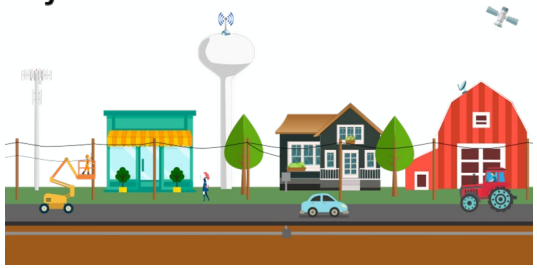
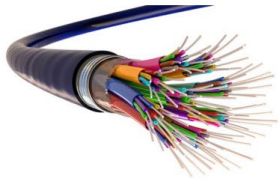
TEXAS BROADBAND
DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Partnering With the Broadband Development Office to Close the Digital Divide
Oct. 17, 2023

What is Broadband?

- Federal Communications Commission (FCC) defines broadband as a minimum of 25 Mbps for download & 3 Mbps for upload (25/3)
  - Federal funding programs target 100/20 for future projects
- Interchangeable with "high-speed internet"
- Two broadband delivery technologies:
  - Physical wire and cables ("wired broadband")
  - Wireless technology ("wireless broadband")





Fiber Optics

Coaxial Cable

Satellite

Microwave

Broadband Defined

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Benefits of Access

- Education
- Healthcare
- Economic Development
- Government Services
- Public Safety
- Telework
- Accessibility
- Urban Revitalization
- Job Applications
- Entertainment

Digital Divide

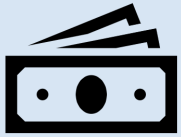
- American Community Survey: Approx. 3 million Texas households do not have access to broadband.
- Causes:
  1. Lack of Infrastructure
  2. Digital literacy
  3. Affordability and access to devices

Covered Populations

- Low-income households
- Aging populations
- Incarcerated individuals
- Veterans
- People with disabilities
- People with language barriers
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Rural inhabitants

What is Digital Opportunity?

Digital literacy



Affordable service

Quality technical support

Applications and online content

Internet-enabled devices

National Digital Inclusion Alliance – definition of digital inclusion

Library Support

- Many libraries already:
  - Provide free Wi-Fi access to all visitors
  - Facilitate digital literacy training to help people understand how to use technology and access the internet
  - Expand access to devices and other technology resources to ensure that everyone has the tools needed to participate in the digital economy.

House Bill 5 (87R)

- Created the Broadband Development Office at the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts
- Required BDO to:
  - Create a state broadband plan (June 2022)
  - Create a broadband development map (January 2023)
  - Implement a broadband development program to administer broadband expansion grants
  - Serve as an information clearinghouse for state & federal funding opportunities in Texas
- Created the BDO Board of Advisors
  - Chaired by the Comptroller with seven appointed members by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, & Speaker

ARPA Funding

- Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (American Rescue Plan Act)
- Administered by U.S. Treasury
- Texas' Allocation: $500.5 Million
- Purpose: helping to ensure that all communities have access to the high-quality modern infrastructure, including broadband, needed to access critical services.
- Funds must be expended by Dec. 2026

