SA DIGITAL CONNECTS

San Antonio and Bexar County Private-Public-Community Collaboration

IMPACT REPORT

2021-2026



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Letter From The Executive Director

Dear Partners,

San Antonio and Bexar County have a long history of recognizing digital opportunity as essential to regional prosperity. Even before SA Digital Connects was created, our community demonstrated national leadership by developing collaborative, innovative approaches to digital inclusion that served as models across the country.

SA Digital Connects was founded to build on that momentum through a coordinated, cross-sector effort. When we began, one in five households across San Antonio and Bexar County lacked adequate digital access. These barriers extended well beyond physical infrastructure: internet service cost, device shortages, limited digital literacy, and trust concerns disproportionately affected families with lower incomes, lower educational attainment, and limited English proficiency.

The San Antonio/Bexar County Digital Investment Plan served as our shared roadmap. Over the past six years, we brought together hundreds of organizations across government, philanthropy, business, education, healthcare, and workforce development. Together, we strengthened local data, advanced policy, and aligned resources across access, affordability, devices, and skills. We approached digital opportunity not merely as a technology issue, but as a commitment to ensuring every resident has the tools, skills, and confidence to thrive in our economy.

SA Digital Connects was never intended to be the permanent owner of this work. As our organizational chapter comes to a close, San Antonio and Bexar County is far better equipped to lead the next one. The digital landscape will continue to evolve, bringing new technologies and new demands. Meeting them will require ongoing investment, collaboration, advocacy, and a dedicated focus on the residents who stand to benefit most.

Thank you to every partner, funder, public agency, educator, advocate, and community member who contributed to this mission. Leading SA Digital Connects has been a profound privilege. Our goal was to generate economic mobility by ensuring every household has reliable, safe, and affordable connectivity. The greatest measure of our success is that we leave our community fully prepared to carry that work forward.

With gratitude,



Rhia Pape, Executive Director, SA Digital Connects

Introduction & Purpose

Introduction and Purpose

The SA Digital Connects (SADC) Impact Report shares the story of a local partnership that set out to address one of the defining challenges of our time: ensuring every resident has the opportunity to fully participate in an increasingly digital world.

Over the past six years, SADC has served as a catalyst for collaboration across San Antonio and Bexar County (SA/BX). It brought together community non-profits, local government, educational institutions, healthcare systems, philanthropic partners, internet service providers, and employers to create and implement the San Antonio/ Bexar County Digital Investment Plan (The Plan).

This report captures the collective impact of that work: the coalitions formed, the infrastructure built, the policy victories achieved, and the community lessons learned. It serves as an actionable guide for future regional leaders to sustain and expand digital opportunity across our region.

Why the Digital Divide Matters

Digital connectivity has become fundamental to how people participate in modern life. Education, employment, healthcare, financial services, government services, communication, and commerce increasingly rely on the internet and digital tools. As more essential activities move online, the ability to connect has become increasingly tied to economic opportunity and mobility.

The digital divide has always been about far more than technology. It is about who can fully participate in social and economic life. These challenges are not unique to SA/BX. Communities across the United States continue to navigate differences in connectivity, affordability, device access, and digital skills, often reflecting broader patterns of economic and social inequities. The digital divide can reinforce existing disparities when the people with the fewest resources are also the least able to benefit from an increasingly digital world.

Bridging the digital divide strengthens a community's ability to participate, adapt, and create opportunity. It requires, expanding broadband infrastructure and sustained attention to affordability, devices, digital skills, accessibility, and the ability of residents to confidently use technology in ways that improve their lives.



About SA Digital Connects

SADC was established as a partnership charged with advancing the recommendations of The Plan. SADC functioned as a backbone organization, aligning partners, coordinating investments, sharing data, convening stakeholders, supporting innovation, and helping organizations work collectively toward common goals.

Stakeholder organizations operated across healthcare, veterans affairs, business, civic engagement, justice system involvement, disability services, senior services, philanthropy, and corporate administration. Within these sectors, 177 stakeholders offered input through focus groups, one-on-one discussions, inventory surveys, and advisory groups.

As implementation of the The Plan reaches completion, SADC is entering its planned sunset. This transition reflects the successful fulfillment of the organization's original mission while recognizing that the work of advancing digital opportunity will continue.



SADC At A Glance

2021

Digital Inclusion Survey & Assessment

Convene and conceptualize

2022

Priority: Affordability

2023

Priority: Access

SA DIGITAL CONNECTS

San Antonio and Bexar County Private-Public-Community Collaboration

200+

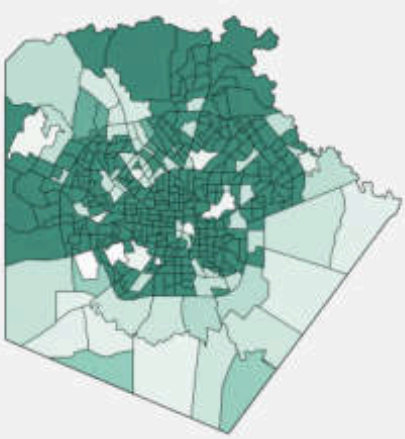
Local Partners

8,000+

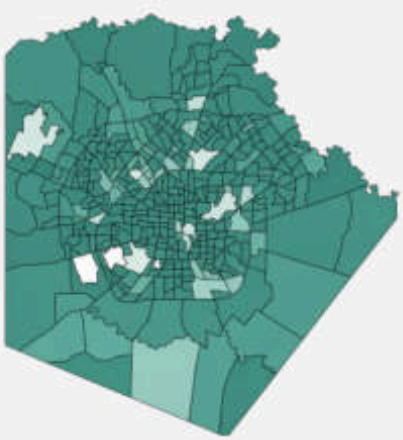
Skills Training

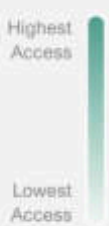
Broadband Access

June 2022



December 2025





Access/Infrastructure

At the end of 2025, 100/20Mbps broadband access in SA/BX rested at 99%. Current broadband access in SA/BX ranks higher than state and national averages, which currently sit at 96% and 95%, respectively.

