



Restore Pennsylvania: Providing High-Speed Internet Access

We live in a knowledge-driven economy where access to reliable and affordable broadband is critical. Our lack of broadband access hinders our students' ability to learn. It keeps our health care and emergency medical service providers from the delivering the best treatment possible. It drives away businesses. It makes it more difficult for families and friends to connect.

Restore Pennsylvania will position communities across the commonwealth to meet the challenges of the 21st century and embrace new opportunities for growth and competitiveness, with the following goals:

- Bridge the digital divide in every community across the commonwealth, ensuring that every Pennsylvanian has access to high speed, reliable, and affordable internet service.
- Encourage and support the expansion of at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload (the federal definition of broadband) to unserved and underserved regions.

Infrastructure Challenge Being Addressed

According to the Federal Communications Commission, more than 800,000 Pennsylvanians lack access to robust, reliable, high-speed internet, with more than 520,000 of those residents living in rural areas. Students in Towanda Area School District cite their consistent struggle to connect to internet at home, hindering their ability to do school work and get assignments done in a timely manner. At Penns Valley School District in Centre County, at least 8 percent of students have only dial-up internet access at home. When it comes to emergency medical services, every second counts. Emergency service providers need access to robust, reliable broadband to ensure they're able to communicate with patients and hospitals effectively, transmit and receive crucial data, and implement the latest technology.

Delivering high-speed broadband access to every resident and business in Pennsylvania is a challenging and expensive proposition. Like other utilities, deploying broadband networks is costly. Depending on the structure used to incentivize broadband expansion, achieving full broadband deployment is projected to require between \$480 and \$715 million in commonwealth funding.

Pennsylvania's broadband access and adoption problems vary widely by geographic and economic lines. Access and adoption are lowest in low-income and our most rural areas of the commonwealth. Several important factors limit the expansion of broadband networks, such as:

- The topography of Pennsylvania's counties, specifically the dense canopies and barren landscapes;
- The cost of building and maintaining last-mile infrastructure to businesses and residents without immediate and aggregated demand for service;
- Lack of broadband adoption by businesses, industry, educational facilities, healthcare and residents, which is driven by high costs for the service or the lack of knowledge about the benefits of broadband;
- Access to capital and financial resources;
- The diversity and independent missions of multiple service providers.

Description of Proposed Funding Usage

Restore Pennsylvania allocates funding to the Department of Community and Economic Development for the establishment of a Pennsylvania Broadband Development Program. The program will provide loans, grants, or other forms of financing for the planning and construction of infrastructure to provide broadband service to unserved and underserved areas of the commonwealth. The following may apply for funding under the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Program:

- 1) For-profit and nonprofit entities;
- 2) Commonwealth agencies and political subdivisions;
- 3) Rural electric cooperatives.

Detailed Description of Proposed Funding Usage

1. Grants/incentives for build out

In areas that have successfully completed a feasibility study (whether funded through a technical assistance grant or not) and seek to either expand their existing network infrastructure or implement new infrastructure or technologies, grant funds will be awarded to eligible applicants for, but not limited to, the following purposes:

- Build-out of both middle mile and last mile connections;
- Purchase and installation of equipment and/or broadband technologies including but not limited to fiber optic technologies; and
- Expansion of existing or the development of new networks to reach underserved/unserved target areas of Pennsylvania.

2. Technical assistance for planning/feasibility studies

With a priority to be placed on regions that have been identified as unserved or underserved, applicants that seek to understand the feasibility of broadband infrastructure deployment will be awarded technical assistance grants. Technical assistance grants may be used for, but not be limited to:

- Identifying an inventory of existing broadband assets, both private and public;
- Conducting a systematic assessment and prioritization of the need for broadband;
- Securing professional consultants who specialize in the design and implementation of broadband networks;
- Assessing financing options;
- Identifying an anchor tenant with adequate broadband demand to spur infrastructure investment;
- Preparing cost estimates and layouts;
- Developing a strategic plan for broadband deployment, including a comprehensive business proposal; and
- Supporting the development of an RFP that will be used for an implementation project.