

Connected
A CONNECTED NATION Initiative

Addressing Your Community's Unique Needs

Kaufman County, Texas
Executive Summary

September 2022

**CONNECTED
NATION** 
connectednation.org



03	Overview
06	Infrastructure Results
09	Household Survey Results
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 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, Kaufman 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 April and June 2022, Kaufman County conducted a comprehensive survey of broadband technology access and adoption across the community that collected responses from 2,155 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 Kaufman 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](#).

KAUFMAN COUNTY, TEXAS

QUICK FACTS

Population

145,310

Households

39,237

Median Household Income

\$72,179

Poverty Rate

10.7%

Adults with a Bachelor's Degree
or Higher

20.2%

Hispanic or Latino

24.9%

Households with
Broadband Access¹

96.94%

Source:

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=0500000US48257>

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/>



62.3%

of households in
Kaufman County
report subscribing
to fixed internet
service



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

***91.5%** of households in Kaufman County have access to internet service at speeds needed to run many modern applications (100 Mbps downstream and 10 Mbps upstream). Statewide, **93.6%** of households have internet access at these speeds.*

*Nearly 3 out of 4 employed survey respondents in Kaufman County (**73.6%**) report teleworking in some capacity. Of those, **44%** telework every day and **24%** telework several days per week.*

*More than half the households surveyed (**56.5%**) and 3 out of 5 businesses (**60.5%**) reported that they were dissatisfied with their current internet service. The top reasons for dissatisfaction were slow speeds, unreliable connections, and high prices.*

*More than 9 out of 10 households (**93.1%**) 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, 96.94% of Kaufman 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 Kaufman County is distributed throughout the county.

Below is the list of internet service providers (ISPs) in Kaufman 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)
1,069

Households Served (10/1 Mbps)
99.52%

Households Served (25/3 Mbps)
96.94%

Households Served (50/5 Mbps)
93.93%

Households Served (100/10 Mbps)
91.52%

*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)
ANTS Wifi	Fixed Wireless	31	2
Argon Technologies	Fixed Wireless	15	3
AT&T Southwest	Fiber	1000	1000
AT&T Southwest	DSL	100	20
CenturyLink	Fiber	940	940
CenturyLink	DSL	100	100
Community Internet Providers	Fixed Wireless	25	25
Dell Telephone Coop	Fiber	100	100
Dell Telephone Coop	Fixed Wireless	10	1
ECTISP Inc.	Fixed Wireless	40	15
Nextlink Residential	Fixed Wireless	100	100
Nextwave Wireless	Fixed Wireless	25	3
Peoples	Fiber	1000	100
Peoples	DSL	80	8
Rise Broadband	Fixed Wireless	50	10
Shout Broadband	Fixed Wireless	50	5
Suddenlink Communications	Cable	1000	50
Texas Windstream Inc.	DSL	200	200
Texas Windstream Inc.	Fiber	200	200
T-Mobile	Fixed Wireless	25	3
Wi-Five Broadband Internet	Fixed Wireless	18	2

