



ARConnect

The Arkansas State Broadband Office

The Broadband Toolkit

A Complete Organizational Guide for Arkansas' Community Leaders



broadband.arkansas.gov

County Broadband Committee Toolkit 2024

Acknowledgment

We extend our gratitude to the Washington State Extension Service and the National Digital Equity Extension Trainers for their invaluable contributions. This planning guide has been shaped by their pioneering work, providing us with critical insights and frameworks that have greatly influenced our approach to enhancing broadband access in our communities. Their dedication and expertise have laid a solid foundation for our ongoing efforts to bridge the digital divide. We would also like to offer special thanks to Malik Barnes, Executive Director of Americans for Actions (A4A), for his significant contributions.

How To Use This Workbook

This workbook is a comprehensive program guide designed to support County Broadband Committees (CBCs) and County Governments in developing Broadband Action Plans and Local Digital Opportunity Plans. It offers a structured roadmap for communities to gather data and create plans that establish a shared understanding of needs and align priorities. This foundation enables locally driven solutions to bring the benefits of high-speed Internet to everyone.

As the Arkansas State Broadband Office (ASBO) implements a statewide plan for broadband and digital opportunity, local input and feedback are critical. This ensures that the unique realities of our diverse communities are understood and respected. The plans developed using this workbook will be submitted to ASBO, aiding in the creation of robust, locally informed strategies for the counties that choose to participate.

These plans will be invaluable as our broadband programs launch soon. They will provide a well-prepared framework for achieving comprehensive digital access and involvement.

What is Included?

This workbook is built around a planning guide and related worksheets designed to support the development and alignment of local Broadband and Digital Opportunity Action Plans. Filled with templates and tips, this workbook has been designed to walk your committee through the steps required to develop robust strategies to ensure your community is prepared to ensure everyone has access to reliable, affordable, high-speed Internet, as well as the skills, technologies, and capacity to use it effectively.

1. Overview of BEAD and DEA Programs

To support these local planning efforts, the Workbook begins with an Overview of the BEAD and DEA Programs. Aligning with these programs can sometimes feel complicated, but this overview will always be there if you need a refresher.

2. Why Broadband Matters

Broadband access is crucial for education, healthcare, and job opportunities. Forming a County Broadband Committee (CBC) and working with ARConnect to bridge Arkansas' digital divide is essential. Building a diverse CBC, identifying priorities, and forging partnerships are key. This journey aims to empower communities through collaboration and digital literacy, with ARConnect supporting every step towards a universally connected Arkansas.

3. Project Phases

To provide you with a better idea of what to expect and how to structure your planning processes, there is a timeline of anticipated tasks associated with competing the Action Plans. Each County Committee starts from different places, that this timeline can be adjusted and customized.

4. Guide to Developing Your Action Plans

At the core of this Workbook is the guide to Developing Your Action Plans, which includes recommendations for aligning your planning efforts, steps to build or strengthen your County Committee, where applicable, and a walkthrough of the various components of your Action Plans.

5. Worksheet Templates

Worksheet templates are provided to support a common structure for the Action Plans. These can be used to organize thoughts, jot down notes, and collect feedback. Each Template will also be made available in an online form.

Overview of BEAD and DEA Programs

The BEAD (Broadband Equity and Access for Development) and DEA (Digital Equity Act) programs are initiatives designed to ensure that everyone in Arkansas has fair access to the internet and digital resources. These programs are managed by the US Department of Commerce and run through their agency, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). These programs are essential because they help bridge the gap between those who have easy access to the internet and those who do not.

BEAD focuses on making sure that everyone, no matter where they live, can connect to the internet. It helps bring internet services to rural areas where it might be hard to get online. This means families in places like small towns or farms will be able to access the internet for things like schoolwork, job searches, or connecting with friends and family.

On the other hand, DEA works to make sure that people know how to use the Internet and digital tools effectively. It provides training and resources to help people become confident in using technology.

This initiative has two separate grant programs: a state capacity program managed by the state broadband office and a nationally competitive program that can be applied for and managed by other community support organizations. The program managed by ASBO will focus on implementing the Digital Skills and Opportunity plan.

The Digital Equity Competitive Program funds activities that promote digital opportunity for our covered populations, such as broadband adoption initiatives, workforce training programs, technology and equipment needs at community organizations, public access computing centers through community anchor institutions, and other approved projects that are in alignment with the Digital Skills and Opportunity plan. It is especially vital for people who might not have had much experience with high-speed internet, computers, or smartphones.

Why Broadband Matters

Broadband isn't just about browsing the web; it's a lifeline that ties us to education, healthcare, job opportunities, and more. It's especially crucial for our farmers' reach, children's education, and businesses' growth. Think of broadband as the highway that connects you to the world's resources right from your home or business.

Your Role in This Journey

Forming a local county broadband committee is critical. Your committee is the local hero in this story, working with ARConnect to pinpoint your community's needs and determine the best ways to meet them. From ensuring that everyone can afford broadband to connecting folks to workshops on how to use it effectively, your role is pivotal.

Forming Your Broadband Committee

Building a Team for Tomorrow

Your first step is to unite dedicated individuals who share the dream of a fully connected community. This team should reflect the diversity of your area, including local leaders, educators, business owners, and enthusiastic residents. Here's how you can start:

- Appoint Your Committee Leader: Every team needs a leader. Look for someone passionate about technology and community development. This person will serve as the driving force, keeping the project moving forward.
- Identify County Broadband Committee Members: Include people from various sectors especially education, healthcare, business, and agriculture. Their unique perspectives will ensure all community needs are considered.

