

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Partner Up: Cox, IEC on Benefits of Working Together on Broadband

With NTIA now having approved four states' full BEAD initial proposals, requests for their allocations from the \$42.5 billion federal program can begin. Those states with approval—right now, Louisiana, Kansas, West Virginia and Nevada—have one year to award subgrants for broadband expansion. As providers look to serve hard-to-reach areas, it sometimes means getting creative. That's what Cox Communications did last June when it signed a deal with Indian Electric Cooperative in Oklahoma for a three-year buildout to all 14,000+ IEC members across seven counties. Under the partnership, customers are 100% Cox customers and Indian Electric owns the infrastructure. We caught up with Cox Senior Manager of Strategic Solutions Justin Soileau and Indian Electric CEO Todd Schroeder to talk about their agreement. The two will dive deeper into their partnership on stage at [Cablefax's American Broadband Congress](#) on June 13 in Washington, D.C.

Cox's agreement with Oklahoma's Indian Electric Cooperative represents its first public-fiber cooperative effort. Why did it make sense to pursue this path now?

Soileau: We are continually looking for innovative ways to reach the unserved and narrow the broadband access gap. By working together with IEC we are able to quickly deploy fiber-to-the-home connectivity using their existing infrastructure and at a cost that is the most fiscally responsible.

Why did IEC decide to partner with Cox to deploy broadband to its members?

Schroeder: Our goal is to serve our members with the access they need to be connected. We considered providing the service ourselves, however it made more sense to combine our respective strengths to provide broadband to the home and do so more swiftly and confidently. This type of cooperative effort may be unprecedented, but it is the best decision for our membership and at the end of the day, we're in business to service our members.

What's the biggest misconception you think people have about partnership agreements with electric cooperatives or utility providers?

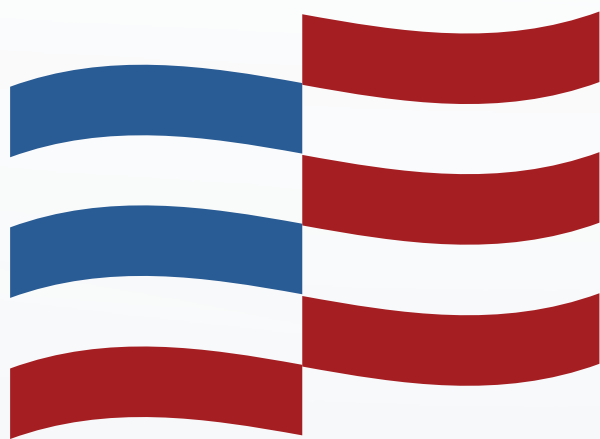
Soileau: One of the biggest misconceptions people often have about partnerships, especially when these involve partnerships with electric cooperatives and ISPs is a perceived misalignment in core values. There's a common assumption that private enterprises and public or cooperative entities are fundamentally at odds, particularly where profit meets public service. However, the reality is quite different and more nuanced. Both private and cooperative entities typically share a similar purpose: to deliver efficient, reliable services to the community and to innovate in ways that meet evolving consumer needs. The key to successful partnerships is in recognizing that these collaborations are not just about filling financial or operational gaps but are fundamentally about better serving the public. By focusing on shared goals, we can achieve outcomes that



Cablefax TOP OPS AWARDS

Cablefax's Top Ops Awards recognize excellence in a variety of areas, including marketing, technology, finance, lifetime achievement, customer service and community involvement. Give credit where credit is due—Nominate the Top Operators of the year.

**NOMINATE
NOW**



AMERICAN BROADBAND CONGRESS

BEAD & BEYOND IN 2024

JUNE 13, 2024 - WASHINGTON, D.C

PRESENTED BY *Cablefax*

YOU'RE INVITED

Join innovators at the Cablefax American Broadband Congress, tackling issues in U.S. broadband. Key themes include: partnerships, BEAD compliance, profitability and low-cost access. Join us June 13, 2024 in Washington, D.C.

REGISTER NOW

might be out of reach for either party working alone.

Do BEAD and other grant opportunities open the door for new types of partnership-type projects?

Soileau: Grant opportunities like BEAD and others certainly open the door for potential partnerships and the exploration of different ways to reach the un- and underserved. With network construction costs being a barrier to deployment for many, grant subsidies help to make the business case make sense and allow service providers to think a bit more outside the box when it comes to finding solutions.

