

Counties and the American Rescue Plan Act Recovery Fund:

BROADBAND



THE RECOVERY FUND AND BROADBAND:

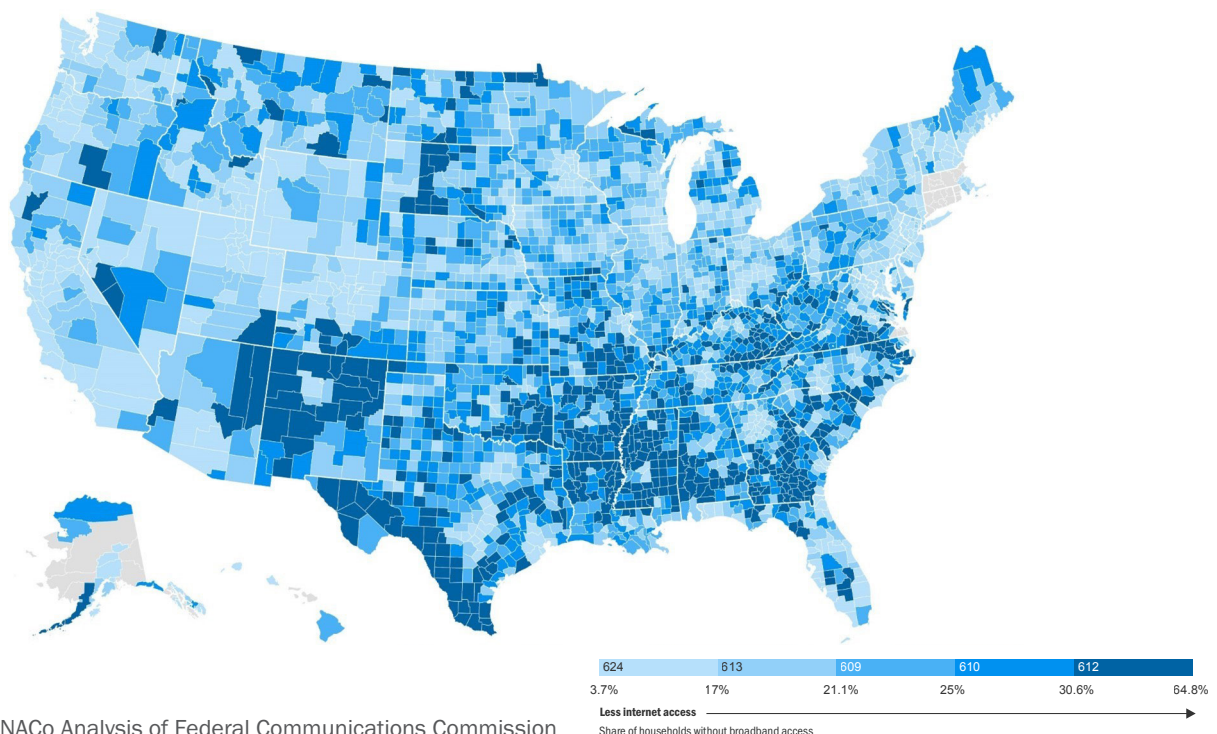
The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (Recovery Fund), part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which NACo helped to develop and strongly advocated to pass, allocates \$65.1 billion. **These funds provide direct, flexible aid for every county, parish and borough in America.** Counties are on the front lines in delivering this aid to residents and are a driving force connecting communities and strengthening the economy.

As directed by the ARPA and the U.S. Department of Treasury, counties can invest Recovery Funds into a broad range of programs, services and projects under five categories to: support the public health response; address negative economic impacts caused by COVID-19; replace lost revenue; provide premium pay to essential workers; and invest in water, sewer and broadband infrastructure.

Since the enactment of the ARPA, America's counties have been working hard to develop Recovery Fund implementation plans that will help spur an equitable economic recovery across the nation. As sound financial stewards, **counties are investing these critical Recovery Funds to ensure the health and well-being of our nation's residents and the economic vitality of our local communities.** Many counties are in the preliminary stages of development and implementation of our Recovery Fund Plans. This report highlights county investments to tackle the digital divide, increase internet speeds and connect previously unserved residents with reliable broadband access.

