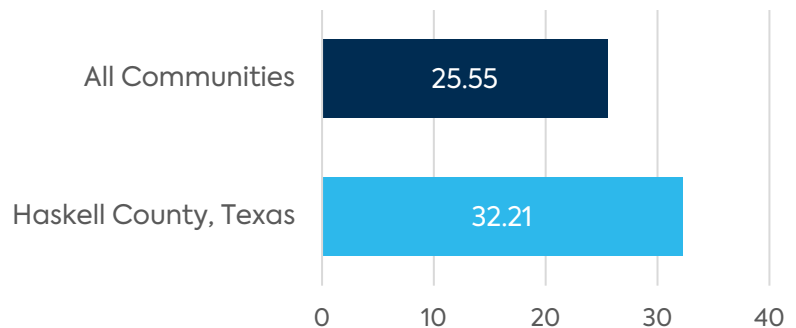
Two percent of monthly income is a recognized standard for measuring the affordability of a home internet connection. Respondents indicate that, on average, their internet connection costs about \$84.83 per month. This is higher than the monthly cost paid in other communities (\$77.97). Two percent of the median household income in Haskell County is \$67.19 per month.

Average Monthly Cost

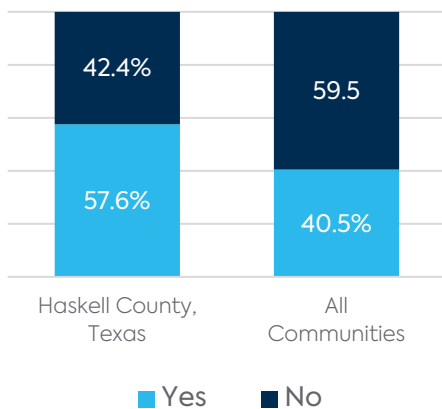


The FCC currently defines broadband as an internet connection with a download speed of at least 25 Mbps and upload speed of at least 3 Mbps. On average, respondents indicate that their connection's download speed is 32.21 Mbps, which is above the minimum defined speed.

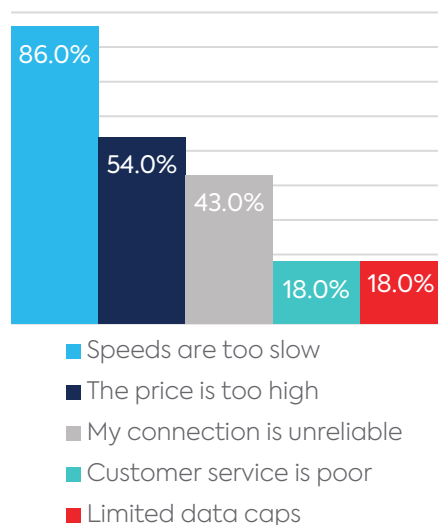
Average Speeds (Mbps)



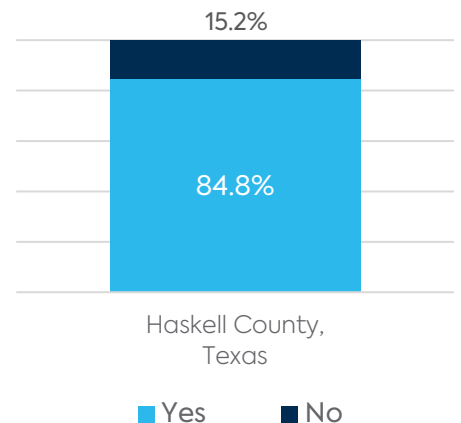
Does Your Internet Meet Your Needs?



Why Doesn't Your Internet Meet Your Needs?



Are You Interested in More Choices at Home?



