Department of Development

BroadbandOhio



BroadbandOhio End of Year Report 2025



Message From Director Mihalik



Access to reliable, affordable high-speed internet is essential to the quality of life for all Ohioans. It's the foundation for how we work, learn, access healthcare, and stay connected to the people and opportunities that matter most.

At BroadbandOhio and the Ohio Department of Development, we're committed to eliminating the Digital Divide. Our goal is to ensure every Ohioan, from the Appalachian foothills to Lake Erie's shores, has the digital tools necessary to compete, contribute, and thrive.

Whether an Ohioan lives in one of our bustling cities or one of the many charming small towns, internet access shapes daily life in profound ways—from job searches and remote learning to telehealth appointments, online banking, grocery delivery, and video calls with loved ones.

Under the leadership of Governor Mike DeWine, the progress we've made is remarkable. When BroadbandOhio launched in March 2020, over 300,000 households lacked high-speed internet. Today, that number stands at approximately 60,000. This dramatic reduction reflects the hard work, dedication, and innovative strategies we've employed to connect communities, businesses, and individuals across the state.

Another milestone in our quest to achieve universal coverage across Ohio was reached when our plan guaranteeing every Ohioan has at least one internet service provider offering high-speed access was initially approved by the National Telecommunications & Information Administration—representing years of collaboration between state and federal partners.

Our passion remains unwavering: We want Ohio to be not only a place where everyone has access to the tools they need to participate in every aspect of the modern economy, but also a state leading the nation in providing this vital service.

I'm deeply optimistic about what lies ahead. As we connect every remaining household and business to fast, affordable internet. Closing the digital divide across the state is no longer a goal of the distant future, but one that is nearing the finish line.

Respectfully,

Lydia Mihalik

Director, Ohio Department of Development



Director Lydia Mihalik of the Ohio Department of Development speaks at the National Governor's Association Broadband Conference.

Broadband Overview and Strategy

High-speed internet access has become as fundamental to modern life as electricity and running water. It powers how Ohioans learn, work, access healthcare, and connect with the world around them. However, for many Ohioans, this necessity remains out of reach. The DeWine Administration created BroadbandOhio to change that reality.

BroadbandOhio's mission is straightforward: ensure every Ohio household and business has access to reliable, affordable high-speed internet. Since 2020, the DeWine Administration has deployed over $1.1 billion in strategic investments, created partnerships across public and private sectors, and pioneered innovative solutions to connect unserved or underserved Ohioans. The results speak for themselves: an 80 percent reduction in unserved households in just five years.

BroadbandOhio uses the following strategies to reduce the Digital Divide:

- **Grant Programs** — Through the Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant (ORBEG) and Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) programs, BroadbandOhio has committed to investing more than $1.1 billion.
- **Infrastructure Development** — BroadbandOhio has collaborated with public and private partners to extend broadband networks and help internet service providers have the proper infrastructure to break down connectivity barriers.
- **Special Projects** — Partnerships between state and local leaders, businesses, and communities can turn ideas into successful projects—a key part of BroadbandOhio's strategy over the past five-plus years.
- **Local Initiatives** — Implementing programs to ensure all Ohioans, regardless of location or income, can access and benefit from high-speed internet, and working with communities to respond to local broadband needs, are other powerful tactics utilized by BroadbandOhio.

This multi-layered approach is providing the resources needed by Ohioans—regardless of the issues affecting them—to meet the demands of the modern economy, connect with opportunities, and enhance their quality of life.

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment

A major step forward in the state's mission of providing universal coverage to every Ohioan took place when the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) initially approved Ohio's Final BEAD Proposal on Dec. 2. Under the proposal, every Ohioan regardless of where they live will soon have access to at least one internet provider that can offer them high-speed availability through the federally funded program.

Since its establishment in 2021 as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Acts (ILJA), BEAD has been a major part of the long-term plan to reach universal coverage in Ohio. The BEAD program was created to provide $42.5 billion nationwide to build broadband networks that would achieve universal national coverage by 2030, with more than $300 million being allocated to Ohio. BroadbandOhio began working with the NTIA to prepare the state's grant process after the announcement more than four years ago.

As part of the program, BroadbandOhio hosted stakeholder meetings, drafted a five-year action plan, wrote an initial proposal detailing how to make Ohio's high-speed internet coverage maps as accurate as possible, and then created the actual grant plan.

Ohio also hosted a challenge process in May 2024 to determine the final map of unserved addresses, and submitted Initial Proposal Volume 2, detailing the grant process for the state, which was subsequently reviewed and approved by the NTIA in October 2024.

