

US Ignite: Supporting State and Local Broadband Efforts for Underserved America

Summary: COVID-19 has painfully demonstrated that broadband infrastructure is both essential for economic and social development - and severely lacking across the country. FCC data estimates over 21 million Americans are without internet access, while private sources suggest twice that at 42 million¹. To address this challenge, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is proposing funds to NTIA to support nationwide deployment through State Broadband Offices (SBOs). FCC estimates \$80 billion is needed for national broadband access; with a local match for funding, this proposed \$65 billion is finally large enough to address the scope of the challenge².

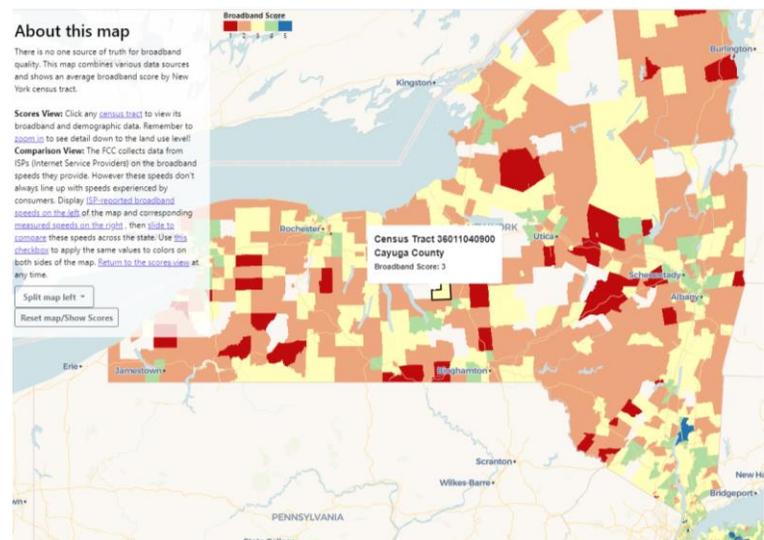
However, states will have just one shot to get this right. Without in-depth technical assistance for SBOs, combined with rapid local government support, this new Federal grant program will remain out of reach for too many underserved communities. US Ignite, working with national and local partners, will work across Federal, state, and local governments to ensure success.

US Ignite is uniquely positioned to support SBOs in their efforts to reach these underserved communities, ensuring that state and local governments have aligned in their vision for the Federal funding. We propose a series of support activities for Federal, state, and local governments, including: easy-to-use mapping tools, webinars, best practice playbooks, and working groups with our engineering, data, and economic experts.

Coordination with White House and Federal Agencies: During the Obama transition, we worked directly on the \$7B request under ARRA (become BTOP/BIP). State broadband office support, to bridge the Federal funds and local deployments - and to keep programs alive when federal funds were gone. These efforts offer lessons to NEC, OSTP, NTIA, FCC, USDA and other agency leadership.

State and Local Broadband Mapping:

SBOs will need ready access to broadband data to identify those communities that are in most need of support in their state. This includes broadband availability, adoption rates³, affordability⁴, and potential economic



¹ <https://broadbandnow.com/research/fcc-underestimates-unserved-by-50-percent>

² <https://www.fcc.gov/document/improving-nations-digital-infrastructure>

³ <https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2019/04/08/its-time-for-a-new-approach-for-mapping-broadband-data-to-better-serve-americans/>

⁴ <https://www.broadbandsearch.net/blog/internet-cost-by-state>



impact⁵. US Ignite combined Federal and industry sources to offer the State of New York and its communities a detailed view of their broadband challenges (see map). We are proposing to do this for all 50 states to support their broadband planning process.

State Broadband Office Working Groups: US Ignite will partner with national and local organizations while collaborating with existing efforts (EveryoneOn, Education Superhighway, NCC, NDIA, ILSR) to support 18 state broadband offices.

- **Statewide planning:** Facilitate the development of a single vision for each SBO to develop broadband projects with design and implementation plans. Define statewide goals and KPIs tailored to underserved communities most in need, while communicating planned outcomes.
- **Technology Assessment:** Assess networking options by target area for fixed, wireless, and satellite technologies best suited across the state to increase connectivity goals. Launch and facilitate peer-led SBO meetings to share strategies.
- **Capacity Building:** Coach state leaders to focus on network deployment outcomes, with a goal of boosting economic and social development. Educate SBOs on the strengths of the business models to ensure sustainable long-term operation.

State and Local Playbooks: US Ignite will identify best practices seen across 18 SBO strategies and dozens local government planning efforts to create a community of practice. With our partners, US Ignite will deliver new monthly webinars, playbooks, and guides that will add capacity to SBOs. Our team will also identify best practices for state and local collaboration on their broadband plan, sorting these communities into cohorts by program focus area, timing, geography, and other local priorities. These US Ignite materials will document the impact of these network deployments on broadband access, education, economic activity, and innovation. States and communities nationally will have access to these materials through a new online portal.

US Ignite background: US Ignite is a 501(c)(3) research organization accelerating the smart cities movement with public-private partnerships that address the most difficult challenges facing underserved communities. For over ten years, US Ignite has worked closely with many Federal agencies, including the NSF- and Schmidt Futures-supported the \$2.7M [Project OVERCOME](#) broadband access program, DoD [Fort Carson Transportation Testbed](#) with its CBRS network and the NSF-Funded \$100M [Platforms for Advanced Wireless Research](#) testbed. The map above features these projects and our technical assistance network of [Smart Gigabit Communities](#). In 2020, US Ignite co-authored [a comprehensive](#)

⁵<https://www.ustelecom.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Rural-Broadband-Economics-A-Review-of-Rural-Subsidies-final-paper-1.pdf>



[study of municipally enabled broadband deployments](#) aimed to help many of the estimated underserved communities evaluate their options broadband networks.

