Texas Digital Opportunity Plan (TDOP) & Public Comment Opportunity Update

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Agenda

1. Introduction & Overview

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2. Texas Digital Opportunity Plan (TDOP) Preview

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4. CTTC Outreach Plans

1. Introduction & Overview

Digital Equity & Inclusion

The **All Together For Digital Inclusion - Stakeholder Summit 2023** successfully convened in the aftermath of significant federal funding ($3.3 Billion) being released to Texas for broadband infrastructure and equitable access, as well as the creation of the Broadband Infrastructure Fund in the Texas Constitution in November of 2023.

The Summit aimed to educate participants about the Digital Divide, spotlight various organizations committed to achieving Digital Inclusion in Central Texas, and **catalyze a call to action for collaboration, partnership, and public comment in response to the recently released Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program 5-year plan draft and the Texas Digital Opportunity Plan (TDOP).**

Digital Equity & Inclusion

The Digital Empowerment Community of Austin (DECA) constitutes a network of nonprofits, educational institutions, businesses, other stakeholders including the Community Technology & Telecommunications Commission (CTTC), Community Technology Division (CTD), Austin Public Library (APL), and the Library Commission working together every day to enhance our community's engagement in a digital society, thereby fostering a more digitally inclusive Austin.

Digital Equity is "a condition in which individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy; Necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services" according to the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA).

Broadband Equity, Access, & Deployment (BEAD) - $3.3B

Texas Digital Opportunity Plan (TDOP)

Expands high-speed internet access by funding planning, deployment, and adoption

Ensure people and communities have the skills and tech to participate in the digital economy

$5M in planning funds to:
- Help close the availability gap
- Develop 5-year action plan
- Conduct research and data collection
- Facilitate publications, outreach and communications support

$3M in planning funds to:
- Help close the digital opportunity gap
- Develop Digital Opportunity Plan
- Reach covered populations
- Foster partnerships through engagement; establish a planning coalition

Source: IIJA Statute
Connect Texas, Digital Opportunity Plan and Public Comment Preview, BDO 11/16/2023 Presentation

What is Digital Opportunity?

❖ Digital Literacy

❖ Affordable Service

❖ Applications and online content

❖ Internet-enabled devices

❖ Quality technical support

National Digital Inclusion Alliance - definition of digital inclusion

Public Comment Timeline

	2023		2024
	NOV	**DEC**	**JAN**
BEAD Initial Proposal	Initial Proposal Public Comment Period 11/2/23 – 12/4/23		
Digital Opportunity Plan		Digital Opportunity Public Comment Period 11/27/23 – 1/5/24	

2. Texas Digital Opportunity Plan (TDOP) Preview

Vision

Improve quality of life and promote economic growth by enabling fast, reliable and affordable broadband connectivity for all residents and businesses of Texas, promoting universal broadband adoption and providing access to digital skills development.

Economic & Workforce Development

- Strengthen and grow a more resilient economy
- Grow skilled workforce
- Retain talent

Essential Services

- Increase access to public resources and tools
- Build resilient and safe communities

Education

- Increase access to high-quality education for all
- Expand opportunities for educational advancement

Achieving this vision will advance state policy priorities and efforts in six areas.

Civic & Social

- Strengthen connections between communities and government
- Improve tools of civic participation

Health

- Improve personal and community health

Business & Telecom

- Grow stronger telecom industry and business community in Texas

Texas Digital Opportunity Plan Goals

BDO has set five goals that align with NTIA's measurable objective categories:

NTIA Measurable Objectives	Texas Goals
Broadband Availability and Affordability	Expand adoption of **reliable, affordable broadband internet service** at home for all Texans.
Device Availability and Affordability and Technical Support	All Texans have access to **affordable computers and other internet-enabled devices** in their home, with corresponding technical support services.
Digital Literacy	All Texans have a **broad foundation of digital literacy skills** and access to a continuum of digital skills development programs.
Online Privacy and Cybersecurity	All Texans **feel safe online** and are familiar with cybersecurity and online privacy measures.
Online Accessibility and Inclusivity of Public Resources	Improve Texans' ability to **access public resources** and services online.

