



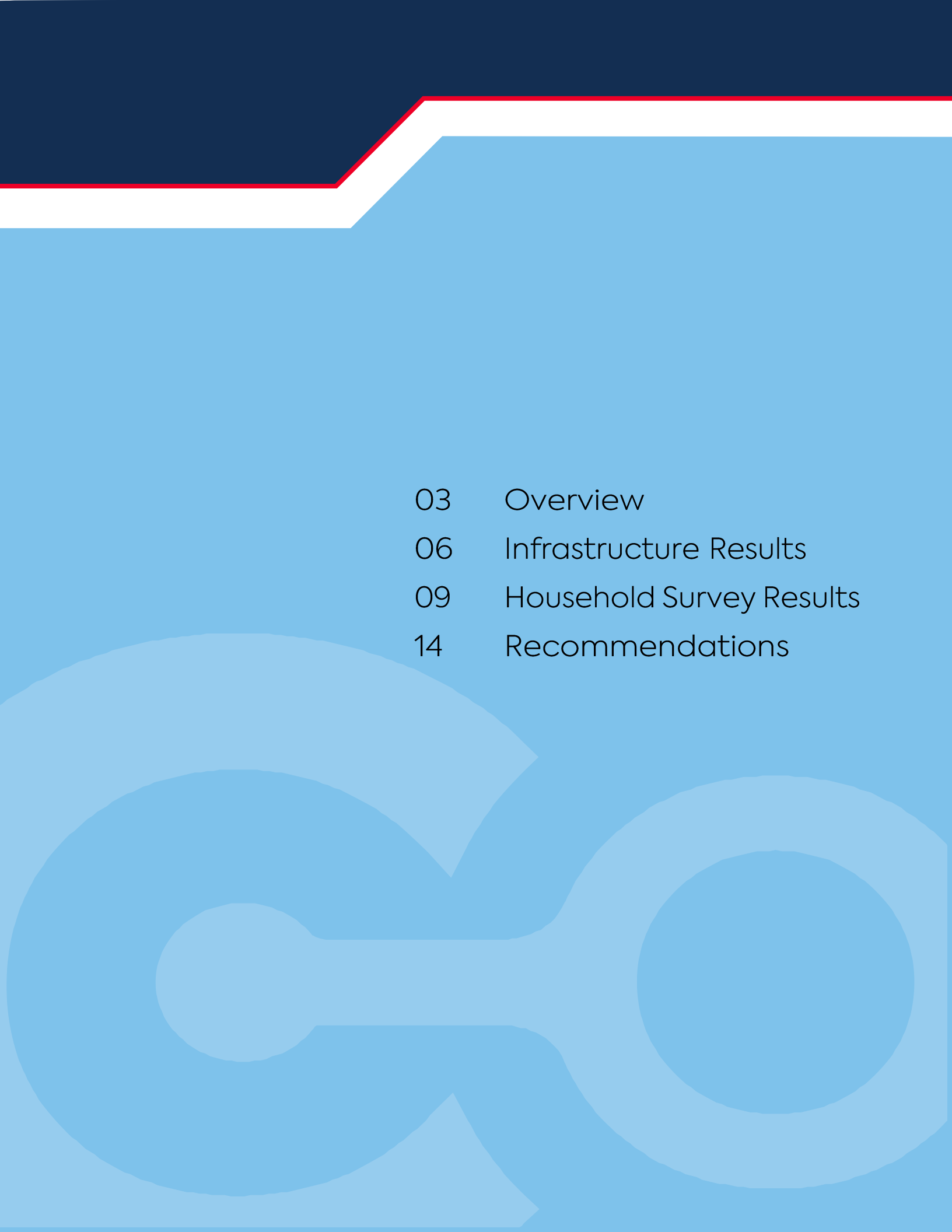
Connected
A CONNECTED NATION Initiative

Addressing Your Community's Unique Needs

Baylor County, Texas Executive Summary

July 2023

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NATION** 
connectednation.org



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Overview



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

As such, Baylor 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 January and May 2023, Baylor County conducted a comprehensive survey of broadband technology access and adoption across the community that collected responses from local 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 Baylor 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](#).

BAYLOR COUNTY, TEXAS QUICK FACTS

Population	3,465
Households	1,509
Median Household Income	\$43,705
Poverty Rate	15.3%
Adults with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher	19.7%
Hispanic or Latino	12.7%
Households with Broadband Access ¹	88.5%

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

¹The current FCC definition of broadband is a minimum of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload. These data are derived from the [FCC National Broadband Map](#) – with numbers as of June 2022.



62.5%

of households in
Baylor County
report subscribing
to fixed internet
service



More than 3 out of 5 households surveyed (**63.2%**) reported subscribing to mobile broadband; of those, **16.7%** use their mobile internet as a primary or secondary

79.7% of households in Baylor County have access to internet service at speeds needed to run many modern applications (100 Mbps downstream and 20 Mbps upstream). Statewide, **86.6%** of households have internet access at these speeds.

3 out of 5 employed survey respondents in Baylor County (**60%**) report teleworking in some capacity. Of those, **30%** telework every day and **20%** telework at least once per week.

2 out of 5 households surveyed (**40%**) reported being dissatisfied with their current internet service. The top reasons for dissatisfaction were slow speeds and unreliable connections.

More than 4 out of 5 households (**85%**) said they would like to have improved or additional options for home internet service.



Infrastructure Results



According to data from the FCC’s National Broadband Map, as of December 2022, 88.5% of Baylor 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 Baylor County is distributed throughout the county.