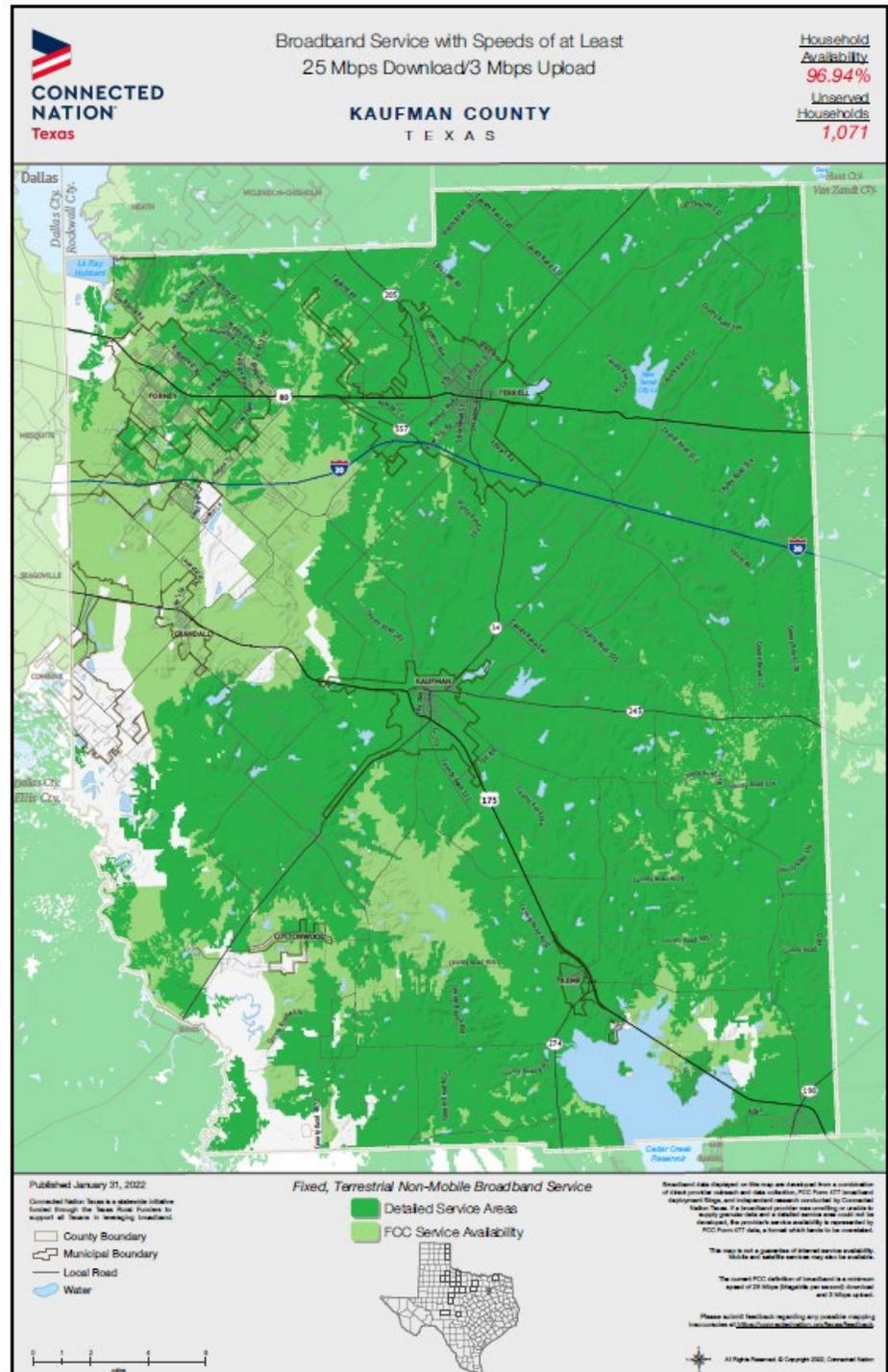
Kaufman County Infrastructure



Below is Kaufman County's (25/3 Mbps) map. To access the full map, go to <https://connectednation.org/texas/county-maps/> and select Kaufman 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.

The first step in understanding the status of broadband infrastructure in Kaufman 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](#).



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



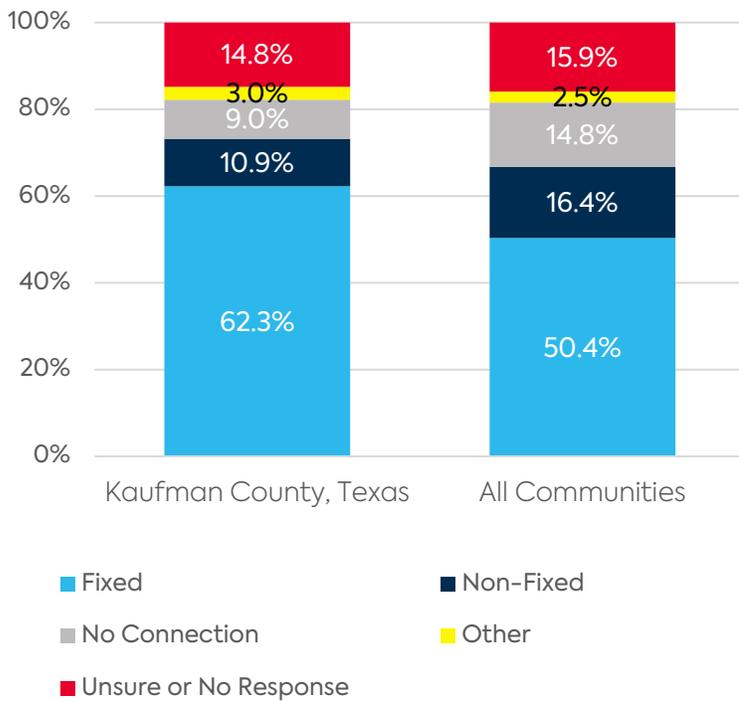
Household Survey Results

Household Survey Results



The following section provides an overview of results from a broadband survey conducted in Kaufman County between April and June 2022. Altogether, CN Texas received 2,155 survey responses from households across the county; respondents provided insights into their internet connectivity or lack thereof. Data from Kaufman County are compared to data from hundreds of other rural Connected communities that participated in the program across Michigan, Ohio, Texas, and Pennsylvania to benchmark and identify areas for improvement.

