



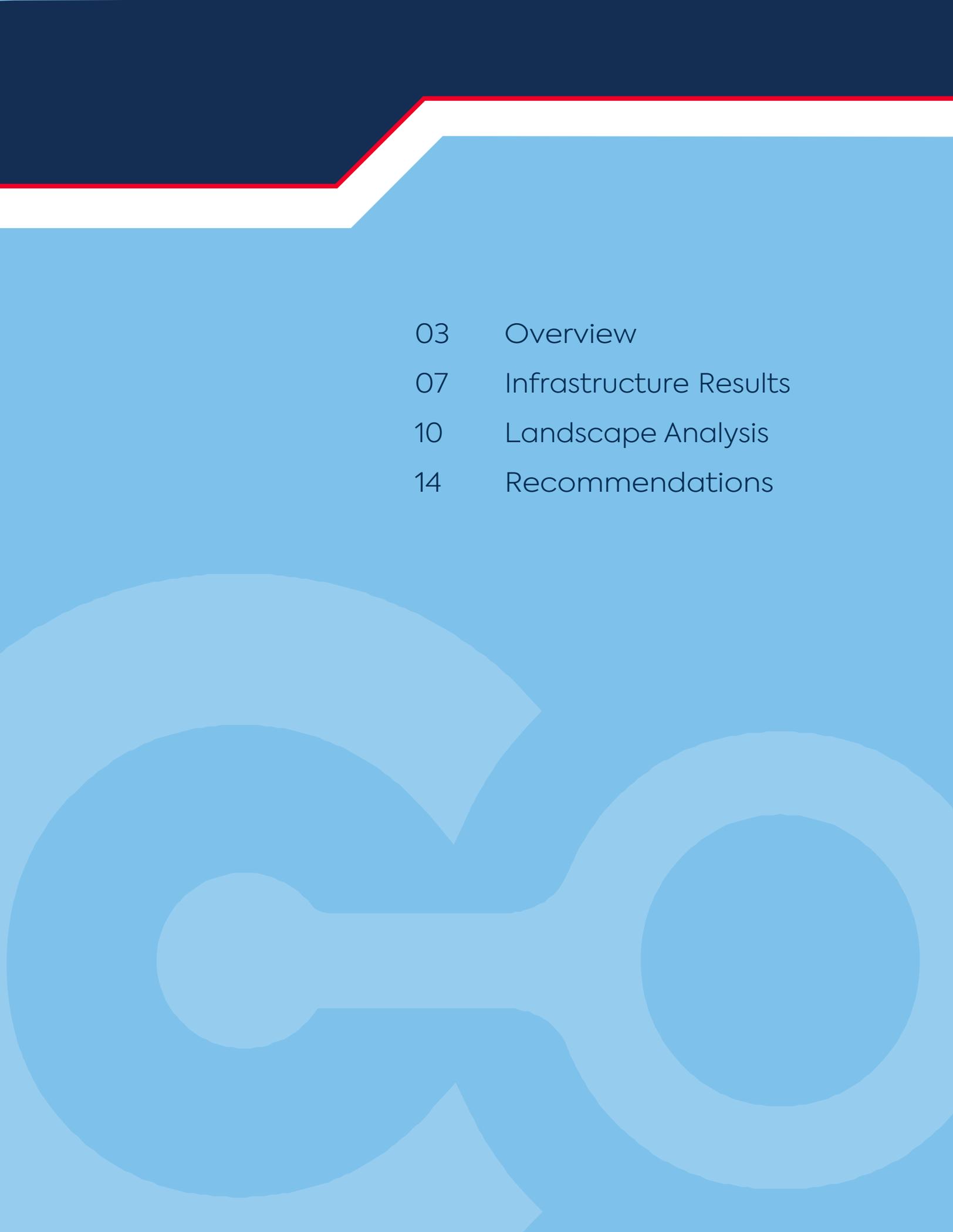
Connected
A CONNECTED NATION Initiative

Addressing Your Community's Unique Needs

Cotton County, Oklahoma Technology Action Report

December 2025

**CONNECTED
NATION** 
connectednation.org



03	Overview
07	Infrastructure Results
10	Landscape Analysis
14	Recommendations



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 now depends 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. Understanding a community’s connectivity needs is essential to developing a holistic plan that addresses connectivity gaps and builds on community resources to support residents’ effective usage of online services.

