

Best Practices in States Nationwide with [Pew Charitable Trusts](#)

Discussion with Kathryn de Wit, Project Director, and Jake Varn, Principal Associate, at The Pew Charitable Trusts

“[The Pew Charitable Trusts] team spent a few years looking at the digital divide across the country. ‘What was it?’ ‘What did it really mean?’ ‘What could states do about it?’ And ‘Was this solvable through public intervention?’ And we did find that yes, it is solvable. For anybody who is familiar with any sort of public policy, the solutions to this are going to be obvious. It really does come down to policy and comes down to planning funding, having capacity within state and local government to run and operate broadband initiatives. And then it's about assessment and evaluation: How are you improving these outcomes over time?”

“The bulk of [Pew Charitable Trusts] work is really spent working directly with state officials, State Broadband Offices and elected officials. But I would be remiss if I didn't mention our other areas of work, which include advocacy and lobbying. For transparency's sake, we did lobby on the Rescue Plan Act and on the infrastructure bill. When we lobby on policy, it's about making sure that we're defining a clear role for state and local leaders, that we are passing policies that promote community driven outcomes/projects: those that prioritize fiber, focus on accountability and provide for affordability.”

“Pew stood up a technical assistance program that we affectionately referred to as BETI, so Broadband Education and Training Initiative, where we are trying to build on our solid foundation of knowledge and research to create a community for state broadband leaders to come together for educational training opportunities to respond to the needs of the moments.”

“ I think everybody is going to hit on at some point today, and already has, is the importance of engagement. Your state needs to hear from you now. The federal government needs to hear from you now. It is about data collection, yes. But it is also about ‘here is what we have tried and hasn't worked, ’ ‘here is where we are running into issues accessing funding that is supposed to be available to us.’ It's helpful for your state office to hear those things as they stand up their program. It's also helpful evidence for them to relay that to their federal counterparts, but now it's the time really to make your voice heard.”

“[Pew] is currently working with 27-30 States and territories. It's an open door policy for any other states that want to join this work.” Reach out to jvarn@pewtrusts.org to learn more