ROSENWORCEL DOUBLES DOWN ON BULK BILLING NPRM

FCC Chairwoman *Jessica Rosenworcel* is sticking to her plan to begin a rulemaking that seeks comment on improving broadband in multi-tenant environments. "Many consumers have complained to the Commission about 'bulk billing' arrangements, which can subject tenants to unwanted fees, forcing them to pay for a specific broadband provider or service plan. I have proposed that we begin a rulemaking to allow consumers to simply opt-out of these arrangements," she wrote in recent letters to lawmakers who have expressed concerns about the NPRM, which is currently on circulation. Last month, a group of bipartisan lawmakers that includes *Darren Soto* (D-FL), *Gus Bilirakis* (R-FL), *Lizzie Fletcher* (D-TX), *Buddy Carter* (R-GA) and *Jared Moskowitz* (D-FL) worried that an FCC ban of bulk billing would harm seniors, fixed income individuals, students and others who rely on such arrangements. The members of Congress questioned why the agency would reverse its 2010 finding that such arrangements predominantly benefit consumers. "I agree that it is important to take that last record into account. However, a lot can change in 14 years and, as is true with many policies in the telecommunications sector, it is often in the public interest to reexamine long-standing policies to ensure they have kept up with changes in technology and the marketplace, especially when it comes to consumer protection and choice," Rosenworcel wrote in her response, which was released Friday.

2024 CABLE TV PIONEERS

Twenty-one new members will join the **Cable TV Pioneers** as its 58th annual banquet and induction ceremony in Atlanta on Sept. 23. They are: **Liberty Global's Amy Blair**, **Ribbon Communications' Bruce McClelland**, **Vantiva's Charles Cheevers**, **ATX Networks' Dan Whalen**, **Music Choice's David Del Beccaro**, **Comcast's Elad Nafshi**, **Lightspeed Construction's George Taylor**, **Breezeline's Heather McCallion**, **Jones Inter-**

cable's Jim O'Brien, **Technetix's Jan Ariesen**, **Altice USA's Jennifer Yohe**, **Charter's John Higgins, Jr.**, **Cable One's Julie Laulis**, **Charter's Justin Colwell**, **Comcast's Lynn Charytan**, **A+E Networks' Mark Garner**, **Comcast's Bob Gaydos**, **TV One's Rori Peters**, **Charter's Steve Raymond**, **Comcast's Todd Gorder** and **Comcast's Weidong Mao**. For sponsorship and ticket info, visit [CableTVPioneers.com](https://www.cabletvpioneers.com).

MEDIACOM ONCE AGAIN A U.S. BEST MANAGED COMPANY

Mediacom is being celebrated again for its achievements and powerful management team, earning a U.S. Best Managed Company distinction for the fourth year in a row. The award is sponsored by **Deloitte Private** and **WSJ** and honors private companies that are able to execute, have a strong company culture, exceptional financial performance and more. **Media-com** can now call itself a 2024 U.S. Best Managed Company Gold Standard Winner, a special designation saved for organizations that have been recognized with the distinction for four or more years.

KIM GODWIN LEAVING ABC NEWS

ABC News President *Kim Godwin* is leaving the organization, telling her staff in an email Sunday that she had decided to retire from broadcast journalism altogether. She first rose to the position of president in 2021 and became the first Black woman to head a broadcast network's news division. Prior to becoming a part of the ABC family, she served as EVP of **CBS News**. Godwin's departure comes three months after *Debra O'Connell* was upped to **Disney** Entertainment President, News Group and Networks and became Godwin's direct management. Reports emerged [last week](#) that O'Connell and Godwin have butted heads since over a difference in leadership styles. O'Connell will lead operations at the news network until a new president is named.

NBCUNIVERSAL, INSTACART EXPAND AD OPPORTUNITIES

NBCUniversal and **Instacart** are expanding their working relationship to make it easier for consumer packaged goods advertisers to reach strategic audiences. They're collaborating on first-party data capabilities, and advertisers will now be able to reach in-market consumers through NBCU's streaming content and measure the impact of their campaigns through ad exposure and purchase data. The offering is expected to launch in the second quarter for streaming, but plans already exist to make it available on linear as well.

