

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Input Wanted: NTIA Opens Comment Period on Broadband Grant Programs

On Friday, **NTIA** put out the official request for public comment on the new broadband grant programs authorized by the Infrastructure Act. The law provides \$65 billion to expand broadband throughout the U.S., with NTIA holding the purse strings for the \$42.5 billion Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program.

Comments must be submitted to [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) by 5pm ET on Feb. 4. While NTIA is welcoming input on any matter that commenters believe is important to NTIA's implementation efforts, it also has put forth a series of question related to three specific grant programs: BEAD, the Middle-Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program and the Digital Equity Planning Grant Program.

They range from very broad—"What are the most important steps NTIA can take to ensure that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's broadband programs meet their goals with respect to access, adoption, affordability, digital equity, and digital inclusion?" to more granular—such as what sort of speeds, throughput, latencies, or other metrics will be required to fully connect all Americans to meaningful use over the next five, 10, and 20 years.

Broadband providers and their associations have already begun their advocacy work. **ACA Connects** and **NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association** are working together to ensure the BEAD program is administered fairly, launching

a state-by-state tracking project. Each state will receive a minimum of \$100 million through the program, with additional money awarded based on unserved locations. Members of each association will get up-to-date information as each state/territory awards grants. "We hope that this project will empower you to help your state/territory benchmark how other jurisdictions are implementing the BEAD program, recognizing what might constitute best practices and effective timelines for distribution of funds," NTCA and ACAC said in a letter to members.

The Fiber Broadband Association and NTCA are developing a broadband infrastructure playbook to help state governments implement the BEAD program. It's slated to be published early this year, in advance of NTIA's Notice of Funding Opportunity, which is expected by May.

"We have 50 states, plus Puerto Rico, it's treated like a state, and four territories. Not all of them have broadband offices. They have different conditions of what a broadband office may look like. [Some] don't have any kind of private office, so it's challenging to figure out how there is going to be consistency and how this \$42.5 billion is going to be distributed," Fiber Broadband President/CEO **Gary Bolton** told *CFX* recently. "What we're hearing from states is they have a big job in front of them, and they're desperate for a great asset like this."

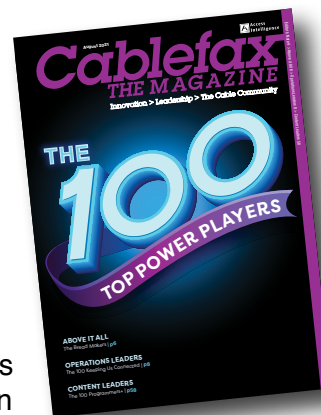
FBA and NTCA are working with consultancy firm **Cartesian** on the playbook, with a goal of having it ready by mid-to-late 1Q. "We're starting with six of the best broadband state practices



Who Deserves to Rank Among Cablefax's Annual Top Power Players?

The Cablefax 100 salutes the most influential executives whose leadership continues to take the industry to new heights. We will rank the top professionals in the media, cable & broadband industry and publish the list in the June edition of Cablefax: The Magazine.

It's free to enter — but you must submit your entries by January 21!



Nominate at www.Cablefax100.com | Questions: Mary-Lou French at mfrench@accessintel.com

as the foundation, and now we're moving into an interview stage where we're interviewing others from different broadband officers and states to find out what's unique about their situation and we're going to be working with NTIA," Bolton said.

At this point, the associations aren't disclosing which six states they've identified as having strong models. That's primarily because they are just the starting framework, with other states being consulted, Bolton said. The goal of the playbook is to create consistency, but also streamline things. "We don't have the wherewithal to advocate in every community across the nation," he said. "As the playbook is finalized, we'll be bringing it to other associations, like utilities, rural electric co-ops and so forth. Everybody has a vested interest in being able to close the digital equity gap."

Inclusivity is important to NTIA, with Friday's public comment request seeking input on how it can ensure all potential recipients, including small and medium providers, nonprofits, municipalities, electric utilities and large companies have robust opportunities to compete for funding.

Late last month, NTIA's Office of Internet Connectivity & Growth issued its first [Access Broadband Report](#), which includes tracking broadband funding. NTIA identified 19 programs, including the Connect America Fund and Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, that received a total of \$1.662 billion in FY20 appropriations, obligated \$5.334 billion and outlaid \$4.942 billion. The top five states that received the most outlaid funding from these programs were California (\$436 million), Texas (\$420 million), Alaska (\$185 million), New York (\$165 million) and Oklahoma (\$159M).

NIelsen, NY INTERCONNECT STICKING TOGETHER

Nielsen and the **New York Interconnect** signed a multi-year deal for local TV measurement in the New York DMA. New York Interconnect is a jv between **Altice USA**, **Charter** and **Comcast** that gives advertisers access to an integrated solution to reach households across the market. The data Nielsen will provide will give the Interconnect data on the daily performance of its campaigns and the cable networks it represents. It will also be able to calculate TV campaign reach and frequency across the DMA.