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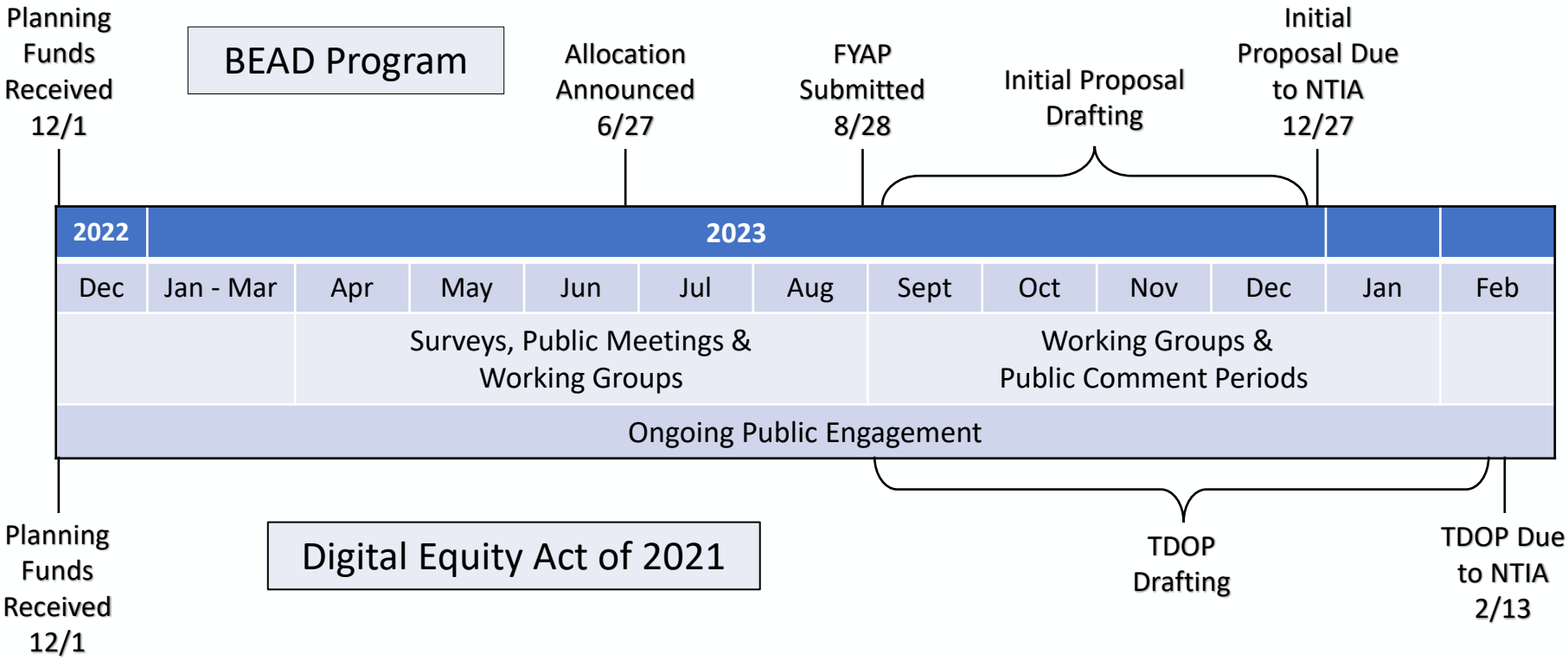
ARPA-Funded Programs

- Texas State Library and Archives Commission –
  - Improving infrastructure and access to the internet
- Texas Department of Transportation
  - Providing WiFi Access at rural rest steps in West Texas
- Texas Department of Agriculture
  - Rural Hospital connectivity