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

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE QUICK FACTS

Unserved Households (25/3 Mbps)
173

Households Served (10/1 Mbps)
95.61%

Households Served (25/3 Mbps)
88.5%

Households Served (50/5 Mbps)
82.2%

Households Served (100/20 Mbps)
79.69%

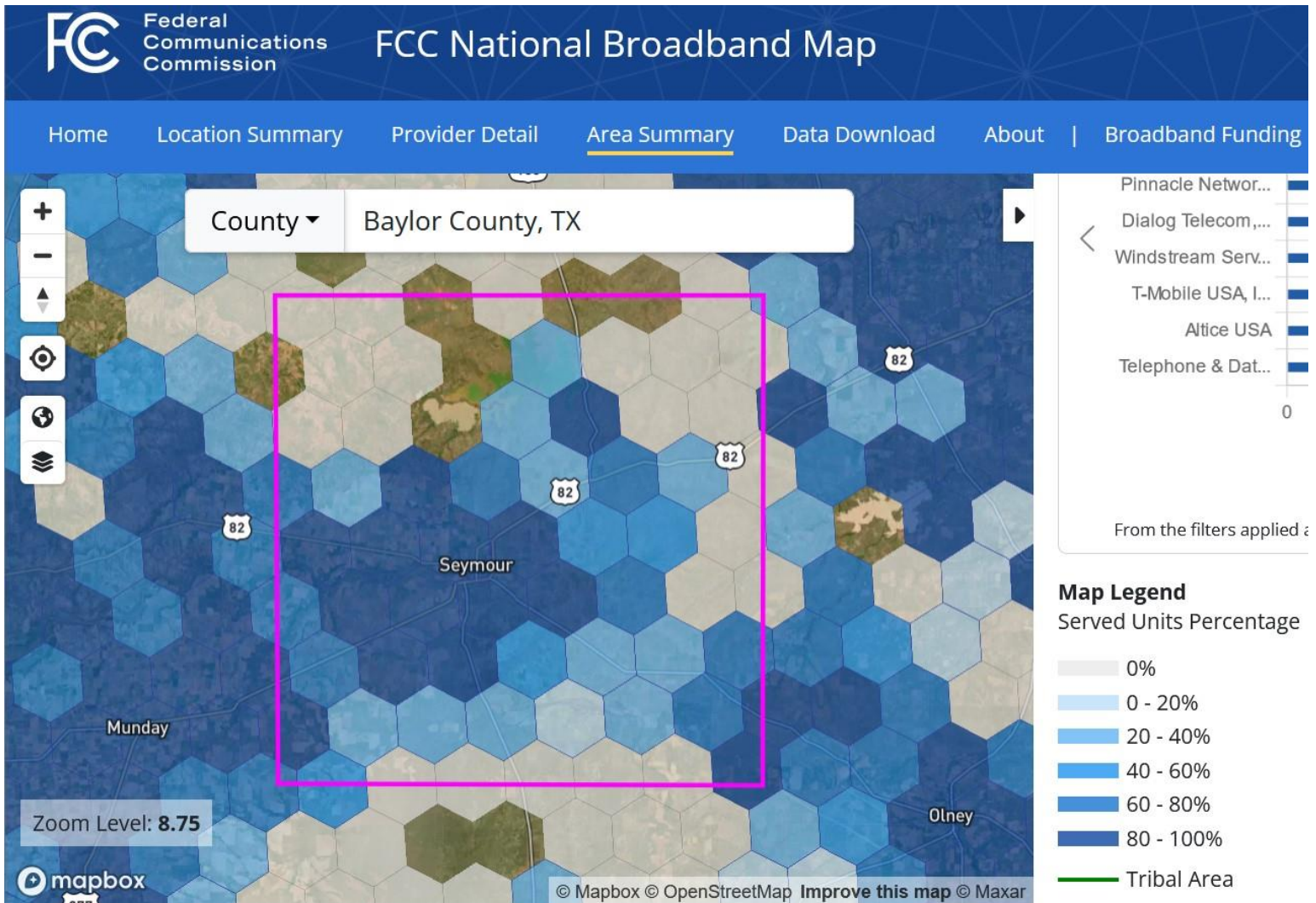
Broadband data released by the FCC for their [National Broadband Map](#).

PROVIDER	TECHNOLOGY	MAXIMUM DOWNLOAD SPEED (Mbps)	MAXIMUM UPLOAD SPEED (Mbps)
Santa Rosa Telephone Cooperative	Copper	50	5
Santa Rosa Telephone Cooperative	Fiber	1000	1000
TGM Pinnacle Network Solutions	Fixed Wireless	100	25
T-Mobile	Fixed Wireless	25	3
United States Cellular Corp.	Fixed Wireless	25	3
Valor Telecommunications of Texas LP	Copper	96	52
Valor Telecommunications of Texas LP	Fiber	1000	1000
Verizon	Fixed Wireless	50	4

Baylor County Infrastructure



The first step in understanding the status of broadband infrastructure in Baylor County and statewide is having accurate maps. The map shown below depicts wired and licensed fixed wireless broadband coverage at speeds of 25/3 Mbps from the FCC Broadband Map, also available [here](#).





