

# ***Bridging the Gap***



**“Every household and business in Florida should have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet Services.”**

The purpose of this document is to assist counties in understanding the Statewide Broadband Initiative; to give guidance in establishing Local Technology Planning Teams; and, to help you answer the following questions -

What are your Internet Access Goals?

Who is leading the Charge?

What are your needs?

What are your assets?

Who are you partners?

What are the resources that can help you Bridge the Gap?

## ***Enhancing/Expanding Internet Services***

**“Every household and business in Florida should have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet Services.”**

Florida’s counties are working to support the expansion of internet services throughout the State of Florida and to support the Dept. of Economic Opportunity as the agency proceeds to implement the provisions of HB 969 that passed in the 2020 Legislative Session and HB 1239 that passed in the 2021 Legislative Session. The Small County Coalition is working in collaboration with the Florida Association Counties to facilitate the overall objective.

### **What are the responsibilities of the Department of Economic Opportunity?**

**DEO is responsible for critical elements that are foundational to the success of the program:**

- Create a strategic plan that has goals and strategies for increasing the use of broadband Internet service in the state.
- Build and facilitate local technology planning teams or partnerships with members representing cross-sections of the community.
- Encourage the use of broadband Internet service, especially in the rural, unserved, or/and underserved communities of the state.
- Develop geographic information system maps of broadband Internet service availability though the state. The bill specifies the content required to be included in the maps and that they must be developed by June 30, 2022.

The Florida Association of Counties has established a Presidential Select Committee on Broadband that is focused on eliminating the Digital Divide in Florida by implementing a comprehensive approach to deliver high-speed, reliable, and affordable Broadband Internet to all Floridians. The Select Committee is coordinating **ACCESS 67 Initiative** to:

- **Advocate** for the adoption, as well as, the implementation of state and federal policies that contribute to the development of solutions that address the lack of **ACCESS** in our local communities.
- **Collaborate** with key stakeholders who share a common goal in developing solutions to address the lack of **ACCESS** in our local communities.
- **Educate** county commissioners with local solutions by sharing best practices among Florida’s counties and similar communities and organizations from around the country.

### ***ACCESS 67 County Champions Network***

- The Florida Association of Counties is requesting each County Commission to designate a lead county contact for matters related to the Presidential Select Committee on Broadband and ACCESS 67 Broadband Initiative.
- **The County Champions** are supported through a designated county staff person that will assist the county in matters related to the ACCESS 67 Broadband Initiative
- FAC will keep a communication network consisting of the designated **County Champions** and the supporting staff person to facilitate collaboration with stakeholders.

## *Initial Steps To Move Forward*

1. **Establish a commitment to participate** – OPTIONAL - This can be in the form of a resolution supporting the goal to improve internet access. Many counties have already taken this step. (See Draft)
2. **Establish the County as the Lead Entity** – REQUESTED OF ALL COUNTIES - the best entity to initiate the collaborative effort is the county government. The county commission and staff should take the lead to begin moving this collaborative effort forward.
  - Each County Should **Designate a lead Commissioner and a Lead Staff** person to assist in coordinating effort.
    - i. The **lead commissioner** should either be a commissioner designated as the lead Contact or the Chairman of the Commission. (FAC refers to this lead commissioner as a “County Champion” in the Access 67 program.)
    - ii. The **lead staff liaison** should either be by the County Administrator, Coordinator, or-Manager or a high-level staff designee that will spearhead the local effort.
3. **Establish Your Local Technology Planning Team (LTPT)** – the LTPT is an entity established pursuant to legislation.
  - Each county should initiate the effort of putting together a Local Technology Planning Team. (See Template)
  - The LTPT’s are intended to include a cross-section of the community, which *may* include, but are not limited to, representatives from the following organizations and industries: public safety, libraries, K-12 education, colleges and universities, local health care providers, private businesses, community organizations, economic development organizations, local governments, tourism, parks and recreation, and agriculture.
  - The people appointed to the represent their respective sectors are the choice of the county, but the team should represent the various sectors seeking enhanced access to the internet.
4. **Assessment of your local internet capacity** – REQUESTED OF ALL COUNTIES Once the LTPT is established – the County should initiate a meeting of the LTPT members to begin a discussion and self-evaluation of internet access and capacity.
  - **Counties that have already implemented assessment or feasibility studies** should have each sector pull the documents into an inventory which can be reviewed and prepare an executive summary addressing the following:
    - Current broadband availability;
    - Unserved and underserved areas - businesses and residents;
    - Existing assets relevant to broadband deployment;
    - Existing partnerships with broadband service providers; and,
    - Existing barriers to the deployment of broadband Internet services in the community.
  - **Counties that have not yet begun to implement a coordinated approach** to enhancing or expanding internet services should begin a self-assessment to answer the following questions –
    - What is the current broadband availability?
    - Where are the Unserved and underserved businesses and residents?
    - What are the existing assets relevant to broadband deployment?
    - What are the existing and potential partnerships with broadband service providers? and,
    - What are the existing barriers to the deployment of broadband Internet services in the community?