2024

Priority: Devices

2025

Priority: Skills

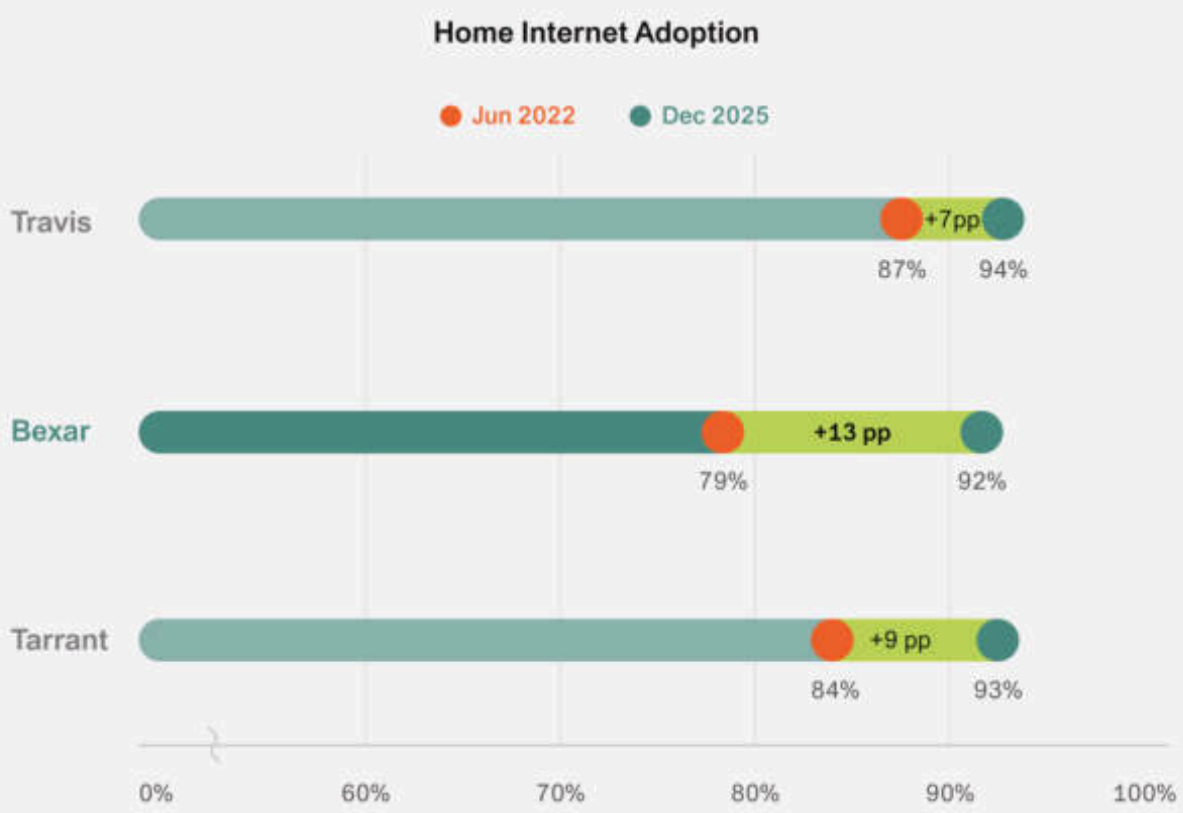
2026

Sustainability & Integration

163,000
Affordable Connectivity Program

35,000+
Households

8,500+
Devices



Understanding The Digital Divide

The term digital divide refers to disparities in access to computing and information resources that can limit individuals' ability to participate fully in today's digital society. The digital divide encompasses three interconnected dimensions: Access/Infrastructure, Affordability, and Adoption (Devices and Skills.) Together, these factors influence how individuals access, use, and benefit from digital technologies.

Access/Infrastructure

Access refers to the availability of reliable, high-speed connectivity. The Plan established a baseline standard of at least 100/20 Mbps with a committed information rate (CIR) to ensure service quality for workforce, education, and healthcare needs.

Affordability

The Plan defines affordability as quality internet service costing no more than 1% of annual household income, recognizing subscription cost as a primary barrier even where physical infrastructure exists.

Adoption (Devices & Skills)

Meaningful adoption requires both adequate hardware and digital literacy. Households need reliable computers or tablets capable of handling essential applications, paired with the foundational skills, cybersecurity awareness, and confidence required to navigate online platforms safely.



Pre-SADC Conditions & Data (Baseline Metrics)

Prior to SADC, more than 20% of households across SA/BX were digitally underserved, largely due to affordability and adoption barriers. Baseline data revealed that more than 130,000 households lacked broadband access and over 65,000 households did not have access to connected devices.[1] Closing these gaps required an intentional, coordinated regional strategy to ensure every resident could participate fully in an increasingly digital society.



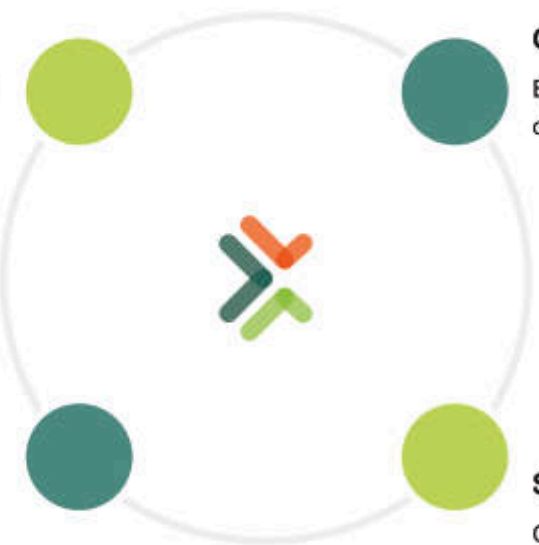
Family Service Association, Teen Tech Titans Robotics Competition

The SA Digital Connects Model

Governance & Private-Public Structure

SADC follows the nonprofit P3 governance model, which is a private-public partnership that includes input from community stakeholders and organizations. The P3 framework enabled private-sector innovation and philanthropic capital to integrate directly with municipal mandates and public investments.

A volunteer Board of Directors drawn from civic, corporate, and public leadership provided fiduciary governance and strategic accountability. Operational coordination was guided by an Executive Director who managed a coalition that grew to more than 600 local, state, and national partners. This partner network spans school districts, non-profits, internet service providers (ISPs), philanthropies, healthcare networks, and workforce development institutions.