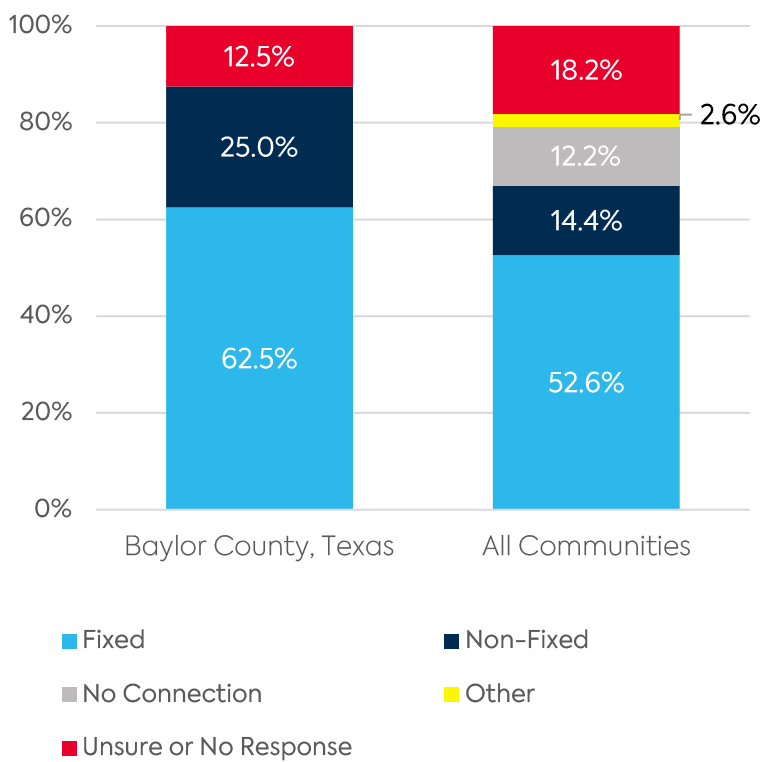
Household Survey Results

Household Survey Results



The following section provides an overview of results from a broadband survey conducted in Baylor County between January and May 2023. Altogether, CN Texas received 24 survey responses from households across the county; respondents provided insights into their internet connectivity or lack thereof. Data from Baylor County are compared to data from hundreds of other rural Connected communities across Michigan, Ohio, Texas, and Pennsylvania to benchmark and identify areas for improvement.

Home Broadband Adoption



ADOPTION

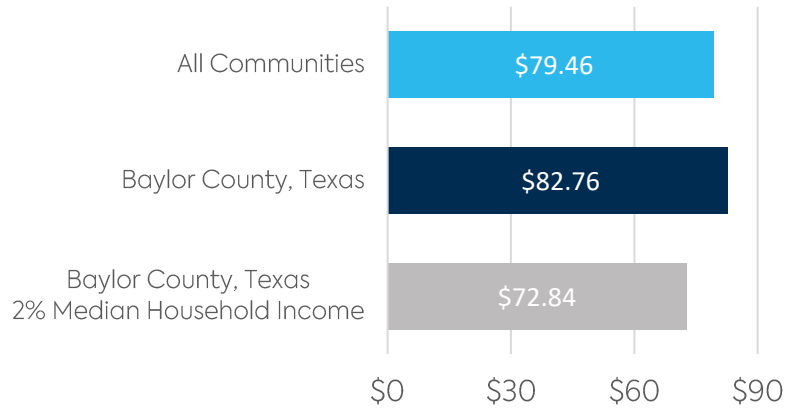
In Baylor County, 62.5% of households that took the survey subscribe to fixed broadband service delivered via a cable, DSL, fiber, or fixed wireless technology, while 25% indicate they have internet service delivered via dial-up, satellite, or a mobile wireless service. This leaves 12.5% of survey respondents unsure of what service they have or provided no response.



CONNECTION DETAILS

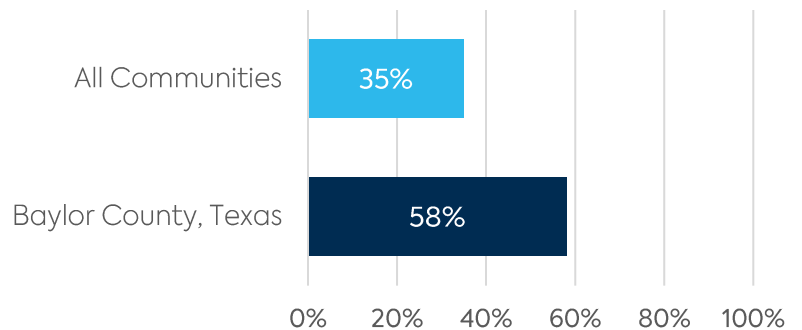
Two percent of monthly income is a recognized standard for measuring the affordability of a home internet connection. Respondents indicate that, on average, their internet connection costs about \$82.76 per month. This is more than the monthly cost paid in other communities (\$79.46). Two percent of the median household income in Baylor County is \$72.84 per month.

Average Monthly Cost

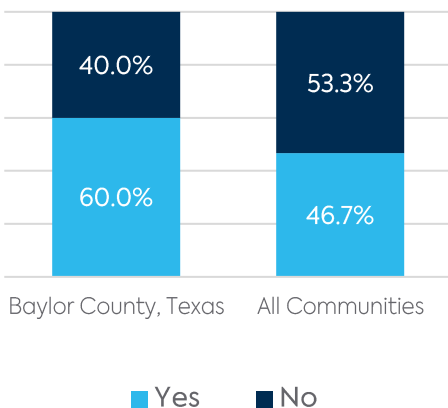


The FCC currently defines broadband as an internet connection with a download speed of at least 25 Mbps and upload speed of at least 3 Mbps. On average, respondents indicate that their connection's advertised download speed is 153 Mbps. In Baylor County, 58% of internet-connected households subscribe to download speeds faster than 25 Mbps.