As such, Connected Nation (CN) implemented the 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 most significant impact toward improving broadband access, adoption, and usage across every local sector in Cotton County.

Pursuant to this goal, between June and October 2025, CN conducted a comprehensive survey of broadband technology access and adoption across the community, collecting responses from local households. CN did not receive enough survey responses to conduct a quantitative analysis. Therefore, CN utilized publicly available data, broadband maps, and desktop research to conduct a landscape analysis and build a community connectivity profile.

This study approached broadband holistically – focusing on the quality of life available 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 analyzed through this engagement played an integral role in developing a unique, locally informed action plan for Cotton County. This document summarizes the assessment findings and

COTTON COUNTY, OKLAHOMA QUICK FACTS	
Population	5,527
Households	2,051
Median Household Income	\$60,313
Poverty Rate	22.9%
Adults with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	20.9%
Hispanic or Latino	6.5%
Households with Broadband Access ¹	94.4%

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

¹The current FCC definition of broadband is a minimum of 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload. These data are derived from the [FCC National Broadband Map](#) – with numbers as of November 2025.



outlines recommendations to improve broadband and technology access, adoption, and usage. In addition, CN created [an interactive map](#) to support these efforts.



Only **61.3%** of households making less than \$20,000 a year have an internet subscription in Cotton County, compared with **82.4%** of all households in the county.

94.4% of households in Cotton County have access to internet service at speeds needed to run many modern applications (100 Mbps downstream and 20 Mbps upstream). Statewide, **90%** of households have internet access at these speeds.

92.1% of households in Cotton County have a computer in the home.



Infrastructure
Results



A ccording to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) broadband data updated in November 2025, 94.44% of Cotton County households have access to wired or licensed fixed wireless broadband at speeds of at least 100/20 Mbps – the FCC’s current definition of broadband. Broadband service is available throughout Cotton County.

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

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE QUICK FACTS	
Unserved Households (100/20 Mbps)	114
Households Served (25/3 Mbps)	96.61%
Households Served (100/20 Mbps)	94.44%
Households Served (1000/100 Mbps)	42.88%

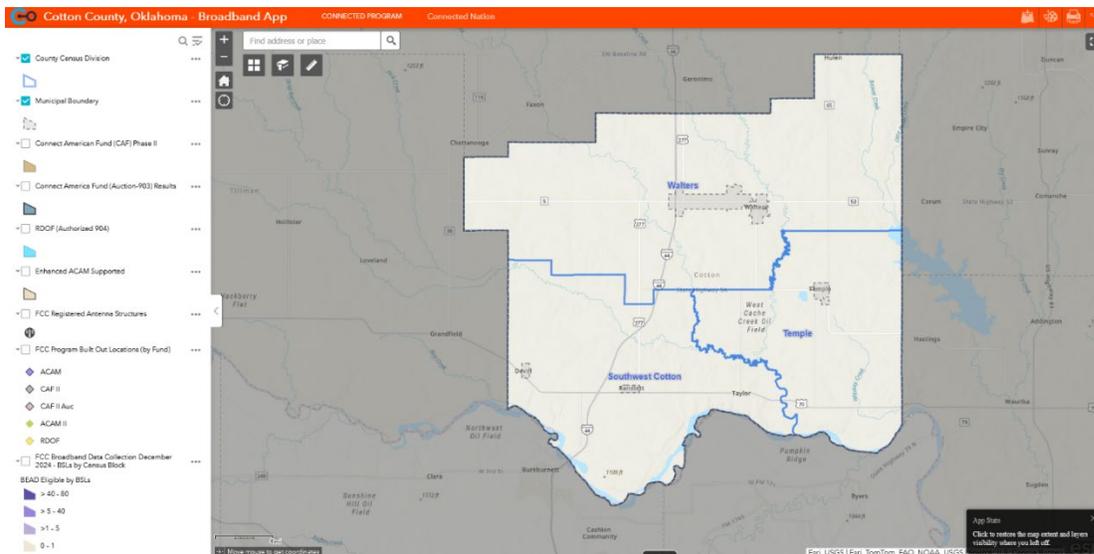
PROVIDER	TECHNOLOGY	MAXIMUM DOWNLOAD SPEED (Mbps)	MAXIMUM UPLOAD SPEED (Mbps)
AT&T Inc.	Fixed Wireless	100	20
AT&T Inc.	Copper	10	1
Hilliary Communications	Cable	250	250
Hilliary Communications	Fiber	1000	1000
Nextlink	Fixed Wireless	1000	500
Pioneer Telephone	Copper	46	7