The San Antonio/Bexar County Digital Investment Plan (The Plan)

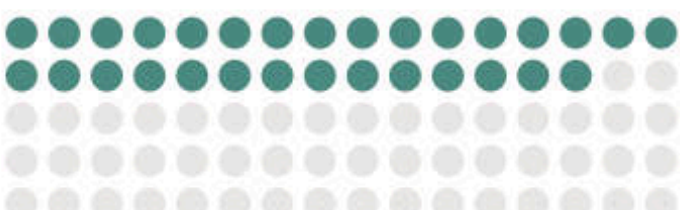
The Plan identified three areas of need: access/infrastructure, affordability, adoption (devices and skills), and proposed investment across each. Connectivity investments targeted four priority populations: households with limited broadband infrastructure, residents of affordable housing, students, and the approximately 90,000 households for whom cost was the primary access barrier. The Plan targeted an ISP cost at 1% of household income, the threshold where broadband shifts from a manageable expense to a financial barrier. The investment case rested on a projected $3-$4 societal ROI per $1 invested in digital access, plus a 3% average increase in new business formation from broadband expansion.[2]

At the time the plan was written, over 80 organizations across the region were already active in digital inclusion — 32 offering free internet access, 30 providing new or refurbished devices, and 30 offering basic digital skills training.

32
offering free internet access



30
providing new or refurbished devices



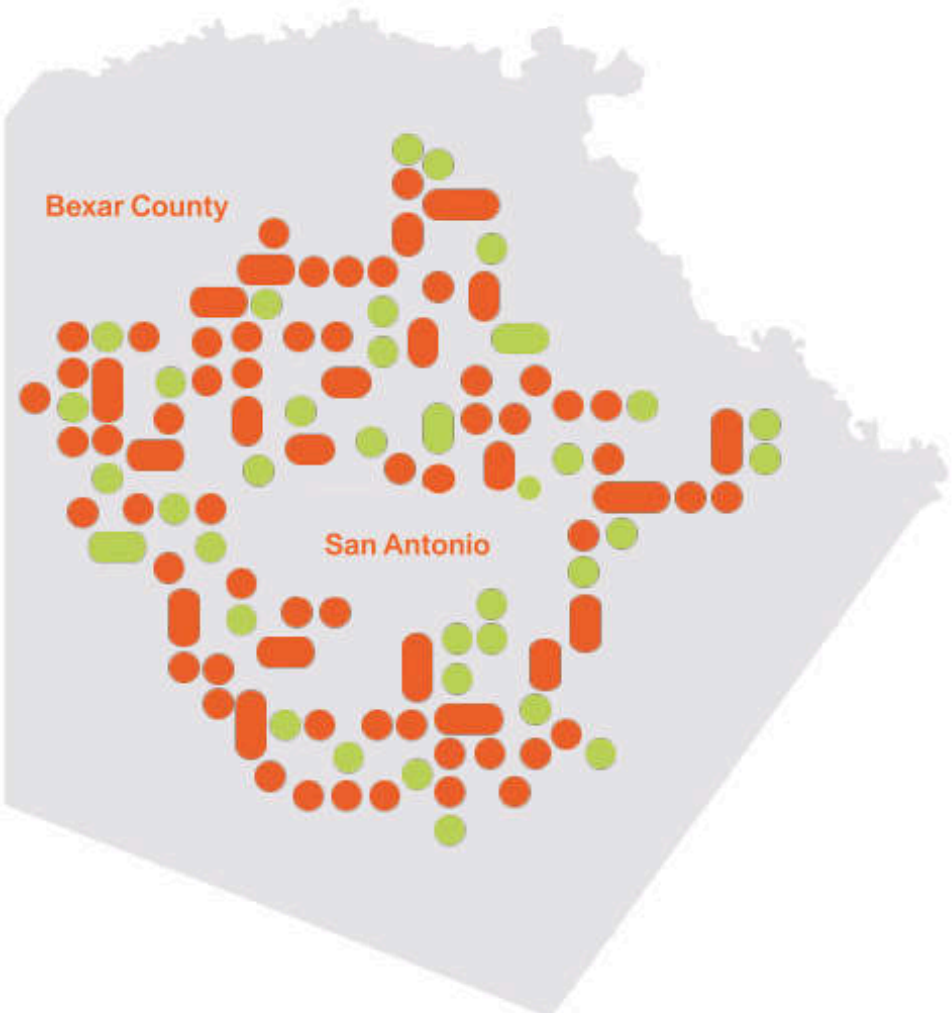
30
offering basic digital skills training



A Local, Collaborative Approach

Closing gaps in digital opportunity required ownership at a local level. SA/BX share the same infrastructure, ISPs, population base, and federal reporting boundaries, meaning a city-only approach would leave county residents – particularly those in rural and suburban communities –without meaningful reach.

A unified cross-sector structure positioned SA/BX to compete for outside funding in ways no individual organization could. Rather than waiting for federal or state action to define the region's priorities and timeline, SADC and its partners built and began implementing a localized plan, charting the region's own course.





Strategy & Implementation

Access/Infrastructure

Through mapping and broadband assessments, the initiative pursued a coordinated strategy that combined public investment, competitive procurement, and partnerships with internet service providers and non-profit organizations to expand broadband access in underserved areas and housing developments.

SADC facilitated the convening of major internet service providers, including AT&T, CWSA, GFiber, T-Mobile, Microsoft, Lit Communities (now OmniFiber), and Charter Spectrum, in 2021 to coordinate broadband expansion efforts. The City of San Antonio and Bexar County issued a joint Request for Proposals (RFP) in 2022 to identify providers capable of delivering broadband infrastructure to underserved communities.

Together, these investments represent one of the region's largest coordinated broadband expansion efforts.

Affordability

A significant component of this strategy was supporting implementation of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), including leveraging the region's cross-sector network to connect eligible households with available federal assistance for home internet service. SADC also elevated affordability through its broader investment planning and policy work, helping partners understand affordability as an ongoing barrier that must be addressed alongside broadband access and infrastructure.



Adoption (Devices & Skills)

SADC worked to strengthen device pathways by connecting community organizations, public and private-sector partners, and funders around opportunities to provide devices to residents who lacked adequate technology.

Working with national partners helped SADC establish a framework for device donations and refurbishment, coordinating with local community organizations, national non-profits. SADC focused largely on digitized areas of workforce development, including navigating job applications, resumes, job trainings, college applications, office/email suites, and accessing job recruiters. Digital skills training sessions were a community effort, with key partners increasing the reach and efficiency of the provided programs.

During Digital Inclusion Week in 2025, SADC brought together the SA Hope Center and Connected Nation, a national broadband and digital inclusion organization. The organizations invited 53 local participants to complete 12 hours of digital skills training over the course of two days. Upon completion of the program, participants were given a personal laptop supplied by Compudopt.

