

# NEXT CENTURY CITIES

JUNE 2023

## The Affordable Connectivity Program

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When low-income households have reliable broadband, communities thrive.

CLEVELAND, OH

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East Carroll Parish, LA

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# TRIBES ARE CONNECTING RESIDENTS WITH BROADBAND. BETTER DATA COULD AMPLIFY SUCCESS STORIES.

By Corian Zacher



[Photo by Tony Webster: Choctaw Boundary - Natchez Trace Trail, Mississippi](#)

In 1958, the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe purchased a telephone company, becoming the first network of its kind in the United States. Since then, eight other Tribes have purchased telecommunications companies. With unprecedented funding for broadband and the migration of financial, health, educational, and employment services online, more Tribes are leading efforts for better broadband in their communities.

Trusted community messengers are essential to helping drive enrollment. Although the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) offers a \$75 a month discount on Tribal lands, researchers with the Benton Institute found that lack of awareness is the main reason eligible households don't enroll.

In Native households, Tribes have a proven track record of building support for federal programs through a community-centered approach. For example, preserving Native culture and community was cited as the number one reason that many Tribal members got vaccinated during the COVID-19 pandemic despite considerable trust barriers. Internet access provides similar benefits. Still, 33% of reservation residents do not have broadband service at home and must rely on their smartphone for Internet. 18% have no Internet connectivity at all.

[Read more](#) about the role that the ACP could play in connecting more Tribal communities.

# The Affordable Connectivity Program

## How can the ACP help me and/or my family?

- Internet service discount up to \$30/month
- Internet service discount up to \$75/month on qualifying Tribal lands
- Mobile device discount up to \$100 for a qualifying device

## You may qualify for the ACP if:

- You, or your child or dependent are enrolled in government programs like Medicaid, SNAP, WIC, Pell Grant, or other federal programs;
- Your household has a student eligible for free or reduced-price meals; or
- Your income is 200% or less than the Federal Poverty Guidelines, which is based on your household size and state.
- Find more specific qualifying information [here](#).

## How can I Apply for the ACP?

- Start the application process online at [GetInternet.gov](https://www.getinternet.gov) or print out a mail-in application.
- Find program updates [here](#).

## Need additional support signing on with ACP?

- Email at [ACPsupport@usac.org](mailto:ACPsupport@usac.org)
- Call the ACP Support Center at (877) 384-2575
  - 7 days a week, 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. ET

Need to file a complaint because your Internet company is giving you issues with ACP?

- Visit this [site](#) to learn more
- File a complaint [here](#).

Additional ACP resource information can be found on the [NCC website](#).

# ACP OUTREACH SERIES: ELIMINATING LANGUAGE BARRIERS AND DEVELOPING TRUSTED PARTNERSHIPS IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OH

*By Brian Donoghue*

**Cuyahoga County**, located in northeastern Ohio along Lake Erie, is home to the city of Cleveland and its surrounding suburbs. Community leaders have recognized the importance of closing the digital divide and made it a key priority. Initially ranked among the worst-connected large-metro areas in the country according to the American Communities Survey, the county has made significant progress, with the unconnected rate dropping from 18.6% in 2019 to 11.7% in 2021.

Despite these hard-fought victories, approximately 1 in 8.5 households in Cuyahoga County still need an in-home Internet connection. This means that thousands of households in the county still face digital access barriers, which can impact their ability to access important information, education, healthcare, and job opportunities.

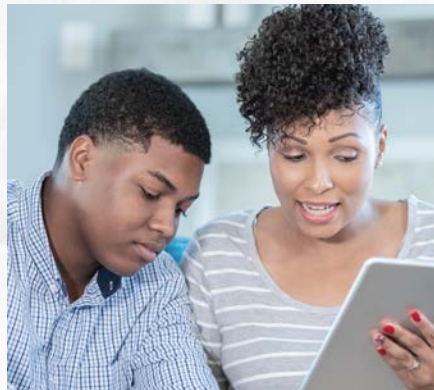
ACP is a critical component of digital equity efforts in Cuyahoga County, providing low-cost or no-cost home Internet to eligible households. Leveraging existing public and private sector partnerships, the County developed a targeted outreach campaign that focuses on 13 zip codes chosen based on current ACP enrollment figures and the percentage of disconnected households. The full-blown campaign will utilize various outreach techniques, including direct mailings, radio advertisements, and print advertisements on buses, billboards, and at school sporting events.