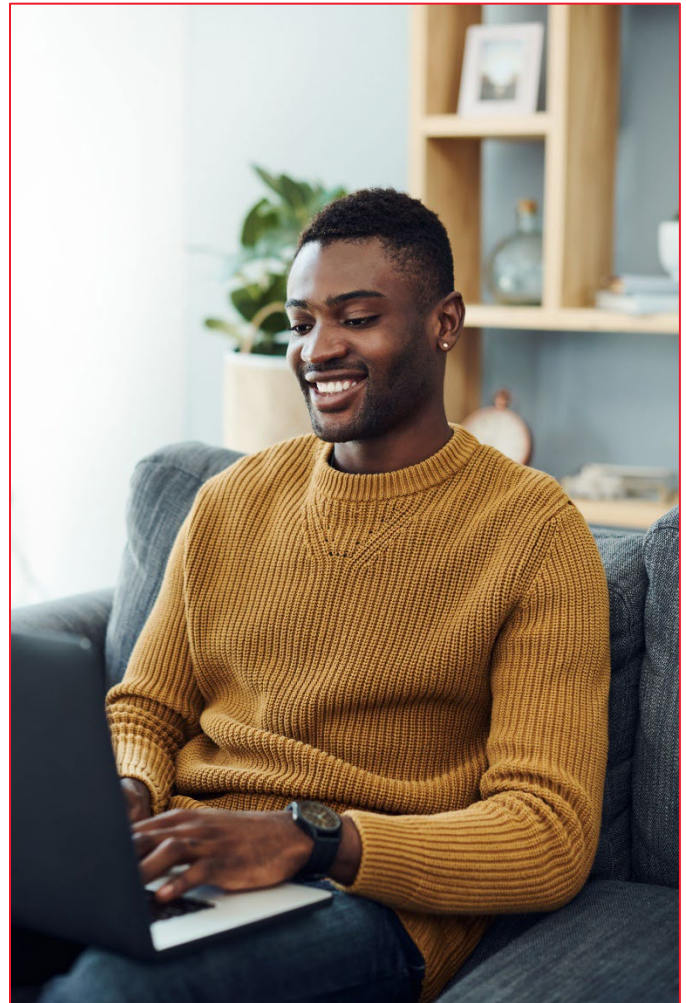
Household Survey Results



Competition provides residents with choices for service, allowing households the ability to switch providers if their current service does not meet their needs. More than two out of five responding households (42.4%) 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, 86% of dissatisfied households indicate that their speed is too slow; 54% say the price is too high, and 43% indicate that the connection is unreliable. Respondents could choose more than one reason for dissatisfaction.

Finally, 84.8% of all respondents indicate that they are interested in additional internet choices for their home.

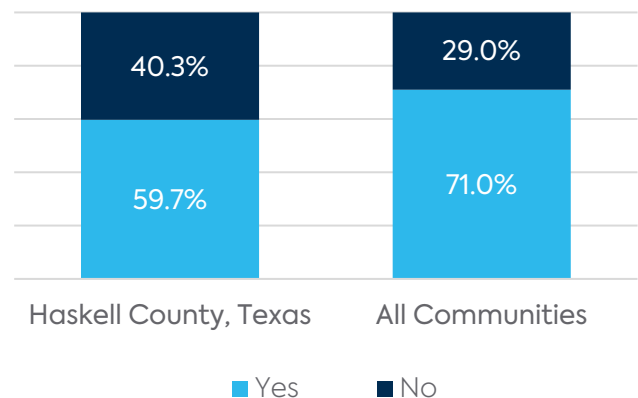


MOBILE CONNECTIVITY

Almost three out of five (59.7%) households reported that they subscribe to mobile internet service, which they access via a smartphone or similar mobile device. This is over 11 percentage points lower than what is reported in other Connected communities (71.0%).

Additionally, 17.5% of mobile-connected households report that they use mobile service to connect other household devices to the internet.