**The Local Technology Planning Team**

**An Overview – What is a Local Technology Planning Team?**

The legislation passed by the State of Florida regarding Broadband expansion includes the establishment of Local Technology Planning Teams. It is envisioned that these LTPT's - planning teams will work to understand current broadband availability, identify assets for broadband deployment, build partnerships with service providers, identify underserved and unserved residents and businesses, and understand funding needs to expand broadband internet service.

The legislation contemplates that each county/region have a local technology planning team that includes participation individuals that can represent the needs of education, public safety, healthcare, business, tourism, agriculture, economic development, and local government. Sectors for potential inclusion on the LTPT:

<b>Sector:</b>	<b>Qualifier/Purpose:</b>	<b>Examples:</b>
Public Safety	Rapid and Inter-Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County Sheriff or designee</li> </ul>
Libraries	Education & Information Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County Director of Libraries</li> </ul>
K-12 Education	Public Sector -	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Superintendent of Schools</li> <li>• School Board Member(s)</li> <li>• College/University Representative(s)</li> </ul>
Health Care Providers	Telemedicine, Institutional Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County Department of Health</li> <li>• Hospital/Clinic Representative(s)</li> </ul>
Private Business	E-Commerce; Economic Development; Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Business Owners</li> <li>• Chamber of Commerce</li> </ul>
Tourism	Vacation Planning & E-Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourist Development Organization</li> <li>• Local Attractions</li> </ul>
Community Organizations	Outreach Initiatives; Community Presence/Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonprofits</li> <li>• Community Leaders</li> </ul>
Agriculture	Base Industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers and Co-Ops</li> <li>• Equipment Brokers</li> <li>• Local IFAS Official</li> </ul>
Economic Development Organizations	(E-)Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Development Council/Committee Member(s)</li> </ul>
Local Governments	E-Governance; E-Government; Infrastructure Initiatives; County Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County Administrator</li> <li>• Town/City Representatives</li> <li>• Parks and Recreation</li> <li>• Public Safety &amp; Emergency Services</li> </ul>
Parks and Recreation	Infrastructure and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National/State Park Representative(s)</li> </ul>
Local Broadband & Internet Service Providers	Partnerships; Infrastructure Expansion (Last Mile); Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet Service Providers servicing the county/region</li> </ul>

While identifying representatives of the key sectors to be engaged with the Local Technology Planning Teams, individuals from additional sectors can be added as locally desired. ***Bottom-line the LTPT should be reflective of the major users within the local area and region.***

**Template of your Local Technology Planning Team**  
**A Guide To Setting Up Your Local Technology Planning Team**

Initial Coordination Shall be Directed by the County – either a designated Commissioner with the support of a designated County Staff Liaison

- **Initial Chair of the LTPT - County Commissioner Designee - Name of Individual**
- **Designated County Staff Liaison - Name of Designee**