PROVIDER	TECHNOLOGY	MAXIMUM DOWNLOAD SPEED (Mbps)	MAXIMUM UPLOAD SPEED (Mbps)
Pioneer Telephone	Fiber	1000	1000
Resound Networks	Fixed Wireless	300	150
T-Mobile	Fixed Wireless	100	20
United States Cellular Corp.	Fixed Wireless	25	3
Verizon	Fixed Wireless	300	20

Below is Cotton County’s (100/20 Mbps) map. To interact with the whole map, go to <https://connectednation.org/oklahoma/Cotton/interactivemap>. Portions of the county are served by ISPs offering slower advertised speeds, and those areas are not shown on this map.

The first step in understanding the status of broadband infrastructure, both in Cotton County and statewide, is having accurate maps. To that end, CN works with ISPs to develop a variety of broadband maps at the state and county levels. Data shown on this map are derived from a combination of direct ISP outreach and data collection, FCC Broadband Data Collection (BDC) filings, and independent research conducted by CN. 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 BDC filings data alone.





Landscape Analysis



Internet access impacts all parts of a community, and expanding access and use of broadband can positively impact the economic, educational, and health outcomes for counties. Examining key sectors and their relationship to internet access is critical for understanding local challenges and opportunities.

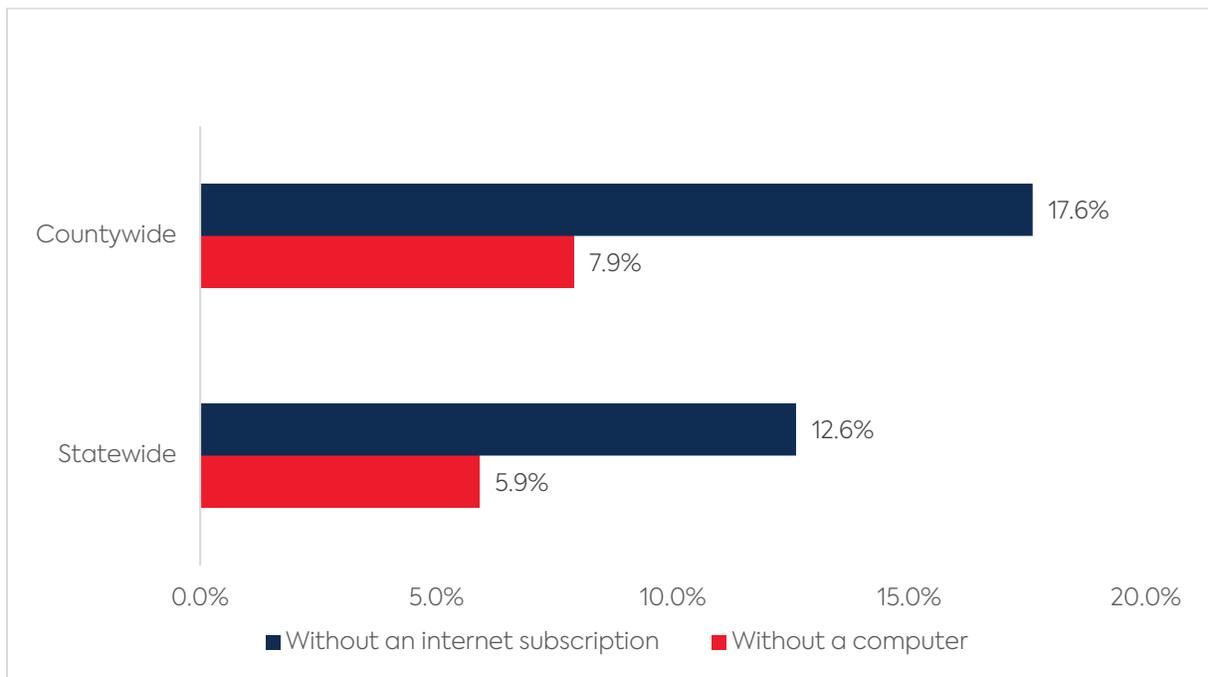
CN conducted a landscape analysis, analyzing publicly available data from the American Communities Study about technology and researching key institutions and sectors within Cotton County. Connectivity affects every sector within a community, and a holistic understanding of the county helps inform the recommendations of this Technology Action Plan.