Home Broadband Adoption

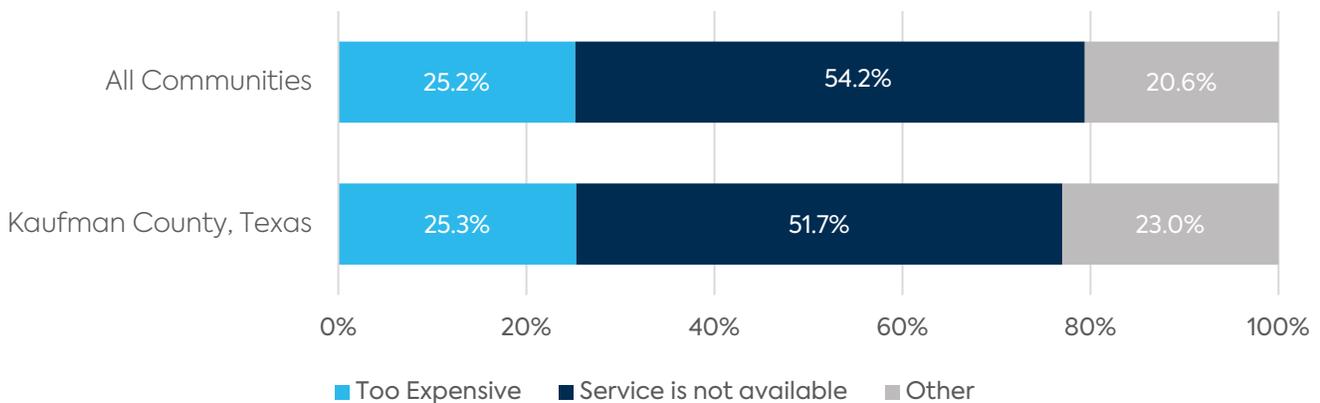


ADOPTION

In Kaufman County, 62.3% of households that took the survey subscribe to fixed broadband service delivered via a cable, DSL, fiber, or fixed wireless technology, while 10.9% indicate they have internet service delivered via dial-up, satellite, or a mobile wireless service. This leaves 9% without internet and 17.8% of survey respondents unsure of what service they have or provided no response.

Among those without a home internet connection, 25.3% said they did not have broadband because it was too expensive. An additional 51.7% say service is not available.

Primary Barrier

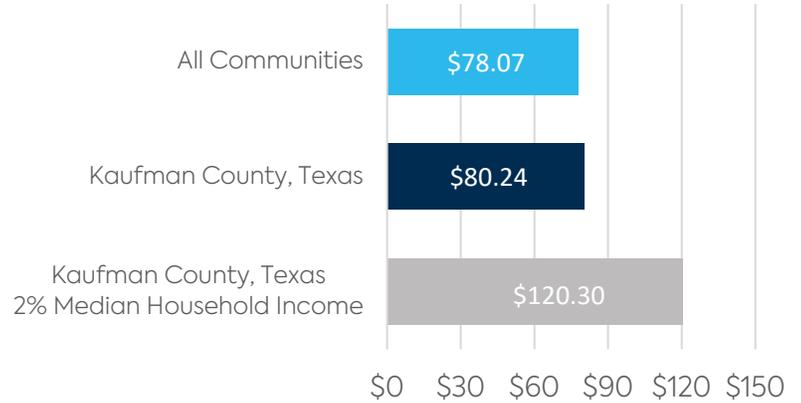




CONNECTION DETAILS

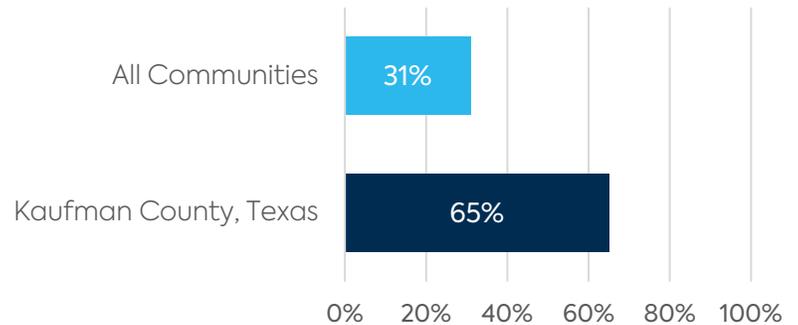
Two percent of monthly income is a recognized standard for measuring the affordability of a home internet connection. Respondents indicate that, on average, their internet connection costs about \$80.24 per month. This is higher than the monthly cost paid in other communities (\$78.07). Two percent of the median household income in Kaufman County is \$120.30 per month.

Average Monthly Cost

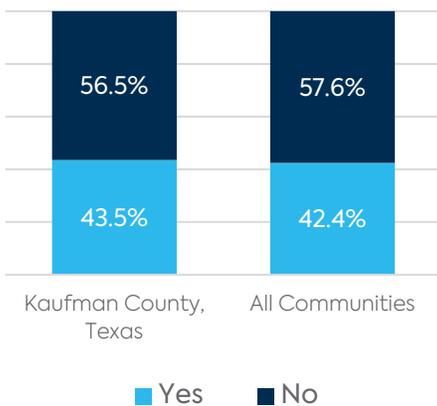


The FCC currently defines broadband as an internet connection with a download speed of at least 25 Mbps and upload speed of at least 3 Mbps. On average, respondents indicate that their connection's advertised download speed is 187.8 Mbps. In Kaufman County, 65% of internet-connected households subscribe to download speeds faster than 25 Mbps.