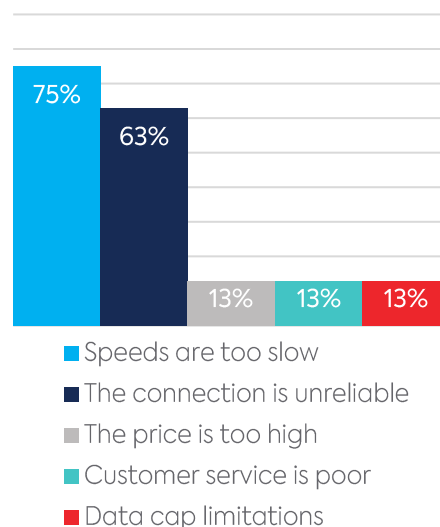
Percentage of Respondents with At Least 25/3 Mbps



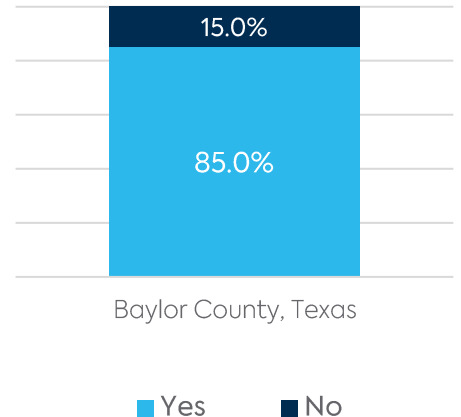
Does Your Internet Meet Your Needs?



Why Doesn't Your Internet Meet Your Needs?



Are You Interested in More Choices at Home?

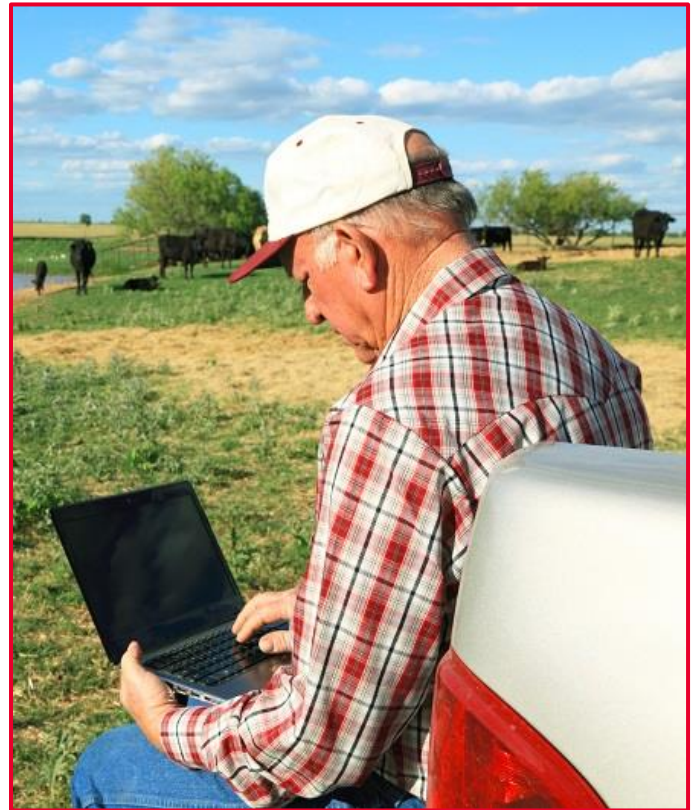




Competition provides residents with choices for service, allowing households the ability to switch providers if their current service does not meet their needs. Three out of five (60%) responding households indicate that their internet connection meets their needs. This is a higher rate of satisfaction than among households in other communities (46.7%).

When asked why their connection does not meet their needs, 75% of dissatisfied households indicate that their speed is too slow, 63% report that their connections are unreliable, 13% say that prices are too high, and 13% say that customer service is poor. Respondents could choose more than one reason for dissatisfaction.

Finally, more than 4 out of 5 respondents (85%) indicate that they are interested in additional internet choices for their home.

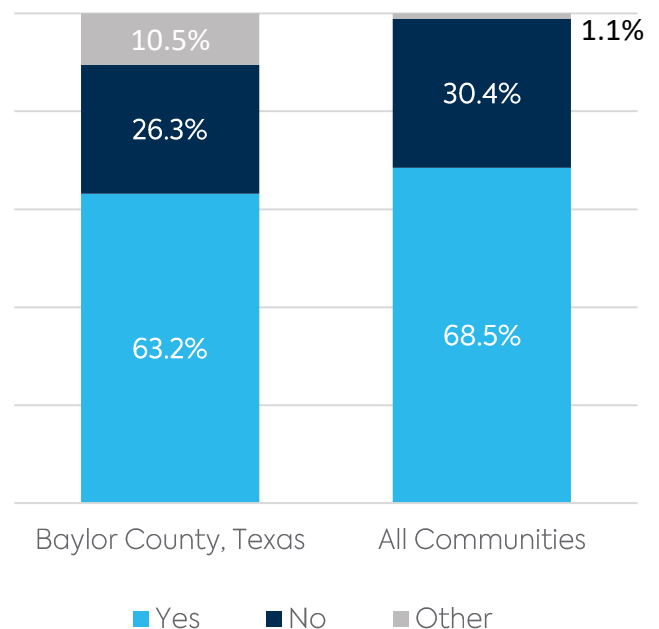


MOBILE CONNECTIVITY

More than 6 out of 10 households (63.2%) report that they subscribe to mobile internet service that they access via a smartphone or similar mobile device. This is slightly less than what is reported in other Connected communities (68.5%).

Additionally, 16.6% of mobile-connected households report that they either rely on those mobile connections as their primary source of home internet connectivity or use mobile service to connect other household devices to the internet.

