

Promoting Broadband Competition Through Open-Access

States can promote universal access to broadband by removing barriers to competition and by directing funding to support local broadband solutions. These policy recommendations can be leveraged together to promote competitive broadband markets.

Promote Open Access Infrastructure

When existing incentives fail to bring about broadband competition, open access infrastructure can create conditions that support competitive markets. [Open access infrastructure](#) is built and owned by either a local government or a broadband provider. The network owner then functions as a wholesaler by leasing its infrastructure to broadband providers that offer service to homes and commercial entities.

- The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (“BEAD”) Program, administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (“NTIA”) provides states with more than \$42 billion dollars to deploy broadband and promote broadband adoption. NTIA strongly encourages States and Territories to use their BEAD money on projects that provide “open access.”
- Promoting open access infrastructure is particularly beneficial for areas in which providers are still reluctant to offer service even with the aid of existing government deployment subsidies, because it lowers the cost for new entrants to offer service. Simply put, they no longer have to build a network.
- This [strategy](#) was successfully deployed broadband in Lincoln, Nebraska, when the Public Works Department identified over 350 square miles of decommissioned pipelines that they were able to use as conduit to lay fiber. This attracted multiple providers, since they were able to pull fiber through the area cheaply.

Prioritize Funding Municipal Broadband and Other Alternative Providers

States should prioritize municipal broadband and broadband cooperatives for BEAD funds in areas that lack sufficient competition or where established companies do not see worthwhile business opportunities. Offering affordable broadband can be a natural fit for these entities because they already have experience running utilities, like water and electricity.

- NTIA requires states to consider awarding funds to municipalities, or to justify their reason for not doing so. Municipal networks can put competitive pressure on incumbent providers by offering better quality of internet service and by [bringing down](#) the average price of broadband. Many municipalities build open-access networks, creating competition where there was once none.
- Unfortunately, nineteen states have “[legal barriers or bans](#)” on municipal broadband. Blocks or bans on municipal broadband harm competition at a time when federal and state policies should promote local connectivity solutions. States legislators should undo these blocks.