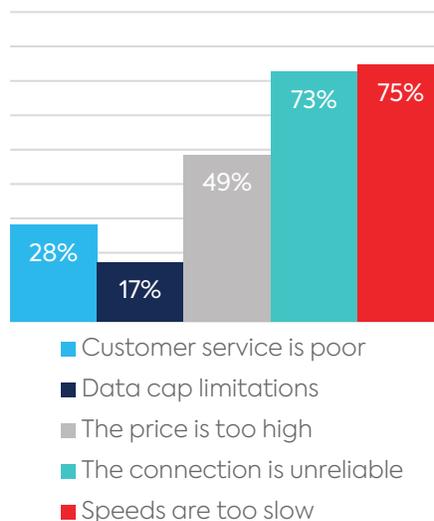
Percentage of Respondents with At Least 25/3 Mbps



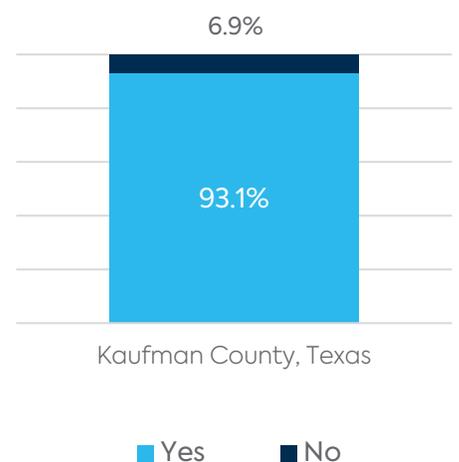
Does Your Internet Meet Your Needs?



Why Doesn't Your Internet Meet Your Needs?



Are You Interested in More Choices at Home?

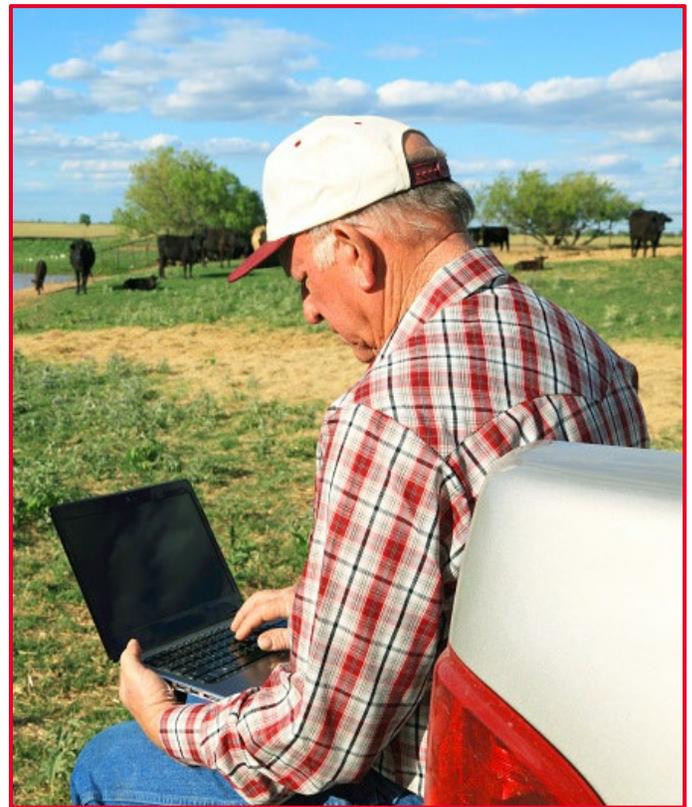




Competition provides residents with choices for service, allowing households the ability to switch providers if their current service does not meet their needs. Less than one-half (43.5%) of responding households indicate that their internet connection meets their needs. This is a slightly higher rate of satisfaction than among households in other communities (42.4%).

When asked why their connection does not meet their needs, 75% of dissatisfied households indicate that their speed is too slow, 73% say their connections are unreliable, and 49% indicate that the price is too high. Respondents could choose more than one reason for dissatisfaction.

Finally, most respondents (93.1%) indicate that they are interested in additional internet choices for their home.

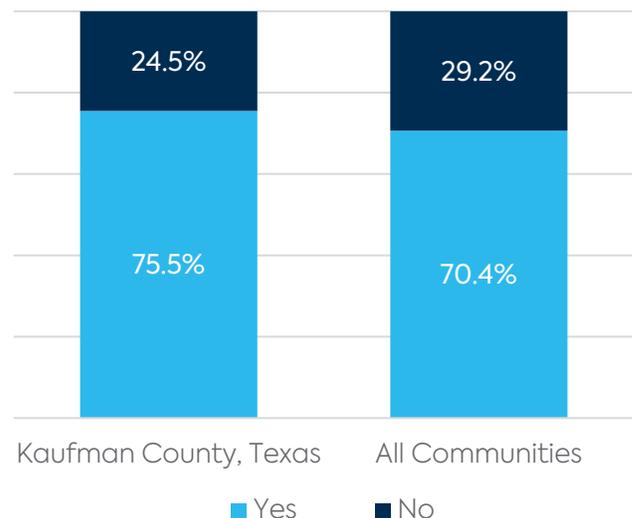


MOBILE CONNECTIVITY

More than 3 out of 4 households (75.5%) reported that they subscribe to mobile internet service that they access via a smartphone or similar mobile device. This is a little more than what is reported in other Connected communities (70.4%).

