

Presentation: Historic Federal Broadband Infrastructure and Affordability Funding: Latest Updates and County Action Items

April 29, 2024

Strong Counties. Stronger America.

Our Mission

Strengthen America's Counties

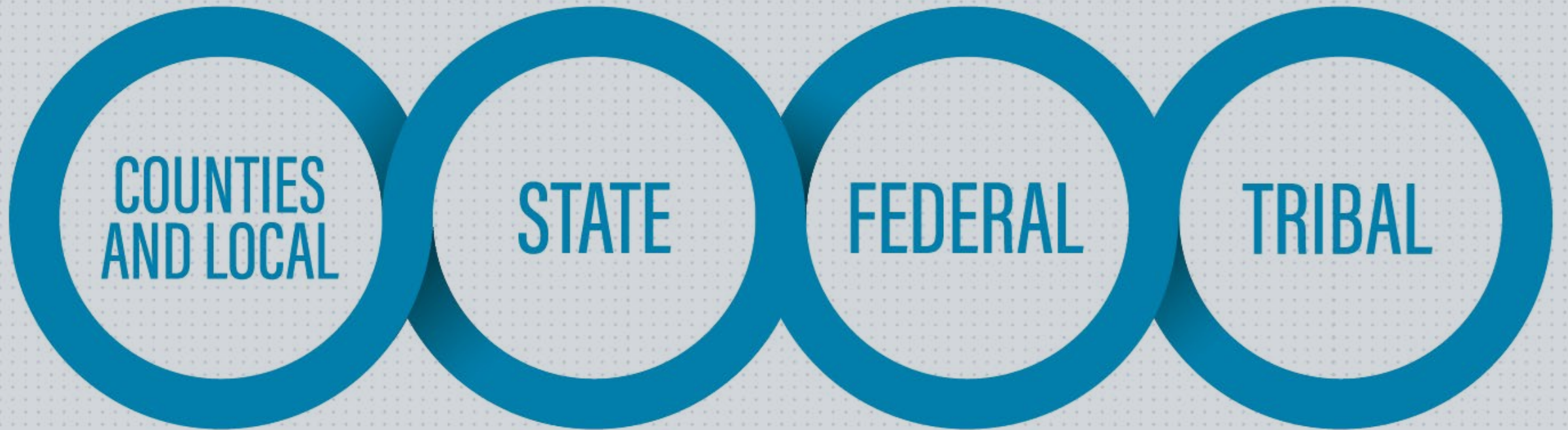
Our Vision

Healthy, safe and vibrant counties across
America

Across America, there are:

- 3,069 counties, parishes and boroughs across the country
- 3.6 million county employees
- 319 million county residents
- 40,000 county elected officials

Role of NACo and America's Counties in our Intergovernmental System



My County. My NACo.

All county elected officials and staff are members and can:

ACCESS – A seat at the table

ENGAGE – on the issues that matter

NETWORK – with folks who know what it's like to walk in your shoes

SAVE – money, time and resources

SUCCEED – as a county and as an individual

To learn more about a NACo membership, visit [our membership inquiry page](#)



As county leaders, we have unlimited potential to advance to our priorities and lead forward together.

- Hon. Mary Jo McGuire, NACo President and Commissioner, Ramsey County, Minnesota

NACo's Structure:

Policy Steering Committees



Energy,
Environment and
Land Use (EELU)