Households Subscribing to Mobile Internet Service





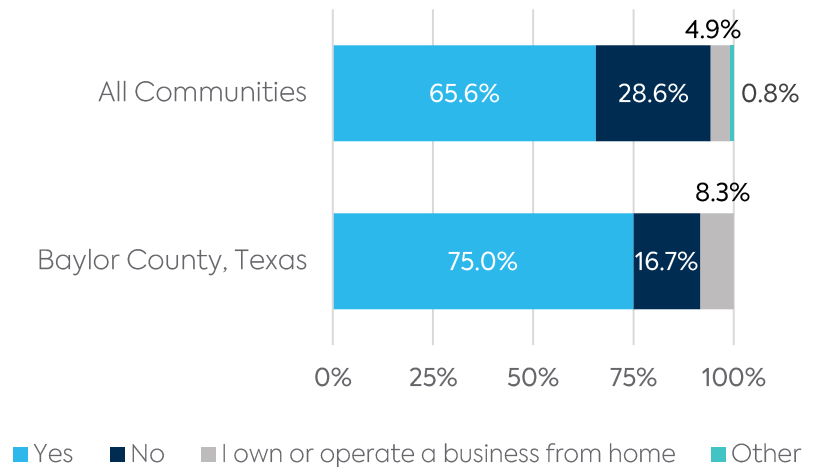
TELEWORK

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

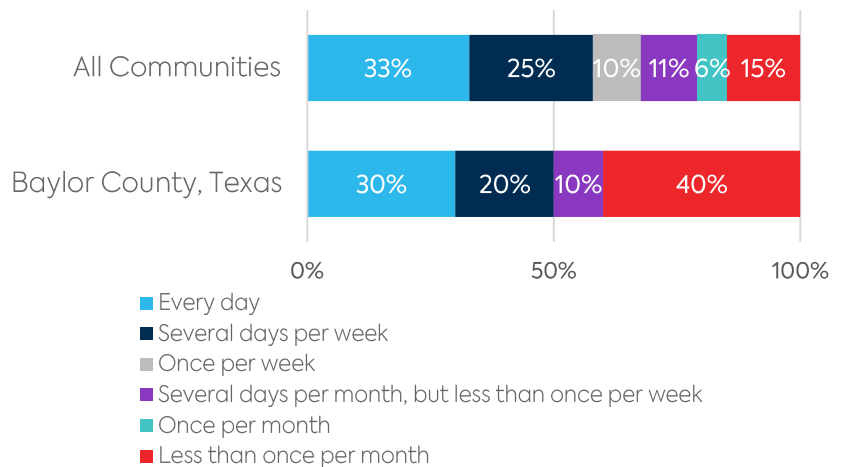
Teleworking is quickly becoming a critical part of growing a local economy because it represents an opportunity to attract and retain employees even when employees are not located in the same community as their employers. However, this only works if those employees have access to advanced broadband infrastructure.

Three out of five (60%) employed respondents in Baylor County (60%) telework at least part of the time. Three out of ten teleworkers (30%) work remotely every day, while approximately 20% telework at least once per week.

Do You Currently Telework?



How Frequently Do You Telework?





Recommendations



A small group of key leadership in Baylor County partnered with Connected Nation Texas (CN Texas) for a local Connected Community Engagement designed to assess the connectivity, affordability, and general technology needs of the county's residents. Based on data from a countywide survey and community feedback, the following recommendations are presented to assist Baylor County in expanding broadband access and adoption.

Goal 1: Align leadership, resources, and community assets to increase access, adoption, and use of high-speed internet for all in Baylor County.

The state of Texas was allocated \$3.3 billion under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) via the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program and the Digital Equity Act. These programs will fund projects that help expand high-speed internet access and ensure Texas communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy by promoting a diverse array of digital advancement projects. This federal funding opportunity is a once-in-a-generation infusion of money that will be administered by the state to eligible communities via a competitive grant program. Therefore, for the county to capitalize on this opportunity, it is paramount Baylor County establishes a formal Broadband Council to ensure the work completed as part of this local engagement is carried forth and the community is staying on top of the state, local, and federal broadband happenings. A standing group of leaders is already active in the broadband space; it's a matter of making it official and more inclusive.

Objective: Baylor County should maintain its focus on greater opportunities for residents, businesses, agriculture, education, and others.

Action 1 – Establish central broadband leadership in Baylor County by making permanent the Broadband Council formed during CN Texas' Connected engagement program.

Establishing leadership is essential. Having a Broadband Council that represents key community and sector partners allows the county to stay informed of key broadband efforts and opportunities. The Broadband Council will maintain a local presence to keep the community interested and engaged in internet adoption and expanded internet deployment.

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

- **Health care:** Local physicians or hospital staff
- **Government:** County Judge, County Commissioners, Mayor, City Council, County IT Director
- **Education (K-12):** Superintendents, School IT Directors
- **Education (Higher Education):** University, community college, trade schools or workforce training



- **Public Safety:** County Sheriff's Office, Police Department, Fire and Rescue and surrounding Volunteer Fire Departments, Emergency Medical Services
- **Agriculture:** County Ag Agent, leading ag producers
- **Business:** Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development
- **Library:** Public Library Directors, librarians
- **Community At-Large:** Someone from the community who is interested in broadband.

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

Responsibilities of the Broadband Council should include:

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

Timeline: Establish an official Broadband Council immediately.



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

Action 2 – Appoint a Broadband Council liaison.

The broadband team needs a point person, a champion for connectivity in the county. Whether paid or volunteer, part-time or full-time, this person will be the point of contact for broadband in the county. The liaison will stay up to date on broadband policy news, new construction projects in the region, new laws, and funding opportunities, as well as maintain visibility to keep the community educated and engaged in internet adoption and expanded internet deployment.

Action 3 – Develop a website to promote local broadband resources.