AT&T UNVEILS TURBO OFFERING FOR ENHANCED DATA SERVICES

AT&T introduced an add-on service last week that gives customers the option to purchase enhanced data connectivity. Called AT&T Turbo, the \$7/month per line service is built to support demanding mobile applications including gaming and video conferencing. Customers with the add-on will be able to add network resources to their mobile data connection at those times. The boost applies to a customer's data regardless of the internet content, applications and services being used to ensure AT&T Turbo is in line with open internet principles.

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL WINS MORE FUNDING

Chicken Soup for the Soul Entertainment is making moves to try to stay away from a bankruptcy filing. It said in an [8-K](#) that it has entered into an agreement that opens the door for it to raise \$175 million of additional working capital from two financing parties. \$75 million of that will be used to pay down its debt. Next TV was the first to find the filing. The company is also expanding its board and appointing two independent directors per requirements tied to the financing deals. CSSE's financial woes have become more prominent in recent weeks. It received a letter from Nasdaq on April 18 warning that its securities may be delisted from the Nasdaq Capital Market due to a delay in the filing of the company's annual report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ending Dec. 31, 2023. CSSE filed the [10-K](#) one day later, and in it said it was having material disputes with its principal lender and it could continue to incur losses in the operation of its business for the foreseeable future. "Substantial doubt exists regarding our ability to continue as a going concern and we are in default on various debt and lease agreements," the 10-K said in a section laying out risk factors for the company. "If we are unable to renegotiate our primary credit facility and secure financing from new sources, we may be required to seek relief and protections under United States federal bankruptcy laws."

FIBER FRENZY

Comcast finished a buildout to more than 250 additional residents and businesses in Shannon, Connecticut. The provider and the town partnered on the project to connect previously unserved residents and businesses. It's part of Comcast's ongoing expansion plans in the state, where the company has invested more than \$335 million in technology and infrastructure over the last three years.

DZS BUYING NETCOMM

DZS has a binding agreement to acquire **Netcomm**, combining Netcomm's fiber extension, fixed wireless access, home broadband and IoT products and patents with DZS' broadband

networking and cloud software solutions. DZS will now connect to NetComm's roughly 50 active CSP and enterprise customers in the US, Canada, Latin America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, including [UScellular](#) and **Bell Canada**. DZS will on-board the majority of the NetComm employees, of which, approximately 60% are research & development and customer care team members.

RATINGS

April was a record-setting month for **ESPN** with the network delivering its best April primetime audience on record. ESPN averaged 2.1 million viewers each night (8-11pm ET), up 42% from the same month in 2023. ESPN's total day audience was also its highest since 2012 with the network averaging 781,000 viewers in any given hour.

PROGRAMMING

HGTV stars are battling it out in surfside home renovation competition series "Battle on the Beach," premiering on June 3 at 9pm. The team adding the most value to the property will earn a \$50,000 prize. – Season 20 of "Deadliest Catch" debuts on **Discovery Channel** on June 11 at 8pm. – **Paramount+** ordered a new half-hour comedy starring *Tracy Morgan*. "Crutch" features Morgan as a Harlem widower whose empty nest plans are put on hold after his millennial son and free-spirited daughter move back home. – *Sean Hannity* will host a new **Fox Nation** historical drama series that explores wild west outlaws and lawman. "Outlaws and Lawmen: The West" will debut May 8 with four episodes dropping on Wednesday nights.

ON THE CIRCUIT

The Mid-America Cable Telecommunications Association (MACTA) is currently accepting applications for the 2024 Mid-America Weary Scholarship. It's open to telcom employees, their spouses and/or children in the Mid-America region. (Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas). The deadline is June 30. Apply online at midamerica-cableshow.com/weary.

PEOPLE

The **Hollywood Radio and Television Society** elected new members to its Foundation board. The Foundation was created in 2022 and advocates for a more diversity and inclusion in the TV and entertainment industry. Newly elected board members include **CBS Entertainment** EVP, Programming Strategy *Noriko Kelley*; **The Lippin Group** Chairman/Chief Executive/Founder *Dick Lippin*; Cause-Related Storytelling, Partnerships and Strategy Consultant *Aimie Billon*; Making Space Co-Founder/CEO *Keely Cat-Wells*; Tony Jonas Productions Founder *Tony Jonas* and writer/researcher *Frederic Richter*.