Justice and Public
Safety



Agriculture and
Rural Affairs



Finance, Pensions and
Intergovernmental
Affairs



Public Lands



Community,
Economic and
Workforce
Development



Health



Telecommunications
and Technology



Human Services
and Education

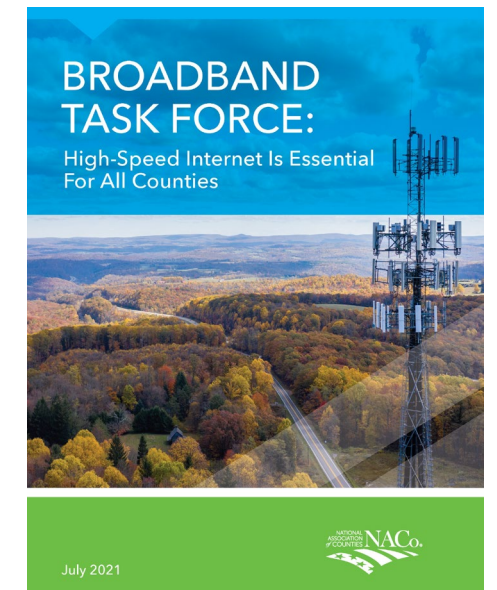


Transportation

NACo's Mission to Support Broadband Connectivity



- **NACo's Broadband Task Force**
 - Task Force of over 40 county leaders who convened and sought to establish working guidelines and best practices for four core areas: (1) Preparing for Broadband; (2) Barriers to Buildout; (3) Digital Divides, Digital Disparities; and (4) Future-proofing and the “Glocal” Economy
- **Findings**
 - Counties serve as policymakers, funders, data aggregators, conveners and partners in pursuit of sustainable solutions to broadband access, affordability, and reliability.
 - Federally supported, locally collected data, and verified data is essential
 - Open “middle mile” systems can increase competition
 - The incentive for “future-proofing” broadband is essential
- **Task Force Report outlines nine specific themes** for deploying better & affordable services



NACo's Broadband Policy Priorities



Policymakers

- Supporting measures to implement pricing transparency for all fees pertaining to broadband internet access services
- Implementing high-speed internet affordability requirements for federal funding programs
- Encouraging a commitment to open access networks for funded by federal grant programs to facilitate competition

Partners

- Calling on Congress to actively engage counties prior to development new wireless infrastructure
- Ensuring the participation of county governments in the development and implementation of broadband expansion efforts
- Empowering counties to be active in the deployment and operations of high-speed internet

Conveners

- Supporting federal solutions to close the “homework gap”
- Supporting a permanent federal broadband assistance program



NACo's Broadband Policy Priorities



Funders

- Direct recipients of the American Rescue Plan Act State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds program, which permitted allocation of funding on broadband infrastructure projects and digital connectivity initiatives

Data Aggregators

- Contributed to the Federal Communications Commission's Broadband Data Collection process to improve identification of broadband serviceable locations



Overview of Advocacy Updates

1. The Affordable Connectivity Program
2. The Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program
3. Question & Answer

What is the Affordable Connectivity Program?



Program Overview

- The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) was enacted in November 2021 by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which funded the ACP through a \$14.2 billion appropriation
- The ACP offers a monthly consumer benefit of \$30 to eligible households to be applied towards a participating internet service provider's internet plan
- Eligible households are also able to receive a one-time credit of up to \$100 towards the purchase of a connectivity device, if they contribute between \$10 and \$50 towards the purchase

The ACP currently enrolls over 23 million households

- ***Michigan has 941,224 households enrolled in the ACP***

Affordable Connectivity Program Wind Down Procedures



The potential end of the program

- In January of 2024, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced the program's funding would become exhausted after April 2024
- In anticipation of a lack of funds, the FCC stopped accepting new enrollments for the ACP at 11:59pm ET on February 7th, 2024.
- Internet Service Providers were required to notify affected households of the end of the program by March 19

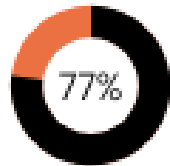
The ACP has been the principal government program for driving affordability in broadband services

Impact of the ACP: FCC Consumer Survey

Loss of ACP
Means
Service



Disruptions



77% survey respondents said they would be affected.

Over 77% of households say losing the ACP would disrupt their internet access

Around 50% of households across urban and rural counties indicated they had no internet access prior to the ACP

ACP allows households to schedule or attend healthcare appointments (72%), apply for jobs or complete work (48%), do schoolwork (75%).



The Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act

The Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act

- On January 10th, House Representatives Yvette Clarke (D-NY) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), alongside Senators Peter Welch (D-VT), J.D. Vance (R-OH), Jacky Rosen (D-NV) and Kevin Cramer (R-ND) introduced the Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act of 2024
- The bill provides \$7 billion in appropriations to extend funding for the ACP through the end of 2024. The bill does not include any programmatic changes to the program

NACo is calling on members to urge their delegation to support funding for the ACP

Current State of Play for the ACP

Congressional Updates

- There are now 228 co-sponsors in the House, but more momentum is needed
- 33 Senators sent letter on March 15 for inclusion in next funding package
- Congressmember Yvette Clarke (D-N.Y.) issued a request for a discharge petition on April 18th, which would have brought the measure to a floor vote
- Senate Commerce is holding a hearing on ACP this week; several proposals introduced



NACo is continuing to urge members to contact their representatives to support the ACP Extension Act of 2024

How To Get Involved



- Step 1: Determine how many enrolled households to the ACP are in your county – [start here!](#)
- Step 2: Utilize NACo's ACP Outreach Toolkit to draft communications to your congressional delegation
- Step 3: Amplify your message to community partners and engage in discussions with local internet service providers
- Step 4: Highlight the *impact* of losing affordable internet access to federal lawmakers

Advocate on ACP Today



NACo's ACP Outreach Toolkit includes a template advocacy letter to your congressional delegation, county best practice stories to share impact in your community, and more resources.

The BEAD Program: Closing the Digital Divide



The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law allocated \$42.45 billion to the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program to connect all unserved and underserved residents



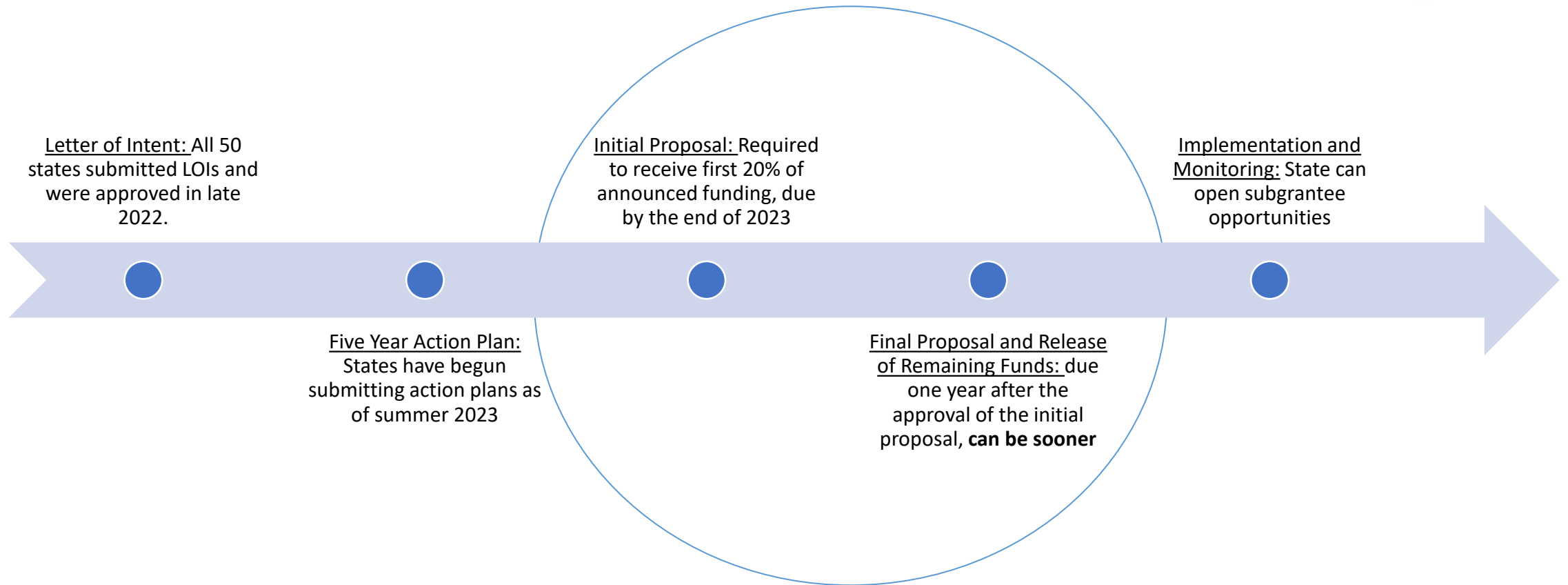
- Three Takeaways
 - The BEAD program will serve every unserved and underserved location in the country with high-speed and affordable internet access
 - Funding is expected to be made available at the subgrantee level as early as the end of 2024
 - NACo urges all members to coordinate with their respective state broadband offices to the greatest extent possible in anticipation of the roll-out of BEAD sub-grant funding opportunities
- Visit InternetForAll.gov for NTIAs guidance documents, contacts, and more information