Internet Usage in Cotton County

CN analyzed connectivity data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey¹ to better understand the Digital Divide in the county.

In Cotton County, 17.6% of households do not have an internet subscription, compared with 12.6% of households statewide. In terms of device access, 7.9% of households do not have a computer, compared with 5.9% of households statewide.

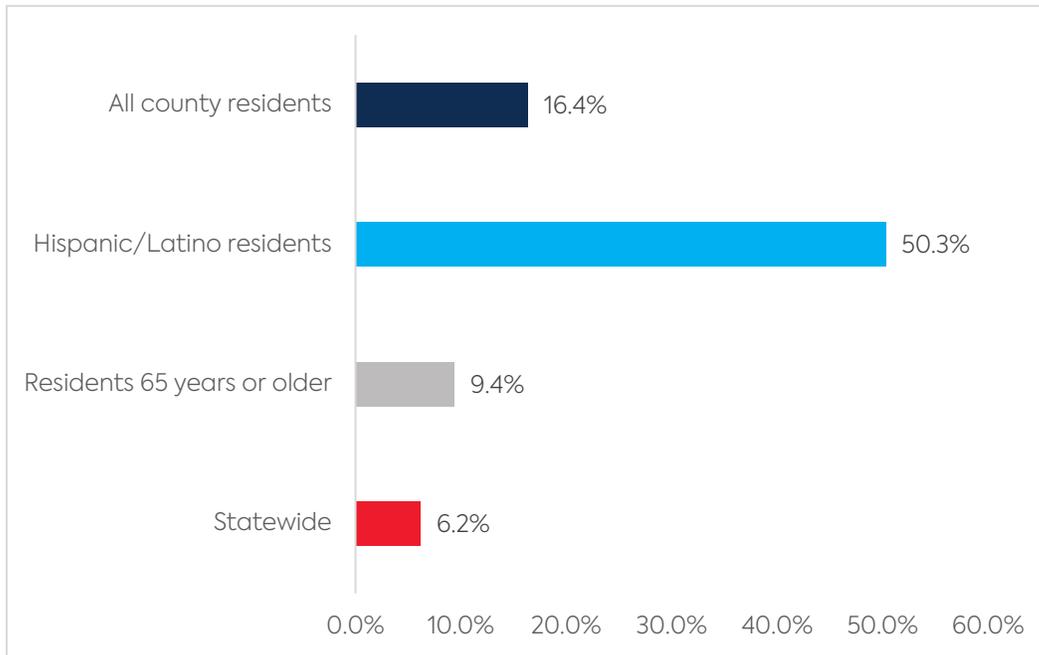
Table 1: Household Internet Subscription and Device Ownership Rates



Among households in Cotton County, 13.4% have a computer but no internet subscription, which is more than the statewide average of 6.2%. The percentage significantly rises for Hispanic/Latino residents, as shown in the chart below.

