



COVID-19 and the Digital Divide: Implications for Policy and Equity

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Webinar
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Millions of Americans lack access to broadband

- At least **18 million** Americans lack access to broadband at speeds of 25Mbps/3Mbps ([FCC](#))
- As many as **42 million** Americans lack access to broadband at speeds of 25Mbps/3Mbps ([BroadbandNow](#))
- There is a rural-urban divide in broadband access:
 - **1.4 percent** of Americans in urban areas
 - **19.8 percent** of rural Americans do not have access to broadband ([FCC](#))

Where there is broadband access, not everyone is online

- Nationally, **82.7 percent** of households have a home broadband subscription ([American Community Survey](#))
- Non-adoption is more likely among low-income, non-white, and rural populations, as well as those over age 65.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, Capital Projects Fund support broadband

- State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF): \$350 billion to state, local, territorial, and tribal governments
 - Eligible uses include “necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.”
 - Requires funded projects provide service of 100Mbps symmetrical
 - Encourages prioritization of fiber and investment in last mile infrastructure; requires enrollment in a low-income subsidy program
- Capital Projects Fund (CPF): \$10 billion to states
 - Investment in capital assets, which can include broadband infrastructure projects, digital connectivity technology projects, and improvements to connectivity, device, and digital literacy at “multi-purpose community facilities.”
 - States required to submit grant and program plans

State are using ARPA funds for broadband

- Georgia - \$408 million towards broadband infrastructure
- Indiana - \$250 million for broadband infrastructure grants
- Tennessee - \$500 million for broadband, \$400 million for infrastructure (to be distributed based on an updated map) and \$100 million for adoption and use
- Texas - \$500 million of CPF funds towards broadband infrastructure, including \$75 million for the broadband pole replacement program
- Virginia - \$718.7 million, including \$497 million of SLFRF funds and \$221 million of CPF funds
- Washington - \$276 million for broadband infrastructure grants, including \$5 million for broadband equity and affordability grants

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

Funding for broadband
infrastructure, digital equity

- Allocates \$65 billion for broadband
- [Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment Program \(BEAD\)](#):
\$42.45 billion to states
 - Minimum of \$100 million to each state
 - States will subgrant funds, subgrants require a 25% match
 - ARPA funding can be used as matching funds
 - Funded projects must provide service at speeds of 100Mbps/20Mbps