Households Subscribing to Mobile Internet Service





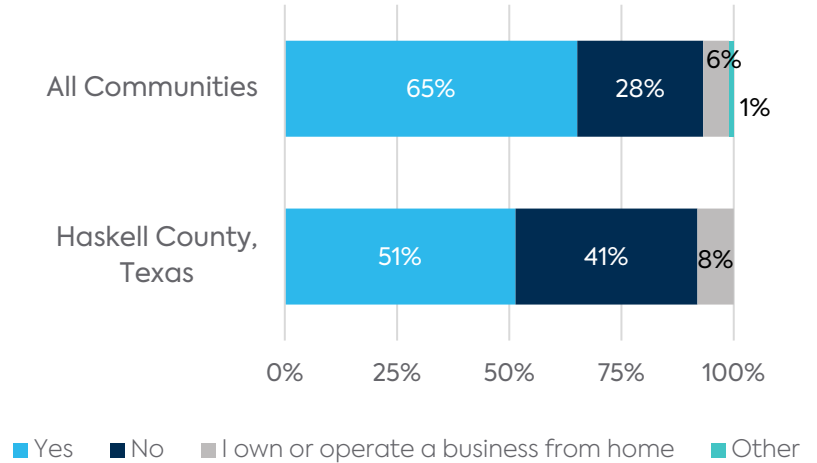
TELEWORK

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.

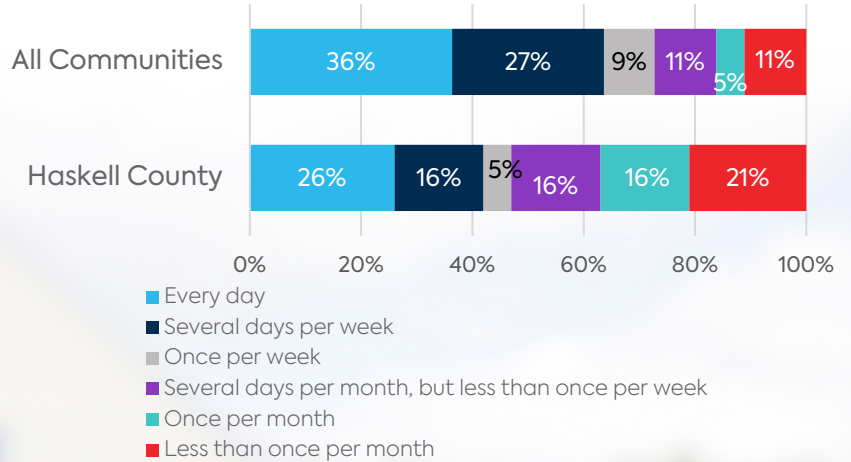
Teleworking is quickly becoming a critical part of growing a local economy because it represents an opportunity to attract and retain employees even when employees are not located in the same community as their employers. However, this only works if those employees have access to advanced broadband infrastructure.

Approximately 51% of employed respondents in Haskell County telework in some capacity. Just over one-quarter (26%) of this group telework every day.

Do You Currently Telework?



How Frequently Do You Telework?





Recommendations



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

Goal 1: Bring 100/10 Mbps coverage to 100% of Haskell County residents, businesses, and community organizations.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) defines broadband as a 25/3 Mbps connection (25 Mbps download, 3 Mbps upload). According to survey data collected in Haskell County in partnership with Connected Nation Texas between September 2021 and January 2022, only 35% of households subscribe to download speeds faster than 25 Mbps. A 25/3 Mbps connection supports three to five devices at any given time. In an increasingly digital society, three to five devices are not a lot, especially in multi-person homes. Take, for example, a home where one parent is teleworking, one child is doing virtual school, another parent is doing a telehealth visit, and another child is watching Netflix. Each of these activities requires an internet connection. It's important for the bandwidth available in homes and community institutions to match the changing digital needs of society.

Slow internet speeds are not only frustrating, they can also be very limiting. While the current federal definition of broadband is 25/3 Mbps, many funding programs are now requiring ISPs to provide speeds of at least 100/20 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, Haskell 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 faster and more reliable internet speeds to Haskell County residents and institutions based on current and future service needs.

Actions:

Action 1 – Review current and planned broadband deployments in the county. The first step to increase broadband speeds across Haskell County is meeting with local broadband providers to determine the infrastructure needs of the community (i.e., what needs to be updated, replaced, or installed). This includes meeting with those providers who have been allocated funding through the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF). Community leaders should assess the **status** and **viability** of ongoing or upcoming infrastructure improvement and expansion projects. It will be important to know and understand where new or improved infrastructure is being built around the county, and how it will affect broadband speeds and delivery to residents.