NTIA Covered Populations

In total, 24.8 million Texans – 86% of the state's population – belong to one or more covered populations. NTIA identified eight "covered populations" that have historically experienced lower rates of computer and internet use.

Covered Population Group	Share of Texas Population
Members of a racial or ethnic minority group (racial or ethnic minorities)	58%
Individuals with low literacy levels	28%
Individuals in households below 150% poverty (low-income households)	23%
Individuals residing in rural areas (rural residents)	21%
Persons who are 60 years of age or older (aging individuals)	18%
Individuals with disabilities	11%
Individuals with a language barrier, including those who are English learners or have low literacy levels (individuals with limited English proficiency)	7%
Veterans	5%
Incarcerated Individuals	1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Digital Equity Act Population Viewer and American Community Survey 5-year data (2017-2021).

Identified Pressing Needs in Texas

Among other priorities, this plan seeks to address the needs for:

1. **Foundational digital literacy skills** for all Texans and especially low-income households, individuals with limited English proficiency, and individuals with disabilities.
2. **Language- and culture-specific resources** for individuals with limited English proficiency who experience some of the highest digital disparities among covered populations.
3. **Expanded access to devices other than a smartphones**, especially for covered populations such as low-income households.
4. **Improved adoption of online privacy and cybersecurity measures** and increased awareness of online privacy and cybersecurity among individuals with limited English proficiency.
5. **Improved online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and service among covered populations.**
6. **Reliable, affordable broadband connections** for rural residents and organizations implementing community-based programs.
7. **Increased adoption of broadband service beyond mobile data plans** for low-income households and rural residents.
8. **Enrollment support for low-cost internet services and subsidy programs** like the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP).
9. **Support for organizations to engage communities in existing programs.**

Strategies to Address Needs

BDO will advance the following four primary strategies to address these needs and other barriers identified in the plan and to realize its goals.

Strategy	Strategy Description
Strategy 1: **Partner with and Fund Statewide Organizations**	The BDO will work with a range of state agencies and other statewide partners who are already actively involved in advancing digital opportunity across the state, ensuring that work is supportive of realizing the goals of this plan.
Strategy 2: **Fund Local Partners**	The BDO will allocate a portion of its Capacity Grant funds to creating a digital opportunity grant program to fund local initiatives addressing the gaps in digital opportunity for covered populations and underserved regions.
Strategy 3: **Promote Internet Adoption**	The BDO will promote activities to support Texans in signing up for and using internet as it is made available across the state– benefiting Texans, multiple statewide priorities and the telecom industry through an expanded customer base.
Strategy 4: **Maintain a Living Digital Opportunity Plan**	The BDO envisions the plan as a living document, to be updated through continued research. The BDO aims to build upon the plan's foundations and make it a sustainable resource to support digital opportunity statewide. The BDO will measure progress and continue to collect critical data to enable the state and its local partners to advance and iterate impactful programs.

3. Public Comment Information Session

Public Comment Overview

What is Public Comment?

- An opportunity for Texas residents to review and give their feedback on the Texas Digital Opportunity Plan.

- A requirement for receive federal funding needed to connect Texans to reliable, high-speed internet and digital resources.

How will the BDO use comments?

- The BDO will review every comment.

- Comments will help to refine the plan to expand digital opportunity and future funding strategies.

Source: Connect Texas, Digital Opportunity Plan and Public Comment Preview, BDO 11/16/2023 Presentation

Public Comment Overview, Cont.

Who should comment?
- All Texas residents and organizations
- The BDO is especially interested in hearing from individuals identifying with a covered population group or organizations that serve these communities.

Will my comments be anonymous?
- No. Your name and email address will be shared with the BDO.

- All comments will be included in the plan, with names and email addresses removed.

- NTIA will also make comments publicly available, with all identifying information removed.