BEAD Program Overview



- What is the BEAD Program?
 - The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, authorized by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), is providing \$42.45 billion in federal funding for a wide variety of eligible uses to close the digital divide, including the construction of broadband infrastructure to last-mile un- and under-served locations among other uses
- Locations are eligible for investment – **consult the FCC maps and with your state broadband office**
 1. Unserved: <25/3 Mbps
 2. Underserved: <100/20 Mbps
 3. Community Anchor Institutions: <1 Gbps
 4. Equity, access and affordability eligible uses (if funds are available)
- Can counties apply for funding?
 - Yes. Funding is available for public entities, internet service providers, cooperatives, and other eligible entities. **Grant opportunities will be managed by the state.**

The BEAD Program: Timeline



Letter of Intent: All 50 states submitted LOIs and were approved in late 2022.

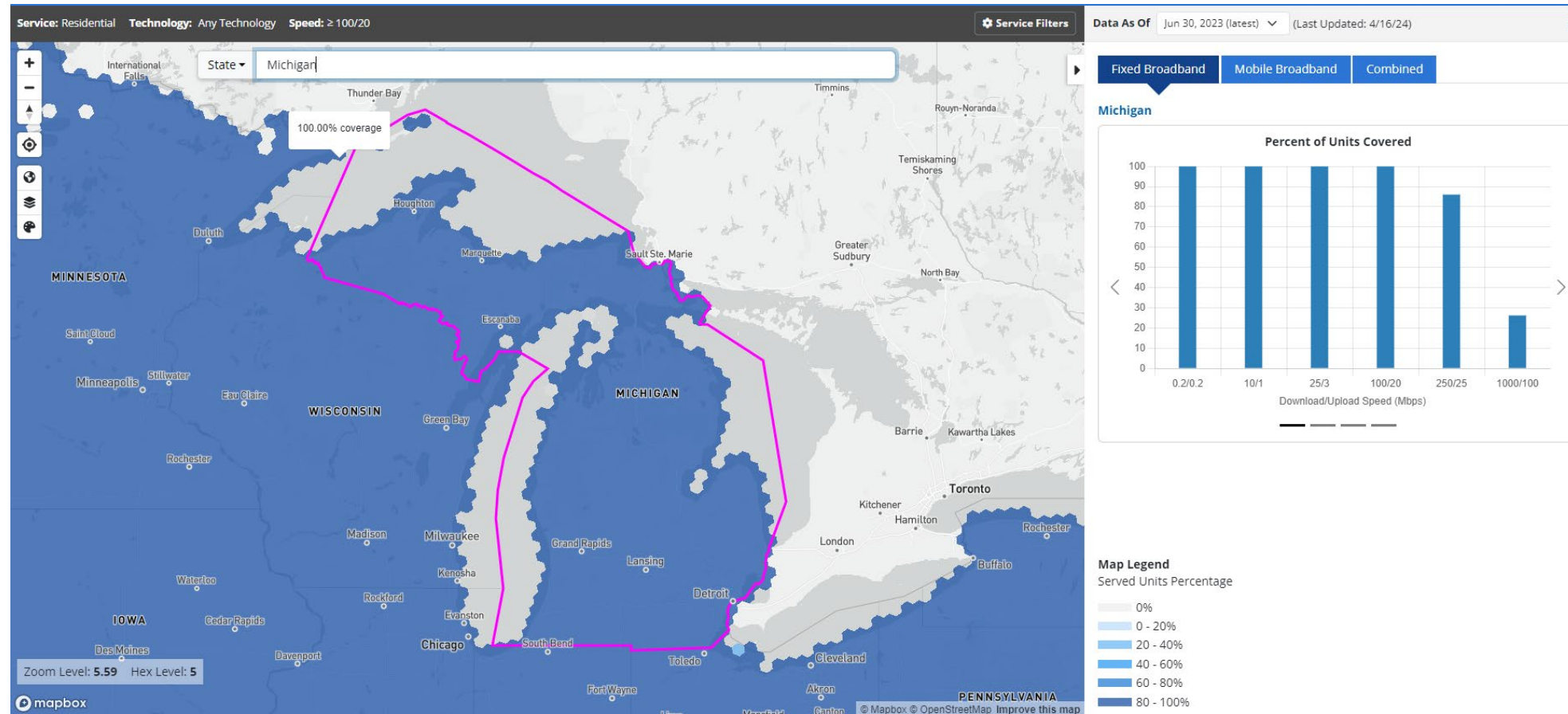
Five Year Action Plan: States have begun submitting action plans as of summer 2023