Setting the Foundation

With your committee in place, your next steps are about laying the groundwork for success:

- Develop a Preliminary List of Broadband Priorities: What does success look like for your community? More access in rural areas? Affordable plans for low-income families?
- Determine Potential Resources: Identify if any available funds exist at the county and/or municipal level to be used as potential matching funds for infrastructure grants and/or other broadband needs, including affordability, outreach, and/or digital skills training, devices, etc.
- Be Prepared to Help Correct the State Broadband Map: Assess your area's current broadband map of availability. Identify gaps in service and areas in need of improvement.

Strategic Steps to Get Your Community Connected

- **Assess Community Needs & Goals**: Engage with your community to pinpoint exact needs. Utilize tools like surveys and public forums to gather input on how improved broadband can benefit education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.
- **Inventory of Assets & Resources**: Identify what you already have—this includes physical infrastructure, potential funding sources, and local champions willing to advocate for broadband.

Understanding your starting point helps in planning more effectively.

- **Forge Strategic Partnerships:** Collaborate with stakeholders such as local businesses, Internet Service Providers, educational institutions, non-profits and government entities. Their expertise, resources, and networks are invaluable.
- **Develop a Clear Communication Plan:** Transparent, ongoing communication with the community is vital. Outline how you'll keep everyone informed and engaged throughout the process. Use newsletters, local meetings, and social media to share updates and successes.

Setting the Foundation

Your planning stage is about more than just logistics; it's about building a shared vision for a connected future. With a thorough understanding of needs, a comprehensive resource inventory, strategic partnerships, and a robust communication strategy, you're well on your way to transforming broadband access in your community. This phase sets the groundwork for turning aspirations into tangible outcomes, ensuring every step is guided by the community's needs and the goal of comprehensive high speed internet connection.

Key Actions for Broadband Committee Success

- **Identifying and Engaging Partners:** After setting your broadband goals, start by identifying potential partners who can help achieve them such as ISPs (Internet Service Providers), local businesses, educational institutions, and healthcare providers. Establish communication with these entities to discuss their potential contributions to expanding broadband access and improving digital literacy within the community.
- **Affordability and Digital Literacy Initiatives:** Work closely with community partners to develop programs aimed at making broadband more affordable and accessible. This might involve negotiating with ISPs to introduce affordable broadband plans or partnering with local nonprofits, libraries, and schools to offer digital literacy courses. The goal is to ensure that all community members can benefit from broadband access, and the ability to effectively utilize digital resources effectively.
- **Community Engagement:** Engage the community through town hall meetings, surveys, and social media to communicate your initiatives, gather feedback, and build enthusiasm around the broadband project. Highlight how improved broadband access will benefit business and overall quality of life.

Making It Happen

By focusing on these key areas, your committee will not only promote broadband expansion but also ensure that the entire community can take full advantage of the digital age. It's about creating a connected, informed, and empowered community ready to thrive in the present and the future.

Empowering Arkansas Together

This toolkit's journey underscores a united mission: bridging Arkansas' digital divide. The foundation set here is merely a starting point, requiring your unwavering dedication to make digital access a reality for every community member.

Collaborate and Innovate

- **Forge Strong Partnerships:** Align efforts with ARConnect, service providers, local enterprises, and educational bodies to ensure a broadband ecosystem that benefits your community.
- **Embrace Innovation:** Tackle obstacles with creative solutions, ensuring every Arkansan in your county enjoys seamless digital access.
- **Champion Digital Literacy:** Prioritize programs that elevate digital skills, empowering residents to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

ARConnect: Your Partner in Progress

Remember, ARConnect is here to support, guide, and celebrate with you. Together, let's unlock the full potential of our communities, forging a future where digital access is universal, creating opportunities for growth, learning, and connection across Arkansas.

Project Phases

As you embark on this journey to enhance broadband access and digital opportunity in your community, it's essential to take a moment to reflect on the significance of your efforts. The path to achieving comprehensive broadband coverage and digital opportunity is multifaceted and requires a collaborative, strategic approach. By understanding the phases of your project, you can navigate the complexities of planning, development, and implementation with confidence and clarity.

The following sections of this toolkit will guide you through each phase, offering practical advice, resources, and templates to support your work. Whether your County Broadband Committee (CBC) is just forming or already established, these phases are designed to be flexible and adaptable to your unique circumstances. The ultimate goal is to create a robust action plan that addresses your community's specific needs and lays the foundation for a more connected and digitally inclusive future.

As you proceed, remember that this journey is not just about technology; it's about people. It's about empowering every resident, business, and institution in your community with the tools and skills needed to thrive in the digital age. Your commitment and dedication are crucial to bridging the digital divide and ensuring that everyone can benefit from the opportunities that high-speed internet brings.

With this in mind, let's delve into the project phases, starting with the initiation phase, which lay the groundwork for your broadband and digital opportunity plans.

Phase 1: *Building Your Committee*

- [Worksheet #1: Pre-Committee Inventory](#)
- [Worksheet #2: Building Your Committee](#)
- [Worksheet #3: Defining Committee Roles](#)
- [Worksheet #4: Committee Communications](#)
- [Worksheet #5: Writing Your Vision Statement](#)
- [Worksheet #6: Defining Your Goals and Objectives](#)

Phase 2: *Assessing and Collecting Data*

- [Worksheet #7: Reviewing your Broadband Base Map](#)
- [Worksheet #8: Local Asset Inventory](#)
- [Worksheet #9: Community Anchor Institution Service Inventory](#)
- [Worksheet #10: Internet Service Provider Outreach](#)
- [Worksheet #14: Digital Opportunity Asset Inventory](#)

Phase 3: *Reviewing*

- [Worksheet #11: Infrastructure Gaps on Our Community Broadband Map](#)
- [Worksheet #12: Obstacles to Broadband Infrastructure Deployment](#)
- [Worksheet #13: Potential Paths Forward for Broadband](#)
- [Worksheet #15: Digital Opportunity and Access Needs Assessment](#)
- [Worksheet #16: Obstacles to Broadband Access and Adoption](#)
- [Worksheet #17: Potential Paths Forward for Digital Opportunity](#)

Phase 4: *Putting it All Together*

- [Worksheet #18: Create your Executive Summary](#)

Developing Your Action Plans

The County Broadband Committee and Digital Opportunity Action Plans will provide local frameworks to ensure everyone has fair broadband access, adoption, and opportunity.