COUNTIES ARE EXPANDING BROADBAND ACCESS AND BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Over 11 million Americans in rural areas and over 846,000 Americans in tribal lands lack access to broadband that meets the federal definition for minimum standards. Counties are working diligently to address these gaps in service across the country.



Source: 2019, NACo Analysis of Federal Communications Commission

COUNTIES PLAN TO INVEST RECOVERY FUNDS TO:



**EXPAND “MIDDLE MILE”
INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS TO
INCREASE INTERNET ACCESS**



**LEVERAGE PUBLIC-PRIVATE
PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS
BROADBAND GAPS**



**IMPLEMENT DIGITAL EQUITY
INITIATIVES**



**EQUIP COUNTY PARKS WITH
PUBLIC WI-FI**



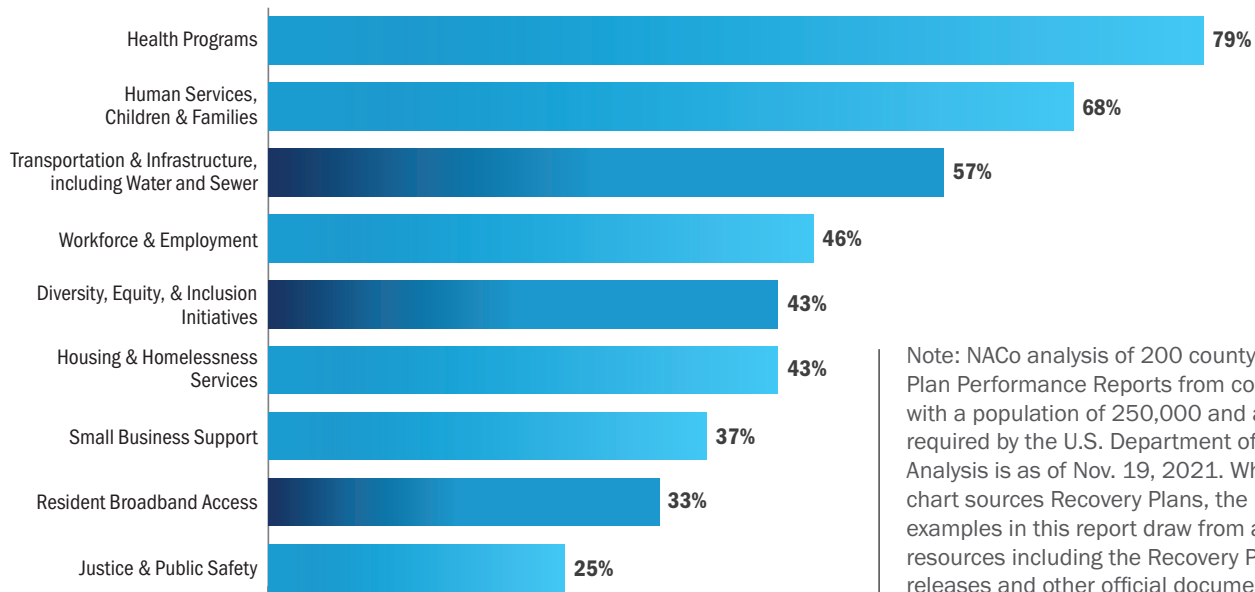
**CONNECT UNSERVED PARTS OF THE
COUNTY WITH RELIABLE SERVICE**



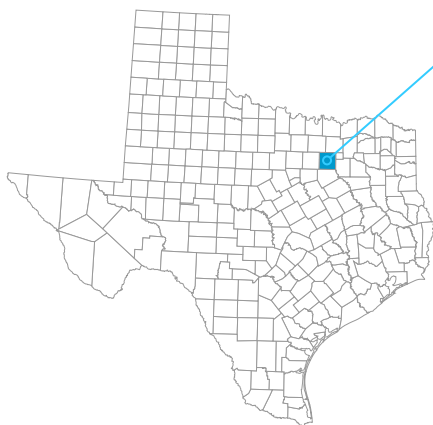
**INCREASE INTERNET SPEEDS TO
100 MBPS DOWNLOAD/UPLOAD**

COUNTIES ARE EXPANDING BROADBAND ACCESS FOR RESIDENTS

How are counties investing the funds? NACo analysis of 200 county ARPA Recovery Fund plans reveals county-designed investments in the community across key areas of need. These local priorities are found within county plans at the rate displayed in the chart, **e.g. thirty-three percent of county plans include investments in broadband.** The darker bars are the investment categories adjacent to broadband that support the continuation and expansion of services in counties. The examples in this report further illustrate the allocations to support resident broadband access on the local level.