Initial Proposal: Required to receive first 20% of announced funding, due by the end of 2023

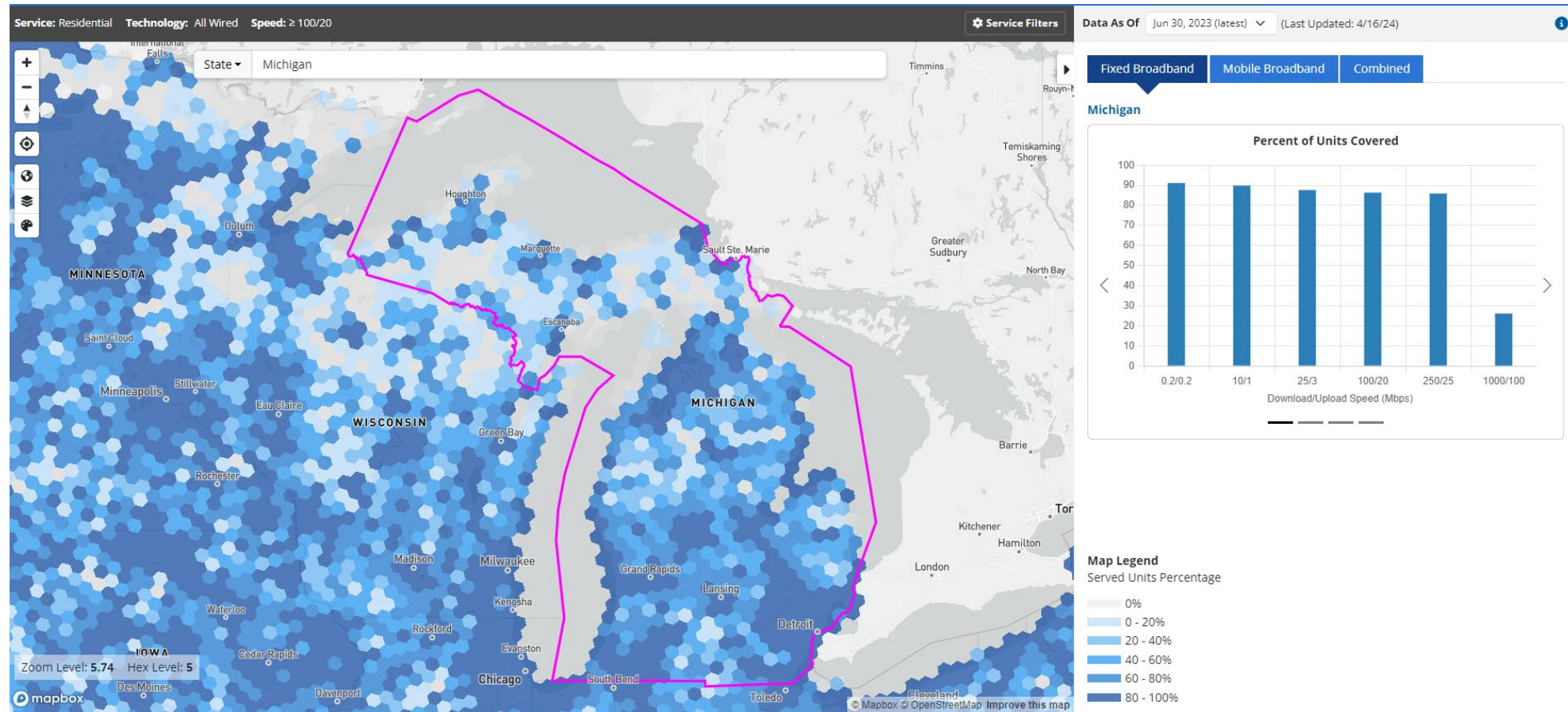
Final Proposal and Release of Remaining Funds: due one year after the approval of the initial proposal, **can be sooner**

