



Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative

What is the mission of GBDI

The Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiatives (GBDI) aims to provide planning, incentives for the promotion of broadband deployment to unserved areas throughout the state. The Department of Community of Affairs in partnership with Georgia Technology Authority is responsible for carrying out the mission of GBDI.

Why is it important

An estimated 1.6 million Georgians lack access to vital high-speed internet service. Broadband has become essential infrastructure, in the 21st Century, to businesses, education, healthcare, agricultural and quality of life. Unfortunately, high-speed internet access remains out of reach for Georgians in many rural communities.

Barriers to Deployment

Due to low population densities and rugged terrain for some areas, rural markets present a massive entry costs for internet service providers. This extensive infrastructural investment creates a barrier to entry that greatly inhibits competition and limits the ability of service providers to provide adequate high-speed coverage.

Background

- In 2016, Senate Resolution 876 created Joint High-Speed Broadband Communications Access for all Georgians Study Committee.
- In 2017 the Senate Rural Georgia Study Committee was created, which examined lack of broadband and
- In 2017 HR 389 created the House Rural Development Council which recommended the inclusion of rural broadband.
- In 2018, the Georgia General Assembly passed SB402 creating the Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act. The Act calls for the promotion and deployment of broadband services throughout the state to unserved areas with a minimum of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds. The legislation serves as the framework for the GBDI.
- Governor Kemp's A New Rural Day prioritizes improving access to healthcare, enhancing educational outcomes, supporting small business, and fostering economic growth.

GBDI Progress to Date

In August of 2018, an Executive Director for GBDI was named by DCA. Since then, there has been considerable progress made in advancing the goals and objectives of GBDI. An inter-agency team, including DCA, GTA, GDOT, SPC, and DEcD, has worked with provider and community stakeholders to achieve several key objectives. In addition to the inter-agency team, an advisory committee was formed to represent the service providers and local government stakeholders. With the assistance of great collaboration, the GBDI team has made the following progress to date:

- Published a State Broadband Plan with the Governor's Support.
- Developing and publishing a state-wide map to identify unserved locations:
 - Phase I interactive map (based on FCC methodology) - published
 - Phase II Enhanced Mapping (address-level methodology) – underway-3 county pilot program complete

- Developed and approved rules and regulations for the GBDI grant program
- Approved a new requirement that Local Comprehensive Plans must include a Broadband Services Element.
- Developed a model ordinance to assist communities in streamlining permitting processes.
- Developed and published Broadband Ready Community and Site Designations.
- Created an online portal that houses:
 - An overview of the GBDI Program
 - The State Broadband Plan
 - Applications for Broadband Ready Community and Site Designations
 - Information for supporting other funding sources and programs (USDA)
 - Statewide Map
- Identifying and supporting funding incentives available to communities and service providers; federal, state and local levels that include grant programs such as USDA ReConnect, etc., as well as low interest loans that may be supported by GBDI and could direct investment to identified unserved Georgians.

Grant Program

Purpose

The purpose of the GBDI funding to provide financial assistance for the activities that lead to the installation or expansion of facilities and equipment which provide broadband services in unserved areas that are not currently served by such services.

Eligible Applicants

Any or all public bodies, designated by DCA as political subdivisions is qualified to apply for funds.

Eligible Activities

Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, the provision of public infrastructure, services, facilities and improvements needed to implement broadband services or enhance existing broadband services in unserved areas as designated by DCA.

Ineligible Activities

Ineligible activities include but are not limited to refinancing of existing debt, on-going administrative, operational maintenance costs, financing of customer terminal equipment (including modems) or inside wiring not owned by the recipient, and financing of operating leases and vehicles.

Match Requirement

A minimum of 50% match is required however, applicants will be awarded additional points for increased capital contribution. To determine the percentage of the applicant's capital contribution the following criteria will be analyzed: (1) amount of total state assistance and (2) amount of public and private investment.

Awarding of Funds

Award limits will be based on final annual funding. The minimum amount of funding per award will be set at \$250,000 and the maximum will be 15% of the total funds available.

**The Grant Program was created in accordance with O.C.G.A 50-40 and with O.C.G.A 50-34.*