While broadband and digital opportunity planning have different parts, they should be seen as working together to close the digital divide. As the BEAD program shows, successful infrastructure needs all communities to use high-speed internet services, especially those left out before, like communities of color, rural areas, and lower-income areas. To help, we suggest that the planning efforts work together closely.

Aligning Broadband and Digital Opportunity Plans

This workbook and the included planning templates are made to help separate but connected planning processes. Different groups may lead the Broadband and Digital Opportunity Action Plans but should share information through a central process, likely the County Broadband Committee.

Unified Plan Components

To help this coordination, both plans should share a summary and an overview with the same goals. Each plan will then say what's needed, what's already there, and how to move forward. Both plans should cover the goals to make sure they're all looked at.

Coordination Between Teams

If different groups make the Broadband and Digital Opportunity Action Plans, there are a few suggestions to help work together:

- Have members from both groups on each other's teams.
- Share information between teams regularly.
- Talk about progress during County Broadband Committee Meetings.

For participating communities, the section on Building and Strengthening your County Broadband Committee and associated Worksheets may not be right for everyone but could have useful information.

Coordinated Stakeholder Outreach

Engaging stakeholders in the planning process for both broadband and digital opportunity plans should be coordinated to ensure efficiency. Combining efforts makes the process more streamlined and effective for everyone involved. Here are some initial tasks to consider:

- **Compile a Comprehensive List of Stakeholders:** Identify and list all individuals and organizations involved in both broadband and digital opportunity initiatives. This will help you see where there are overlaps and common interests.
- **Coordinate Joint Meetings:** Plan meetings that address both broadband and digital opportunity topics together. This ensures that all stakeholders are informed and can contribute to both plans simultaneously.

By planning these activities together, you create a more cohesive approach, making it easier to manage and implement the plans easier.

Building and Strengthening Your County Broadband Committee

County Broadband Committees (CBCs) are community groups that plan, meet as necessary and address broadband and digital opportunity needs. In this workbook, a CBC refers to the entire team dedicated to improving broadband access in your community. An active CBC can identify gaps in broadband service, collaborate with providers and funders, and ensure equitable distribution of resources. Local involvement is crucial to prevent overbuilding in certain areas and to foster effective planning and collaboration with the state.

CBCs play a vital role in Arkansas communities by identifying broadband and digital opportunity needs and developing strategic plans. Here's how a CBC can benefit a community:

- **Facilitate Broadband Discussions:** Create a platform for open dialogue about broadband needs and challenges.
- **Promote Digital Opportunity and Incorporation:** Advocate for equal opportunity to digital resources for all community members.
- **Represent Community Technology Needs:** Serve as the voice for the community's technological requirements.
- **Foster Collaboration:** Connect various stakeholders to work together towards common goals.
- **Stay Informed on Projects:** Keep the community updated on new and ongoing projects.

This workbook provides worksheets to support your efforts, whether your CBC is well-established or just starting out. Use these resources to guide your planning and implementation according to your community's unique needs.

Worksheet #1: Pre-Committee Effort Inventory

If your community doesn't have an active Committee, Worksheet #1: Pre-CBC Effort Inventory may help you start.

Worksheet #2: Building Your Committee

Building Your Committee may be utilized to log the members of your team and help you determine who should/could participate in your committee to ensure you have a diverse and representative group. Fundamental to planning efforts is ensuring that key stakeholders including covered populations have representation. Take a moment to identify the members of your team and determine who should/could participate in your committee to ensure you have a diverse and representative group.

Worksheet #3: Defining CBC Roles

Every Committee will want to have certain people identified who will carry out the tasks needed to maintain the group. These include leadership roles, note takers, the data collector, and folks who specialize in specific topics related to broadband and digital opportunity. This worksheet will help you identify and log what members of your committee are committed to engaging in those roles.

Worksheet #4: CBC Communications

Communicating with the community will be central to developing a broadband infrastructure and digital skills and opportunity plan. This worksheet will help your team define the methods of communication you will utilize to spread the word about efforts you're engaging in and solicit feedback from the community.

Visions, Goals, and Objectives

Having a clearly defined vision can support team cohesion by developing alignment on what success looks like for your community. This vision will inform strategies, serve as a guide for setting goals and objectives, and determine the activities the community will choose to identify as prioritized in its Broadband Action Plan.

Worksheet #5: Writing a Vision Statement

Worksheet #5 provides examples of vision statements, and a space for you to write down your team's vision of what success looks like for this planning process.

Worksheet #6: Defining Your Team's Goals and Objectives

Use Worksheet #6 with your committee to outline the collective goals and objectives for broadband deployment and digital opportunity in your community.

The goals in the Broadband Action Plan will help later plans and projects. They should think about long-term goals like closing the digital divide and helping everyone get online.

Broadband Action Plan

This may be utilized as a jumping-off point for understanding the area's current services, infrastructure, and demographic attributes. Local resources such as GIS datasets, previously collected survey data, studies, projects, etc., may be integrated into this mapping resource further to understand the needs and dynamics of the area, and strategize solutions for gaps that are known or found to exist

Asset mapping at the state level helps to identify and build on the state's existing resources, networks, and strengths; these are the assets. This process emphasizes capacity building and community-based solutions, and it works with community members and organizations as partners invested in solutions rather than as problems to be solved. By mapping the connections of core assets in a region or community and then expanding iteratively, the asset mapping process can generate a robust network of potential partners and stakeholders.