Other partners of The Plan provided a community-based digital navigator program, including Restore Education, DigitalLIFT, and BiblioTech. BiblioTech, the United States' first all-digital public library, provides one-on-one digital literacy education and tools at both public library branches and community locations.



Convenings

SADC also led Community Connects, a recurring convening designed to keep partners aligned around a shared understanding of the local digital opportunity landscape. Community Connects served as a venue for surfacing existing efforts, sharing data, and reducing duplication among the roughly 250 non-profits and community organizations engaged in digital inclusion work.

Each convening brought together cross-sector community partners, where they openly shared resources, aligned program goals, discussed challenges, and developed multifaceted solutions. SADC paired Community Connects with a similar annual convening of funders, ensuring that the same updates, coordination, and transparency extended to the funder community driving investment in the local digital opportunity work.

Non-profit & Community Organizations

Local community partners expanded the regional plan by delivering targeted access, devices, and training directly to their existing networks:

Meals on Wheels San Antonio

Distributed tablets, telehealth instruction, and online prescription management to homebound seniors and clients with disabilities across Bexar, Frio, and Atascosa counties (Approximately 3,400 served each weekday).

NPower

Delivered tuition-free technology certification tracks for veterans, military spouses, and young adults. Program alumni increased their average annual earnings from $13,000 to over $44,000, securing roles with regional employers including USAA, Microsoft, and Christus Health.[3]

Compudopt

Provided 5,000 free refurbished computers to eligible families, connected 2,500 households to affordable internet, trained 18,000 residents in digital literacy, and equipped 300 students with workforce technology training.



Policy & Systems Alignment

Local Government Engagement

The Infrastructure, Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA) required that cities and counties have a plan in place to be eligible to draw down matching funds. The City and County worked in collaboration with SADC to develop the Digital Connectivity in Underserved Community Areas RFP, securing CARES Act funding to build out broadband infrastructure in designated areas.

State Government Engagement

SADC influenced state-level legislation and programs aligned with its mission to increase digital opportunity. In 2021, Texas House Bill 5 (C.S.H.B. 5) passed unanimously, establishing the Broadband Development Office. The office spearheaded a grant and low-interest loan program to expand broadband access in vulnerable areas. In 2023, Texas voters approved Proposition 8 (H.B. 9), which allocated $1.5 billion in state funds to expand internet access and upgrade emergency communications across the state.

Under the federal Digital Equity Act (DEA), Texas was allocated $55.6 million for its Digital Opportunity Plan. In May 2025, an administrative order cancelled the grant, freezing planned local rollouts. SADC responded by sustaining targeted advocacy efforts to restore digital opportunity funding.

Federal Government Engagement

SADC tracked federal legislation and regulatory changes directly impacting its mission, advocating for bills such as S.4317 and H.R.8709 to re-establish the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which previously supplied over 163,000 SA/BX residents with affordable internet access.

One central highlight of SADC's federal government engagement was its participation in D.C. lobbying on broadband policy. In 2024, 2025, and 2026, SADC chaired the Broadband Issue Team as part of the SA to DC Annual Capitol visit. Coordinated by the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, meeting with members of Congress, the Senate, and key agencies to build support for broadband initiatives.

An example of investment in digital infrastructure at SA/BX's anchor institutions illustrates how broadband expansion functions in an educational context. In 2023, Our Lady of the Lake University received a $2.2M Connecting Minority Communities grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, part of a broader $175 million round distributed to 61 minority-serving colleges and universities nationwide.[4] The funding upgraded OLLU's distance learning capacity, expanded off-campus software access, and provided mobile hotspots and technology support to students who might otherwise lack reliable connectivity.



Impact & Outcomes

Investment

Advancing digital opportunity across SA/BX required investment from across the community. Over the course of SADC, public agencies, philanthropic organizations, private-sector partners, internet service providers, and community organizations contributed funding, resources, infrastructure, programs, technology, and expertise to address barriers to digital participation.

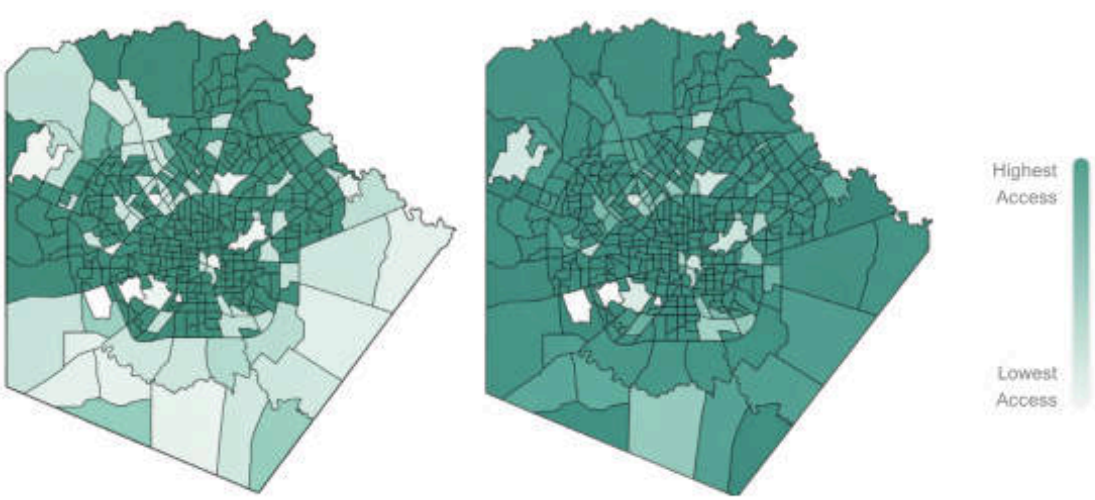
SADC's role was not to serve as the sole source or administrator of these investments, but to help identify needs, align resources, coordinate efforts, and connect investments to a shared regional strategy. Through The Plan and ongoing partner engagement, SADC helped create greater visibility into where investment was needed and opportunities for partners to work collectively.

The breadth of participation demonstrates a significant and sustained community commitment to expanding digital opportunity.