RDOF Phase I Winners:

- Resound Networks, 117 locations, \$166,584

Providers in Haskell County (Data published January 31, 2022, CN Texas)

- AMA TechTel Communications
- Mid-Plains Communications
- Rise Broadband
- Santa Rosa Telephone Cooperative Inc.
- TGM Pinnacle Network Solutions
- T-Mobile
- Transworld Network Corp.
- Valor Communications of Texas (Windstream)

Action 2 – Monitor state and federal broadband funding sources. Haskell County should monitor funding opportunities at the state and federal levels that promise money for broadband expansion and improvement projects. Application windows are historically very brief, and application reviews very competitive, thus making it very important for communities, especially small, rural ones, to have smart, well-written applications with supporting data ready to go. It's not only important to be prepared in advance of an application, but also to prioritize forward and long-term thinking when applying for funding. Haskell 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 set 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 2A – Work with a grant writer. As previously mentioned, grant application windows are short and review processes competitive, thus it is important for Haskell County to engage a reliable and trusted grant writer who can accurately capture the needs and wants of Haskell County residents, businesses, and community leaders in writing. More information on grant writing can be found in Goal 4.

Action 3 – 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, Haskell County can offer infrastructure (publicly owned buildings, light poles, towers, other vertical assets for mounting fixed wireless or wirelines infrastructure) for the deployment of a network, as well as guaranteeing 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 at <https://connectednation.org/current-broadband-funding/>. 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 3A – Think long term with community resources. In a February 2022 article, U.S. Telecom had this to say about P3s and broadband: “The need for broadband connectivity has never been greater, and closing the final segments of the broadband gap will require true public-private partnerships. States and communities have the ability to help their residents, not just through funding programs, but also by preparing their communities to receive broadband service.” Haskell County has been allocated \$1,099,000 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. Should Haskell County



choose to spend any of these federal funds on broadband, it is important that county officials are prepared, informed, and readily equipped to begin working with reliable partners.

Responsible parties:

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

Timeline:

Haskell 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.

Resources:

U.S. Telecom: Preparing your Community for Broadband Success

https://www.ustelecom.org/preparing-your-community-for-broadband-success/?utm_source=sendgrid&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newsletters

The era of the broadband public-private partnership: New trends and opportunities in the wake of COVID-19

https://www.benton.org/publications/new-collaborative-trends?utm_source=sendgrid&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newsletters

For full effect, broadband expansion will require cooperation

https://www.govtech.com/network/for-full-effect-broadband-expansion-will-require-cooperation?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newsletters&utm_source=sendgrid

Texas Broadband Development Office: Funding Resources

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/programs/broadband/funding.php>

U.S. Department of the Treasury: Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

<https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>

EDA: Economic Adjustment Assistance

<https://eda.gov/arpa/economic-adjustment-assistance/>

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

<https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, County Allocation

https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/fiscalrecoveryfunds_countyfunding_2021.05.10-1a-508A.pdf

Texas Broadband Providers by County

<https://connectednation.org/texas/planning/>

Guide to Federal Broadband Funding Opportunities in the U.S.

<https://www.internetsociety.org/resources/doc/2021/guide-to-broadband-funding-opportunities-in-us/>

Current Broadband Funding

<https://connectednation.org/current-broadband-funding>

Auction 904: Rural Digital Opportunity Fund

<https://www.fcc.gov/auction/904>

FCC: First RDOF Default Public Notice

<https://www.fcc.gov/document/first-rdof-default-public-notice>

The push to expand rural broadband expands across state government

https://statetechmagazine.com/article/2022/02/push-expand-rural-broadband-unfolds-across-state-government-perfcon?utm_source=sendgrid&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newsletters



Goal 2: Empower the Haskell County Public Library to bridge digital literacy gaps by offering community workshops for residents, businesses, and public officials in a mobile learning lab.