Asset mapping is also particularly effective at uncovering resources in the community that would not otherwise have been invited to "a seat at the table" in a more traditional planning or engagement approach. Identifying the opportunities, interpersonal networks, and resources in a community will help identify areas to support and scale strategies already in place – which reduces duplicative efforts. In turn, asset mapping supports the empowerment of community institutions and people by sharing ownership in the local coordination efforts.

This section of the workbook has five parts:

- Review State Broadband Map and other Data
- Collect Local Broadband Asset Inventory Data
- Broadband Infrastructure Needs Assessment
- Obstacles And Barriers to Broadband Infrastructure Deployment
- Potential Paths Forward

1. Review State Broadband Map and other Data

The Arkansas state broadband map has been officially published, featuring layers that display BEAD eligibility (current service tier), Community Anchor Institutions, and the current challenge status. Committees are encouraged to examine this map to determine if the data accurately represents the local community's understanding. Additionally, committees should identify any data that may be missing from the map.

Worksheet #7: Reviewing Your Local Broadband Map

Worksheet #7 provides a space for review our State Broadband map and Microsoft's Digital Equity Dashboard and take notes on your observations of the characteristics of your community on the map. This will allow you and your team to understand what the existing data is saying about broadband availability in the area and perhaps notice specific areas that are served, underserved, and unserved according to the public data.

2. Collect Local Broadband Asset Inventory Data

After reviewing the State Broadband map, your team will be tasked with collecting additional local data that would help inform what assets in your community are not represented on the base map.

This may include:

- Requesting shapefiles of local networks from local internet service providers,
- Locating any previously conducted local broadband survey of feasibility study data,
- Surveying anchor institutions about the quality of their services,
- Asking for GIS Data from your local utility and municipal entities, such as:
 - The County
 - Cities
 - PUDs
 - Ports
 - Other Local Utilities

Worksheet #8: Local Asset Inventory

The broadband map is just a start- your local assets being mapped on your local broadband map will help to develop this resource for your community. The local broadband asset inventory survey (worksheet 8) may be utilized to request data from local utilities and municipalities to support the collection of data from these organizations that may be useful for local broadband planning efforts.

Worksheet #9: Community Anchor Institution Service Inventory

The Arkansas State Broadband Office has set the goal that all community anchor institutions should have access to 1/1Gbps services by the year 2030. To meet this goal, it will be critical that we have good information on the current level of services that these organizations are getting today. This worksheet can help create an inventory of your local CAIs and serve as a place to tabulate what you learn about their current services. Your team can use worksheet #9 to send out to your local CAIs to gather this data.

Worksheet #10: Internet Service Provider Outreach

Local Internet Service Providers are the current organizations providing internet services in your community. Your team can create a list of ISPs to reach out to and then send the questions in worksheet #10 to help gather information about the services and programs they may have in your community.

3. Broadband Infrastructure Needs Assessment

Now that you and your team have reviewed the broadband map and have collected your local asset data it's time to take a look and identify areas that appear to be struggling with the infrastructure component to broadband access. You may notice from this data that there are areas that appear to be well-served, underserved, and unserved.

[Worksheet #11: Infrastructure Gaps on Our Community Broadband Map](#)

4. Obstacles To Broadband Infrastructure Deployment

What's stopping broadband from getting better? Worksheet #12 helps think about this. From the conversations you've had with local leaders, Internet Service Providers, Utility Providers, and community members. What do you perceive to be the obstacles to broadband infrastructure deployment in your community? Worksheet #12 gives you space to brainstorm as a team about what the barriers your area is facing to ubiquitous high-speed broadband.

[Worksheet #12: Obstacles To Broadband Infrastructure Deployment](#)

5. Potential Paths Forward

Through this process, you've likely learned a lot about the assets and challenges that exist within your community. With this information, now your team can imagine potential paths forward for how to overcome those barriers to infrastructure access in your community. Worksheet #13 gives you and your team space to write down those potential paths forward.

[Worksheet #13: Potential Paths Forward for Broadband](#)

Digital Opportunity Action Plan

The Digital Opportunity Action Plan is a local plan developed to identify the needs, existing assets, barriers to full use, and strategies to support covered populations. The plan should be as comprehensive as possible of local stakeholders. The activities planned and implemented through this process build toward achieving digital opportunity.

Digital Opportunity is a phrase that is used to encompass that digital access and skills are now required for full participation in many aspects of society and the economy. Digital Opportunity links this work to social justice and highlights that a lack of access and/or skills can further isolate individuals and communities from a broad range of opportunities. Conditions that support digital opportunity include Public Internet Access, Public Device Access, Affordability, Adoption, Digital literacy skills, Online safety, and internet-connected device availability/affordability. These are all things that are as important as the physical network infrastructure for communities to achieve bridging the digital divide.

Each Committee participating in this effort will be provided digital opportunity data at the onset of this planning effort that has been developed from publicly available data. This may be utilized as a jumping-off point for understanding the demographics of the area and common digital opportunity measurements. Local resources and discussions are critical to further understand the needs and dynamics of the area and strategize solutions for gaps that are known or found to exist.

This section of the workbook is broken down into five parts:

1. Review Local Population Demographic Base Map Data
2. Collect Local Digital Opportunity Asset Inventory Data
3. Conduct a Digital Opportunity Needs Assessment
4. Identify Barriers to Broadband Access and Adoption
5. Potential Paths Forward

1. Review Local Digital Opportunity Indicators Base Map Data

Similar to the broadband infrastructure data we've explored on this map, we have wanted you to utilize a data dashboard published by Microsoft. This dashboard aggregates data from the American Community Survey, FCC broadband reports, Broadband Now, and Code.org. It features layers that include census data on income levels, device ownership access, unemployment rates, median age, and education levels, among others. Committees are encouraged to analyze these indicators to identify populations or areas that might benefit from additional programs or resources, enhancing the impact of high-speed Internet service. Access this valuable resource through the following link: [Data Dashboard](#).