Implementation and Monitoring: State can open subgrantee opportunities

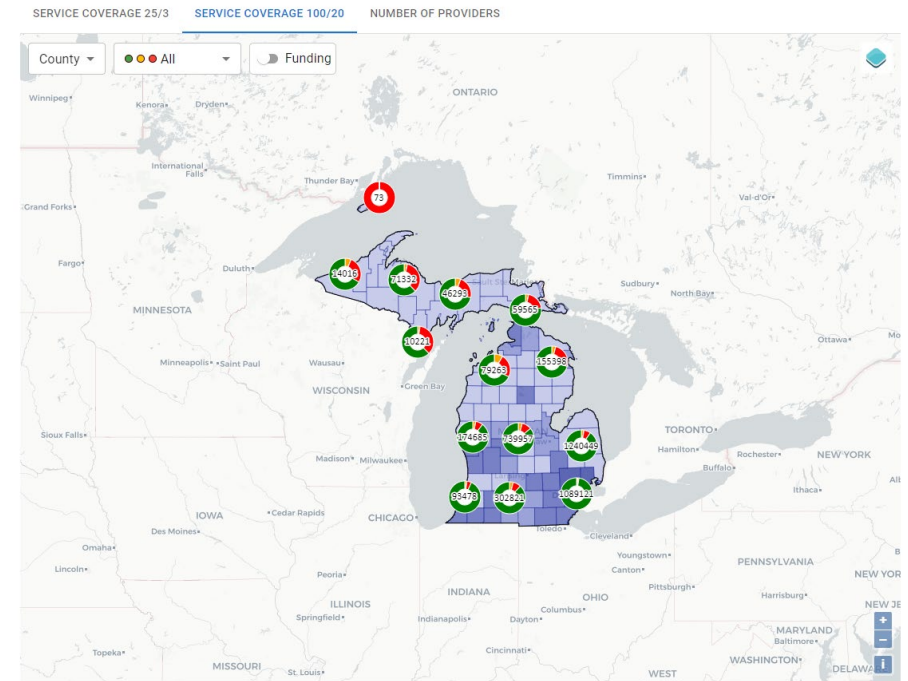
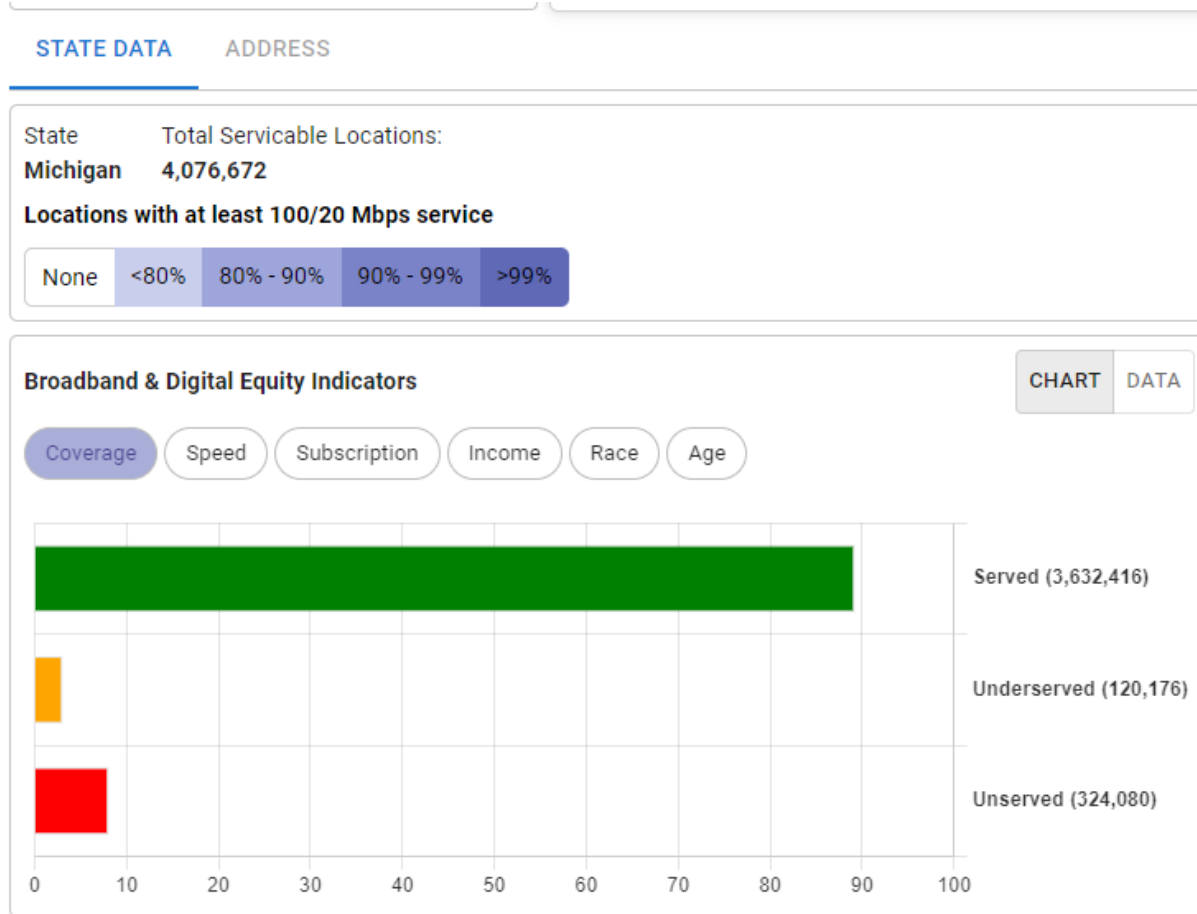
Who is connected to high-speed internet, and who is not?