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. In answering digital literacy questions on the residential survey, responses ranged from “I need to learn” and “I know a little” to “I could teach this [skill].” These data reflect the need for residents to focus on increasing their technology skills. Ultimately, technology skills are paramount to competitiveness in the workforce, to community development in an uber-digital society, and to general quality of life (i.e., telehealth and teleworking).

Objective:

Offer Haskell County residents digital literacy classes, discussing topics such as workforce development, higher education, and telehealth.

Actions:

Action 1 – Identify a digital literacy hub in Haskell County. Broadband is more than physical infrastructure; it is being able to attend a telehealth appointment, streaming your favorite show on Netflix, or having a Zoom call with family members during the COVID-19 pandemic. Having the requisite **skills** and **knowledge** to utilize the internet and related technologies to the fullest extent allows a user to capitalize on endless online opportunities. In 2022, those lacking digital skills are being left behind. Society is becoming increasingly dependent on technology, and people are turning to the internet for news, entertainment, education, health care, and more.

In Haskell County, the survey data indicate that residents are anywhere from “unsure” to “comfortable” with hardware, software, social media, and other technology devices. For those who “need to learn,” Haskell County should set up a *learning lab* at the Haskell County Public Library to host digital literacy workshops. The library already provides free community resources and public computers, and is well-known to the public. The learning lab should offer desktop computers and laptops (should the library want to go mobile) for public use. When not hosting a workshop, the learning lab can be used by residents to apply for jobs, by students studying for exams, or others to simply surf the web.

Action 1A – Utilize community partnerships, resources, and funding programs to purchase or update current technology. The county library can pursue grant funds to acquire new devices or partner with community organizations and internet service providers to outfit the learning lab with desktops and laptops for mobile service. Communitywide electronic recycling efforts may serve as a



less expensive alternative for pre-owned equipment. The community should continue monitoring local, state, and federal sources that provide funding for broadband equipment purchases.

Action 2 – Create curriculum for free community workshops designed to improve the digital skills of residents. Workshop curricula should be curated using material created by the county and publicly available programs, such as Digital Learn and Grow with Google (resources linked below). Workshop topics should be informed by local interests. Additionally, community stakeholders should lead workshops based upon their expertise. For example, the Chief of Police might lead the “Online Safety Tips and Tricks” workshop, while Haskell Memorial Hospital staff could lead “Telehealth 101.”

Workshop topics to consider:

- Intro to Microsoft Office Suite
 - **About:** Train employees on the basics of the Microsoft Office Suite given its ubiquitous use in companies/industries.
 - **Who:** Haskell Chamber of Commerce or Development Corp.
- How to Telework
 - **About:** What is telework and why is it appealing for employees and employers?
 - **Who:** Haskell Chamber of Commerce or Development Corp.
- Intro to Social Media and Websites
 - **About:** How can an online presence help business grow and improve productivity?
 - **Who:** Haskell Chamber of Commerce or Development Corp.
- Telehealth 101
 - **About:** Discuss terminology commonly associated with telemedicine and the benefits of virtual healthcare.
 - **Who:** Haskell Memorial Hospital staff
- Just What the Doctor Ordered
 - **About:** Discuss how residents can use free and reduced-cost digital services to improve physical and mental health.
 - **Who:** Haskell Memorial Hospital staff
- Online Safety Tips and Tricks
 - **About:** Discuss how to keep you, your family, and your information safe online.
 - **Who:** Haskell Police or Sheriff’s Department
- Effective Online Learning and Teaching Strategies
 - **About:** Discuss how teachers/students can maximize the benefits of online learning.
 - **Who:** Haskell CISD, Paint Creek ISD, Rule ISD
- Continuing-Education Opportunities
 - **About:** What programs, courses, and classes are available for students who would like to continue learning beyond the classroom? What resources are available for those who would like to return to college, obtain a certification or GED, or complete continuing-education courses?
 - **Who:** Haskell CISD, Paint Creek ISD, Rule ISD



Action 2A – Take the learning lab mobile. While the library is a great location for many workshops, a change of scenery is always welcome. Having laptops available in the learning lab allows the community to hold workshops at notable locations throughout the county, including the Haskell High School gym, Haskell Memorial Hospital Education Building, Haskell County Courthouse, or others.

