

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

BEAD Ready: NTIA's Doug Kinkoph Offers Update on Internet for All

As we hit the mid-point of the year, the \$42.5 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program to expand high-speed internet access in America is gaining momentum. More states are earning approval of their initial proposals and challenges processes are underway. Doug Kinkoph, NTIA Associate Administrator for the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, gave **CFX** a temperature update on BEAD and the mission to bring internet to all. Kinkoph, who is responsible for all of NTIA's broadband programs, will share more during his keynote at Cablefax's June 13 [American Broadband Congress](#) in Washington, D.C.

Where is NTIA in the approval of state's BEAD plans and what are the anticipated milestones for project implementation?

2024 is the year of execution. We're working with urgency to approve all plans while ensuring they meet our program criteria. Right now, seven states and D.C. have both volumes of their initial proposals approved, meaning they can conduct the subgrantee selection process that will identify the specific projects that will close the digital divide. And all eligible entities have received approval of Volume 1 of their initial proposal, meaning they can begin their challenge processes. So far more than half the country has started their challenge process and millions of locations have been challenged. We continue to approve Volume 2 of initial proposals on a rolling basis. We're reaching the point in this initiative where the states are in the driver's seat. So, dates

and deadlines are going to vary from state to state. At NTIA we're working to ensure visibility across the program at each stage:

- Our Initial Proposal dashboard shows each state and territory's progress in the approval journey.
- We also have a webpage that displays active challenges, including links to the challenge portals and the dates they open and close.
- In the coming months, we will post a public version of the approved plans.

Overall, this year we're focused on approving state plans, each state completing its challenge process, and getting the subgrantee selection process started everywhere to determine who will deploy these networks and what technology makes the most sense for each community.

Each state has to run its own challenge process to check the accuracy of the FCC maps at a local level. What can you tell us about how states are running their challenge processes so far?

As we've approved Volume 1 of BEAD initial proposals, states have started executing their challenge processes. This is where the rubber meets the road in ensuring that BEAD funds go where they are needed most. The challenge process determines which locations and community anchor institutions in each state and territory are eligible to be served by BEAD funded networks. In this process, an eligible challenger (a unit of local or tribal government, nonprofit organization, or Internet service provider) may challenge a determination made by the FCC as to whether



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a particular location (home or business) or community anchor institution—such as schools or libraries—is served, underserved, or unserved. Getting these determinations of eligibility right is critical for ensuring that states spend these funds wisely.

What types of organizations can get involved with the Internet for All initiative?

When we say, “Internet for All,” we mean “all.” Not only is it the right thing to ensure everyone is at the table, but our program requires states to bring diverse groups of stakeholders into their planning and implementation efforts. As we move from planning to execution we are focused on companies, organizations, and local governments getting involved in the state challenge processes and asking service providers to start thinking about applying for the state grants. As part of applying for the grants, we are encouraging companies and cooperatives to start thinking about what partnerships make the most sense for submitting BEAD proposals. And we also encourage them to consider Minority-owned Business Enterprises (MBEs) and Women-owned Business Enterprises (WBEs), where at all possible.

DIAMOND SPORTS AND COMCAST ARE ‘AT AN IMPASSE’

Diamond Sports has locked in long-term distribution deals with a number of its partners by this point in the bankruptcy process, but things have reached a standstill with **Comcast**. “Unfortunately, your honor, our negotiations with Comcast are currently at an impasse,” counsel for Diamond Sports said during a Tuesday status hearing in the **Southern Texas Bankruptcy Court**. “While we remain open to further negotiations... the company has little choice but to explore alternatives to Comcast.” Comcast countered in a statement, saying **Bally Sports** chose not to exercise a right to extend their contract and have also declined multiple offers. Comcast said it doesn’t have the rights to Bally Sports programming at this time. “More than 70% of our customers that received these networks didn’t watch them. We moved forward with our plan to proactively credit millions of customers for the costs associated with them—most are automatically receiving \$8 to \$10 per month in credits,” Comcast said. During the hearing, Diamond Sports asked to push back the dates for hearings tied to the confirmation of its plan to emerge from bankruptcy. It asked to move the date of the confirmation hearing from June 18 to July 29th and 30th, saying the adjustment would give it more time to finalize business negotiations with its key stakeholders. But its league partners have different thoughts on what that delay means with counsel for the **NBA**, the **NHL** and the **MLB** arguing Diamond Sports has made no meaningful progress in producing a plan over the last three weeks. *Vincent Indelicato*, counsel for the NBA, also said the 2024-25 season is fast approaching and it takes time to properly