Steps to submitting comments:

1. Review the plan.
2. Fill out the online form with your information.
3. Select a section on which to comment. Type or use Voice to Text to enter your comment.
4. Select another section if you wish to comment on multiple sections.
5. Submit.

Tips for Effective Comments

1. Support your comment with substantive data, facts, and opinions. When possible, provide your lived experience in your comment.

2. Clearly identify the section within the plan that you are commenting on and include the section number. Although comments should be clear and concise, there is no minimum or maximum length for an effective comment.

3. If you disagree with an aspect of the plan, suggest an alternative and include an explanation and/or analysis of how the alternative might meet the same objective or be more effective.

4. Include pros and cons and trade-offs in your comment. Consider other points of view and respond to them with your views. Include examples of how the proposed digital opportunity programs and activities would impact your life and work positively or negatively.

Source: Connect Texas, Digital Opportunity Plan and Public Comment Preview, BDO 11/16/2023 Presentation

What is the purpose of public comment?

NTIA requires states to hold public comment periods to allow residents and organizations to give their feedback on their digital opportunity plans.

Help refine and improve upon the plan.

- ○ Suggest changes you'd like to see in the document.

- ○ Share where your organization could be helpful in implementation.

- ○ Provide additional information that the plan may not capture.

- ○ Correct the record if needed.

Source: Connect Texas, Digital Opportunity Plan and Public Comment Preview, BDO 11/16/2023 Presentation

Texas Digital Opportunity Plan

Traducir al español

The BDO has developed the Texas Digital Opportunity Plan to address broadband access, affordability, and adoption for all Texans.

The BDO invites the public to submit comments on the draft plan. The public comment period ends on January 5, 2024.

Download the Executive Summary in English or Spanish.

View the full plan in English.

LIVE DEMONSTRATION
— Link for TDOP & Public Comment Form:
https://infinite-peak-70034.herokuapp.com/

4. CTTC Outreach Plans

Join us to get ready for digital opportunity

- BDO will host a series of digital opportunity readiness webinars to provide stakeholders throughout Texas with tools and information to participate in upcoming digital opportunity activities and apply for state funding.

- The series of webinars will run on Wednesdays and kick off with Digital Opportunity 101.

- Workshops presented in partnership with the Institute for Local Self-Reliance and HR&A Advisors.

- DECA will host workshops presented in collaboration with BDO partners.

- Registration details coming soon!

Planned Community TDOP Engagement

- CTTC will collaborate with other Austin Boards & Commissions to spread the word about TDOP & Public Comment opportunity.
  - **Library Commission Meeting - 12/18 @ 6PM**

- CTTC will collaborate with City Council Districts and community partners to promote TDOP & Public Comment throughout Austin

  - **City Council Districts**:
    - Coordinated outreach into District offices through CTTC Commissioners

  - **Community Partners**:
    Will post information about TDOP & Public Comment at in person service and payment locations
    - Austin Public Library
    - Austin Energy

What comes next

November 27, 2023	January 5, 2024	Late Spring 2024

Draft Texas Digital Opportunity Plan is available

Public Comment Period (11/27/2023 – 1/05/2024)

Community Outreach to drive Public Comment (12/1/2023 - 1/05/2024)

Final Digital Opportunity Plan posted to the BDO website.

Source: CTTC & Connect Texas, Digital Opportunity Plan and Public Comment Preview, BDO 11/16/2023 Presentation

HOW YOU CAN HELP?

- ★ **Mindshift** towards how digital Inclusion impacts EVERYONE
- ★ **Persistent** collaboration, partnership, and advocacy to address challenges
- ★ Prioritizing equitable outcomes over events
- ★ **Drive public comment response…**

Texas Digital Opportunity Plan: Elevate Voices of the Affected - Stand-In OR Bring Them To The Table

- ★ Get Plugged In - Join DECA Community Calls
- ★ Join BDO Partner Webinars on TDOP & Public Comment - RESOURCES HERE
- ★ Become a GTOPs Grant Review Volunteer
- ★ Apply for GTOPs funding here!

For more information:
http://digitalatx.com

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