Sectors For Potential Inclusion on the LTPT	Qualifier/Purpose of participation	Participant	Name of Person Selected
<b>Public Safety</b>	High Speed Response	Sheriff's Office	
<b>Libraries</b>	Information Services	Director of County Library	
<b>K-12 Education</b>	Access to Educational information and utilization	Supt. of Schools Representative of Higher Ed located in the county.	
<b>Health Care</b>	Institutional Connectivity Telemedicine	County Health Dept. Hospital/Clinic Rep.	
<b>Business</b>	Economic Development – Ecommerce - Partnerships	Chamber of Commerce; Business leader(s)	
<b>Tourism</b>	Vacation Planning - Eco Tourism - Ecommerce	T.D.C. – Local Attractions	
<b>Community Orgs.</b>	Outreach – Influence	Nonprofits Community Leaders	
<b>Agriculture</b>	Base Industries	Farmer – Co-ops – Equipment Supplies – Local extension	
<b>Economic Development organizations</b>	(E-)Commerce	Economic Development Council/Committee Member(s)	
<b>Local Governments</b>	E-Governance;E- Government; Infrastructure Initiatives; County Plans	County Administrator Town/City Representatives Parks and Recreation Public Safety & Emergency Services	
<b>Parks and Recreation</b>	Partnerships; Infrastructure Expansion (Last Mile); Funding	Internet Service Providers servicing the county/region	
<b>Local Broadband &amp; Internet Service Providers</b>	Partnerships; Infrastructure Expansion (Last Mile); Funding	Internet Service Providers servicing the county/region	
<b>Additional Participants reflective of the community</b>	Skill sets with utilizing internet services		

## **The Initial Meeting of the Local Technology Planning Team**

### **A Guide to the First Meeting of the Local Technology Planning Team**

Once the members of the Local Technology Planning Teams have been established, the Team Leader/County Champion should call a meeting. The meeting agenda should include:

#### **Agenda**

1. Introductions and Role of the Local Technology Planning Team
2. A review of the state legislation and the statutory responsibilities of the Department of Economic Opportunity (Statewide Strategic Plan; Statewide Map; Provide Technical Assistance and Development of Resources)
3. Introduction of each Sector represented on the LTPT - each LTPT member should discuss/present their use of broadband/internet in their respective area-
  - a. Sector Goals – Policies
  - b. Sector Leadership/Decision-maker
  - c. Sector Demand – Target user/User Access
  - d. Sector Assets – existing services, current funds available, types of technology available, etc.
  - e. Existing partnerships with broadband service providers; and
  - f. Barriers to the deployment of broadband Internet services in the community.
4. Plan to develop an Executive Summary of Status of Broadband in the area covered by the LTPT – It is recommended that a summary of the status of the elements needed to achieve broadband access be developed based on the following questions:
  - a. Introduction
  - b. Current Availability of Broadband/Internet Access
  - c. Unserved/Underserved Areas
  - d. Current and Potential Assets to Support Broadband/Internet Access
  - e. Current and Potential Partnerships with Providers
  - f. Barriers to Expansion
  - g. Immediate and future Needs
5. Technical Assistance and Resources Needed to Move Forward.
6. Future Meetings

**Adopting a Resolution – Optional**

**Option 1 -**

**Resolution 21-\_\_\_**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE \_\_\_ COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
SUPPORTING AFFORDABLE AND RELIABLE HIGH-SPEED INTERNET THROUGHOUT FLORIDA.**

**WHEREAS**, affordable and reliable, high-speed internet access is essential for Floridians to be prosperous, compete in a global economy, and achieve a high quality of life; and

**WHEREAS**, affordable and reliable, high-speed internet access is as fundamental as acquiring electricity in the first half of the 20th century; and

**WHEREAS**, the lack of broadband internet access impacts small, medium, and large counties, both rural and urban; and

**WHEREAS**, the absence and/or lack of high-speed internet hinders:

- Equitable educational opportunities for school children and workforce development;
- Access to telemedicine to improve health outcomes without demanding travel and transportation needs;
- Rapid communication between the public and law enforcement agencies;
- Economic competitiveness limiting business investment, job growth, and career opportunities;

**WHEREAS**, high-speed Internet can be cost prohibitive for many Floridians further accelerating the Digital Divide; and

**WHEREAS**, identifying community needs, assets, and barriers is necessary to meet the goal of universal access to high-speed Internet; and

**WHEREAS**, local governments, states, and the federal government must leverage resources to deliver cost-effective broadband solutions which provide a return on investment to both the public and private interest; and

**WHEREAS**, county officials play a crucial role as policymakers, funders, data aggregators, conveners, and partners in pursuing sustainable solutions to broadband access, affordability, and reliability; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Legislature passed House Bill 969 in 2020 creating an Office of Broadband within the Department of Economic Opportunity requiring the creation of a strategic plan that has goals and strategies for increasing the use of broadband Internet service in the state; and