Action 2B – Look to other communities as examples. Writing for CNET, Marguerite Reardon says, “It will take more than infrastructure to get rural and tribal communities online.” 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.; Digital Literacy Coaches and Navigator Program in Wisconsin; Digital Literacy Certification and Computer Training in Plainfield, N.J.; and Senior Connect in Austin, Texas. Each of these programs is unique, but the underlying current is the drive to provide digital training and support to the community (for free). The hope is that users will be able to use the internet with ease and greater confidence after engaging with one of these local initiatives. To learn more, reference the links in the resource section.

Responsible parties:

Residents; local units of government; community organizations; businesses; internet service providers

Timeline:

Additional laptops and desktops should be purchased for a Haskell County learning lab by the start of the 2022-23 school year. It will be critical for parents, students, and other community residents to have a digital education hub in the county. As new computers become available, workshops should be offered. Curriculum should be reviewed and updated every three to four months.

Resources:

Improving the Quality of Life in Rural America with Broadband Internet
<https://bonfire-ec.com/improving-the-quality-of-life-in-rural-america-with-broadband-internet/>

Implementing Productive Teleworking with Business-Quality Mobile Communications
<https://tango-networks.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Tango-Networks-Trend-Advisor-Productive-Teleworking-with-Mobile-Communications-v15May2020.pdf>

Texas Broadband Providers by County
<https://connectednation.org/texas/planning/>

Grow with Google
<https://grow.google/>

The complete guide to digital skills

<https://www.futurelearn.com/info/blog/the-complete-guide-to-digital-skills>

AARP Joins with Nonprofit to Teach Tech to Older Adults
<https://www.aarp.org/about-aarp/info-2021/oats-senior-planet.html>

Digital Learn: Use a computer to do almost anything!
<https://www.digitallearn.org/>

GCFLearnFree.org® program
[GCFLearnFree.org](https://www.gcflearnfree.org)

National Digital Inclusion Alliance
<https://www.digitalinclusion.org/>

5 Reasons Why Libraries are Essential to Have
<https://princh.com/blog-5-reasons-why-libraries-are-essential-to-have/>



[essential-to-have/#.Ybt0tb3MKUI](#)

How to Create a Public Computer Center
<https://www.newamerica.org/oti/blog/how-to-create-a-public-computer-center/>

Northland Public Library
<https://www.northlandlibrary.org/computer-center/>

First-eEver National Study: Millions of People Rely on Library Computers for Employment, Health, and Education (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation)
<https://www.gatesfoundation.org/ideas/media-center/press-releases/2010/03/millions-of-people-rely-on-library-computers-for-employment-health-and-education>

Senior Connect: Connecting Senior in Central Texas
<https://www.communitytechnetwork.org/blog/connecting-seniors-in-central-texas-with-senior-connect/>

Plainfield Public Library to Offer Computer Literacy Training
<https://www.tapinto.net/towns/plainfield/sections/education/articles/plainfield-public-library-to-offer-computer-literacy-training>

The 411 on Funding
<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2022/03/01/the-411-on-funding/>

Orleans County Digital Literacy Initiative
<http://orleans.cce.cornell.edu/digital-literacy>.

Eua Claire County: County Stars free digital literacy program
https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/daily-updates/county-starts-free-digital-literacy-program/article_8f99afcc-a222-5445-8438-1a410a215a49.html

It Takes a Village: Solving the Broadband Adoption Problem in Rural America
https://www.cnet.com/home/internet/it-takes-a-village-solving-the-broadband-adoption-problem-in-rural-america/?utm_source=sendgrid&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newslettershttps://www.communitytechnetwork.org/blog/connecting-seniors-in-central-texas-with-senior-connect/

Mobile Computer Labs, Classrooms Bring STEM to rural schools
https://www.govtech.com/education/k-12/mobile-computer-labs-classrooms-bring-stem-to-rural-schools?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newsletters&utm_source=sendgrid

Toward an equitable digital future: libraries are bridging the divide and empowering communities
<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2022/03/01/special-report-toward-an-equitable-digital-future/>

Goal 3: Increase broadband adoption and use among Haskell County residents by providing and promoting low- and reduced-cost internet plans and subsidy programs.