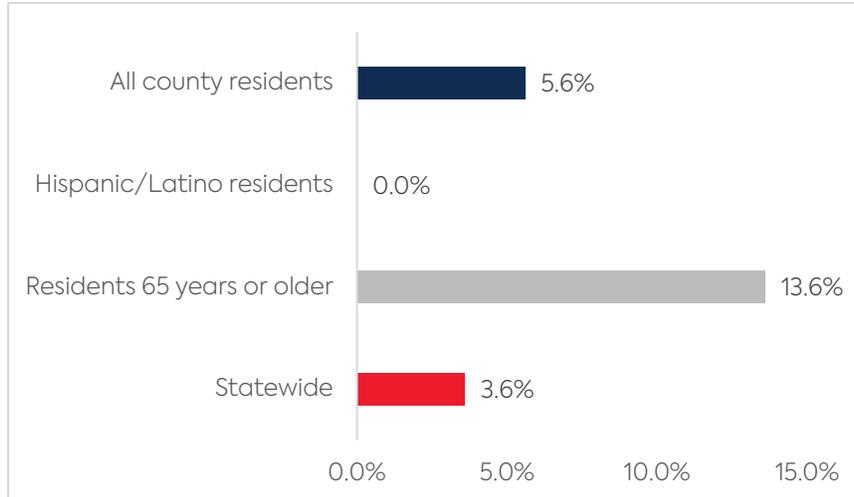
Table 2: Population with a Computer but No Internet Subscription

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. 2024. American Community Survey 2019-2023 five-year estimates. <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S2801?q=s2801+in+cotton+county+ok&moe=false>



Approximately 5.6% of county residents have no computer or internet subscription in the household, which is higher than the statewide average of 3.6%. This number is even higher for seniors, as shown in the chart below.

Table 3: Population with No Computer and No Internet Subscription



At the household level, 92.1% of households have a computer. Less than 1 in 5 (17.6%) households do not have an internet subscription, with that figure rising to 38.7% among households earning less than \$20,000 a year.

The Affordable Connectivity Program, which ran from 2021–2024, provided a subsidy to households meeting specific criteria. Only 15.7% of households in Cotton County were enrolled in the program, compared to the state average of around 50%. This lack of access stems from both service affordability concerns and a lack of physical infrastructure.



Key Sectors and Institutions

<p>Education</p> 	<p>Cotton County is primarily served by three school districts – Big Pasture School District, serving 235 students, Temple School District, serving 251 students, and Walters School District, serving 733 students.²</p> <p>In the community, 20.9% of residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher. There are no higher education institutions within the county.</p>
<p>Health</p> 	<p>The county does not have a hospital. The Oklahoma State Department of Health ranks Cotton County as moderate need on its Health Equity Index and Food Insecurity Index, and high need on its Mental Health Index.³</p>
<p>Agriculture</p> 	<p>Cotton County has 353 farms, spanning 322,468 acres. 98% of these farms are family farms. Top crops in terms of acres are grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas, and tobacco. 85% of farms have internet access.⁴</p>
<p>Community Anchor Institutions</p> 	<p>The Walters Public Library serves the community. Computers are available for public use.</p> <p>The library offers a range of services, including technology assistance (access to computers, fax, copy, print, and scan services), creative solutions like poster-making, youth engagement programs, and community resources like special events, workshops, and educational opportunities for people of all ages.⁵</p>

² 2023 School Profiles, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability.

³ Oklahoma State Department of Health 2024 Wellness County Profiles.

⁴ 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture County Profile.

⁵ <https://www.waltersok.org/public-library>



Recommendations



Internet access and digital tools affect many aspects of daily life in Cotton County, from school and work to healthcare and local businesses. Technology should support how residents choose to live and work, while helping the community stay connected and competitive.

Cotton County has an opportunity to improve connectivity through practical, locally driven approaches that reflect community priorities and build on existing strengths. The following recommendations outline clear steps to expand internet access, build practical digital skills, and ensure that technology investments deliver real benefits for residents, businesses, and community institutions, without altering the community's character. These recommendations are informed by Connected Nation's community assessment and data analysis, as summarized in the Executive Summary.