Access/Infrastructure

At the end of 2025, 100/20Mbps broadband access in Bexar County rested at 99%.[5] Current broadband access in Bexar County ranks higher than state and national averages, which currently sit at 96% and 95%, respectively.[6]

Broadband Access



June 2022 **December 2025**

Before SADC's formation, an estimated 80% of households in SA/BX had access to broadband internet, leaving 20% disconnected.[7] Of those 20% disconnected households, a total of 130,000 households in Bexar County, cited physical, institutional, and/or social barriers to access.[8]

In April 2023, the City of San Antonio contracted with AT&T Mobility to deliver fiber connectivity to 20,200 locations: 14,843 single-family homes, 1,834 multi-family units across 148 public and affordable housing properties, and 3,523 businesses.[9] By the end of 2025, over 28,000 underserved households were connected (5,000 more households than originally projected). A contract between Spectrum Internet and Bexar County provided broadband internet access to 12,500 primarily rural households (2,500 more households than originally projected). Combined, both projects connected more than 35,000 individual households and businesses in San Antonio to high-speed internet. These efforts resulted in leveraging more than $66 million in combined local and matching funds to expand broadband access.



Affordability

The University of Texas at San Antonio surveyed Bexar County residents directly in 2021 and 2023 through its Digital Inclusion Survey and Assessment, drawing over 7,800 responses across all 10 council districts.

The two barriers keeping residents offline were cost and device access. In 2020, 65% of residents without home internet said cost kept them from subscribing; by 2023, only 32% of unconnected residents pointed to cost as the main inhibitor. The share who said they lacked a device fell from 53% to 25% over the same period.

In 2022-2024, SADC built and distributed an Affordable Connectivity Toolkit to increase subscribers to affordable internet programs, with Bexar County having 163,000 subscribers at the end of 2024 – the most of any county in Texas.

Adoption (Devices & Skills)

In 2024 and 2025, SADC expanded device access and digital literacy through various partnerships. These initiatives distributed more than 8,500 laptops and delivered more than 8,000 hours of digital skills training across SA/BX.

This hardware and training expanded opportunity across four key areas:

Education: Equipping high school juniors and seniors to complete college and trade school applications, access financial aid, and build competencies for higher education.

Workforce Mobility: Enabling job seekers and emerging professionals, particularly in rural communities, to search for employment, tailor résumés, and connect with recruiters.

Healthcare Access: Equipping older adults and underserved residents to navigate the post-COVID-19 shift toward virtual care, schedule clinical appointments, and participate in telehealth visits.

Housing, Public Services, and Civic Life: Enabling residents to apply for housing assistance, navigate municipal and social services, engage in civic opportunities, and reduce social isolation by staying connected to family, friends, and neighborhood support networks.

Social Determinants of Health

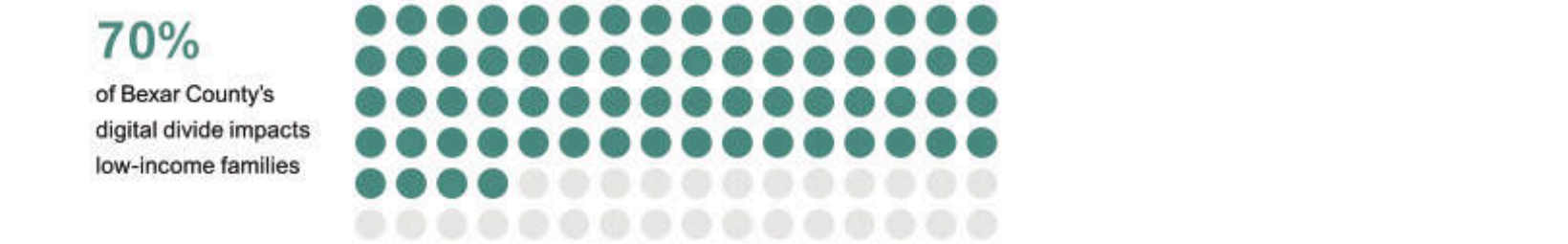
The CDC defines social determinants of health (SDOH) as environmental conditions that affect well-being and health outcomes. Digital access functions as a modern precondition across all these domains, determining whether health and economic interventions can reach those who need them most.

Digital exclusion compounds existing inequities. Low-income households and households with children represented almost 70% of Bexar County's digital divide. Connectivity gaps persist sharply along socioeconomic lines: households earning under $25,000 annually connect at far lower rates than those earning over $100,000, while adults with only a high school education and residents with limited English proficiency face similar disparities.[10]

Digital navigators are one of the most direct SDOH interventions in this work. By serving as trusted intermediaries, navigators help vulnerable residents access patient portals, schedule clinical appointments, and manage chronic conditions online, turning physical connectivity into meaningful health access.

70%

of Bexar County's digital divide impacts low-income families





Equity Considerations

San Antonio is one of the fastest-growing cities in the United States when measured through population and migration, however the effects of this continued growth do not impact every community equitably.[11] San Antonio currently ranks as the third-poorest city among the United States' top 25 metropolitan areas[12], with neighborhoods across the South, West, and East sides remaining heavily affected by historic redlining practices. Over generations, these practices have led to inadequate wealth accumulation and educational disparities in primarily black and brown neighborhoods.[13]

An area's wealth can predict investment and broadband availability. Approximately 48% of households earning less than $20,000 annually reported not having an internet connection at home, while 27% of households earning between $20,000 and $39,000 annually also lacked home internet access.[14] The implementation of The Plan helped address these disparities by prioritizing investments in communities with the greatest need.