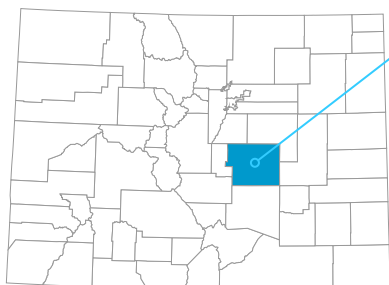


Note: NACo analysis of 200 county Recovery Plan Performance Reports from counties with a population of 250,000 and above, as required by the U.S. Department of Treasury. Analysis is as of Nov. 19, 2021. While the bar chart sources Recovery Plans, the narrative examples in this report draw from a variety of resources including the Recovery Plans, press releases and other official documents.



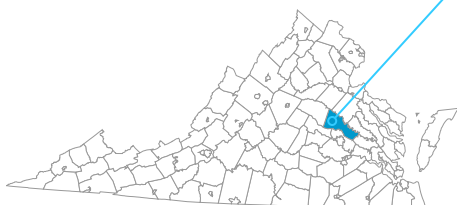
DALLAS COUNTY, TEXAS

Dallas County is expanding reliable internet service for residents through a \$35 million allocation of Recovery Funds. The broadband infrastructure project will focus on **providing residents with a minimum of 100 Mbps download/upload speeds**, which was identified as an urgent need due to service shortages experienced during the pandemic. Recovery Funds will also strategically target households and businesses without access as well as those without minimally acceptable speeds.



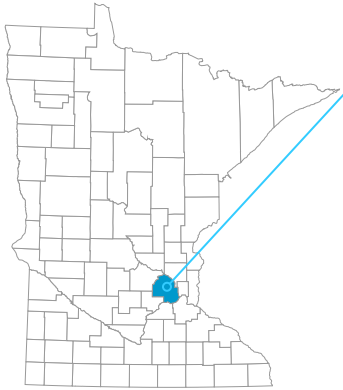
EL PASO COUNTY, COLO.

El Paso County will **support “middle mile” broadband projects that connect county facilities** and provide the capacity for private providers to deliver “last mile” broadband services. The county’s \$6 million investment will also help implement a competitive proposal process to increase the quality of broadband for underserved residents that were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.



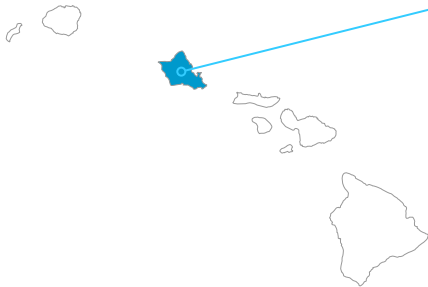
HANOVER COUNTY, VA.

Hanover County is utilizing Recovery Funds to implement high-quality broadband access through the “Connect Hanover” initiative. The initiative is a **public-private partnership that will put fiber optic cables on existing power lines in areas of the county that are underserved**. The plan leverages these power lines for “middle fiber” capabilities and will connect to individual homes to provide download/upload speeds of 100Mbps and address gaps in access worsened during the pandemic.



HENNEPIN COUNTY, MINN.

Hennepin County is addressing the digital divide that was intensified due to extensive school and work closures over the past year. The county has dedicated \$10 million to the “Connecting Hennepin” initiative which aims to **eliminate the digital divide by leveraging the county’s fiber-optic infrastructure to resolve broadband gaps**. County staff will also coordinate with federal, state and local government partners to develop and implement a comprehensive digital equity plan.