2. Collect Local Digital Opportunity Asset Inventory Data

After reviewing the demographic map data, it will be the task for your team to collect additional local data for the Digital Opportunity Asset Inventory that will help identify what resources, plans, and programs already exist to support digital opportunity for Covered Populations in your community. The Digital Opportunity Asset Inventory is an iterative product that will be developed and remain useful throughout and beyond this planning process.

Steps to Building Your Asset Inventory

- Review pre-identified digital opportunity assets available to your community in [Arkansas Digital Skills and Opportunity Plan](#)
- Ask Committee members to identify and input known assets
- Coordinate community outreach efforts
- Identify local stakeholders that may play a role in digital opportunity efforts
- Assign outreach tasks
- Ask stakeholders to provide input using Worksheet
- Analyze and develop a summary report of asset inventory
- Identify which types of services are available throughout the region
- Identify service areas of available services
- Identify which services are available for Covered Populations
- Identify any regional, sub-regional or stakeholder digital opportunity plans
- Recommend any necessary follow-up with stakeholders
- Add to the inventory and summary report iteratively throughout the planning process

Each community will have different assets available and different stakeholder networks for collecting the necessary data. A successful asset inventory process involves coordinated outreach and reflects the input of a range of stakeholders in your community.

[Worksheet #14: Digital Opportunity Asset Inventory](#)

The local asset inventory form may be utilized to request data from local organizations working to support digital opportunity initiatives. Documenting and organizing data from these organizations may be useful for local broadband planning efforts. Your team can use the language from worksheet #14 to send out to local agencies to help document their current and future efforts.

3. Conduct a Digital Opportunity Needs Assessment

After your team reviews the data on the provided dashboard and collects your local digital opportunity asset data, it's important to identify areas that lack support services related to digital opportunities and broadband access. Which areas seem to lack public computer centers, digital navigator programs, or other essential services?

[Worksheet #15: Digital Opportunity and Access Needs Assessment](#)

4. Identify Barriers to Broadband Access and Adoption

From the conversations you've had with local stakeholders, including those with lived experience, what do you perceive to be the obstacles to broadband access, adoption, and use in your community? Worksheet #16 gives you space to brainstorm as a team about what the barriers your area is facing to ubiquitous high-speed broadband.

[Worksheet #16: Obstacles To Broadband Access and Adoption](#)

5. Potential Paths Forward

You've also learned about the assets your community has for broadband. In your discussions have you learned things that have helped you define potential paths forward for bringing better broadband access to your area? Worksheet #17 gives you and your team space to think through potential paths forward for how to overcome the barriers that exist for your community.

[Worksheet #17: Potential Paths Forward for Digital Opportunity](#)

Executive Summary Development

You've reached the end of your Broadband Infrastructure and Digital Opportunity Planning Effort. Congratulations! Now it is time to go through all that you've learned and assemble an executive summary. Your worksheets should make this part a breeze. Key questions you'll answer in your executive summary include:

- What has been accomplished in our community already for broadband?
- What assets exist?
- Where does our community have infrastructure gaps?
- What kinds of digital opportunity issues is our community facing?
- What is our vision for overcoming these issues?

One final worksheet is waiting for you that will help you compile notes for this

summary. [Worksheet #18: Key Points for Your Executive Summary](#)

Worksheet Templates

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Worksheet #1: Pre-Committee Effort Inventory

Consider these questions and decisions as you think about forming a local Broadband committee:

- Will we have an advisory group that provides insight and direction on broadband projects?
- Will we have our meetings open to the public?
- Will planning documents and meeting notes be publicly available?
- How will we document stakeholder input?
- Will project plans be regularly adjusted to reflect input from stakeholders?
- How will stakeholder plans include engagement with people who have concerns or who may be critical of our efforts?
- How will we determine stakeholder engagement activities to be appropriate to each audience?
- Will public-private partnerships be a part of our broadband plan?

1.1 Leadership: Are there already broadband champions in your community? Is there more than one? Who are they?

1.2 Team: Does your community already have a formal or informal broadband planning team? If so, who are they, and can you coordinate your efforts?

1.3 Existing Plans: Does your community have a broadband plan? Who has that plan?

1.4 Online Presence: Does your broadband planning team have a website? Is the broadband plan available online?

Worksheet #2: Building Your County Broadband Committee

This worksheet will help you determine who should/could participate in your county committee.

1. List by name those already involved in your broadband related activity.
2. Identify and list those you would like to involve in your county committee.
3. Assign who will invite them and the due date for this outreach.
4. Revisit this worksheet frequently to add members as identified and needed.

	Already Involved	Want to involve	Who will follow up?	When?
Municipal Governments				
County Governments				
Council of Governments				
Elected Officials & Staff (State)				
Elected Officials & Staff (Federal)				
State Agencies				
Public Utility Districts				
Port Authorities				
Internet Service Providers				
Libraries				
Healthcare Providers				

	Already Involved	Want to involve	Who will follow up?	When?
K-12 Education Agencies				
Higher Education Agencies				
Nonprofit organizations				
Econ. dev. authorities				
Public housing authorities				
Orgs. serving individuals with disabilities				
Orgs. serving English language learners				
Orgs. serving individuals with low literacy levels				
Orgs. serving veterans				
Social services organizations				
Public safety & emergency mgmt.				

	Already Involved	Want to involve	Who will follow up?	When?
Orgs. for incarcerated individuals				
Orgs. for rural interests				
Civil rights organizations				
State & Local Corrections				
Local Businesses				
Planning organizations				
Churches and faith-based org.				
Chambers of commerce				
Transportation planners				
Community members: Civic leaders				
Community members: youth & older adults				

Worksheet #3: Defining Committee Roles

Use this worksheet to Identify core team member roles. Who will serve the following roles?

