



State Efforts to Expand Broadband Access

Executive Summary

Broadband communication is radically transforming the way in which Americans use the Internet by providing the ability to access voice, video, and data through a single network. However, challenges remain in ensuring universal access to broadband service, as providers do not reach every person across the country. From the standpoint of economic viability, it is very costly to build the infrastructure that connects remote rural areas to broadband service, and this challenge has led to a disparity between urban (73 percent) versus rural (55 percent) broadband adoption rates.

A number of compelling reasons exist for promoting broadband access and adoption. Notably, there are benefits in having access to educational institutions or telemedicine applications through the Internet. With this in mind, states have used a variety of strategies to encourage or incentivize providers to expand broadband service to unserved areas. These include:

- Establishing a task force with public and private stakeholders to evaluate the current state of broadband deployment and identify beneficial policy changes;
- Providing tax incentives designed to encourage investment in broadband infrastructure as well as other related equipment and expenses;
- Creating dedicated funding that allows states to leverage private sector funds for investing in the infrastructure, thus maximizing their return on investment and expanding broadband availability in the most efficient way possible;
- Mapping broadband availability to help both policymakers and service providers determine where to focus their efforts and reveal gaps in service to providers who wish to expand their offerings; and
- Engaging local communities to increase grassroots demand that encourages providers to deploy broadband in previously unserved areas.

This *Issue Brief* reviews state efforts to expand broadband access by offering examples of implementation strategies. In addition, we highlight how broadband access can spur economic development and improve quality of life.

This *Issue Brief* was written by Ryan Miller in the Homeland Security & Technology Division.