

# Expand Broadband Access and Affordability

## Issue and Background

- As the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic quickly forced the vast majority of America's workforce into a remote and virtual setting, the importance of reliable and affordable broadband has never been more of a paramount issue facing our nation.
- While broadband expansion, and expansion of networks to rural areas of the country, has been a significant priority at the federal and local level, there are still nearly 18.5 million Americans who lack even basic access to broadband, according to the National Governors Association (NGA).
- State CIOs understand the importance of broadband in supporting nearly every initiative in their portfolio – from improving digital government services to supporting remote work solutions to providing education and healthcare opportunities for their citizens.
- In this year's [State CIO Survey](#), more than 80 percent of state CIOs contend that their state will now accelerate the implementation of their broadband strategies.
- Currently, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) collects and maps all data on current broadband availability and service speeds. Some states have developed their own mapping capabilities that provide significantly more data at higher granularity as opposed to the FCC's model of capturing data at a census-block level.
- Inaccurate and outdated broadband coverage maps create a significant issue that needs to be addressed to improve connectivity across the country. This mapping methodology is also currently tied to funding for broadband deployment.

## Recommendation

- **Streamline existing federal funding.** Congress should look to streamline existing federal funding for broadband as current sources of funding have proven difficult to navigate for most states. Current funding sources are also primarily tied to specific programs, which constrain state and local governments from best utilizing funds.
- **Increase partnerships between state and federal governments.** Congress and the FCC should increase and enhance these partnerships to resolve the numerous challenges associated with broadband expansion in rural and low-income areas across the country. These challenges include lack of economic incentive for internet providers and lack of competition that keep broadband prices too high.
- **Leverage state-led broadband mapping strategies.** Congress and the FCC should look to leverage broadband mapping strategies that have been deployed in state broadband offices, including [Georgia's Broadband Deployment Initiative](#), to challenge and amend the FCC's broadband data collection processes. A more accurate mapping process will result in improved tools to inform citizens and measure the progress of broadband programs.