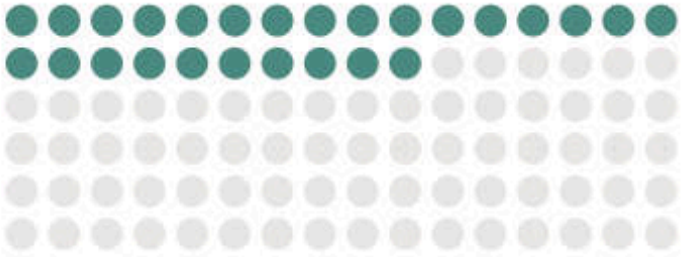
48%

Lack home internet access
Under $20K annually



27%

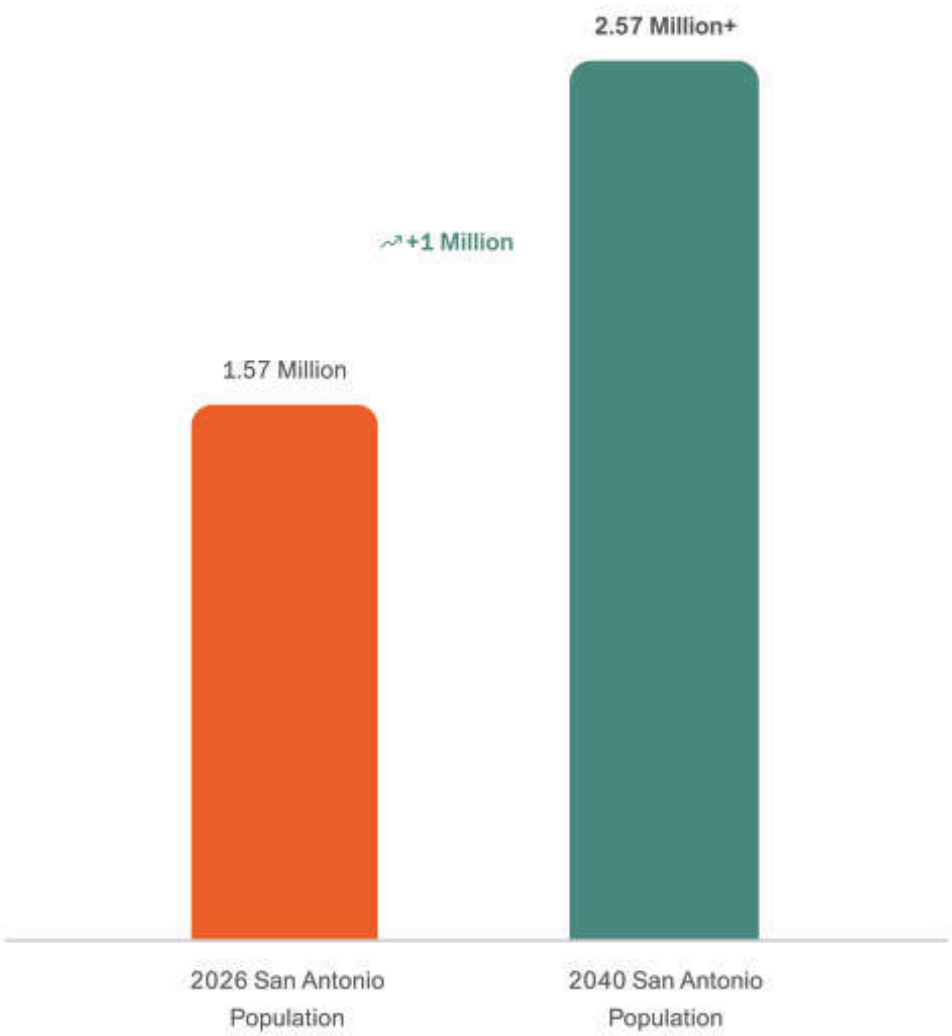
Lack home internet access
$20K–$39K annually





Return On Investment

Bridging the digital divide presents a compelling return on investment (ROI) by fostering inclusive economic growth. When under-connected communities gain access to reliable broadband internet and digital tools, it catalyzes a surge in educational and employment opportunities, enabling individuals to acquire valuable skills and businesses to tap into a wider talent pool. The planned digitization of essential services in San Antonio coincides with extreme growth projections, as San Antonio's population is expected to gain 1 million residents by 2040.[15]





Workforce Participation & Productivity

Digital inclusion investments produced direct economic returns by removing employment barriers across SA/BX. Survey data and program outcomes demonstrate the economic value of these investments.

As barriers diminished, digital participation increasingly supported labor market engagement: 29% of surveyed residents reported working remotely, and 28% used the internet to search for employment opportunities. Notably, online job searching was not limited to unemployed residents, indicating that improved digital access and upskilling also enabled employed individuals to pursue higher-paying positions and greater career mobility. At the same time, participation in digital skills training expanded from approximately 3,500 residents in 2024 to nearly 4,800 in 2025.[16]

When The Plan launched in 2021, regional partners already had strong foundations: a quarter offered job placement, a third ran workforce training, and half served unemployed residents. SADC scaled this existing capacity rather than duplicating it.

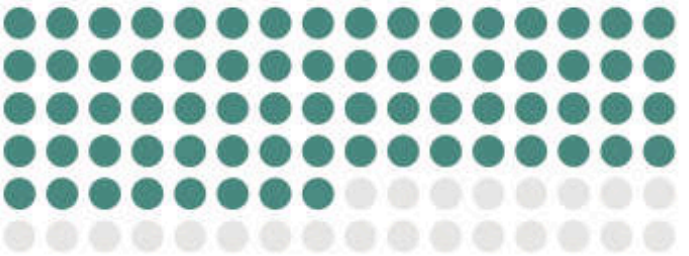


Regional Competitiveness & Employer Benefits

Nationally, labor force participation among prime-age workers runs 21 percentage points higher for those with a broadband-enabled computer at home[17], and more than three-quarters of middle-skill jobs require baseline digital skills.[18] Those national patterns played out locally, where limited connectivity constrained both Bexar County's workforce and its local customer base. Nearly 75% of the more than 100 SA/BX businesses surveyed for The Plan reported depending on customers having broadband access and connected devices[19] — a dependence that has only grown as customer operations have moved online. Broadband has also become essential to workforce retention, letting residents pursue online credentials and remote-eligible jobs without leaving the region.

75%+

Of middle-skill jobs require baseline digital skills





Cost Avoidance & Efficiency Gains

Digital investment is not only important for the outcomes it generates, but also to what it can prevent. Every day a person remains disconnected, the U.S. loses an estimated $2.16 in potential economic activity per person — roughly $130 million per day nationally.[20] Every $1 invested in digital access generates approximately $2.40 in societal return, driven by increased earnings and tax revenue.[21] Furthermore, The World Bank estimates that a 10 percentage point increase in broadband penetration is associated with a 1.2% increase in per capita GDP in developed countries[22], and a 10 percentage point increase in U.S. broadband penetration would have generated more than 800,000 additional jobs within three years.[23]

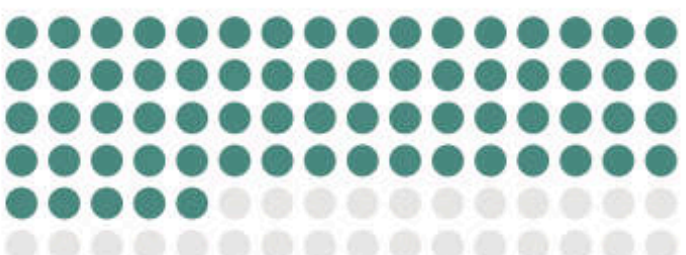
The savings are equally pronounced in healthcare. Telehealth remote monitoring has reduced hospital admissions by 20% for patients with diabetes and by as much as 56% for other conditions.[24] Further research has also suggested telehealth reduces both hospitalizations and the length of hospital stays, cutting avoidable emergency care costs for hospitals, insurers, and patients alike.[25]

Digital access has also become a precondition for interacting with public systems. Nationally, 72% of unemployment insurance claims are now filed online[26], yet nearly one in three Americans lack the foundational digital skills to navigate such systems.[27] Locally, Bexar County Courts have continued remote and hybrid hearings beyond the pandemic, equipping courtrooms with devices for participants without their own technology.