Who is connected to high-speed internet, and who is not?



Who is connected to high-speed internet, and who is not?



Next Steps: Action Items for Counties



Establish a strong relationship with your state broadband office

Get involved in their planning process as they formulate their Initial and Final Proposal for BEAD funding



Assess current and future broadband needs

Focus on local broadband availability, infrastructure deployment processes and challenges, and consult county-held data



Advocate for your county's vulnerable communities

Targeted outreach and community convening will help boost awareness of the forthcoming funding opportunity



Apply to be a subgrantee

Counties can apply to directly deploy or fund broadband infrastructure networks – determine if this is a viable solution in your community



Develop data and engage in strategic planning

Consult county-held data, engage in feasibility and needs assessments, collaborate with neighboring counties and jurisdictions

County Processes in Broadband



Pole Attachments

Counties are often primary stewards of public utility poles



Environmental & Historical Reviews

Counties oversee permitting processes for environmental and historical reviews within our jurisdictions



Rights of Way (ROW)

Counties often manage the rights-of-way for public property held in trust for the community

County Processes in Broadband



Dig once policies

This applies to all construction policies – particularly valuable to leverage for broadband deployment



Asset mapping

Counties can leverage internal resourcing to map county assets in advance of infrastructure projects



One-Touch-Make-Ready (OTMR)

This policy allows for pole owners to conduct all make-ready tasks at the same time in advance of a deployment project

**For more
information**



Visit NACo's Bead Program Toolkit, which includes county action items; NACo's County Explorer resource and statistics on broadband connectivity; updated NTIA resources and technical assistance documents; and ongoing best practices and education for county involvement in broadband connectivity initiatives

QUESTIONS?

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