Broadband adoption is critical for increasing the digital capacity of a community, and empowering residents and community leaders. Adoption not only refers to subscriptions to service providers, but also the daily use of the internet. Broadband adoption requires basic computer skills and access to a personal device that enables an individual to accomplish basic tasks. Since the inception of public internet, the leading barriers to broadband adoption in areas where access is not an issue have been affordability and lack of digital skills (reference Goal 2). The affordability barrier can be further explained by the poverty rate in Haskell County. According to U.S. Census data, one in five residents are living in poverty. Compared to the state average, the disparity in these numbers presents a distinct need for affordable broadband options in Haskell County. It is imperative for project plans to



reflect programs that can help overcome barriers to adoption — particularly for low-income households and other vulnerable populations.

Objective:

Encourage Haskell County residents to utilize free and reduced-cost internet programs throughout the community to increase online engagement and quality of life.

Actions:

Action 1 – Promote programs that help residents overcome the affordability barrier to broadband adoption. The county should work with community leaders and institutions to publicly promote programs and opportunities designed to reduce the cost of broadband service. This can be done by advertising in the local newspaper, providing updates in monthly school newsletters, posting flyers in public buildings throughout the county, or publicly discussing at commissioners' court and city hall meetings.

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

- **Resource to locate affordable internet service or computers:** Haskell County residents can identify local and national providers who offer special low-cost services for vulnerable populations, older adults, and low-income families with children via resources such as EveryoneOn (<https://www.everyoneon.org/>).
 - **EveryoneOn** helps residents locate low-cost internet services and affordable computers by ZIP code and by need based on their participation in assistance programs.
- **State and federal low-cost programs:** There are two critical programs that offer discounts for broadband to eligible households:
 - **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 service. The monthly discount may be up to \$12.75, 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](#).
 - **The 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 on broadband with participating providers. For more information, visit the FCC's [webpage](#).

The following institutions and leaders should help promote these programs:

- School districts: Haskell CISD, Paint Creek ISD, Rule ISD
- Local and county government



- Local media, such as the Haskell Star News
- Other: Haskell County Public Library, West Central Texas COG, Haskell County Chamber of Commerce and Development Corp., food pantries, churches, etc.

Action 2 – Ensure that Haskell County residents have access to affordable internet-enabled devices that meet their needs. There are two ways to achieve this. 1.) Promote programs that provide access to low-cost devices such as [PCs for People](#), [Human I-T](#) and; 2.) The county and/or the cities should create a program where departments and businesses could donate surplus computing devices for refurbishment, distribution or sale in high-need communities.

Action 3 – Promote the new computer lab at the local library. For residents who do not have access to the internet at home, the next best option is access at a trusted location in the community, such as the library. It is important for residents to know what community resources exist, such as the computer lab, so they can capitalize on those services in times of need.

Responsible parties:

Local units of government and elected officials; broadband providers; community and regional organizations and institutions: businesses, schools, libraries; community residents

Timeline:

Disseminating information about free and reduced-cost broadband services should begin immediately to ensure anyone who wants access can get access.

Resources:

Affordable Connectivity Program
<https://www.fcc.gov/acp>

Texas Lifeline Program
<https://www.texaslifeline.org/>

PCs for People
<https://www.pcsforpeople.org/>

Human I-T
<https://www.human-i-t.org/>

US Census: Haskell County
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?q=0500000US48207>

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

Action 1 – Pursue grant(s) for advancement of local community development using broadband technologies (i.e., workforce development, telehealth, digital literacy, etc.). In conjunction with the countywide Connected Engagement program, Haskell County has been allocated funding to pursue applicable grant opportunities. For specifics, please contact your Broadband Solutions Manager.