Local Team Leader: Champion, meeting convener, facilitator

Team Secretary: Note taker, task tracker

Data Collector: Collector of data from the Committee and coordinator with LDA to submit to project folder

Community Outreach Team: Social media folks, people with email distribution lists, newsletter writers

Infrastructure Team: The people who focus on physical infrastructure (ISP outreach, reviewing state broadband map)

Digital opportunity Team: The people who focus on affordability, digital literacy, access to devices (local covered populations)

Worksheet #4: Broadband County Committee Communications

Use this worksheet to determine communications plan for:

- Committee members, key stakeholders, and supporters
- Community members

4.1 What modes of communication will you use (email, website, social media, press, etc.)?

**4.2 How will you communicate with Committee members, key stakeholders and supporters?
Who will be responsible for this communication?**

**4.3 What information will you communicate with the public? How will that communications
take place, and who will be responsible for this?**

Worksheet #5: Writing Your Vision Statement

Vision statement examples:

Example #1

Our vision is to ensure our county has access to affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband infrastructure to facilitate economic development, public welfare, digital opportunity, and quality of life for today and the foreseeable future for area residents, businesses and community facilities.

Example #2

Our vision is to evaluate the feasibility of ensuring every premise in our county has access to affordable and reliable high-speed broadband infrastructure to meet current and future social, educational, and economic development needs.

Example #3

Our vision is to develop a telecommunications network plan for the purpose of bringing low-cost, high-capacity, reliable broadband to our county's homes and businesses.

Example #4

Our vision is to bring the highest quality broadband and future-proof telecommunications technologies and digital opportunity services to the residents and businesses that are currently unserved in our county.

Our Community or County Vision Statement:

Worksheet #6: Defining Your Goals & Objectives

Example goals and objectives:

- Ensure the County committee is made up of representatives from frequently covered populations to ensure a holistic approach is taken in both digital opportunity barriers and solutions
- Address the results of a needs assessment for covered communities
- Identify existing broadband service providers in our community
- Develop an asset inventory of ongoing digital opportunity activities in our community
- Identify areas that are not well-served by existing infrastructure
- Identify areas where other digital opportunity needs are a barrier to access (affordability, know-how)
- Identify infrastructure barriers and solutions
- Identify digital opportunity barriers to accessibility and solutions
- Increase participation in the Affordable Connectivity Program
- Provide outreach and digital education programs to the aging populations in our community
- Launch or enhance a digital support program at the local library

The goals and objectives for our team's broadband and digital opportunity planning process are:

Worksheet #7: Reviewing Your Broadband Base Map

Primary Data sets: [State Broadband Map](#) and [Digital Opportunity Dashboard](#)

7.1 Broadband Infrastructure Characteristics

Does the data reflect what you know about services in your community area?

Where do you notice service availability?

What speeds are available at residential homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions?

Are all local service providers reflected on the map?

Yes

No

What layers are missing that are significant to our community?

7.2 Digital opportunity Characteristics

Does the data reflect what you know about population attributes in our community?

What areas on this map may be having digital opportunity issues?

Worksheet #8: Local Asset Inventory

Your team can use the Broadband Local Asset Inventory questions to gather the specified data from local utilities and municipalities. This data will aid in your local broadband planning efforts. Consider incorporating these questions into a survey template, such as Google Forms, for easier distribution to various groups. To create your local asset map, you can use mapping software such as Google Earth or ESRI. It would be helpful to have someone on your county committee that know how to use the mapping software as well.

Organization Name:

Contact Information:

Our organization currently has:

GIS Department

Telecommunications staff

Current or forthcoming capital projects, which would allow providers to lay new fiber at lower costs (e.g., road construction, water, or sewer projects);

If yes, please describe:

We have utility Infrastructure Assets that may be of benefit to broadband deployment efforts

Broadband or Telecommunications Networks Dark Fiber

Conduit

Existing duct systems

Public rights-of-way, including roads and bridges

Towers

Tall Buildings

Streetlights

Water Towers

Water Distribution Systems

Wastewater Systems

Water Tanks

Other

**For each asset you have, please answer the questions on the following two pages.*

Worksheet #8: Local Asset Inventory (Continued)

Type of Asset:

Physical Addresses:

Do you have GIS data for this asset that we could map on our community broadband map?

Yes, on local map

Yes, on local and state maps

No

Asset Owner:

Asset Owner Contact Information:

What is required to access this asset for broadband utilization?

Type of Asset:

Physical Addresses:

Do you have GIS data for this asset that we could map on our community broadband map?

Yes, on local map

Yes, on local and state maps

No

Asset Owner:

Asset Owner Contact Information:

What is required to access this asset for broadband utilization?

Worksheet #8: Local Asset Inventory (Continued)

Type of Asset:

Physical Addresses:

Do you have GIS data for this asset that we could map on our community broadband map?

Yes, on local map

Yes, on local and state maps

No

Asset Owner:

Asset Owner Contact Information:

What is required to access this asset for broadband utilization?

Type of Asset:

Physical Addresses:

Do you have GIS data for this asset that we could map on our community broadband map?

Yes, on local map

Yes, on local and state maps

No

Asset Owner:

Asset Owner Contact Information:

What is required to access this asset for broadband utilization?