Continue reading about Cuyahoga County's local broadband leaders' role in enhancing ACP outreach efforts [here](#).

Cleveland, OH

# FUNDING FOR THE ACP MEANS SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS FOR AMERICANS IN NEED

By Stacey Baxter



The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) was launched in December of 2021 as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). It promotes broadband affordability among low-income individuals and families, providing Internet subsidies to those who meet certain eligibility criteria.

So far, the ACP has helped to provide more than 18 million individuals with access to the Internet. Unfortunately, despite its success and continued need, funding for the ACP is projected to run out by the middle of 2024, which is less than a year away.

As many have experienced, either personally or through a friend or loved one, the pandemic has taken a toll on people's mental health. Since 2020, individuals and youth have experienced an increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression across the United States and worldwide.

Continue reading about the ACP and mental health [here](#).

# THE ACP HAS BEEN A SUCCESS, BUT CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE REQUIRES FUTURE ACP FUNDING

*By Ryan Johnston*

On June 14th, the White House kicked off a “[week of action](#)” devoted to raising awareness and enrollment for the Affordable Connectivity Program (“ACP”). Nationally, only 18.7 million of the eligible 52 million households (35.8%) are enrolled in the program. This is a truly outstanding achievement for a program that is only a year and a half old. More importantly, the ACP has had a profound effect on the lives of individual enrollees.

A Montgomery County, Maryland, resident, who wished to remain anonymous, reported that as a result of enrolling in the ACP, she was able to participate in telehealth appointments. She explained that, without the ACP, she would not have been able to maintain a broadband connection, given the financial strain on her limited income. The subsidy has enabled her to maintain a broadband subscription. In her words, being able to connect with friends, family, and essential medical and government services increases her quality of life.

Additionally, South Dakota’s [McLaughlin School District](#) serves over 470 rural students, 98% of whom are Native American. As the school district realized gaps in broadband infrastructure prevented students from accessing remote learning tools, it created a physical site for ACP enrollment assistance. Help from an in-person representative made sign-ups easier and drove more than 100 new enrollments in the program for households that needed it the most. As the Superintendent noted, “For a school district, [offline] is not best practice for serving our customers. There is no back and forth... It is a great supplemental piece as long as you are in class with the teacher Monday through Friday.”

Continue reading about the future of ACP funding [here](#).



# The ACP Enrollment Performance Tool

Created by Benton Institute for Broadband and Society

In May 2023, the Benton Institute for Broadband and Society launched an [Affordable Connectivity Program mapping tool](#) for communities to assess how many households have signed up for the ACP compared to the number of households in a given area are eligible for the benefit. Learn about Benton's methodology [here](#). Enter a zip code to determine how many residents in your area have successfully enrolled in the program.



## Learn How Communities are Promoting the ACP from Local Leaders

Join Next Century Cities for a Broadband Bites for Lunch Meeting on Tuesday, July 25th  
12:00 to 12:30 p.m. ET

### VIRTUAL MEETING AGENDA

- Learning how communities are promoting the ACP from local leaders
- Federal, state, and local broadband headlines
- Community spotlights

Local leaders can register [here](#).



# THE FIGHT FOR BROADBAND IN EAST CARROLL, LOUISIANA



Residents in East Carroll Parish, Louisiana, have lived without reliable Internet for years. When they spoke to their providers about their slow service and high prices, they were told to be happy with what they had. They were not happy. And they took action, organizing through the church-based group Delta Interfaith. After years of planning, roadblocks, and incremental victories, East Carroll Parish will soon have affordable Internet with some of the fastest speeds in the nation. As organizer and former school teacher Wanda Manning says in the video: "Finally, we can see a brighter future ahead of us in East Carroll Parish". **Watch the video to learn more about the community's remarkable work that made this possible.**

For local leaders in other parishes looking for ways to start broadband planning, get in touch with [Louisiana's Office of Broadband Development and Connectivity](#) for support.

