



Broadband for Everyone in Louisiana

Mission:

The State of Louisiana's Broadband for Everyone in Louisiana (BEL) Commission will facilitate private sector providers, public entities, and other broadband stakeholders to:

Improve both the adoption and availability of broadband service for Louisiana residents by providing universal access to broadband service with minimum committed speed of 25 Megabits per second (Mbps) download and 3 Mbps upload, scalable to up to 100 Mbps download and 100 Mbps upload, for all Louisianans by 2029.

Guiding Principles:

The State of Louisiana's Broadband for Everyone in Louisiana (BEL) Commission will serve as lead facilitator and collaborate with all sectors to successfully complete this plan, embracing all communities to encourage broadband adoption and availability and use of all technologies that can deploy, operate, and maintain high levels of broadband service. The delivery of resources and programs to unserved and underserved areas of the state will have a customer centric approach that should be open and transparent, complement regional priorities.

Priority Areas:

Providing Broadband for Everyone in Louisiana involves two parts – encouraging adoption by individuals and families who do not currently have broadband, and encouraging broadband providers to expand their networks to reach individual and families who do not have access. The Broadband for Everyone in Louisiana Commission will focus on these two pillars – ADOPTION and AVAILABILITY.

Adoption

By Executive Order, create the Louisiana's Broadband for Everyone in Louisiana (BEL) Commission to encourage more families to subscribe to broadband service and:

- Work with private broadband providers to identify and inventory all low-cost broadband programs currently offered by Internet service providers in Louisiana by June 15, 2020;
- Publish the available programs on the Governor's Office website and publicize them in communications and events;
- Develop a survey to identify areas of the state where broadband adoption rates fall below the state- or national-average;
- Identify communities without low-cost broadband programs and identify potential partners to launch new programs where needed by December 31, 2019;
- Work with private broadband providers, educational institutions, parish and municipal governments, non-profit organizations, and other stakeholders to identify barriers to adoption by individuals and families in Louisiana;
- Inventory best practices for adoption programs and identify opportunities to use public and private resources to encourage adoption programs that turn Louisiana households in to broadband households.

Availability

Louisiana's Broadband for Everyone in Louisiana (BEL) Commission will:

- Identify barriers restraining broadband deployment and propose solutions to the Governor quarterly beginning on or before July 1, 2020;
- Encourage partnerships throughout Louisiana to maximize state and federal grant funding for broadband deployment;
- Celebrate broadband build-outs throughout the state, including providers utilizing FCC, USDA, State Grant (where applicable), and other programs designed to accelerate broadband deployment;
- Develop a survey for providers to ascertain barriers and opportunities to accelerate the construction of broadband by July 1, 2020;
- Survey governmental entities and existing providers on any buildings and/or assets in need of broadband services by July 1, 2020;

- Research and recommend the viability of local governments creating or expanding special assessment districts to assist in deploying broadband in unserved and underserved areas;
- Leverage available federal and state E-Rate funding opportunities, achieve 100% of Louisiana’s school buildings and libraries gaining access to broadband services by January 2021; and
- Collect, aggregate, and disseminate from the provider community best practices for the following:
 - One Touch Make Ready (OTMR) contracts or joint-use agreements;
 - Create template for a broadband ready communities, with all the necessary permitting and easement accessibility in place;
 - Develop co-location agreements for access to fiber and towers; and
 - Model design standards for installing an empty fiber conduit in the One Dig Model.

Data & Mapping

- Publish a core set of definitions and terminology, that all stakeholders can utilize in their broadband planning initiatives by June 15, 2020;
- Track and report on local and regional broadband developments, post developments on the Governor’s Office website, and in electronic communications;
- Create baseline maps for Louisiana broadband infrastructure, adoption, and coverage by July 15, 2020;
- Update maps every other year prior to the release of state broadband grant application deadlines;
- Utilize FCC, USDA, and NTIA mapping and data resources;
- Report and publish updated national and state broadband maps and data sets from the FCC, USDA, and NTIA;
- Publish results of surveys, research, and analysis undertaken by this plan on the Governor’s Office website for public consumption; and
- Promote new broadband research and findings on broadband initiatives and emerging technologies.