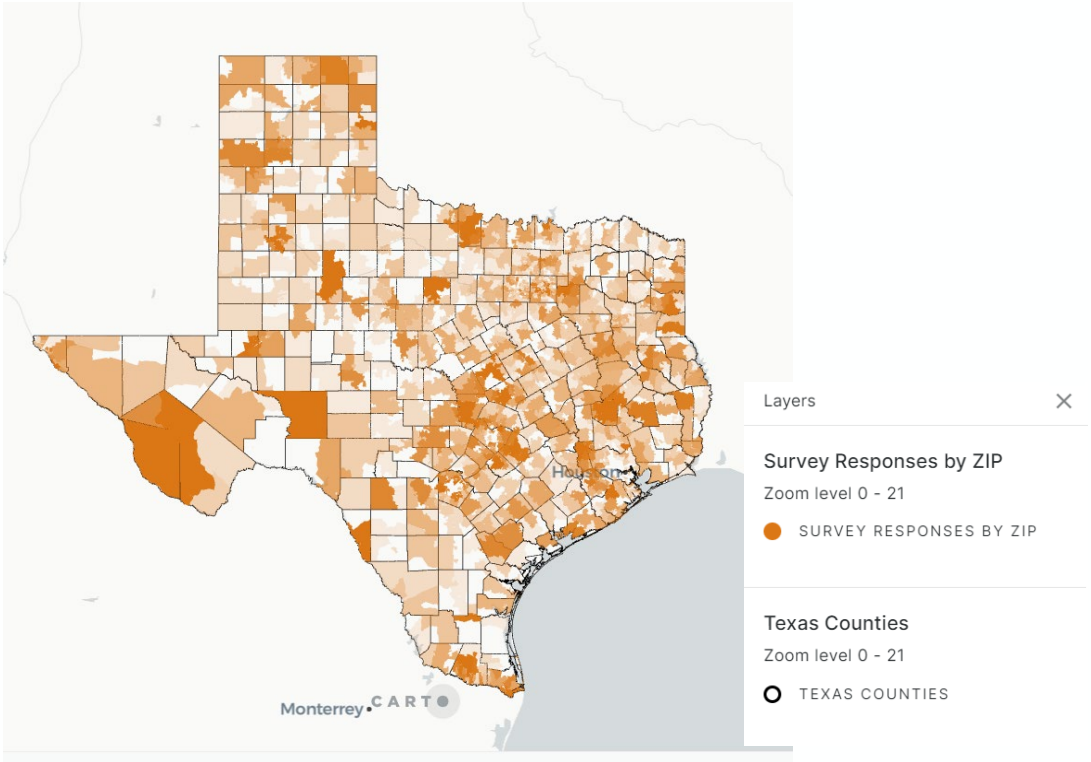
IIJA Funding

- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
- Administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
  - Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program
    - Help close the availability gap
    - Texas's Allocation: $3.3 billion
  - Digital Equity Act
    - Help close the digital opportunity gap
    - Expected Allocation: $130 million

IIJA Timeline



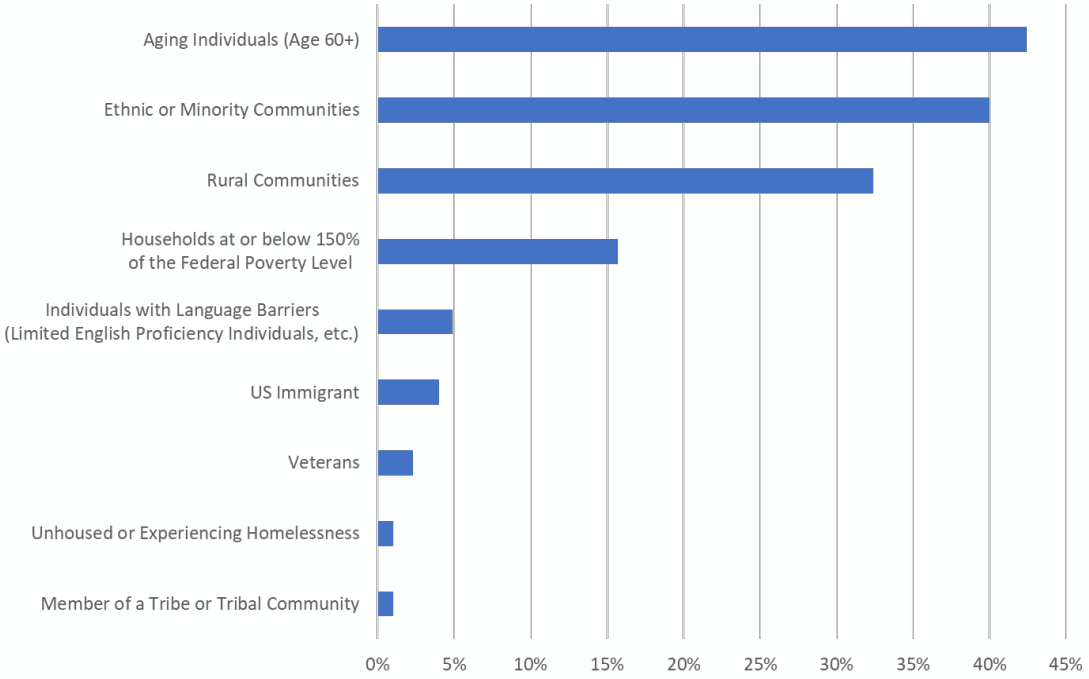
Public Engagement for IIJA Funding: Preliminary Survey Results



- The Public Survey and Digital Resources Mapping Tool Survey (DRMTS) closed on 8/31/23.
- The Public Survey received responses from residents of all 254 counties in Texas.
  - The map to the left shows responses across the state.
- The Public Survey received 9,440 valid online responses and at the close of the survey we received 1,400 paper responses.
- The DRMTS received 352 valid responses.
- CTT is analyzing this data. The results will be incorporated into the Texas Digital Opportunity Plan.