The WHO and the WHY

CFX’s spotlight on recent new hires & promotions



ROBIN DAVIS
SVP/CHIEF DISTRIBUTION OFFICER
SCRIPPS

3 THINGS TO KNOW

- A Scripps career that began as a Controller for its former newspaper division has turned into a spot in the C-suite. Robin has held the interim tag for her new position since February, but Scripps decided to make the title permanent. She’ll oversee a team whose responsibilities include managing distribution across platforms including cable, satellite and virtual carriers in addition to multicast spectrum.
- Robin has held several strategy and financial leadership positions throughout her nearly two-decade stay under the Scripps umbrella. Her achievements include leading mergers and acquisitions that have fueled Scripps’ local TV station portfolio to grow from 10 stations in nine markets in 2010 to its current holding of over 60 stations in 40+ markets. Robin was key in the acquisitions of Newsy in 2014, Journal Communications in 2015, Katz Networks in 2017 and ION in 2021. She was also key to the creation of the Scripps Networks division.
- Outside of the office, Robin serves on the Selection Advisory Council of GreenLight Fund Cincinnati, which seeks to address economic and racial inequities by creating new opportunities for organizations through funding and engagement. She’s also a member of the Extraordinary Women on Boards and was elected to be a Director of Highlights for Children.

prepare its systems, produce the games and ensure fans know where to find them. “You just simply can’t launch an entirely new production, distribution and marketing system, your honor, for approximately 1,000 games in that many geographies overnight. It just simply cannot be done,” he said. Judge *Christopher Lopez* did agree to the dates of July 29-30 for confirmation, asking all interested parties to come to the courthouse in person to hash out the plan once and for all.

REPORT: NBA ROUNDING THIRD ON MEDIA RIGHTS DEAL

The clock continues to tick for **Warner Bros. Discovery**. The **NBA** is nearing the completion of media rights deals with **ESPN**, **Amazon** and **NBC**, according to a *Wall Street Journal* [report](#) citing people familiar with the discussions. The NBA’s deal would

include the rights to **WNBA** games. The deal's worth comes in at around \$76 billion across 11 years. NBC is on the brink of signing a deal to pay an average of \$2.5 billion per year, and about 50% of its games would be exclusive to **Peacock**. NBC would get games on Tuesdays and Sundays when there are no Sunday Night Football scheduling conflicts. Amazon's piece of the pie includes both regular-season and NBA Playoff games in addition to the In-Season Tournament and Playoff play-in games. WSJ writes it'll also have a share of the conference finals, which would be split among the other companies in rotation. Amazon's payment is reportedly \$1.8 billion per year. Disney would keep its spot in the league's distribution group for \$2.6 billion per year. Of note: the deal would also let ESPN put games on the DTC service it hopes to launch in 2025. As for WBD, it can match another company's package or the NBA could create a new, smaller package. The next media rights deal kicks in starting with the 2025-26 season.

COMBS SELLS REVOLT STAKE

REVOLT is turning to a new chapter after its founder and former Chairman **Sean Combs** sold his majority stake in the company. The move follows a wave of lawsuits and sexual assault allegations against Combs over the last several months. "We have completely separated and dissociated from each other," **REVOLT** CEO **Detavio Samuels** said in an [interview](#) with the *New York Times*. **REVOLT**'s new projected largest shareholder group isn't an investment firm or larger company, but its own employees. **REVOLT** will give current and future full-time workers equity in the company. The allocation of that equity participation will be rolled out over the next few months.

ACSI REPORTS FIBER STILL THE CHOICE AMONG CUSTOMERS

While fiber continues to be the top broadband choice for customers when available, 5G is becoming a viable alternative. The **American Customer Satisfaction Index** Telecommunications Study showed that fiber ISPs outperform non-fiber ISPs 76 to 68 on a 100-point scale for customer satisfaction. Of those fiber providers, **AT&T** Fiber scored the highest at 80, which beat Verizon Fios' 77 and three companies—**CenturyLink** Fiber, **Frontier** Fiber and **Google Fiber**—at 76. **Comcast**'s Xfinity Fiber came in at 75. For non-fiber providers, **T-Mobile** 5G Home Internet topped the list at 76. **Verizon** 5G Home Internet wasn't far behind with 74 and **AT&T** at 69, while **Cox** and **Charter**/Spectrum both checked in with 68. Xfinity's score was 67. The study also looked at subscription TV and video streaming services. Verizon Fios topped the subscription TV chart at 75 as **Frontier** (71), **Cox** (69) and **Xfinity** (69) came after. **DirecTV** and **DISH** both came in at 68. **Prime Video** was the top-rated streamer at 82. **Peacock** and **YouTube** Premium were at 80 (**YouTube TV** was 76), and four companies—**Apple TV+**, **Hulu**, **Netflix** and **Sling TV**—recorded scores of 79. ACSI's study included interviews with 25,468 customers chosen at random.