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Legislature passed House Bill 1239 in 2021, the “Florida Broadband Deployment Act of 2021”, finding sustainable broadband Internet service is critical to economic and business development, essential for all residents, and provided resources to develop a state broadband internet service map to identify connectivity gaps to end users; and

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of County Commissioners of \_\_\_\_\_ County, Florida, as follows:

**Section 1.** The above recitals are true and correct and incorporated in this Resolution.

**Section 2.** That the \_\_\_\_\_ County Board of County Commissioners, hereby supports the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity’s Office of Broadband in the effort to achieve access to reliable and affordable, high-speed internet access to every household and business throughout the State of Florida.

**Section 3.** This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

APPROVED and ADOPTED by the Board of County Commissioners of \_\_\_\_\_ County, Florida. on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021.

**ADOPTING A RESOLUTION – AN OPTIONAL STEP**  
**OPTION 2**  
**XXXXXX DRAFT RESOLUTION**  
**SUPPORTING AFFORDABLE AND RELIABLE HIGH-SPEED INTERNET**  
**THROUGHOUT FLORIDA.**

**WHEREAS**, reliable and affordable high-speed internet access is essential for Floridians to be prosperous and meet today’s challenges; and

**WHEREAS**, the absence of access to reliable and affordable high-speed internet service prevents communities from achieving the high quality of life that is considered a fundamental component for educational and economic success; and

**WHEREAS**, the absence and/or lack of high-speed internet:

- hinders the ability for all schoolchildren to have access to educational opportunities;
- hinders access to telemedicine to improve health outcomes for its residents, and to provide access without demanding travel and transportation;
- hinders the ability for rapid communication between the public and law enforcement agencies;
- hinders the ability for communities to maintain and expand business opportunities, stimulate job growth;
- hinders the ability to engage in innovative technologies that are required for a vibrant economy.

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Legislature has established the Office of Broadband within the Department of Economic Opportunity requiring the creation of a strategic plan; the development of a statewide map of internet access; and the development of Local Technology Planning Teams to assist in assessing and planning local capacity and needs, and

**WHEREAS**, in order to meet the goal of universal access to high-speed internet, it will be necessary to identify community assets, needs, and barriers; and,

**WHEREAS**, it is recognized that private providers are an important partner in providing affordable and reliable connectivity, expanded internet services, and engaging governmental entities at the Federal and State level in meeting identified local needs.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the members of the **XXXXXX** resolve as follows:

**Section 1.** That the **XXXXXXXXXX** hereby supports the State of Florida, the Department of Economic Opportunity in the effort to achieve access to reliable and affordable high-speed internet access to every household and business throughout the State of Florida.

**Section 2.** That the **XXXXXXXXXX** will assist the State Office of Broadband by participating as needed in providing information, assistance in mapping efforts, and supporting other such efforts that will lead to enhanced access to affordable, reliable high-speed internet services throughout the State of Florida.

**Section 3.** This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

**APPROVED and ADOPTED by the **XXXXXXXXXX** on the **XXXXX** day of (Month), 2021.**

**Authorized Signature**

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ATTEST

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Authorized Signature**



## **Enabling Legislation Passed in 2020 and 2021**

### **Backgrounder on the Relevant Legislation**

#### ***CS/HB 969 By: Broadband Internet Service passed by the Florida Legislature in 2020***

##### **[Text of Enrolled Version of HB 969](#)**

CS/HB 969 designates the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) as the lead state agency to facilitate the expansion of broadband Internet service in the state and creates the Florida Office of Broadband (Office) within DEO's Division of Community Development. The Office must create a strategic plan for increasing the use of broadband Internet service in the state, build local technology planning teams, encourage the use of broadband Internet service, especially in rural, unserved, and underserved Florida's Turnpike Enterprise for the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance program may be used for projects that assist in the development of broadband infrastructure within or adjacent to a multiuse corridor. Subject to the Governor's veto powers, the effective date of this bill is July 1, 2020.