The recommendations are organized around four key themes to support increased connectivity:

- Ecosystem Development - Working Together to Improve Connectivity
- Digital Infrastructure - Building and Expanding Reliable Internet Connectivity
- Digital Empowerment - Helping People Use Technology with Confidence
- Sustainability - Making Progress Last

Each recommendation has a clear goal for the county, along with strategic actions to achieve that goal. Each recommendation also includes a list of resources to support plan implementation.



Ecosystem Development – Working Together to Improve Connectivity

Goal: Strengthen countywide tech-focused leadership to accelerate high-speed internet access and adoption.

Justification: Improving connectivity requires coordination among local government, schools, healthcare providers, businesses, and community organizations. Without clear leadership and communication, efforts can become fragmented, and opportunities may be missed. Establishing shared responsibility and collaboration helps ensure that technology investments reflect local needs, support how residents live and work, and deliver tangible community benefits.

As the focus on artificial intelligence (AI) and technology continues to expand, a coordinated, strategic technology plan will ensure Cotton County is equipped to leverage funding and economic development opportunities that benefit county residents.

Strategic Actions:

1. Designate connectivity lead(s) or champions across sectors of local government and key community anchor institutions.

Cotton County should designate one or more individuals to coordinate broadband and digital opportunity initiatives throughout the community. These leaders may work within county government or be drawn from trusted local organizations. The role focuses on coordination rather than creating a new position. Key responsibilities include:

- Serving as a point of contact for internet service providers and community partners
- Sharing information about broadband access and digital skills programs
- Coordinating efforts across county departments and community organizations
- Tracking progress on this Technology Action Plan
- Monitoring funding and partnership opportunities

2. Build and maintain a local connectivity coalition.

The county should build or strengthen a cross-sector coalition committed to improving broadband access and digital skills. This coalition can help identify community needs, align efforts, and support outreach.

Potential partners include:

- Education and workforce organizations
- Healthcare providers
- Local businesses and agricultural partners
- Libraries, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations



- Public safety and local government

The county should also maintain relationships with regional and state broadband partners, including the Oklahoma Broadband Office (OBO), to stay informed about programs and funding opportunities.

The OBO regularly engages with stakeholders to keep them apprised of broadband infrastructure, adoption programs, and grants. The Oklahoma Broadband Governing Board regularly meets to discuss programs and grants that the OBO implements. The OBO's website contains information about the office's work and current programs. Visit <https://oklahoma.gov/broadband.html> to learn more.

3. Strengthen community outreach and information access to create an informed and engaged citizenry.

Cotton County should make it easier for residents to find information about broadband access, digital skills training, and technology resources by using existing communication channels.

Information shared may include:

- Locations offering free public Wi-Fi
- Digital skills classes and training opportunities
- Public computer access or device lending programs

Other organizations and community anchor institutions in the area can also collaborate to share resources with the stakeholders they serve. Increasing the flow of information about broadband and related technologies will help the public understand the resources available to them. It will also allow residents to share feedback on the barriers to access they continue to face.

4. Analyze and strengthen the local government's digital tools and services

The county should audit its current website to understand and strengthen how information is shared online. This may include reviewing the county's websites, social media pages, and online tools to assess how easily residents can find timely, accurate information. Gathering feedback from community members on how they access information—and where gaps exist—can help identify opportunities for improvement. By updating content, simplifying navigation, and ensuring information is accessible across devices and in languages appropriate for its residents, the county can use digital tools more effectively to connect residents with services, programs, and community updates.

Resources

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



- [Digital.gov resources](#)



Digital Infrastructure – Building and Expanding Reliable Internet Connectivity

Goal: Advance county-wide access to reliable, high-quality internet by fostering strong partnerships, championing investment, and coordinating community efforts to support broadband expansion.

