

State Broadband Data and Development Grant Program

Executive Summary for Connect Arkansas

In 2007, Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe signed the Connect Arkansas Act into law creating a broadband initiative focused on increasing the use and availability of broadband internet within the state. Governor Beebe also designated Connect Arkansas as the lead entity eligible to receive a federal broadband mapping grant under the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) State Broadband Data and Development Program. Connect Arkansas submitted a proposal requesting \$1,586,872 in funding to support a two year mapping program. An additional \$494,366 was requested to support a broadband planning program within Arkansas.

Connect Arkansas has secured \$317,375 for mapping and \$125,000 for planning in matching funds. This is the equivalent of a 20% match to the submitted budget through the proposal.

Through the NTIA's funding, Connect Arkansas will build upon initial mapping efforts and expand the information it already has acquired from service providers to show information at a more granular level. Connect Arkansas has established over 100 partnerships with both public and private sector entities throughout Arkansas to assist in the Connect Arkansas strategy.

Connect Arkansas's Broadband and Data Mapping strategy includes:

- Coverage data for facilities-based broadband providers on a census block level for the 134,664 census blocks in Arkansas;
- Coverage data for facilities-based broadband providers listing street segments with address ranges in the remaining 5,515 census blocks;
- For facilities-based providers of wireless broadband service that is not address specific, develop GIS-compatible map layers (shapefiles) depicting areas in which broadband service is available to end users;
- Weighted Average Speeds;
- Middle-Mile and Backbone Interconnection Points;
- And Community Anchor Points.

In addition to the Arkansas Broadband Data & Delivery Program, Connect Arkansas is engaging in collaborative planning processes that will allow unserved and underserved counties to address broadband access issues. In many cases, the unserved and underserved counties in Arkansas also correlate to being economically depressed delta regions or sparsely populated counties. The eCommunity strategic planning process will give each county an opportunity to identify the resources they have, identify the resources they need and create a plan on how to build the demand for and access to broadband internet opportunities. Connect has identified nine of the most distressed counties in the Delta Regional Authority as targets for these funds. The planning efforts will be consistent with the Delta Regional Authority's iDelta Plan.