Additionally, 25.1% of mobile-connected households report that they either rely on those mobile connections as their primary source of home internet connectivity or use mobile service to connect other household devices to the internet.

Households Subscribing to Mobile Internet Service





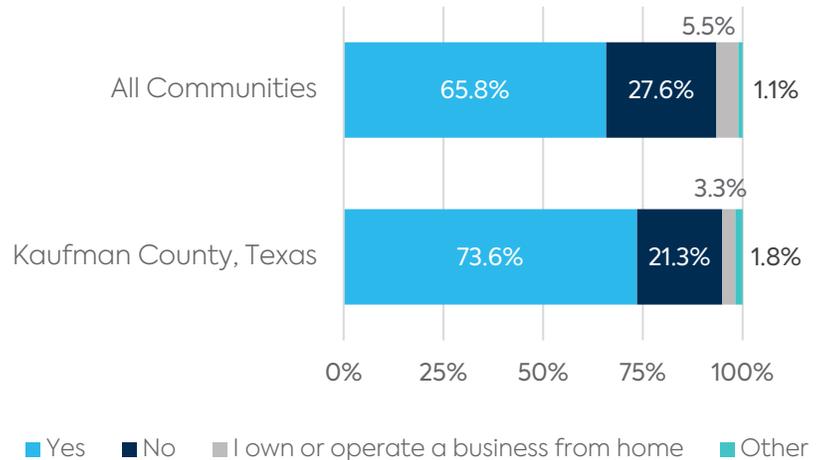
TELEWORK

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

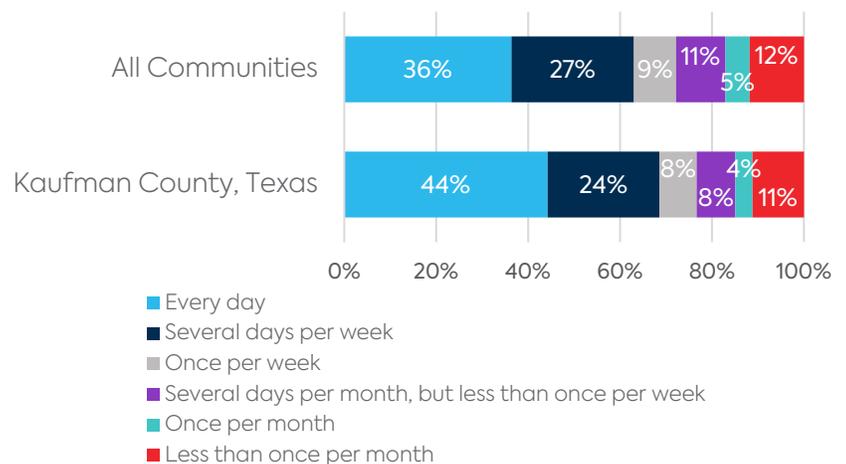
Teleworking is quickly becoming a critical part of growing a local economy because it represents an opportunity to attract and retain employees even when employees are not located in the same community as their employers. However, this only works if those employees have access to advanced broadband infrastructure.

Nearly 3 out of 4 employed respondents in Kaufman County (73.6%) telework at least part of the time. More than 2 out of 5 teleworkers (44%) work remotely every day, while approximately 76% telework at least once a week.

Do You Currently Telework?



How Frequently Do You Telework?





Recommendations



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

Kaufman County bills itself as the perfect place to call home. It's just minutes from the luxuries of a big city, but far enough away to find a serene and peaceful country lifestyle. Kaufman County is home to more than 145,000 people, 15 cities, seven independent school districts, two colleges, and thousands of thriving businesses.¹ As Kaufman County continues to grow, it will be important that residents, business owners, and community leaders have access to fast, affordable, and reliable high-speed internet.

From April to June 2022, Kaufman County stakeholders partnered with Connected Nation Texas (CN Texas) for a local Connected Community Engagement designed to assess the connectivity, affordability, and general technology needs of Kaufman County residents. The following recommendations are informed jointly by survey data and qualitative community feedback. The following quotes highlight some of the key feedback from Kaufman County residents:

- “Kaufman County is growing incredibly fast and becoming home to many new families. The community needs quality internet service to help attract and retain positive growth.”
- “We would own more connected devices and use them if we could get internet connections that would support them.”
- “I work from home full time and take online courses. Please help bring fiber-optic internet and higher speed connections to the area.”
- “We currently have to have two lines for internet service to keep up with our household needs.”
- “We need and will buy better internet.”