Following a BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice on June 6, 2025, Ohio's subgrantee selection process was condensed from a three-round application process into a single application round. To ensure a fair, open, and competitive application process, BroadbandOhio implemented an outreach and support framework specifically tailored to applicants of all sizes and technology types. Applicants, including both small and large internet service providers (ISPs), and those using fiber, hybrid fiber coaxial, fixed wireless, and low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite technologies were supported through multiple technical assistance resources.

The final proposal was submitted to the federal government on Sept. 4, 2025, more than a month before the original deadline. Ohio's BEAD Final Proposal guarantees that every home will have access to high-speed internet at the end of the program.

The plan awaiting final approval by the NTIA includes funding for 23 provisional sub-awardees that will provide universal broadband connectivity across the state of Ohio, connecting 83,992 locations using over $300 million. Of those locations, 48% were provisionally awarded to a low-earth orbit satellite provider, 44% were awarded to fiber providers, 7% to fixed wireless providers, and the remaining addresses were awarded to coaxial cable providers.

Through ORBEG, $232 million in grants was awarded to 11 internet service providers in March 2022 to service more than 43,000 households and $94.5 million in grants was awarded to two internet service providers in August 2024 to service more than 35,000 households.

"Providing access to affordable high-speed internet is one of the basic principles in our vision of empowering communities to succeed. Through the efforts of our BroadbandOhio team, we're working diligently to make sure everyone in our state is not only covered but has all the resources they need to thrive in this digital age."

Lydia Mihalik, director of the Ohio Department of Development

"There are still Ohioans who don't have fast, reliable internet, but we're closer than ever before to changing that. Through the work of BroadbandOhio, we have a plan in place that will provide a way for everyone, regardless of where they live, to have the digital resources they need for things like telehealth, online learning, or job searches."

Governor DeWine

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Pole Replacement and Undergrounding Program

Reliable internet starts with reliable infrastructure, and for many Ohio communities, outdated or insufficient infrastructure is a barrier to connectivity.

The Pole Replacement and Undergrounding Program was created by House Bill 33 of the 135th General Assembly and established July 1, 2023. The program reimburses internet service providers up to $7,500 for essential pole replacements or to bury fiber underground in unserved areas. Eligible costs include removing, modifying, and disposing of existing utility poles, and undergrounding costs include the costs to dig a trench, perform directional boring, install conduit, seal the trench, and other affiliated expenses.

In June 2025, BroadbandOhio announced it was awarding $23.7 million through this program, with six ISPs receiving reimbursement—impacting 23 counties. The Broadband Expansion Authority approved the reimbursement of 67 applications, covering 1,333 poles and 3,622 undergrounding projects during what was the program's third round of funding:

- Ohio Gig submitted six applications totaling more than $18.5 million, impacting six counties
- Charter Communications submitted 22 applications totaling more than $3 million in reimbursement, impacting 13 counties
- South Central Power submitted 33 applications totaling more than $1.4 million in reimbursement, impacting four counties
- Logan County Gig submitted one application totaling $303,304 for Logan County
- The Southern Ohio Communications Company submitted one application requesting $295,235 in reimbursement for Adams County
- JB Nets submitted four applications totaling $100,236 in reimbursement for Gallia County

Round 4 applications were approved in December 2025 totaling 64 applications for a total of $6.3 million, exhausting the remaining funds in the program. Overall, 175 applications were approved to replace 2,865 poles and 4,719 poles passed by undergrounding. The $31.3 million in total funding, including more than $1.3 million awarded in 2024, helped replace poles in 51 counties and served over 13,000 Ohioans.

Line Extension Grant Program

Another infrastructure issue ISPs deal with are the high construction costs to run fiber to homes set back from main roads. This is the objective of the Line Extension Grant program, which was launched in late 2025 and provides funding to ISPs to offset the costs of line extension construction beyond the first 200 feet. Each eligible project must be designed to bring broadband access to unserved homes, where the last-mile connection has longer than normal installation, and as a result is cost-prohibitive to the ISP. Once established, the project must provide broadband service speeds of at least 100/100 Mbps to every connected residence.

There is $3 million in federal Capital Projects Fund (CPF) funding available to ISPs, and the Line Extension Grant program will accept applications on a rolling basis until funding is exhausted. All funds must be spent, and all projects must be operational by Dec. 31, 2026.

A scoring system to evaluate and select applications for program grants has been established, and awards will be disbursed based on mutually agreed-upon project milestones. Eligible projects may receive the lesser of $5,000 per address or the total cost to be incurred by the customer. The maximum per foot cost is $9.50.

"Every Ohioan deserves access to affordable high-speed internet, no matter where they live. By supporting infrastructure investments, we're opening doors for more communities to connect, grow, and thrive."