The county should have a page on its website that serves as a one-stop resource guide for ISPs, community residents, and local leaders. The website should include resources related to digital literacy, digital skills, reduced-cost broadband offerings, public computing centers, and other relevant information for residents and ISPs. Having a comprehensive set of resources in one location makes it easier for the public to access this information and for the county to highlight all the different connectivity resources it has available.

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

Responsible parties: County Judge, Commissioners Court, Economic Director, and community broadband team

Resources

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

Broadband readiness

- [Texas Broadband Providers by County](#)
- [Smart Cities Readiness Guide](#)



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

Broadband leadership:

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

Goal 2: Work with internet service providers (ISPs) to improve internet access and speeds.

Objective: The Baylor County Connected Engagement surveyed residents and key business sectors, and convened stakeholders to understand the county's connectivity landscape. The survey data indicates that, while almost 77% of residents have access to speeds of 100 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload, only 58% of surveyed households subscribe to download speeds faster than 25 Mbps. Even though most residents indicated satisfaction with their current service, 85% of all respondents would like improved or additional options for broadband.

Action 1 – Maintain open communication and positive relations with ISPs working or scheduled to work in the county, as well as ISPs interested in expanding in the county.

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

Additionally, the county should strive to be an environment that is amenable to business. This means having easy-to-use websites that allow ISPs and vendors quick access to relevant information, as well as fostering a business environment that rewards open communication and timely resolution of concerns.

Action 2 – Consider incorporating broadband development and planning within local budgets.

Broadband expansion will bring expanded employment opportunities, innovation, and quality-of-life improvements. Under advisement from the Broadband Council, the county should commit funds to



expand broadband access, adoption, and use, setting aside resources that reflect the broadband priorities of the community.

In March 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) established the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) to provide state, local, and tribal governments with the resources needed to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic and its economic effects.

Baylor County was the recipient of \$681,582 in ARPA SLFRF funds. The SLFRF provide substantial flexibility for each government to meet local needs — including, “to make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.” The Final Rule for the program, released in 2022, made it even easier to use these funds for broadband if communities deemed it necessary and they had funds remaining.

Additionally, the county could seek broadband funding from existing revenue, planned contributions, and public or private grants, including broadband grants from the state of Texas Broadband Development Office (BDO).

Action 3 – Provide survey data to all local ISPs.

When meeting with providers, community leaders should address the Connected survey results, highlighting the need for faster service at an affordable price. It is important for providers to understand the consumer base in Baylor County to provide the best customer service experience. Sixty percent of households with a broadband report being dissatisfied with their service, citing slow speeds (75%), unreliable connections (63%), and high prices and poor service (13%) as the leading reasons. Despite the long list of ISPs, over 85% of those surveyed want more choices at home. Armed with this information, ISPs can strategically address their service areas and improve access and education about services throughout the county.

Action 4 – Pursue state and federal funding for broadband advancement.

As mentioned previously, the infusion of federal funds via the BEAD and DEA to the state is an opportunity for Texas communities to obtain funds via a competitive grant program. Baylor County should explore opportunities to obtain funds for infrastructure deployment and adoption, middle-mile infrastructure, and digital equity efforts.

In addition, there are other funding sources that promise opportunities for broadband, such as the U.S. Economic Development Association or U.S. Department of Agriculture. Funding guides have been linked in the resource section. Capitalizing on these once-in-a-generation funding opportunities will be paramount to ensuring Baylor County residents have faster, more reliable broadband for years to come.

Action 5 – Pursue grants that advance local community development using broadband



technologies (e.g., workforce development, telehealth, digital literacy, etc.).

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

The Seymour Economic Development Council, Agriculture Extension Agent and the Seymour Chamber of Commerce have been highly engaged in conversations throughout the Connected Community Engagement and expressed interest in pursuing grant funding. Specifically, research should be done to pursue funding for expansion or support of the co-workspace that the City of Seymour has developed. This space provides affordable, internet-enabled office space to rent for residents who do not have internet access at their home. In conjunction with the countywide Connected Community Engagement, Baylor County has access to funding for grant-writing assistance. If funding opportunities are identified, simply contact your Connected Nation Broadband Solutions Manager for specifics.

Timeline: The Baylor County Broadband Council should reach out to ISPs for an initial meeting with community stakeholders and decision makers as soon as council leadership is established. The community should identify grant opportunities within three months and utilize the available funds of \$7,500 via the Priddy Foundation to assist with grant writing.

Responsible parties: Local and county governments, Broadband Council and Broadband Liaison, City of Seymour Economic Development and Chamber of Commerce

Resources

- [FCC High-Cost program: CAF A-CAM](#)
- [The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund \(RDOF\)](#)
- [Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, Allocation by County](#)
- [ARPA SLFRE, Final Rule](#)
- [Governor's Broadband Development Council](#)
- [The Texas Statute](#)
- [Senate Bill 1238](#)
- [The 2021 Governor's Broadband Development Council's Report](#)
- [The 2020 Governor's Broadband Development Council's Report](#)
- [The Texas Broadband Development Office](#)
- [The Texas Broadband Plan 2022](#)
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- [Letter: Do your part on broadband](#)
- [The Anatomy of a Community Broadband Manager](#)
- [TARA Leadership: Rondella Hawkins](#)

Funding Resources

Treasury Issues Final Rule for State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Program to Support the Ongoing COVID Program

<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0550>

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>

BroadbandUSA: Federal Funding Guide

<https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/federal>

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, County Allocation

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

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>



Goal 3: Ensure that Baylor County residents have access to the internet, regardless of income level.

Objective: Increase broadband adoption and usage rates among Baylor County’s low-income residents through low-cost connectivity solutions.