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

As part of the 2022 engagement with CN Texas, Kaufman County stakeholders spanning education, government, health care, business, public safety, agriculture, and technology came together for a countywide broadband engagement. With a diverse broadband team, Kaufman County was able to collect a diverse sample of surveys, truly capturing the community's connectivity and communication profile.

Broadband remains a hot topic in the state of Texas and across the county. With the once-in-a-generation infusion of money coming from federal and state governments, it is paramount that Kaufman County establishes a formal broadband committee to ensure (1) the work completed as part of this local engagement is carried forth and (2) the community is staying on the top the of state,

¹ <https://www.kaufmancounty.net/>



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.

Objective: Establish a permanent broadband team in Kaufman County that can serve as the go-to point of contact for questions, meetings, and projects.

Action 1 – Create a permanent Kaufman County broadband committee with leaders from each community sector.

Kaufman County should establish a local network of leaders who are passionate about improving broadband throughout the community. This group should function as a supervisor of broadband progress throughout the county, and the cities within it. The committee should include representatives from each community sector that participated in the survey.

Board of advisor members could include:

- **Health care:** Local physicians or hospital staff (Texas Health Kaufman) and local physicians serving in private practice (e.g., veterinarians, dentists, primary care physicians), and others
- **Government:** County Judge, County Commissioners, Mayor, City Council, County IT Director
- **Education (K-12):** Superintendents, School IT Directors: Crandall ISD, Forney ISD, Kaufman ISD, Kemp ISD, Terrell ISD, Mabank ISD, Scurry-Rosser ISD
- **Education (Higher Education):** Trinity Valley Community College, Southwestern Christian College
- **Public Safety:** Sheriff's Office, Police and Fire Departments, Emergency Management
- **Agriculture:** County Agriculture Agent, leading agriculture producers
- **Business:** Local chamber of commerce and economic development centers
- **Community At-Large:** A local resident who is interested in furthering the broadband agenda of Kaufman County

The responsibilities of the committee should include:

- Identify a chairperson to lead the broadband committee. The chair is responsible for overseeing committee activities and executing the county's broadband vision in accordance with committee participation.
- Stay up to date on state and federal broadband legislation.
- Apply for applicable state and federal grant programs.
- Ensure digital engagement in Kaufman County in all community sectors (telehealth, telework, online learning, Wi-Fi in businesses, etc.).
- Attend workshops, webinars, meetings, and general training that discuss broadband specifically and telecommunications generally.
- Provide digital literacy and digital skills assistance to at-risk populations in the community.



- Participate in regular meetings. The committee should meet at least once a month. Meetings can be held virtually, in-person, or in a hybrid capacity to accommodate needs of members. These meetings should provide updates on community activities, allow time for guest speakers and presentations, and offer an open forum for discussion about broadband advancements in Kaufman County.

Action 2 – Create a technology portal/website to promote local broadband resources.

The website should serve as a one-stop resource guide for broadband providers, community residents, and local leaders. Online materials should include resources related to digital literacy, digital skills, reduced-cost broadband offerings in the county, public computing centers, and other relevant information for residents and internet service providers (ISPs).

Action 3 – Track state and national broadband policy.

The broadband committee should remain informed and up to date on any publications, events, and policy briefs published by (1) the Governor’s Broadband Development Council ([GBDC](#)) and (2) the Broadband Development Office ([BDO](#)). The committee should coordinate ongoing community outreach efforts and initiatives in alignment with the long-term objectives of the aforementioned entities. Local broadband teams should mirror the successes and objectives laid out by the state. Taking advantage of federal and state funding as it becomes available will position Kaufman County to increase digital opportunities for all residents.

Responsible parties:

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

Resources:

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

[BroadbandUSA: Federal Funding Guide](#)

[Guide to Federal Broadband Funding Opportunities in the U.S.](#)

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

[Texas Broadband Providers by County](#)

[Becoming Broadband Ready](#)

[Smart Cities Readiness Guide](#)

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

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



Goal 2: Curate workforce development and digital literacy curriculum for local use to expand economic opportunities and workplace preparedness.

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. Kaufman County businesses reported that nearly one-third of their employees (32.9%) are advanced technology users and need advanced technology skills for their jobs. Yet, when asked how well the current technology skills of their workers match the needs of the organization, 36% of businesses said the current workforce matches their needs only “poorly” or “fairly well.” This reflects the need for residents to focus on increasing their technology skills. Ultimately, digital skills are paramount to competitiveness in the workforce, to community development in an uber-digital society, and to general quality of life (e.g., telehealth and teleworking).

Furthermore, data reflect a large legion of teleworkers in Kaufman County: 73.6% of employed survey respondents indicate they telework in some capacity. With telework on the rise across the country, it is important that residents not only have a reliable internet connection to complete their work, but the digital skills to compete in the workforce.