Worksheet #9: Community Anchor Institution Service Inventory

Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) are defined by the FCC to include such entities as schools, libraries, hospitals and other medical providers, public safety entities, institutions of higher education, and community support organizations that facilitate greater use of broadband by our covered populations, including low-income, the unemployed, and the aged. Broadband needs assessment and planning for CAIs is one of the most critical steps that your BCC can take to improve broadband connectivity and promote economic growth in your region. Conducting an inventory of the locations and speeds of the existing broadband services for CAIs – and identifying the gaps in broadband coverage – can help attract new funding and target investments to the areas with the most need. Conducting an inventory among all CAIs can also facilitate meaningful partnerships and strategies to ensure that your entire community has adequate broadband connectivity.

Consider these institutions:			
Gov. Agencies	Healthcare-Hospitals	Libraries	Education- K-12
Community Support Orgs	Healthcare-Clinics	Public Safety-Fire	Education-Higher Ed
Public Housing	Healthcare-Community	Public Safety-Police	Education-Technical

Institution	Contact	Current Speeds	Current Provider

Institution	Contact	Current Speeds	Current Provider

Institution	Contact	Current Speeds	Current Provider

Worksheet #10: Internet Service Provider Outreach

Your team can utilize the list of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) by county, provided by the Arkansas State Broadband Office, to contact and send questions to them. Feel free to modify these questions to better reflect your community's specific interests. Additionally, consider converting these questions into a survey format if it simplifies distribution.

10.1 Our Broadband County Committee Leads includes the following individuals:

10.2 We have identified the following initial Broadband County Committee priorities:

To help us better understand your role in providing services within our county, we have a few questions:

10.3 Where do you currently provide service in our county area?

10.4 What services do you offer in our county area? Please provide price points.

10.5 Did you participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program or any other low-income affordability and digital opportunity programs?

10.6 Are there areas in the county area where network expansion is underway?

10.7 Who are your staff working in the county? What are their roles?

10.8 What challenges are there to providing internet services in our county area?

10.9 What gaps in awareness or knowledge about internet availability and uses are you aware of in the area?

10.10 Have you provided any training or other resources to residents and/or businesses to help them understand the benefits of internet use? If yes, can you please provide additional information (what, when, where, how, etc.)?

10.11 Are you interested in working with our County Committee to address broadband needs in the community? If yes, how? (Participate in committee meetings, help with projects, sponsor events, etc.)?

10.12 Are you interested and planning to participate in the BEAD program?

We very much appreciate your time and welcome opportunities to work together to improve broadband access and digital opportunity services for our community.

Worksheet #11: Infrastructure Gaps on our Community Map

Now that the Broadband County Committee has collected local data and it is integrated into their local broadband map, reevaluate the map and reflect upon these questions.

11.1 What areas of our community appear to lack access to broadband services?

11.2 What areas only have access to unlicensed fixed wireless?

11.3 What areas are missing middle mile infrastructure?

11.4 What areas are missing last mile (end user connections) infrastructure?

Worksheet #12: Obstacles To Broadband Infrastructure Deployment

Through this process, you and your team have likely learned a lot about the broadband landscape of your community or county area. Have you noticed some barriers or obstacles being brought to the surface? This worksheet will give you space to identify the issues that may be preventing broadband infrastructure to be deployed to all the residences and businesses within your area.

12.1 These financial needs may be preventing broadband infrastructure deployment:

12.2 These workforce gaps may be preventing broadband infrastructure deployment:

12.3 These policy barriers may be inhibiting broadband infrastructure deployment:

12.4 These community awareness issues may be inhibiting broadband infrastructure deployment:

12.5 These geographic issues may be inhibiting broadband infrastructure deployment:

12.6 These other things may be inhibiting broadband infrastructure deployment:

Worksheet #13: Potential Paths Forward for Broadband

13.1 Possible Funding Mechanisms

- State Broadband Programs
- Local Government
- Federal Programs
- Other

13.2 Entities Already Working on Expanding Broadband in Our Area

13.3 Local Entities Interested in Taking a Leadership Role for Local Broadband Expansion

13.4 Possible Workforce Planning Solutions

13.5 Possible Policy Solutions to Accelerate Infrastructure Deployment

13.6 Potential Service Zones for Broadband Infrastructure Development

13.7 Local Service Providers Interested in Partnership or Expanding Services

13.8 Upcoming Municipal or County Projects Where Conduit or Fiber Might be Deployed

Worksheet #14: Digital opportunity Asset Inventory

The local Broadband committee is working to identify digital opportunity assets that we have that may support broadband infrastructure development and digital opportunity planning. Could you please share this list with your team and help us collect any information that will help us identify our community's existing assets?

Organization Name:

Contact Information:

The Area or Region our organization serves is:

14.1 Our organization currently has:

A Digital Opportunity Plan or identified digital opportunity priorities

Staff dedicated to providing digital opportunity services

Marketing and outreach staff

An interest in engaging digital opportunity, but no current programs or plans

Current or forthcoming projects or events which would allow for digital opportunity outreach or services to be advertised or facilitated:

If yes, please describe project/event and timeline:

14.2 We currently serve the following populations that are targeted by the Digital opportunity Program:

Populations who live in low-income households

Aging Individuals

Justice Involved Individuals

Veterans

Individuals with Disabilities

Individuals with a language barrier, such as English learners, or those with low levels of literacy

Individuals of racial or ethnic minority groups

Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area

Worksheet #14: Digital Opportunity Asset Inventory (Continued)

14.3 We have assets that can be leveraged to support digital opportunity efforts:

- Communications channels to share information, such as newsletter
- Meeting space for classes, trainings, or meetings
- Public computer workspaces
- Public Wi-Fi
- Mobile hot-spot or device lending program
- Digital literacy and skills classes or training
- Training to support online privacy and cybersecurity
- Staff that provide digital navigation services as part of their job
- Local Digital Navigator programs
- Assess online accessibility of public resources and services
- Programs to provide affordable devices to low-income community members
- Available assistance for Government program Enrollment
- Measures to ensure online privacy and cybersecurity

*For each asset you have, please answer the following questions.