Governor Mike DeWine







SPECIAL PROJECTS

Left: Governor DeWine, former Lt. Governor Husted, Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb, Cleveland City Council President Blaine Griffin, and DigitalC CEO Joshua Edmonds at 2024 Cleveland event.
Right: BroadbandOhio team and DigitalC CEO Joshua Edmonds at 2025 Cleveland event.

Connecting Cleveland

Whether it was expanding telehealth in Muskingum County in 2021, bringing high-speed internet to residents in Mount Healthy in 2022, or connecting Adams, Brown, and Clermont counties by partnering with altafiber in 2024, BroadbandOhio has long been at the center of community-changing projects. In 2025, one of its most impactful collaborations, in the city of Cleveland, reached a major milestone with the nonprofit DigitalC.

In January 2024, BroadbandOhio announced an investment of $10 million to create a broadband network offering high-speed, low-cost internet service across all of Cleveland—a city identified as the worst-connected large city in the country in 2019 by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. The partnership began reaping major benefits in 2025. In October, BroadbandOhio announced that all construction for the network had been completed and that more than 6,300 Cleveland households—representing 15,800 residents—are now connected through the partnership with the city of Cleveland and DigitalC. Households connected through the project have access to high-speed internet for $18 per month, with a five-year commitment, and it is free for families with children in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. DigitalC also has provided online skills training to more than 14,000 residents and facilitated more than 17,500 training sessions, advancing digital literacy alongside access. The city of Cleveland provided up to $20 million in financial support for the project, which had an estimated total cost of $53 million and built on an expansion project BroadbandOhio launched in 2021 that connected residents in the city of East Cleveland with affordable high-speed internet.

Route 30 Middle-Mile Expansion

During the final quarter of 2025, BroadbandOhio began accepting proposals for a project that will bring high-speed internet to several communities in northern Ohio—and do it cost-effectively. The U.S. Route 30 Middle-Mile Infrastructure Project will build a fiber network eastward from Mansfield to Canton and westward from Mansfield to Lima, passing through 15 counties and spanning the entire width of Ohio. The infrastructure build will run near many education centers, healthcare facilities, local government institutions, the city of Mansfield Industrial Park, and the 179th Cyberspace Wing.

Funded as part of Ohio's biennial budget in House Bill 96 during the 136th General Assembly, the project commits $20 million to build out commercially available infrastructure to address connectivity issues in that part of Ohio. The inquiry period for interested applicants began Dec. 1, 2025.

"This is a historic achievement, more than a decade in the making. Ten years ago, DigitalC made a visionary promise to bridge the digital divide and connect the unconnected. With this support from the state of Ohio, alongside a coalition of partners, we have delivered on that commitment, our promise to prosperity, and ushered in the Cleveland era as a fully connected city."

Joshua Edmonds, DigitalC CEO



LOCAL INITIATIVES

BroadbandOhio Accelerator Program

With an eye on educating communities looking to expand broadband access in their area, BroadbandOhio hosted Broadband Community Accelerator Program sessions in five Ohio regions this year. A collaborative effort between the BroadbandOhio and Ohio State University Extension, the sessions discussed:

- How communities can prepare for funding through the BEAD program
- An overview of broadband terminology and a brief explanation of broadband technology to help local leaders better understand the landscape
- Information related to available resources and the important roles communities, anchor institutions, and local leaders play in advancing broadband development during this phase of Ohio's expansion efforts.

Sessions were held in Knox, Preble, Stark, Paulding, and Athens counties.

Digital Opportunity

To help further digital skills development across Ohio, BroadbandOhio selected Literacy Minnesota through a competitive process to administer the Northstar Digital Literacy program at 331 sites. Among the areas impacted are Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) facilities, ASPIRE sites, and public library systems. Northstar is a comprehensive, widely used digital skills program that aims to help individuals gain essential skills in using technology effectively, particularly for work, education, and personal activities like healthcare—regardless of their starting point or experience level.

Northstar has been used in Ohio's public library systems for several years. Through this partnership, Northstar will continue to be available to all Ohioans with access to a public library.

In addition, BroadbandOhio supported events and workshops across the state during Digital Inclusion Week held Oct. 6-10, including events at the United Way of Greater Cincinnati which explored the role digital access has in education and workforce initiatives, and the Central Ohio Digital Inclusion Summit held at the Columbus Metropolitan Library.

"As we move closer to achieving universal coverage across Ohio, local leaders will continue to play an important role because they understand the unique needs of their communities. These local initiatives provided guidance on how to leverage funding opportunities and successful projects in the future."
Governor DeWine





Department of Development

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