Broadband adoption occurs when a resident, business, or community institution recognizes the value of broadband (high-speed internet), subscribes to the service, and embraces related digital technologies. Adoption is critical for increasing the community’s digital capacity, and empowering both residents and community leaders. To adopt broadband, a person needs access to the internet, a digital device, and requisite digital skills to navigate the online world and related technology.

Affordability is a key component to adoption and eventually closing the Digital Divide — being unable to pay for an internet subscription is a barrier for some residents. The average monthly cost of internet in Baylor County is \$82.76, which is slightly higher than the average cost of \$79.46 in other Connected communities. Based on the standard metric of affordability (2% of monthly median household income), the cost of internet in Baylor County should be \$72.08 or less per month.

Many residents leverage their smartphone and mobile service as their primary connection to the internet, even when at home. In fact, nearly 17% of survey respondents said that they exclusively use their smartphones to go online and use their smartphone to connect other devices to the internet.

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

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

The county should work with community leaders and institutions to publicly promote programs and opportunities designed to reduce the cost of broadband service. Information about monthly internet subsidy programs and providers with low-cost subscription packages should be kept updated and shared widely with the community. This can be done by advertising in the local newspaper, providing updates in monthly school newsletters, posting flyers in public buildings throughout the county, and publicly discussing at Commissioners’ Court and City Hall meetings, and through other outlets (schools, nonprofits, etc.) throughout the community.

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

- **Resource to locate affordable internet service or computers:** Using online resources, Baylor County residents can identify local and national providers that offer special low-cost services



for vulnerable populations, older adults, and low-income families with children. Resources include EveryoneOn (<https://www.everyoneon.org/>)

- [EveryoneOn](#) 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:** There are two critical programs that offer broadband discounts to eligible households:
 - [Lifeline](#) is a federal program administered through the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) Universal Service Administrative Co. that lowers the monthly cost of phone or internet services for eligible consumers. Consumers can get up to \$9.25 off the cost of phone, internet, or bundled services each month. Households can qualify based on income or participation in federal or tribal assistance programs.
 - The [Affordable Connectivity Program](#) (ACP) was created to help households struggling to afford internet service. The ACP provides a \$30 a month credit toward internet coverage (\$75 a month for qualifying residents on tribal lands) and up to \$100 for the purchase of a device. Households can qualify based on income or participation in federal or tribal assistance programs. To receive the connected device discount, consumers must enroll in the ACP with a participating provider that offers connected devices. The internet company will provide the discount to the consumer, then seek reimbursement. Find out which providers participate by clicking [here](#).
 - The [ACP tool kit](#) is a great resource that communities can use to promote the program to residents.

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

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

Action 2 – Ensure that Baylor 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](#) or [HumanIT](#).
- 2.) The county and/or cities within the county should create a program where departments and



businesses could donate surplus computing devices for refurbishment and distribution or sale in high-need communities.

Timeline: Disseminating information about free and reduced-cost broadband services should begin immediately to ensure anyone who wants access can get it. For residents who cannot access the internet at home, public computers are the next best option for accessing the digital world. To meet the needs of these residents, Baylor County should increase the number of free, public computing stations by fall 2023.

Responsible parties: Local and county governments, Broadband Council

Resources

Affordable Connectivity Program

<https://connectednation.org/acprogram/>

Universal Service Administrative Co.: Lifeline

<https://www.lifelinesupport.org/#>

Free Wi-Fi Hotspot Locator Apps

<https://www.lifewire.com/free-online-wifi-hotspot-locators-818276>

Texas Broadband Providers by County

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

Human I-T

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

PCs for People

<https://www.pcsforpeople.org/>

5 Reasons Why Libraries are Essential to Have

<https://princh.com/blog-5-reasons-why-libraries-are-essential-to-have/#.Ybt0tb3MKUI>

Current Broadband Funding

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

BroadbandUSA: Federal Funding Guide

<https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/federal>

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-Ever 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>

Goal 4: Ensure that Baylor County residents and business have digital literacy skills to improve digital engagement and improve outcomes in business, public safety, workforce readiness, and quality of life.

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

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

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

Action 1 – Identify community advocates in five community sectors who can lead digital engagement initiatives. Baylor County leaders should identify key advocates in each of the following areas to educate the community about the short- and long-term benefits of broadband adoption and use. Industry leaders can speak to the importance of broadband in their line of work, as well as discuss the myriad uses. The more residents, businesses, and community institutions understand the positive benefits of broadband, the greater the likelihood of adoption and use.

- **Economy:** Baylor County Commissioners Court, Nortex Regional Planning Commission, Workforce Solutions
- **Telehealth:** County Hospital District
- **Agriculture:** Baylor County Texas Agrilife Office
- **Education:** Baylor City ISD, Holliday ISD and Windthorst ISD



- **Public Safety:** Baylor County Sheriff's Department, local Police Departments, and Volunteer Fire Departments

Economy

Highlight economic and practical advantages of teleworking: Broadband access is critical for ongoing economic development in communities. Reliable access provides opportunities to develop new businesses, expand current businesses, and recruit new residents to the area. According to survey results, 30% of employed survey respondents telework. Of that group, 30% work remotely every day. By teleworking, an employee can reside in Baylor County but be employed by an entity in Dallas, Houston, Lubbock, or anywhere in the world. Telework offers greater flexibility in work schedules and expands the number of job opportunities for rural Texans, while also increasing the number of potential applicants for employers. The keys to telework is adequate digital skills to engage online and a reliable internet connection.

Promote e-commerce as the gateway to the global economy: As businesses and community organizations expand their online presence, they expand their customer pool and increase profit. By utilizing websites and social media to market services and sell products, businesses can take part in a larger digital economy.