Connectivity can also substitute for travel: 34% of local organizations surveyed for The Plan reported that transportation barriers prevent residents from accessing essential in-person services — barriers that reliable home connectivity helps residents bypass.

72%

of unemployment insurance claims are now filed online



Gaps & Future Needs

Skills & Workforce Alignment Needs

Digital literacy and confidence remain the hardest dimensions of the divide to measure. While regional initiatives reached thousands of residents, critical workforce and structural gaps persist. Today's training ecosystem focuses primarily on entry-level job seekers, with few resources for incumbent workers vulnerable to automation. A July 2026 CompTIA survey found that while 80% of professionals use AI tools monthly, only 29% describe themselves as highly familiar with the technology.[28] Additionally, a 2026 Brookings analysis estimates that roughly 6.1 million U.S. workers face high exposure to AI-driven task automation and low adaptive capacity to manage a job transition.[29]

The Digital Inclusion Survey and Assessment (DISA) 2023 survey reveals specific vulnerabilities among older adults. While 90% of Bexar County residents 60 and older reported finding the internet easy to use, more than a quarter operated devices more than five years old. Skills deficits widen sharply past age 70, leaving older residents vulnerable to cybersecurity risks and digital isolation. Sustaining digital inclusion requires continuous hardware refresh pipelines and specialized cyber safety instruction.

In Texas, a key structural gap is the absence of standardized digital competency and credentialing frameworks aligned across K-12, higher education, and workforce development systems.

Technology Change & Future Readiness

In 2015, broadband was defined as 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speed; however, by March 2024, the FCC increased this benchmark to 100 Mbps down and 20 Mbps up. The Commission has also set a future goal of achieving 1 Gbps download speeds. SA/BX has been proactive in adapting to these changes, having integrated the 100/20 standard into The Plan in 2021, well ahead of the FCC's official update.

As of 2025, around 55% of American adults aged 18 to 64 had used a generative AI tool, marking the most rapid technology adoption within the timeframe covered by this report — outpacing the early internet.[30] But adoption has also outpaced familiarity: while 80% of professionals report using AI tools multiple times a month, only 29% describe themselves as highly familiar with the technology.[31] SA/BX has spent the past five years building the resources and programs that close exactly that kind of gap.



Conclusion & Recommendations

Our region must maintain regional momentum which requires sustained convening, continued policy and advocacy, partner funding, and device pipelines. Over the past several years, SADC and its partners have built more than individual programs or initiatives– we have built relationships, knowledge, tools, strategies, and a shared understanding of what it takes to advance digital opportunity across our community. The groundwork already exists, but it must be actively maintained.

SADC is sunsetting, but the work it started is not. The following priorities represent the key elements of this work that should be sustained:

1 **Community Leadership and a Shared Roadmap**

A trusted, neutral organization to convene partners. A shared leadership model should continue bringing together non-profits, healthcare systems, educational institutions, local governments, philanthropic organizations, and private sector partners to foster collaboration.

Community partners should regularly revisit priorities, evaluate progress, identify emerging needs, and adjust strategies. Together, sustained community leadership and an evolving shared roadmap can help ensure that digital opportunity remains a coordinated, community-wide priority.

2 **Regional Data Collection and Shared Measurement**

Maintain a shared approach to collecting and analyzing data on broadband access/infrastructure, affordability, device ownership, digital skills, and adoption. Community-wide metrics should continue to inform funding decisions, identify gaps and underserved populations, and measure progress.

Shared measurement will also help the community better understand whether digital skills training is aligned with evolving workforce needs and translating connectivity into economic mobility.



3 **Prioritize Digital Participation**

As broadband infrastructure expands, the community's focus must shift toward meaningful participation, addressing barriers across affordable service, appropriate devices, digital literacy, cybersecurity, and trusted community support.

Digital navigators and other trusted intermediaries will remain particularly important in helping residents overcome barriers that cannot be addressed through infrastructure alone.





4 **Maintain Cross-Sector Partnerships**

Digital opportunity should continue to integrate into broader community priorities and systems, including workforce development, education, healthcare, housing, aging services, and small business support.

Embedding digital opportunity within these systems can help ensure that digital needs are addressed where they intersect with residents' everyday lives. Cities and counties should continue playing an active role by convening stakeholders, improving local permitting and infrastructure coordination, supporting broadband expansion, leveraging public assets, and aligning community priorities with internet service providers and other partners.

5 **Expand Sustainable Funding Strategies**

With federal digital opportunity funding less certain, our community must pursue a diversified funding strategy that draws across philanthropy, healthcare systems, local government, corporate investment, and regional partnerships. Long-term sustainability requires moving beyond short-term grant cycles, embedding digital opportunity directly into ongoing operational budgets for workforce development, education, healthcare, and economic mobility. No single sector can or should fund these needs alone.

7 **Preserve the Model**

The future of digital opportunity in SA/BX relies on a distributed leadership model, sharing responsibility across community non-profits, public agencies, philanthropy, healthcare, education, and the private sector.

Ultimately, success will not be measured by the continuation of one organization. It will be measured by the community's continued ability to collaborate, make informed decisions, and sustain progress toward ensuring every resident has the opportunity to participate fully and thrive in our digital world.

6 **Continue Advocacy**

Community leaders must remain actively engaged in Austin and Washington to ensure local priorities and on-the-ground experience continue shaping future broadband policy. Maintaining strong relationships with state and federal agencies positions SA/BX to respond quickly as new funding programs and legislative frameworks emerge. Speaking with a unified, coordinated regional voice strengthens our ability to advocate for investments that reflect community needs.



Community Case & Partner Highlights

BiblioTech: Mobile Digital Navigators

At BiblioTech, the nation's first all-digital public library, connectivity is paired with intensive human support. The county library employs a dedicated team of six mobile digital navigators who provide one-on-one technology education across community hubs, including Converse Public Library, San Antonio College, and University Health sites. Navigators undergo three months of intensive instructional training before deploying into the field. Through a strategic partnership with Meals on Wheels, navigators conduct in-home technology visits for homebound seniors, teaching telemedicine navigation, cyber safety, and digital communication tools.