HONOLULU CITY & COUNTY, HAWAII

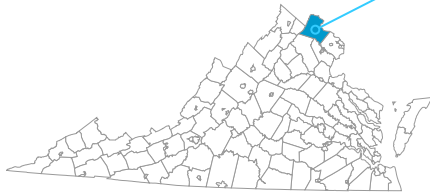
Honolulu City & County is supporting critical island infrastructure through a \$50 million investment of Recovery Funds. Within that allocation, \$1.5 million will be used for a **broadband needs assessment to determine the gaps in access** for residents as they continue to navigate the pandemic, fulfilling one of the ARPA’s key directives. The funds will also increase Wi-Fi capacity and connectivity access in public areas to support digital equity.



KERN COUNTY, CALIF.

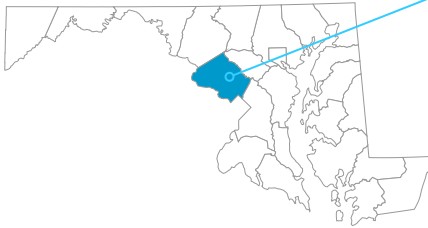
Kern County is modernizing public Wi-Fi infrastructure by allocating \$10 million to **outfit forty-three county parks in disadvantaged communities with public Wi-Fi**. The project aims to address technology equity gaps so that residents disproportionately affected by the pandemic can access online content like schoolwork and job applications moving forward.

LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA.



Loudoun County is assisting underserved residents by investing \$1 million to **extend internet access and meet minimum speed standards to mitigate the impact of inadequate broadband connectivity.** Loudoun County selected the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Virginia Telecommunications Initiative grant as the vehicle for providing competitive and comprehensive service to expediently address these gaps in service.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD.

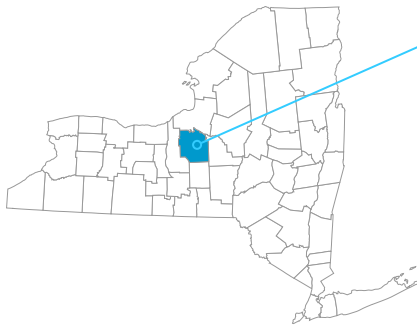


Montgomery County is **helping low-income households by creating a digital equity program** to support the county's broadband infrastructure. The program utilizes Recovery Funds to bolster internet reliability, expand program outreach to Spanish-speaking residents and enroll low-income residents in free computer device and home broadband discount programs to help them connect to vital services during the ongoing pandemic.

NEW HANOVER COUNTY, N.C.

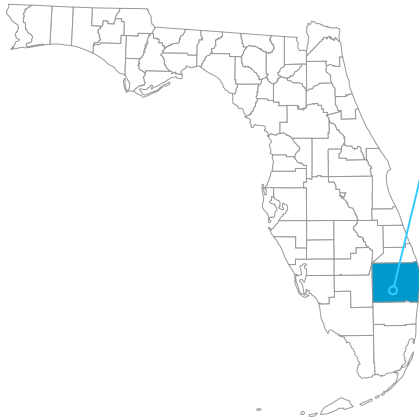


New Hanover County will **connect around 8,000 homes without adequate internet access, with a particular focus on households with children who qualify for Medicaid or Food and Nutrition Benefits.** The county's \$5.76 million allocation will expand overall broadband connectivity and serve those who struggled with the online transition brought on by COVID-19.



ONONDAGA COUNTY, N.Y.

Onondaga County is increasing access to reliable broadband internet through a \$15 million investment that will help bridge the digital divide. The initiative aims to **provide equal access to broadband in all areas of the county not currently served by providers**. The county recognizes that reliable internet is an essential need to support the county's COVID-19 recovery, and is leveraging this opportunity to support future resiliency.



PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLA.

Palm Beach County is expanding broadband and cybersecurity infrastructure to **support additional teleworking and virtual learning opportunities** during the pandemic. The \$43 million Recovery Fund allocation will increase public offerings of internet signals as well as offer internet coverage to students in partnership with the school district.



PLACER COUNTY, CALIF.

Placer County is **incorporating community equity into broadband expansion initiatives** made possible by a \$10 million allocation of Recovery Funds. The program will focus on building out broadband service for unserved parts of the county and will partner with local community organizations to provide fast, reliable service to enable teleworking and virtual learning for all county residents.



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