Preliminary Online Public Survey Results

Survey Responses by Covered Population*



Survey Responses by Language Used

Language of Submission	Percent
English	97%
Spanish	3%
Simplified Chinese	0.04%
Vietnamese	0.03%

*Multiple select question, respondents can choose more than one answer choice to this question in the survey.

Preliminary DRMTS Results

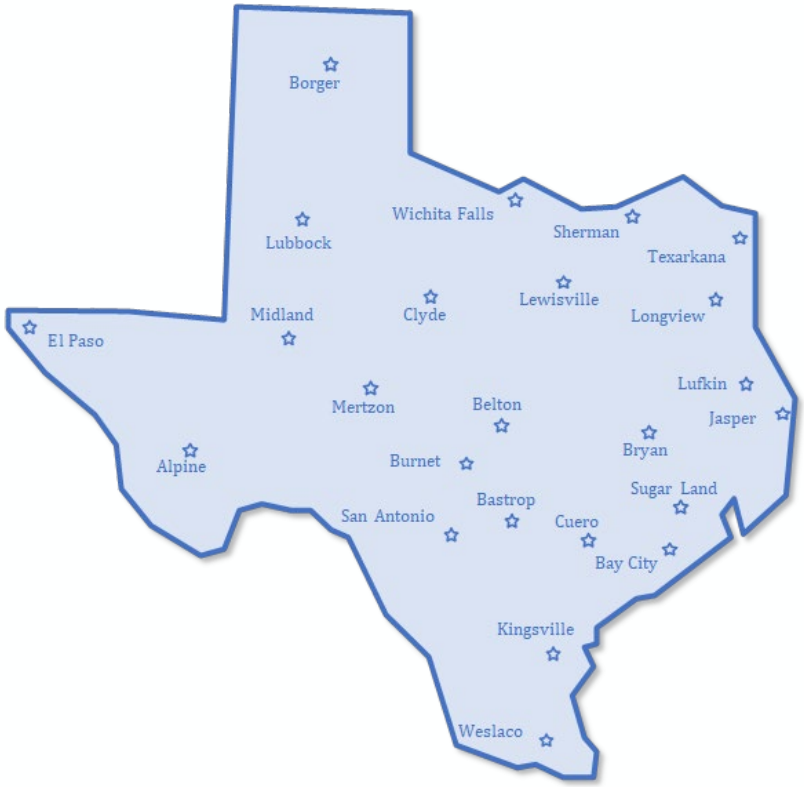
Community Anchor Institution*	
Library	20%
Community-Support or Community-Based	19%
Other	17%
School (K-12)	15%
Community College	7%
Workforce Development	7%
Health Clinic or Health Center	6%
Public Housing or Affordable Housing	4%
Hospital or Other Medical	2%
Public or State University	2%
Public Safety Entity (Non-gov't)	1%
Private University	1%

Government or Public Organizations*	
City Government	28%
County Government	20%
State Government	17%
Local or Regional Authority	16%
Special District	8%
Public Safety Entity (Gov't)	5%
Council or Metropolitan Planning Organization	3%
County Office of Education	1%
Tribal Government	1%
Other	1%

Private Sector and Non-Governmental Organizations*	
Non-Profit Organization	74%
For-Profit Corporation or Business	8%
Internet Service Provider	7%
Other	7%
Foundation/Philanthropic Organization	3%
Labor Organization	1%

*Multiple select question, respondents can choose more than one answer choice to this question in the survey.