> "Technology in its highest form is a solution for connectivity, to reduce isolation. And that's why I think that this program is so important."
>
> — Laura Cole, BiblioTech Director, Secretary SADC Board of Directors

Family Service: Multi-Generational Impact

For generations, Family Service has supported vulnerable neighborhoods across San Antonio's West and South sides. Through an on-site computer lab and youth technology centers, Family Service provides hardware access, tutoring, and technical certifications.

For youth participants like Dom, early digital access proved transformative: joining Family Service programs at age 13, he mastered robotics, Photoshop, and audio engineering, earning a university engineering scholarship and returning to mentor younger students.

> "I'm not sure that our community had any clue how bad the access was before the pandemic. There was no real data out there about it. What SA Digital Connects did first and foremost was bring the data — those heat maps, who's got it, who doesn't, who can access it."
>
> — Mylinda Swierc, Senior Vice President of Quality and Systems, Family Service



Toyota Motor North America (TMNA)

TMNA has served as an economic anchor on San Antonio's South Side for over two decades. Recognizing that modern manufacturing demands a technologically proficient workforce, Toyota invested in SADC and championed digital opportunity through its national Driving Possibilities initiative, demonstrating how corporate engagement fosters regional mobility.

TMNA recognized that digital inclusion is no longer a standalone issue. Access to technology has become essential for education, employment, healthcare, and economic mobility. Toyota's investment is rooted in the understanding that our workforce is becoming increasingly digital.

> "We've been proud to support San Antonio Digital Connects throughout its existence. Several Toyota team members have served on the organization's board, and we're incredibly proud of everything that has been accomplished. We're also excited to see that work continue as the organization transitions into its next chapter."
>
> — Melinda Higgins Louden, Manager of Corporate Communications Toyota North America, Co-Vice Chair SADC Board of Directors



Community Case: Final Community Connects Meeting

As the SADC initiative entered its final chapter, more than 50 community leaders from non-profits, educational institutions, government agencies, and local organizations gathered for the final Community Connects meeting to reflect on the progress made and identify the work that still lies ahead.

Facilitated by Scholars from the Better Futures Institute (BFI), a San Antonio-based social innovation and civic research organization, the roundtable discussions created a space for participants to share their experiences serving residents, discuss persistent barriers to digital inclusion, and envision the future of the initiative. Although each roundtable discussion represented different organizations and communities, several common themes emerged throughout the conversations.

Access ≠ Accessibility

While internet connectivity has expanded, many residents continue to face barriers that prevent meaningful digital participation. Community leaders stressed that digital access must be paired with affordability, digital literacy training, and accessible resources. Current systems often present challenges for English language learners, individuals with disabilities, low-income households, and older adults, who are particularly vulnerable to digital isolation.

The Importance of Continued Collaboration

> "We have to keep coming to the table. If not, people focus on other things and end up doing isolated work."
>
> — SADC Partner

Leaders recognized SADC as a unifying initiative that brought together organizations across sectors under a shared vision. Participants emphasized the need to continue fostering partnerships among nonprofits, government agencies, educational institutions, and private-sector organizations. Many also encouraged organizations to prioritize collaboration over competition by coordinating services, leveraging each other's strengths, and reducing duplication efforts.

Digital Inclusion = Foundation for Essential Services

> "If people are learning tech skills and becoming digitally literate, then there is a better pool of applicants or employees."
>
> — SADC Partner

Investing in digital skills strengthens both individuals and the broader community, creating pathways to employment, improving access to essential services, and reducing social isolation. Without continued investment in digital opportunity, many of SA/BX's most vulnerable populations risk being excluded from opportunities that increasingly depend on digital participation.

The conversations from the final Community Connects meeting, as reflected in our partner quotes, reaffirmed that digital inclusion extends far beyond internet access. It requires sustained collaboration, community-informed decision-making, and continued investment in the people and organizations working every day to bridge the digital divide.

Appendix

Funding Availability and Analysis

While certain federal funding was made available for digital inclusion, it has been slow to translate into the deployment of infrastructure on the ground:

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD):

The 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) allocated $42.5 billion to BEAD. Texas received $3.3 billion to fund network expansion through eligible local governments, school districts, and public-private partnerships. However, as of mid-2026, home broadband installations funded by BEAD remain incomplete across the state.

Texas Regional Broadband Program:

Established by the Texas Association of Regional Councils (TARC) and the Texas Broadband Development Office (BDO), this $8.75 million investment was divided among regional councils for three years. Active through 2029, these funds allow local governments to lead broadband planning and digital opportunity initiatives.

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP):

Under the 2021 Infrastructure Act, the $14.2 billion ACP fund provided low-income families with a $30 monthly broadband voucher ($75 in high-cost areas). In February 2024, the FCC halted new enrollments, and funds were fully exhausted later that year, harming broadband affordability for many low-income families.

Digital Equity Act (DEA):

Texas was allocated $55.6 million under the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program before an administrative order cancelled the grant in May 2025. While a recent federal ruling ordered the grant restored without race-based criteria, the reallocation timeline for SA/BX remains unknown.

Glossary

ACP:
Affordable Connectivity Program, a federal monthly broadband subsidy for qualifying low-income households.

BDO:
Texas Broadband Development Office, established under Texas House Bill 5 to coordinate statewide broadband expansion.

BEAD:
Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program, a federal infrastructure grant program administered by the NTIA.

CIR:
Committed Information Rate, the minimum guaranteed bandwidth provided by an internet service provider.

DEA:
Digital Equity Act, federal legislation supporting digital inclusion programs and workforce capacity.

Digital Opportunity:
The condition where people and groups have the tools, internet, and skills they need to take part in today's society, economy, and democracy.

FCC:
Federal Communications Commission.

IIJA:
Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021.

ISP:
Internet Service Provider.

Mbps:
Megabits per second, standard metric for data transmission speed (download/upload).

NTIA:
National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

P3:
Public-Private Partnership governance framework.

RFP:
Request for Proposal, a call for proposals that opens the bidding process for a project.

SA/BX
San Antonio/Bexar County.

SDOH:
Social Determinants of Health, environmental conditions shaping health risks and outcomes.

Underserved:
An area or group has some access, but the service is poor, slow, or too hard to reach.

Unserved:
An area or group has zero access to a specific service or tool.

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