Type of Asset:

Service Area:

Website where services are available or more information can be found:

Physical address(es) where services are provided or available:

Languages supported other than English:

Contact Information:

Worksheet #14: Digital Opportunity Asset Inventory (Continued)

Describe how the asset does or can support digital opportunity efforts:

Type of Asset:

Service Area:

Website where services are available or more information can be found:

Physical address(es) where services are provided or available:

Languages supported other than English:

Contact Information:

Describe how the asset does or can support digital opportunity efforts:

Type of Asset:

Service Area:

Website where services are available or more information can be found:

Physical address(es) where services are provided or available:

Languages supported other than English:

Contact Information:

Describe how the asset does or can support digital opportunity efforts:

Worksheet #15: Digital Opportunity and Access Needs Assessment

15.1 Where do there appear to be gaps between available digital opportunity needs and services? In answering this question, be sure to consider needs and services related to (a) Internet adoption, (b) devices, and (c) skills.

15.2 Which covered populations appear to lack awareness, adoption, or availability of dedicated and/or accessible digital opportunity services?

15.3 Where are the gaps in availability of online safety and privacy training for your community?

15.4 What are the gaps in local online government, community, and cultural services?

Worksheet #16: Obstacles To Broadband Access, Adoption, And Application

Through this process, you and your team have likely learned a lot about the digital opportunity landscape of your community. Have you noticed some barriers or obstacles? This worksheet will give you space to identify the issues outside of infrastructure that may be preventing digital opportunity from being realized within your area.

16.1 These barriers may be preventing access, adoption and use of the Internet and devices:

16.2 These barriers and gaps may be preventing the provision of digital opportunity support services throughout our region:

16.3 These community awareness issues may be inhibiting digital opportunity resources from being utilized:

16.4 What, if anything, is preventing you from assessing the digital opportunity landscape of your community? Are there needs, gaps, or barriers that you've experienced in being able to assess the digital opportunity landscape of your community?

16.5 Is there anything related to digital opportunity needs, gaps, or barriers that you were not able to cover in Worksheets #15 and #16?

Worksheet #17: Potential Paths Forward for Digital Opportunity

17.1 Possible Funding Mechanisms

- State Broadband Programs
- Local Government
- Federal Programs
- Other

17.2 Entities Already Working on Digital Opportunity Issues in Our Community (Affordability, Access, Education, Etc.)

17.3 Local Entities Interested in Taking a Leadership Role for Local Digital opportunity Programs

17.4 Possible Workforce Planning Solutions

17.5 Possible Policy Solutions to Accelerate Digital opportunity, Access, And Adoption in Our Community

17.6 Potential Regions/Populations of High Focus or Significance for Digital opportunity Programs Outreach in Our Community

17.7 Local Service Providers Interested in Digital opportunity Partnerships

17.8 Upcoming Projects or Programs Where Digital Opportunity Awareness May Be Raised

17.9 How can existing local efforts and interested stakeholders be leveraged to improve digital opportunity in our community?

17.10 How can outside resources, including state, federal, and private resources, be leveraged to improve digital opportunity in our community?

17.11 Do you have evaluation built into your program designs?

Worksheet #18: Checklist for your Executive Summary

This worksheet is an area to compile all that your team learned both from a broadband infrastructure and digital opportunity services standpoint. The bullets below will assist your team in developing your executive summary. The worksheets that you've been working on should have the data to support filling this out and bringing together all the data you've collected over the past couple of months.

Broadband Infrastructure Summary

Broadband Base Map Review

Public data does/does not reflect what we know to be true about broadband services in our area

Local Broadband Asset Inventory Data

Organizations that are currently serving our community with broadband

Upcoming projects that may allow for conduit/fiber/infrastructure placement

Community anchor institutions being well served

ISPs that are currently serving our community (potential partners for upcoming work)

Organizations providing data for our community broadband map and details on current speeds/pricing

Broadband Infrastructure Needs Assessment

Community Anchor Institutions that need improved services or where cost of services is too high

Areas lacking broadband

Areas where the cost of services may be too high for the average household

Obstacles And Barriers to Broadband Infrastructure Deployment

Challenges ISPs are facing to broadband deployment

Financial gaps preventing infrastructure investment

Workforce gaps

Policy barriers

Community awareness issues

Geographic and environmental issues

Potential Paths Forward

Planned expansion areas

Possible funding sources

Local leadership

Workforce solutions

Policy solutions

Upcoming municipal projects and conduit placement

Worksheet #18: Checklist for your Executive Summary (Continued)

Digital Opportunity Summary

Demographic Base Map Review

Public data does/does not accurately reflect our local population characteristics
Areas that appear to lack digital opportunity resources
Covered populations that are prevalent in our community
Local layers added to the basemap to more accurately reflect our community

Digital Opportunity Asset Inventory

Organizations currently serving our community with digital opportunity services, and what the services are
Upcoming events or projects that could support digital opportunity efforts
Organizations currently supporting covered populations but not engaged in DE efforts
Community engagement resources & spaces for classes, trainings, or meetings

Digital opportunity Needs Assessment

Regions that face barriers to access or lack available digital opportunity services
Demographics/populations that face barriers or lack access to digital opportunity services
Sectors (gov't, community, cultural services) that face barriers to access or lack available digital opportunity services

Barriers To Digital Opportunity

Barriers preventing access, adoption and use of the Internet and devices
Barriers and gaps preventing the provision of digital opportunity support services throughout a region
Community awareness issues inhibiting digital opportunity resources from being utilized
Needs, gaps, or barriers in ability to assess the digital opportunity landscape of your community

Potential Paths Forward

Possible funding mechanisms
Entities providing leadership in this area
Regions/populations of high significance for outreach in our community
Local ISPs interested in DE partnerships
Upcoming programs or projects that could support DE efforts