#### ***CS/CS/HB 1239 - Broadband Internet Infrastructure passed in by the 2021 Legislature***

##### **[Text of Enrolled Version of HB 1239](#)**

The bill requires local technology planning teams established by the Office to work with rural communities to help identify unserved and underserved consumers and to work with broadband providers to identify opportunities and reduce barriers to the deployment of service. The bill provides a nonrecurring appropriation of \$1.5 million for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 to DEO to develop, by June 30, 2022, geographic information system maps of broadband Internet service availability throughout this state. The bill creates two new programs to support the expansion of broadband Internet service to consumers without access to service. The bill creates a program within the Florida Office of Broadband (Office), within the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) to award grants, subject to appropriation, to applicants who seek to install or deploy infrastructure that expands broadband service to unserved areas. The bill specifies the types of entities eligible for such grants, provides application requirements and evaluation criteria, and requires the Office to enter into an agreement with each grant recipient that specifies performance conditions, including potential sanctions. The bill establishes a process by which an existing broadband provider may challenge a grant application on the grounds that the provider already offers or plans to offer service in the area at issue. The bill provides limitations on grant awards and requires the Office to prepare an annual report summarizing the activity under this program. The bill requires municipal electric utilities, through July 1, 2024, to offer broadband service providers a discounted rate of \$1 per attachment per year for any new pole attachment necessary to make broadband service available to an unserved or underserved consumer within the utility's service territory. The bill provides terms for these discounted attachments. The bill prohibits municipal electric utilities from raising their current pole attachment rates for broadband providers before July 31, 2022. The bill became law on May 7, 2021; chapter 2021-24, Laws of Florida, and becomes effective on July 1, 2021.

**Resources and References**  
**Here are links to relevant resources**

*DEO – Office of Broadband Website*

*FAC – ACCESS 67 Website*

*NACO Report from Internet Task Force*

*The Florida Broadband Initiative 11-20-20 - Third Revised Final [.docx](#)*

**County Local Technology Planning Team**

*Counties should complete this form and send to  
 Jeff Scala - [jscala@fl-counties.com](mailto:jscala@fl-counties.com) with a copy to Chris Doolin - [cdoolin@doolinandassoc.com](mailto:cdoolin@doolinandassoc.com)*

**Name of the County Commissioner Chairing the LTPT**

Name –  
 Email - Cell phone –

**Name of the County Staff Liaison to the LTPT**

Name –  
 Email - Cell phone-

**Names and Contact Information for Sector Representatives Appointed to the LTPT**

Potential Sectors on the LTPT	Representing	Name of Person Selected – email address – cellphone	
<b>Public Safety</b>	Sheriff's Office/Police	Name - Email -	Title - Cell Phone -
<b>Libraries</b>	Director of County Library	Name - Email -	Title - Cell Phone -
<b>K-12 Education</b>	Supt. of Schools Representative of Higher Ed located in the county.	Name - Email -	Title - Cell Phone -
<b>Health Care</b>	County Health Dept/ Hospital/Clinic Rep.	Name - Email -	Title - Cell Phone -
<b>Business</b>	Chamber of Commerce; Business leader(s)	Name - Email -	Title - Cell Phone -
<b>Tourism</b>	T.D.C. – Local Attractions	Name - Email -	Title - Cell Phone -
<b>Community Orgs.</b>	Nonprofits Community Leaders	Name - Email -	Title - Cell Phone -
<b>Agriculture</b>	Farmer – Co-ops – Equipment Supplies – Local extension	Name - Email -	Title - Cell Phone -
<b>Economic Development</b>	Economic Development Council/Committee Member(s)	Name - Email -	Title - Cell Phone --
<b>Local Governments</b>	County Administrator Town/City Representatives	Name - Email -	Title - Cell Phone -
<b>Parks and Recreation</b>	Internet Service Providers servicing the county/region	Name - Email -	Title - Cell Phone -
<b>Service Providers</b>	Internet Service Providers servicing the county/region	Name - Email -	Title - Cell Phone -

*Broadband Conversations and Actions  
Requests of Counties*

*Move forward to Appoint your Commissioner Designee and Staff Liaison*

*Move forward to appoint Sector Representatives to your LTPT*

*Complete the form on page 11 and send it to FAC with a copy to the Small  
County Coalition*

*Contact or Call with questions*

*Jeff Scala*     [jscala@fl-counties.com](mailto:jscala@fl-counties.com)     727-637-4081  
*Chris Doolin*     [cdoolin@doolinandassoc.com](mailto:cdoolin@doolinandassoc.com)     850-508-5492