Justification: Having broadband access is essential for communities to fully participate in the opportunities available in our AI-driven future. As noted in the Executive Summary, 5.6% of homes still lack access to a reliable, high-speed internet connection. By building strong partnerships, pursuing investments in local and regional infrastructure, and maintaining key relationships with industry and regional and state broadband entities, Cotton County can continue to close infrastructure gaps in the community.

Strategic Actions:

1. [Build and maintain relationships with local internet service providers and other digital infrastructure entities that conduct or are interested in conducting business in the County.](#)

Cotton County should maintain regular communication with internet service providers operating in or considering expansion in the county. Ongoing dialogue helps align provider plans with local needs and fosters collaboration.

Key activities include:

- Staying informed about planned expansions and construction timelines
- Sharing local priorities and areas of need
- Exploring public-private partnerships where appropriate
- Ensuring providers can easily access county information and points of contact

Creating a business-friendly environment with clear processes and responsive communication can help attract and support broadband investment.

2. [Monitor and pursue federal, state, and local funding opportunities to maximize investment in local broadband infrastructure projects.](#)

Cotton County should actively monitor federal, state, and local funding programs that support broadband infrastructure and be prepared to act when opportunities arise. This includes staying informed about application deadlines, eligibility requirements, and program priorities, and coordinating with internet service providers, regional partners, and state agencies to strengthen applications and align projects with local needs. By taking a proactive, coordinated approach to funding, the county can maximize



available resources, support broadband expansion, and accelerate progress toward reliable internet access for all residents.

Several active broadband deployment initiatives are underway at the state and federal levels. While many have already awarded grants and are beginning to build networks, the county should monitor current and future funding opportunities. Current programs, such as the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, and projects funded through the American Rescue Plan Act, are deploying networks in communities across the state. Cotton County should explore effective ways to support ISPs that are considering buildouts in the community. This may involve collaborating with and assisting ISPs seeking federal and state funding.

Additional funding sources, such as the U.S. Economic Development Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, offer opportunities to expand broadband. Funding guides are linked in the resource section. Capitalizing on this once-in-a-generation funding opportunity will help ensure that Cotton County residents enjoy faster and more reliable broadband for years to come.

Resources

- [The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund \(RDOF\)](#)
- [The FCC High-Cost program: CAF A-CAM](#)
- [Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, Allocation by County](#)
- [ARPA SLFRE, Final Rule](#)
- [BroadbandUSA: Federal Funding Guide](#)
- [Guide to Federal Broadband Funding Opportunities in the U.S.](#)
- [Lifeline Program](#)

Digital Empowerment – Helping People Use Technology with Confidence

Goal: Increase the ability and confidence of Cotton County residents, businesses, and institutions to safely engage in digital spaces in ways that meet their needs.

Justification: Access to the internet alone is not enough. Residents also need skills, devices, and support to use technology in ways that meet their needs. Strengthening digital skills helps people access education, healthcare, jobs, and services, while also supporting local businesses and community organizations.

Strategic Actions:

1. Partner with trusted organizations to offer digital skills training.



Cotton County should collaborate with local and regional organizations and institutions to offer free digital literacy classes that boost confidence, engagement, and participation online throughout the county. Equipping residents with essential digital skills to safely navigate online platforms and applications is vital to ensuring everyone in the community benefits from investments in technology and digital infrastructure. As technology continues to evolve, introductory training on basic artificial intelligence (AI) tools—such as how AI can support job searches, learning, and everyday tasks—should also be included to help residents use emerging technologies responsibly and effectively.

Curriculum can be drawn from county-developed materials and trusted, publicly available resources. Classes may be hosted in familiar, accessible locations such as schools, libraries, churches, community centers, or other shared spaces, and promoted through local media and community networks. Building digital skills helps residents access education, healthcare, employment, and civic information, while also strengthening the county. A more digitally connected and informed population supports economic growth, improves service delivery, and enhances overall community resilience.