AT&T CUSTOMERS STRUGGLE TO MAKE CALLS

AT&T phone customers may have had some difficulties making calls Tuesday evening, but the carrier said it did not experience a nationwide outage. Instead, there was an issue it identified that affected some customers trying to complete calls between carriers, and **Verizon** callers took to social media to confirm the issue was impacting them. The problem was resolved by 8:20pm ET Tuesday. "We collaborated with the other carrier to find a solution and appreciate our customers' patience during this period," the **AT&T** News account on X said in a [post](#).

BOINGO LAUNCHES FTTH SOLUTION FOR U.S. MILITARY

Boingo Wireless, the provider dedicated to wireless solutions for the U.S. military, has launched **Boingo Fiber**, the first "instant-on" FTTH solution to be rolled out on a military base. Its first location is Fort Carson, Colorado, and it offers symmetrical 1 Gig plans for \$69/month with no data caps, hidden fees, contracts or equipment charges.

FIBER FRENZY

Google Fiber's engineering process for its network in Wilmington, North Carolina, is underway. Construction is scheduled to begin later this year, with service to its first customers in the city set to go live in 2025. G Fiber has been growing throughout North Carolina after signing new agreements to build networks in Harrisburg, Kannapolis and Stallings. The company also began installations in Raleigh-Durham for its G Fiber Labs 20 Gig service. – The first set of customers in **FOCUS Broadband**'s Chowan County project in North Carolina can now get service. Additional groups are expected to be able to obtain **FOCUS**' services in the coming weeks as construction continues.

BASEBALL RATINGS

The latest edition of **ESPN**'s Sunday Night Baseball between the Cardinals and Phillies averaged 1.65 million viewers, peaking at 1.98 million at 9:45pm. That's good for a 16% improvement compared to the 2023 full-season average of Sunday Night Baseball, and is up 3% from the comparable game last season between the Yankees and Dodgers. Next Sunday's game will see a Yankees-Dodgers rematch at 7pm.

PEOPLE

EarthxTV has a new Executive Chairman with the appointment of **Steve Schiffman**. He'll be tasked with the network's operations, and **EarthxTV** President **Dan Russell** will report to him. Schiffman—who'll also serve as the Chairman of the Board of Directors—was previously President/CEO of **National Geographic Channels** and CEO of **Cooper Media**.

Think about that for a minute...

What's the Point?

Commentary by Steve Effros

We were watching an older (from 1981) movie the other night and something sort of jumped out at me. It was the opening credits. I could read them! They were toward the middle of the screen. They came up, one after the other, at a pace and size that allowed one to actually read them, both name and title!. It was not the type of thing you would see in many of the new movies and series coming out these days.

No, today's "classy" video efforts start out with an extended, artful, fascinating to watch in many cases "opening" with impressive visuals usually computer generated and intended as eye candy. You know the type I'm talking about, Game of Thrones, Shogun, A Gentleman in Moscow all highlight the trend. I admit, I like looking at the two- or three-minute piece. I also appreciate that if it's a series you're watching they usually let you skip the "intro" after you've seen it a couple of times!

But what's the point? You might have noticed, although that's clearly not their intent, that the intro also has names flashing by of the Producer, the Director, and a whole host of other folks responsible for creating the thing you are about to watch. But speaking of points, as I have complained before, the font or type point size of that information, and where it shows up on the otherwise attention-grabbing screen is certainly not meant for you to actually register.

Credits flash by at a speed that for most of us is so fast it's not likely any true communication is taking place. The location of the names and titles jumps all over the screen, so you might not even realize where it popped up before it's gone. This isn't designed to let folks know who created the video, and it certainly isn't intended to give them the credit they deserve. So what's the point?

Of course the same thing now happens at the end of a movie or episode. The "credits" come up. The cast list (who was that actor playing the spouse of the lead) starts scrolling up at a speed certainly not designed for reading. The font is so small, even on big screens, that it becomes almost ludi-

crous to suggest that there is really an intent to have anyone recognize names and titles before they are either gone or the entire "credit scroll" gets minimized into a small box at the top left of the screen, or maybe the top right. The streaming service is now showing an "up next" promo rather than letting you actually read the credits. Yes, you can grab your remote and try to "click" on the little box before it disappears to get it back full-size, but how many folks know that?

Well, you get my point. I do understand that the long, almost interminable credit scrolls of the huge projects like Lord of the Rings with every artist, craftsman, driver, etc., probably forced some of this blur upon us. There are probably contract requirements that say all those folks have to be cited. It's like what I called "smudge" that used to be at the bottom of pharmaceutical ads with all the conditions and ills that could come from using the product. It's not really intended to be read, or even noticed.

What if we actually tried to get the video folks to communicate some of the critical information, like lead actors, producers, composers, directors, cinematographer, etc.? Put their credits in a font you can actually read. Let the artsy "intro" be just that, not something that totally distracts from the information you are allegedly trying to convey. Wouldn't that work better for everyone involved? I'll get to my beef with "GUI's" another time!



Steve

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(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)



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