



# NCACC Brief Broadband

**The #1 goal for NC counties is to seek legislation, funding, and other efforts to expand digital infrastructure/broadband capability to the unserved and under-served areas and residents of the state. Specifically, counties need direct funding opportunities, the ability to build and lease digital infrastructure, and other financial mechanisms to help residents gain access to broadband service.**

## At-A-Glance

- Reliable, high-speed broadband is not available or affordable, or both, to certain unserved and under-served areas of the state.
- These areas are typically concentrated in the rural parts of North Carolina including the west, northeast, and southeast regions of the state, creating a digital divide in the state.
- While the need for broadband access existed before COVID-19 and associated public health mitigation efforts, the pandemic heightened and accelerated the importance of connectivity.

## Background

- While dependable data on broadband access remains difficult to obtain, the U.S. Census Bureau collects figures on broadband subscription rates, showing 1 in 4 people do not have a broadband Internet subscription in one-half of North Carolina counties. And 1 in 3 people do not in one-fourth of the counties.
- Additionally, large percentages of individuals in the northeastern, southeastern, and western parts of the state reportedly do not own a computing device like a desktop, laptop, smartphone, or tablet. This is one among many causes contributing to the widespread digital divide issue in North Carolina.
- While some additional federal and state funds have been directed to Internet service providers in recent years, counties in North Carolina lack the flexibility needed to address the complex issue in a complementary, versatile way.

## County Efforts & Recommendation

- Increasing access to broadband is consistently a top priority for NC counties, and continues to be the number one legislative goal for NCACC.
- Counties conduct resident surveys and partner with the N.C. Broadband Infrastructure Office to collect information about unserved and under-served areas and the data shows lack of broadband access significantly limits advancement in education, healthcare and economic development.
- Counties are leveraging their own assets and infrastructure to partner with private industry and increase the types of technology available to residents.
- A more comprehensive and adaptable approach is required to address the lack of reliable, high-speed Internet access, and to increase affordable options when private industry does not offer access.
- The need to connect North Carolinians in all areas of the state is as great as it ever has been, and the need is only expected to continue to increase.
- Counties need resources including:
  1. Access to an infrastructure bond and other competitive funding opportunities, similar to those available to providers, to extend coverage to all residents who require it;
  2. The ability to build infrastructure and lease to private Internet service providers; and
  3. Other functional and financial mechanisms to help residents access, afford, and adopt broadband service.

## Act Now

Support legislation, funding, and other efforts to expand digital infrastructure/broadband capability to the unserved and under-served areas and residents of the state.

## For More Information

[www.ncacc.org/advocacyhub](http://www.ncacc.org/advocacyhub)

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