- Veneeth lyengar, Executive Director, [Veneeth.lyengar@la.gov](mailto:Veneeth.lyengar@la.gov), (225) 219-7594
- Thomas Tyler Jr., Deputy Director, [Thomas.tyler@la.gov](mailto:Thomas.tyler@la.gov), (225) 342-7000
- David Lehman, Program Manager, [David.Lehman@la.gov](mailto:David.Lehman@la.gov), (225) 342-9267

Click [here](#) for more information about [Louisiana's five-year plan](#) to tackle its digital divide.

# IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Public comment on Louisiana's BEAD Initial Proposal has been extended until **June 30, 2023**. Read the draft BEAD proposal [here](#). Comment on the draft BEAD proposal [here](#).

The Texas Broadband Development Office (BDO) has extended the public survey deadline through August 31st. Access both the individual and organizational surveys [here](#).

Pennsylvania launched a **Resident Digital Access Survey**. Paper copies and a survey phone number will be available to residents soon.



## THE CITY OF DUBLIN ANNOUNCES PLANS TO CONNECT RESIDENTS WITH "UNPARALLELED SPEED AND RELIABILITY FOR DIVERSE INTERNET NEEDS"

Dublin, Ohio, conducted a series of community surveys to assess internet service needs. Most residents surveyed called for improved access to higher internet speeds, lower service costs, and better customer service. This week, the City announced a public-private partnership to construct a 10-gig fiber network that provides residents with unparalleled speed and reliability.

NCC's Senior Policy Counsel Corian Zacher notes that Dublin's plan to connect all residents with high-speed broadband does not only address existing broadband gaps but also proactively targets future needs. Congratulations, City of Dublin, on crafting a community-wide strategy that provides a model for other cities. Read more in the press release [here](#).

## NEXT CENTURY CITIES PROVIDES TESTIMONY ON DIGITAL EQUITY AND CALIFORNIA'S BROADBAND EQUITY, ACCESS & DEPLOYMENT PROGRAM



On May 23, 2023, the California State Assembly Committee on Communications and Conveyance held an informational hearing entitled "Digital Equity and the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program." The hearing was called to provide oversight of the California Public Utilities Commission and examine the barriers to deploying State broadband funding. [Continue reading](#) about NCC's California testimony.

# OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS

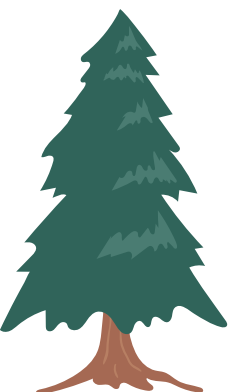
The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City is hiring for a Community Development Advisor.

The City of Topeka's Digital Equity coalition, TSC - Get Digital, is expanding its computer program, and is now giving away laptop computers to qualifying Topeka residents who are between the ages of 18 and 59 years old. Click here to view the qualifying criteria.

The Washington State Broadband Office (WSBO) and the NTIA will host a monthly virtual update meeting on both federal and state funding on the 4th Wednesday of every month at 2:00PM PST.

## Join us For **BROADBAND COMMUNICATIONS CAMP**

**18  
JULY**



During the day-long workshop, advocates will receive media training with feedback from field professionals; dissect social media trends; talk through effective broadband policy campaigns; and create and/or revise a communications plan for your community to achieve its digital equity goals. We hope to see you on **July 18th** in Washington, DC. Contact Brittany-Rae Gregory for more information.



Are you looking for data, templates, or reports that could inform your community's broadband strategy?

## **broadbandhub.org**

The National Broadband Resource Hub is a free online community for government leaders and nonprofits working to expand broadband access and affordability. It includes a Resource Library, Community Conversation Forum, and a Help Desk to support various stages of the broadband planning process.



Reports



Connections



Ideas