Partnership Development

- Establish Louisiana's Broadband for Everyone in Louisiana (BEL) Commission with diverse representation of stakeholders by August 1, 2019;
- Serve as stewards of the broadband plan and advise the Governor and the Louisiana Legislature on activities and challenges;
- Create a survey instrument designed to gather data and insights from parishes, communities, and citizens on broadband access, opportunities, and barriers;
- Research available broadband toolkits and promote a designated toolkit to regions, parishes, and communities for utilization by January 1, 2020;
- Plan and convene an annual statewide broadband summit;
- Promote available federal and state programs that can assist with broadband deployment and increasing adoption rates (USDA, FCC, CRA);
- Identify other programs that can be utilized for buildout purposes;
- Implement a 'Broadband Ready' designation for local communities by January 1, 2020;
- Serve as a resource to providers for broadband opportunities and accessing available programs to accelerate deployment; and
- Serve as a resource to communities, businesses, and citizens seeking assistance to expand broadband.

Sector Strategies:

Economic, Community, and Workforce Developers

- Provide training opportunities for Louisiana parishes on the 'Broadband Ready' designation by July 1, 2020; and
- Encourage professionals and state agencies to include broadband priorities in their economic, community, and workforce development plans.

Agriculture

- Encourage additional research aimed at quantifying the economic benefits in utilizing ag-precision and value-added technologies;
- Collaborate with agriculture partners to demonstrate best practices at regularly scheduled events and conferences;
- Support continuing education efforts to teach digital literacy to agriculture based businesses; and
- Facilitate agribusiness development sessions that leverage regional agricultural assets with technology advancements.

Business Development

- Promote business training opportunities on technology and software tools that can assist business efficiencies and growth; and
- Coordinate amongst business development partners to host seminars for businesses establishing an online presence and e-commerce strategies.

Health Care

- Establish baseline data of health centers utilizing telehealth and monitoring strategies by July 1, 2020. As new broadband is deployed, ensure 100% of health centers can offer telehealth and monitoring services to their service territory;
- Establish a regional goal to increase the number of clients accessing the service;
- Promote available healthy living, screening, and wellness trainings offered by health centers and organizations; and
- Explore federal and state opportunities for health care providers to submit for reimbursements for telehealth services and for patients who need broadband to use telehealth services.

Education

- Establish baseline data of households with early childhood, elementary and secondary and post-secondary students that subscribe to broadband;
- Establish baseline data of early childhood, secondary and post-secondary students utilizing online classes from Louisiana's public and higher education systems by July 1, 2020; and
- Establish a goal by region to increase the number of students utilizing online educational opportunities.

Education & Awareness Strategies

- Develop the State Broadband Communications Plan by July 1, 2020;
- Launch a new website for Louisiana's Broadband efforts on the Governor's website;
- Host regular sessions for stakeholders on broadband developments, technologies, and government actions;
- Promote regional campaigns to increase adoption and utilization of broadband services in unserved and underserved communities;

- Partner with BESE and school districts to document the homework gap of Louisiana students;
- Devise and disseminate a core set of best practices for regions, districts, and communities to undertake in closing the gap (i.e. mobile service options, device lending) by July 1, 2020;
- Identify and promote digital literacy and online security/safety programs to populations of need, businesses, and agricultural producers; and
- Partner with Louisiana’s Library System to promote their resources, technology, and opportunities for community outreach.

Administrative & Regulatory Strategies:

- Monitor broadband efforts and funded projects from the FCC, USDA, NTIA and Congress;
- Update the Governor and Stakeholders on a quarterly basis;
- Analyze provider survey results on barriers and opportunities; recommend strategies for revision and/or inclusion in future policy or advocacy discussions;
- Convene meetings with Louisiana broadband providers to develop best practices;
- Prioritize implementation of strategies;
- Report results and facilitate next steps at the Broadband Summit;
- Develop a One Dig policy for right of way (ROW) maintained by state, parish and local governments for their consideration by March 1, 2020;
- Research best practices and consult with state agencies, police juries, and municipal associations;
- Monitor federal legislation for policy movements;
- Solicit feedback from the provider community;
- Facilitate efforts to streamline access, permitting, and partnerships in accessing federal and state assets;
- Provide best practices and insight to police juries, municipalities, and regions seeking similar opportunities; and
- Research and recommend alternative funding sources and tools that can assist providers in accelerating broadband buildout in unserved and underserved areas.