Workshop topics can include:

- Computer and internet basics
- How to teleconference
- Internet safety basics
- Mobile device basics
- Microsoft Office skills
- Intro to social media and website building
- Telehealth basics
- Platform or application-specific basics, including ones used by the county, school district, or local hospital/clinic
- AI basics

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

2. [Share information about affordable internet service plans.](#)

Data from the American Communities Survey indicates that many residents who likely have physical access to the internet are not subscribing to the service. This number is higher among seniors in the county, suggesting that cost may be a barrier to subscription. Addressing the affordability of internet service can help more residents get online. The county should work with community leaders and institutions to publicly promote programs and opportunities designed to reduce the cost of broadband service.

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

- **Resources to locate affordable internet service or computers:** Using online resources, Cotton County residents can identify local and national ISPs that offer



special low-cost services for vulnerable populations, older adults, and low-income families with children. Resources include EveryoneOn (<https://www.everyoneon.org/>), which helps residents locate low-cost internet services and affordable computers by ZIP code and need, based on their participation in assistance programs.

- **State and federal low-cost programs:** Two vital programs offer discounts for broadband to eligible households:
 - **Lifeline** is a federal program administered through the Federal Communications 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.
 - **ISP low-cost plans:** Many ISPs offer their own low-cost plans or subsidized programs to customers at a reduced cost. Some grant programs require ISPs receiving federal or state money to offer low-cost service to eligible low-income households. Residents should ask their local providers about any programs and potential eligibility.

The county and the connectivity lead can compile this information and make it publicly available to residents. Local organizations that help residents access services and benefit programs can include broadband affordability programs as part of those efforts.

3. Highlight successful local use cases of technology adoption and innovation to promote wider adoption of new technology strategies.

Cotton County can encourage broader technology adoption by showcasing local success stories that demonstrate how digital tools are already creating value in the community. Highlighting examples such as a small business expanding its customer base through online sales, a farm using connected technologies to improve efficiency, a healthcare provider offering telehealth services, or a school leveraging digital platforms to enhance learning can make the benefits of technology clearer to residents and organizations. Sharing these use cases through local media, community events, and county communication channels helps build awareness, reduce uncertainty, and inspire others to explore new technology strategies that support economic growth, service delivery, and overall community advancement.

These use cases may also highlight the need for additional community leaders to build the local broadband ecosystem. The individuals and organizations profiled could assist in various ways to support the county's connectivity goals, such as leading workshops to teach others how to use the tools and platforms to support their own education or business pursuits, or providing pathways and opportunities for local students to gain real-world experience with technology applications.



Resources

- [Connected Nation Digital Literacy Workshops](#)
- [Digital Learn – Free courses to learn anything about computers](#)
- [Digital Literacy Curriculum for K-12](#)
- [Free Applied Digital Skills – Google for Education](#)
- [Live, Virtual Classes for Seniors](#)
- [AARP Joins Nonprofit to teach tech to older adults](#)
- [The complete guide to digital skills](#)
- [Grow with Google](#)
- [Cybersecurity courses](#)
- [NDIA Honor Roll of Low Cost Plans](#)
- [Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency – Cyber Resource Hub](#)
- [Connected Nation Cybersecurity Workshops](#)



Sustainability – Making Progress Last

Goal: Drive community advancement by cultivating opportunities created by broadband and emerging technologies.

Justification: Broadband access plays a critical role in community development, influencing outcomes in healthcare, education, workforce readiness, business growth, public safety, and economic development. Securing additional funding to support the recommendations in this plan will help accelerate digital adoption, strengthen local programs, and ensure that investments in connectivity yield long-term benefits for Cotton County residents.

Strategic Action:

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

Cotton County should leverage the dedicated grant-writing resources available through the Connected Engagement program and coordinate with the connectivity lead and local partners to identify, pursue, and align funding opportunities across sectors. By taking a proactive, coordinated approach to grant pursuit, the county can maximize available resources, unlock new funding streams, and sustain progress toward closing the Digital Divide.

For example, local schools may consider opportunities through the U.S. Department of Education, libraries may consider grants through the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Chamber of Commerce may consider opportunities through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). For specifics and further information about the grant-writing funds, please contact Connected Nation.