As one resident said, “I need my phone to work around the neighborhood and town so I can do my side job as a DoorDash driver. With the internet not working around town, I cannot do that job.” Another resident reported her struggles with telework, saying, “Working full time from home without a reliable ISP has been nothing short of difficult. ... Having to use our mobile hotspot has put us in a position where we have to carefully watch how much data we use so our internet doesn’t slow down. My husband and I both work full time from home.”

Objective: The newly formed Kaufman County broadband committee should partner with local stakeholders to put on community workshops with workforce development and digital literacy-focused curriculum.

Action 1 – Model best practices from other communities on digital skills building.

Writing for CNET, Marguerite Reardon says, “It will take more than infrastructure to get rural and tribal communities online.” What “more” is she referring to? Digital skills. Community organizations across the state and the country have worked tirelessly during the pandemic to bridge the Digital Divide, specifically as it relates to digital literacy. Examples include the Orleans Digital Literacy Initiative in Buffalo, N.Y.; the Digital Literacy Coaches and Navigator Program in Wisconsin; Opportunity Las Cruces with the local Economic Development Department and Workforce Development and Career Center; the Skills Enhancement Initiative with the Texas Workforce Commission; Digital literacy certification and computer training in Plainfield, N.J.; and Senior Connect in Austin, Texas. Each of these programs is unique, but their underlying current is the drive to provide **free** digital training and support to the community. The hope is that residents will be able to use the internet with ease and greater confidence after engaging with one of these local initiatives. To learn more, please reference the links in the resource section below.



Developing curriculum for workforce development and digital literacy courses is underway across the state of Texas and the country. It's likely that organizations in Kaufman County already have basic curriculum prepared for such workshops. CN Texas is among the organizations offering these services across the state. If your community is interested in learning more, please contact your Broadband Solutions Manager for further details about our ongoing work.

Action 2 – Partner with community stakeholders for workshop execution.

Industry leaders can speak to the importance of broadband in their line of work, as well as discuss myriad uses. The more residents, businesses, and community institutions that understand the positive benefits of broadband, the greater the likelihood of adoption and use. A banker can discuss the benefits of online banking, while the school IT Director can discuss the importance of online safety. Kaufman County already has the resources (be it personnel or curriculum) to deliver quality programs to the community.

Community partners:

- Workforce Solutions of North Central Texas
- North Central Texas Council of Governments
- Chambers of commerce and economic development corporations (EDCs)
- Riter C. Hulsey Public Library, Kaufman County Library, Tri-County Library (Mabank), Crandall-Combine Community Library
- Community and faith-based organizations: Goodwill, United Way, local churches, etc.

Workshop topics to consider:

- Intro to Microsoft Office Suite
 - o **About:** Train employees on the basics of Microsoft Office Suite, given its ubiquitous use in companies/industries.
 - o **Who:** Chamber of commerce and EDC
- How to Teleconference
 - o **About:** What is telework, and why is it appealing for employees and employers?
 - o **Who:** Chamber of commerce and EDC
- Intro to social media and websites
 - o **About:** How can an online presence help business grow and improve productivity?
 - o **Who:** Chamber of commerce and EDC
- Telehealth 101
 - o **About:** Discuss terminology commonly associated with telemedicine and the benefits of virtual health care.
 - o **Who:** Local hospital/medical professionals
- Online Safety Tips and Tricks
 - o **About:** Discuss how to keep you, your family, and your information safe online



- **Who:** Police or Sheriff's Department
- 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 residents who would like to return to college, obtain a certification or GED, or complete continuing-education courses?
 - **Who:** Crandall ISD, Forney ISD, Kaufman ISD, Kemp ISD, Terrell ISD, Mabank ISD, Scurry-Rosser ISD, private and charter schools

Responsible parties:

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

Timeline:

Digital literacy and workforce development programs are important in the here and now. Classes should be offered by Spring 2023. Curriculum should be reviewed and updated every three to four months.

Resources:

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

[Texas Broadband Providers by County](#)

[The complete guide to digital skills](#)

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

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

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

[GCF Global: Free Online Learning](#)

[Grow with Google](#)

[National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#)

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

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

[Northland Public Library](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Orleans County Digital Literacy Initiative](#)

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

[Skills Enhancement Initiative by the Texas Workforce Commission](#)

Goal 3: Increase broadband reliability across Kaufman County to



accommodate modern applications such as digital streaming, online gaming, and telework.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) defines broadband as a 25 Mbps download speed by 3 Mbps upload speed connection. In Kaufman County, survey results indicate 65% of households subscribe to advertised download speeds faster than 25 Mbps. Residents were prompted to either (1) self-report the broadband speed they subscribe to from their internet provider or (2) take a speed test through the survey portal. Data revealed that, on average, Kaufman County residents have a downloaded speed of 187.8 Mbps; however, 56.5% of internet-connected household respondents indicated they were dissatisfied with their current internet service. The top reasons for dissatisfaction were an unreliable connection and slow speeds. To better understand this disparity in dissatisfaction, Kaufman County should investigate the infrastructure landscape of the community to understand where service is available and where it is not. Understanding the gaps in infrastructure allows a community to accurately seek out funding.