Telehealth

Highlight physical health and time-saving benefits of telehealth services: The future of medicine is online. For communities that lack large hospitals, general practitioners, surgical attendees, and medical specialists, telehealth is a natural solution. Online medical services allow communities to speak with top-of-the-line doctors, dentists, surgeons, dermatologists, veterinarians, and many other providers through the click of a button. These online services are not only important in times of emergency, but they allow residents flexibility when meeting with medical professionals. No longer do you have to take time off work to drive to the clinic, but rather use a phone or tablet to meet with your doctor from the comfort of your home or office. Survey results reveal that 100% of health care facilities in Baylor County subscribe to internet services.

Telehealth is important not only for treating physical needs, but also addressing psychological needs — so it should include therapy and related care. Telehealth does not have to fit inside a box and is not intended to be a substitute for rural medical providers; if anything, telehealth is meant to enhance the services already offered by hard-working, conscientious, rural medical professionals. Key barriers to participating in telehealth include a lack of digital skills to access videoconferencing, access to affordable and adequate devices to successfully participate in remote sessions, and underlying fears of cybersecurity and privacy concerns.

Agriculture

Showcase the intersection of the agriculture industry and broadband: Agriculture is the backbone of Texas (and the United States as a whole), but for field operations and ranches to remain profitable and sustainable into the future, farmers and ranchers will need to adapt to the changing times.



Innovations in farming technology range from automated equipment to livestock tracking, all of which are designed to increase profitability, meet changing demands, and allow operations to stay competitive. Ultimately, the future of American agriculture demands broadband, not only so producers can stay connected to the outside world, but so local ag operations can run sustainable and successful businesses that contribute to local economies and global food sources. The current County Agriculture Extension Agent would be an excellent option to assist with this showcase. She has a strong level of trust with the community, extensive exposure to families, and a deep knowledge of the industry.

Public Safety

Promote the importance of broadband in emergency preparedness and in the public safety sector (911, interoperable networks). Public safety involves protecting citizens, organizations, and communities from danger particularly in times of crisis. It involves the timely deployment of emergency response systems, personnel, video surveillance systems, and dissemination of timely and accurate information. With improved broadband connectivity and reliability comes increased public safety capabilities of EMS, police, and fire departments. This is because first responders can now communicate effectively using mobile devices while in the field and can also easily communicate with other agencies at local, state, and federal levels. Additionally, the increased connectivity allows for more efficient communication of important public safety information to the public, and the ability for the public to communicate back to first responders. Without adequate broadband infrastructure, many of today's systems to ensure public safety cannot be implemented successfully.

Action 2 – Develop curriculum for free, community workshops.

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

Workshop topics can include:

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



Action 2A – Provide varied formats for greater community involvement.

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

Action 3 – Encourage anchor institutions, community organizations, and service organizations to offer web design and online marketing classes for local businesses.

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

Timeline: Digital literacy and skills workshops for residents and businesses should be available throughout Baylor County by fall 2023 or early 2024. The community should routinely assess the curriculum to determine if updates are needed.

Responsible parties: Broadband Council, community institutions such as businesses, schools, libraries, organizations, local government leaders and elected officials, broadband providers, and community residents

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>

How Better Broadband Access Will Help Telemedicine Reach Its Full Potential

<https://intouchhealth.com/how-broadband-will-help-telemedicine-reach-its-full-potential/>

The Benefit that Broadband Internet Offers for Ecommerce

<https://www.newsanyway.com/2020/02/26/the-benefits-that-broadband-internet-offers-for-ecommerce/>

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/>

Grow with Google

<https://grow.google/>

GCFLearnFree.org® program

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

BOSS: Business Owners Sharing Solutions

<https://wichitafallschamber.com/boss/>

Telehealth for behavioral health care

<https://telehealth.hhs.gov/providers/telehealth-for-behavioral-health/>

Texas Department of Health and Human Services: Aging

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/aging>

New telehealth station launching in Milam County

<https://www.kbtx.com/2020/07/07/new-telehealth-station-launching-in-milam-county/>

Telehealth station in Milam County first of its kind in Texas, bridging accessibility gap in rural areas

<https://www.kxxv.com/brazos/telehealth-station-in-milam-county-first-of-its-kind-in-texas-bridging-accessibility-gap-in-rural-areas>

Pottsville Library teaming with UNT medical school for telemedicine program

<https://www.kxii.com/2020/12/23/pottsville-library-teaming-with-unt-medical-school-for-telemedicine-program/>

Pottsville Area Library: Check out telehealth at your local library!

<https://pottsvillibrary.com/health/>

County starts free digital literacy program

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

Getting Started with Telemedicine

<https://connectednation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Getting-Started-with-Telemedicine.pdf>



Common Terms Associated with Telehealth and Telemedicine

<https://connectednation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Common-Terms-Associated-with-Telehealth-and-Telemedicine.pdf>

5 Tips for Securing your Mobile Device for Telehealth

https://connectednation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Tips-for-Securing-your-Mobile_updated.pdf

Connecting Seniors in Central Texas

<https://www.communitytechnetwork.org/blog/connecting-seniors-in-central-texas-with-senior-connect/>

The Future of American Farming

<https://www.benton.org/publications/future-american-farming>

Digital Literacy

- [Connected Nation Digital Literacy Workshops](#)
- [Digital Learn – Free courses to learn anything about computers](#)
- [Digital Literacy Curriculum for K-12](#)
- [Free Applied Digital Skills – Google for Education](#)
- [Live, Virtual Classes for Seniors](#)

Cybersecurity

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