

# Broadband for All Americans

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America's broadband networks met the challenge of the pandemic . . .

. . . but also highlighted the digital divide, showing that those not connected are at a significant disadvantage.

**Internet traffic jumped 27%** at the height of the pandemic\* but the country's broadband networks rose to the challenge.

*\*Source: USTelecom*

However, many **rural** and **low-income** families don't have the internet access they need to work and learn.



# AT&T recommends a holistic framework to bridge the digital divide

## Congressional actions to date



### Establish and make permanent low-income broadband benefit

Help people who have limited financial resources to afford internet service

**ENACTED: \$3.2B** Emergency Broadband Benefit funding \$50/month benefit (\$75/month Tribal) during pandemic for eligible households. 6.6M household participating as of 10/17/21

**PENDING: \$14.2B** permanent Affordable Connectivity Program funding \$30/month benefit for eligible households



### Fund broadband service deployment

Target funding to ensure that all Americans have universally robust internet service

**ENACTED: \$360B** American Rescue Plan Act funding that states and local governments may direct to broadband infrastructure

**PENDING: \$42.5B** broadband infrastructure deployment funding to states, to create own grant programs



### Support digital equity & adoption

Enable flexible, locally-targeted programs addressing barriers to adoption among people who aren't online

**PENDING: \$2.75B** Digital Equity Grant funding for states, to promote digital equity, support digital inclusion, and foster greater adoption of broadband

# Broadband Service Deployment: States Play a Key Role

## American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)



- Coronavirus State & Local Fiscal Recovery Funds – **\$350B**
  - **\$220B** – states, territories and Tribes
  - **\$130B** – counties, cities, other local governments
- Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund - **\$10B**
- Local Assistance & Tribal Consistency Fund - **\$2B**

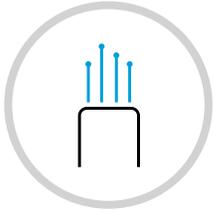
## Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act



- Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment Grants - **\$42.5B**
- Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program - **\$2B**
- Digital Equity Grant Program - **\$2.75B**



# In broadband infrastructure funding legislation, State policymakers should...



## Future-proof deployments to extent possible

Promote funding for faster speeds, including fiber deployments

To ensure all people have robust service, require the use of technologies capable of achieving speeds of 100/20 Mbps service; and

Encourage funding for projects that would deploy fiber to the premises ( $\geq 100/100$  Mbps service), where feasible



## Utilize competitive processes, like RFPs

Encourage customized proposals tailored to a community's unique needs

Accommodates a range of proposals, including large-scale proposals that can get service to more consumer locations most efficiently and expeditiously

Facilitates participation by all providers, including those with the expertise, financial capability, and proven experience successfully deploying retail internet service



## Incentivize private sector investment & innovation

Realize the greatest taxpayer value at the least taxpayer risk

The private sector is best positioned financially and technically to deploy broadband efficiently, and to make ongoing investments and pro-consumer service improvements

Proven track record of innovation and investment (\$1.9T since 1996; \$79B in 2020 alone). Result: Prices have dropped for all speed tiers while speeds have continued to increase



## Rely on existing mapping resources

Utilize limited state funds for deployment and adoption programs, not mapping

The FCC is hard at work implementing new, congressionally-mandated broadband maps, but they may not be ready for ARPA deadlines

Because any state maps will quickly be superseded by the FCC maps, using existing broadband maps, no matter how imperfect, will result in faster deployments

(Source: USTelecom)

# Other Considerations



Government Owned Networks (GONs) historically fail



Timeline for Using the ARP Funds



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