Objective: Support and expand fast and reliable high-speed internet to Kaufman County.

Action 1 – Consider conducting a targeted broadband field validation study.

As Kaufman County seeks to bring better connectivity to residents, it is important to know what providers serve the community and where their infrastructure is located. Accordingly, Kaufman County should consider conducting a field validation study. This would entail locating, identifying, and documenting targeted wireline platforms such as digital subscriber line (DSL), hybrid fiber coaxial (HFC), fiber-to-the-home (FTTH), middle-mile fiber optic transport lines, and fixed wireless transmit locations, mapping infrastructure assets and provider service boundaries. Such work would allow the community to accurately assess and map known broadband speeds and delivery platforms.

Action 2 – Consider public-private partnerships.

Public-private partnerships (P3s) take many forms, depending on the needs and resources of each community. The strength of these partnerships is that each party brings something important to the table that the other lacks or cannot easily acquire. For example, Kaufman County can offer infrastructure (publicly owned buildings, light poles, towers, other vertical assets for mounting fixed wireless or wireline infrastructure) for the deployment of a network, as well as guaranteeing committed anchor tenants and possible funding sources. A public-private partnership does not have to be financial in nature. For example, Kaufman County can work with local providers to promote the Affordable Connectivity Program for qualifying households. More information about the program can be found in Goal 4.



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 3 – Monitor funding sources and identify grant writers for upcoming grant opportunities.

Kaufman County should monitor funding opportunities at the state and federal level 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 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 it's important to prioritize forward and long-term thinking when applying for funding. In preparation for potential grant opportunities, the county should acquire an in-house or contract grant writer who can accurately capture the needs and wants of Kaufman County residents, businesses, and community leaders in writing.

Funding sources include:

- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)
 - The landmark IIJA, signed into law in November 2021, promises \$65 billion for broadband. These funds will be used in a variety of different ways, but the largest share is designated for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. BEAD funding will be allocated to states that, in turn, will be responsible for doling it out according to a set plan.
- Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds
 - Under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery funds provide emergency funding for states and eligible local governments across the nation. Local governments in Texas received \$10.5 billion from the Local Fiscal Recovery Fund. These funds are administered by the U.S. Treasury and can be used to make necessary investments in broadband infrastructure. The Treasury Department



issued its Final Rule on January 6, 2022, expanding the use of funds for broadband. County leaders should reference the Treasury's website for official details.

- Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (CPF)
 - Under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the CPF provides \$10 billion to eligible governments to carry out critical capital projects that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring. The Texas State Legislature appropriated all the funding from the CPF for broadband purposes. The Broadband Development Office (BDO) plans to stand up a competitive grant process to support local broadband projects around the state. More information can be found on the BDO's website (linked below).

Additional information about federal funding sources can be found here: [BroadbandUSA](#). As new federal opportunities become available, this link will be updated.

Additional information about state funding sources can be found here: [Broadband Development Office](#). As new opportunities become available, this link will be updated.

Responsible Parties:

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

Timeline:

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

Resources:

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

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

[US Telecom: Preparing your Community for Broadband Success](#)

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

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

[Texas Broadband Development Office: Funding Resources](#)

[U.S. Department of the Treasury: Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds](#)

[Current Broadband Funding](#)

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

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

[Texas Broadband Providers by County](#)

[Guide to Federal Broadband Funding Opportunities in the U.S.](#)

[FCC Affordable Connectivity Program](#)



Goal 4: Increase broadband adoption and use among Kaufman County residents by promoting low- and reduced-cost internet plans and subsidy programs.

Households without an internet connection face many barriers to obtaining connectivity. In Kaufman County, 25.3% of residents who do not subscribe to home broadband service stated it was because service is too expensive. Everyone deserves to be online, regardless of income level. It's important to promote free and reduced-cost internet programs for residents like this one who shared on the survey, "I need [an] internet service that I can afford because I'm a senior citizen living on a fixed income."

Objective: Increase access, availability, and use of broadband by addressing the cost barriers in Kaufman County.

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

- **State Lifeline Program:** This is a government assistance program run by the Public Utility Commission of Texas that provides a discount to qualifying low-income customers who subscribe to voice telephone service or broadband internet access service. The Lifeline discount for qualifying low-income customers may be up to \$12.75 per month, depending on the services a resident subscribes to and the customer's eligibility. Lifeline service is non-transferrable and is limited to one discount per household. More information can be found on the Public Utility Commission of Texas' [website](#).
- **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). It provides eligible customers a \$30 per month discount on broadband service through participating providers. For more information, visit the FCC's [webpage](#).

Resources:

[FCC Affordable Connectivity Program](#)

[FCC Affordable Connectivity Program Outreach Toolkit](#)

[FCC Affordable Connectivity Program Participating Providers](#)