FCC CONSIDERING ACP RULES, BROADBAND LABEL

FCC Chair **Jessica Rosenworcel** circulated a draft report and order and further NPRM that would establish the rules for the \$14.2 billion Affordable Connectivity Program, if adopted. The program is a successor to the Emergency Broadband Benefit, offering eligible households discounts of up to \$30/month for broadband service and up to \$75/month if the household is on Tribal lands. The program began earlier this week, but has largely been running over the rules that governed the Emergency Broadband Benefit in lieu of a ruling on official procedures from the Commission. The FCC is kicking off 2022 with a packed open meeting on Jan. 27. On the agenda is an NPRM that would propose requiring ISPs to display at the point of sale labels with information about prices, introductory rates, data allowances, management practices and more. The Commission will also consider a report and order that would amend the definition of library within the agency's rules to allow Tribal libraries to claim support through the E-Rate program. The FCC is taking another look at white space spectrum as well, examining a second order

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on reconsideration and order that would allow unlicensed white space devices to continue operating efficiently while also protecting other spectrum users.

SPARKLIGHT IN HENDERSON

Sparklight is building a \$9 million fiber network in Henderson, Texas. Once completed, the network will deliver symmetrical speeds of up to 1 gig for residential customers and up to 5 gigs for business customers. Construction is expected to begin this spring and be completed by the end of the year. Ultimately, the network will connect nearly 5,000 residential and business customers in the area.

NKTELCO LINKS JACKSON CENTER

Ohio-based **NKTelco** completed its fiber-to-the-premise system expansion in Jackson Center. The build connected 750 local homes and businesses to the company's network. Additionally, NKTelco installed an automated sports camera in the high school gymnasium for the Jackson Center Tigers, allowing the school to livestream sporting activities to the public at any time using the NKT.tv subscription platform.

RATINGS

Uptv must have made it onto the nice list this Christmas. Throughout December, Uptv had holiday movies streaming every day to Christmas. As a result, the net ended the last week of 2021 with its strongest week in households. Uptv Christmas movies reached 18.4 million P2+ viewers during the holiday season. Overall, Christmas movies on Uptv in 2021 were up vs. last year in HH (+30%), W35-64 (+29%) and P35-64 (+25%).

PEOPLE

Roku SVP/GM, Platform Business **Scott Rosenberg** is stepping down this spring. He joined Roku in 2012 as VP, Advertising and Business Development before rising to his current role in 2017. Rosenberg will continue to lead his teams until his departure and will assist with the recruitment process for a replacement and the transition. –

FreeWheel named **Mark McKee** to the role of GM. He succeeds **Dave Clark**, who has announced his departure after nearly five years leading the company. McKee has served as FreeWheel's U.S. CRO since January 2020 and previously served as SVP of **Videology**.

CABLEFAX DASHBOARD

Twitter Hits



Research

(Source: Redbox)

- > The most popular Redbox kiosk rental from 2021 was animated children's film "The Croods: A New Age." Taking the second and third spots were "Greenland" and "The Marksman," respectively.
- > "Free Guy," an action comedy starring Ryan Reynolds, proved to be Redbox's top On Demand title for the year, according to data from the company's streaming app. "It surpassed "The Croods: A New Age," which owned the second spot.
- > Ad-supported video continued to grow in 2021, and the Jeffrey Dean Morgan crime drama "Texas Killing Fields" emerged as the top title on Redbox's AVOD streaming service.

Up Ahead

JAN 10-13: [TV of Tomorrow Show](#), Virtual

JAN 18-20: [NATPE Miami](#)

JAN 21: [Cablefax 100 Nomination Deadline](#)

FEB 4-20: [Beijing Winter Olympics](#)

FEB 8: [INCOMPAS Policy Summit](#), DC

Quotable

"We've said mid-year. Could it accelerate and happen earlier? Entirely possible. It could also possibly slip. My view is right now... we're doing exactly what we expected... We filed our S-4, we'll get some indications of what's going on there. I think that now clears the way for us to move into the Discovery shareholder vote which, of course, needs to occur. You saw that the EU cleared this without any concerns. I would say that if you think about the company's holdings in the EU versus elsewhere in the world, there shouldn't be anything that jumps out that says gosh... that's going to be a problem. So we feel comfortable about the balance of the world approvals... The US regulators, in particular the DOJ, has been following the script and the expectations when we set up the deal and gave you guidance." – **AT&T CEO John Stankey at the Citi AppsEconomy Conference talking the state of the WarnerMedia-Discovery combination**