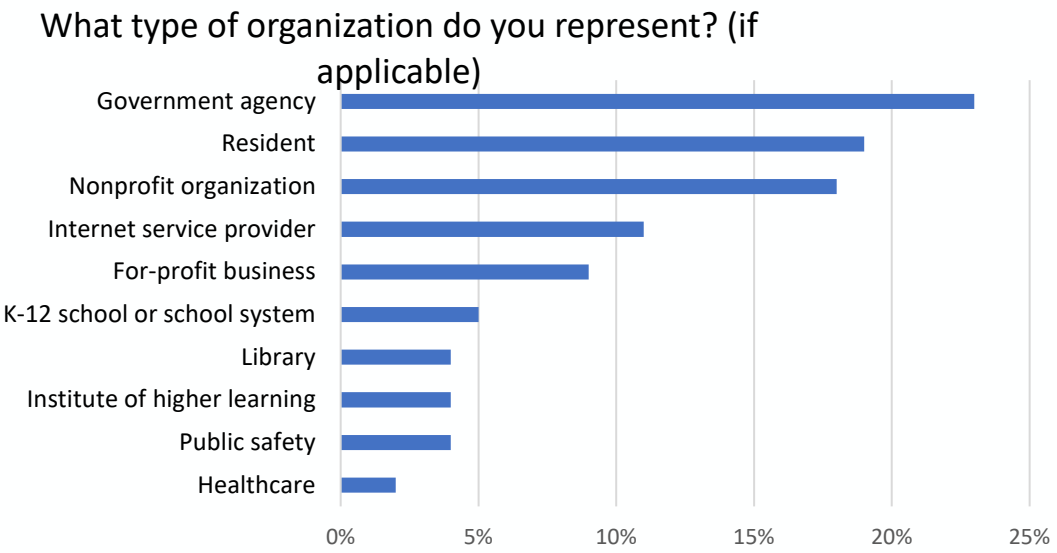
Public Meetings Summary



- The BDO and CTT visited 24 cities and hosted 2 virtual meetings across the 12 economic regions of Texas in 7 weeks.
- There were 1,274 participants in the meetings
- Participants represented 127 Counties

Public Meetings Summary

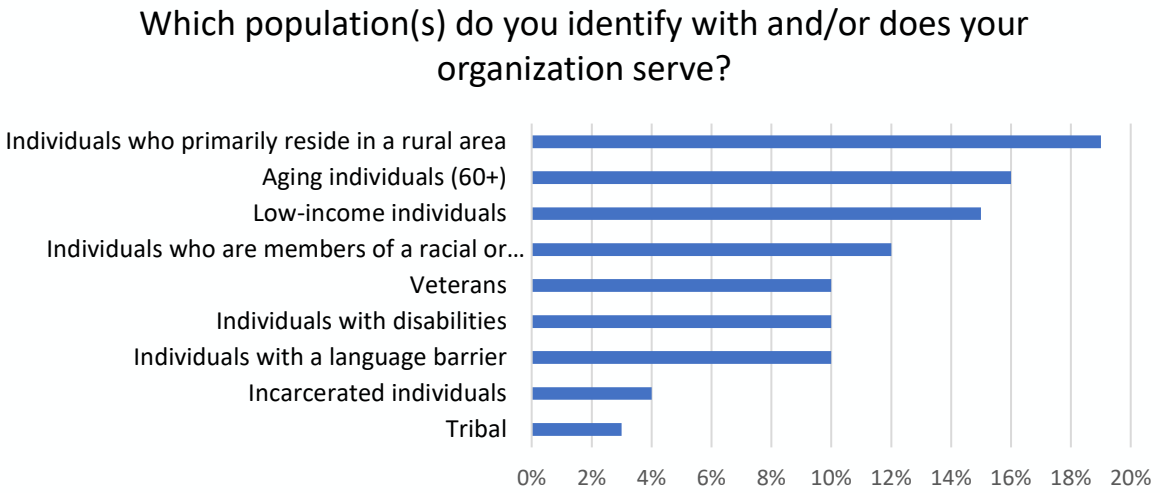
Image of the TX BDO Public Meeting in Weslaco, TX July 18, 2023



Last updated 9/1/23. Percentages are based on those that responded to the question. Note, respondents were permitted to make multiple selections.

Public Meetings Summary

Image of the TX BDO Public Meeting in El Paso, TX August 7, 2023



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Key Takeaways from the Public Meetings

- Primary barriers identified:
  - Affordability
  - Availability
- Top priorities for meeting participants:
  - Improved high-speed infrastructure
  - Increased speed and reliability of connections
- Most widely available assets:
  - Wi-Fi connectivity
  - Public access to computers
- Least common resources:
  - Computer coding education
  - Help subscribing to internet service
  - Community Technical Support

Call to Action

- Collaborate with schools, government agencies, and community organizations to support covered populations.
- Advocate for increased broadband access by collaborating with elected officials and community leaders to ensure digital participation for all Texans.
- Provide feedback during BEAD Initial Proposal and the TDOP public comment period.

Connect with BDO

- Stay connected with the BDO by joining monthly roundtables:
  - Local Government Roundtable – first Thursday of every month at 10 a.m.
  - Sign up for monthly newsletters and announcements
  - Visit our outreach page to learn about all opportunities to engage with our office.