



BROADBAND OFFICES IN OTHER STATES

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DEFINING "BROADBAND"

According to the [Federal Communications Commission](#), (FCC) "broadband" generally refers to high-speed Internet access that is always on and faster than traditional dial-up access. It includes access through digital subscriber lines (DSL), cable modems, and fiber optic technologies, among other things.

In January 2015, the [FCC](#) updated its 5-year-old broadband benchmark for download speeds from 4 megabits per second (Mbps) to 25 Mbps. It also updated its benchmark upload speeds from 1 Mbps to 3 Mbps.

In comparison, "gigabit" broadband is typically transmitted through fiber optic technology and can deliver download speeds of up to 1,000 Mbps.

ISSUE

Do other states have dedicated broadband offices, and if so, how are they funded? Have any states published an economic analysis of "gigabit" broadband services for their state?

SUMMARY

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), over the past several years, every state, including [Connecticut](#), has established a task force, commission, or other initiative to help promote the expansion of broadband service in their state. These entities and initiatives have been largely funded through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), with grants provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce's [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) (NTIA).

It appears that only New Hampshire has statutorily created a new state employee position dedicated to overseeing broadband development, although Arkansas expanded an existing position's duties to

include oversight of broadband development. We were unable to identify any states that have created positions dedicated to developing or promoting state-wide gigabit broadband service.

We were also unable to identify any recent state-sponsored studies that examined the state-wide economic impact of gigabit broadband.

STATE BROADBAND OFFICES

Over the past several years, every state has created a broadband task force, advisory council, commission, or other initiative. NCSL's list of these entities and initiatives can be found at <http://www.ncsl.org/research/telecommunications-and-information-technology/state-broadband-task-forces-commissions.aspx>. According to NCSL, only two states, Arkansas and New Hampshire, have statutorily established dedicated governmental positions to oversee broadband development, although neither position is specifically focused on developing or promoting the expansion of gigabit broadband. Additional information on state legislation regarding broadband development can be found at <http://www.ncsl.org/research/telecommunications-and-information-technology/broadband-statutes.aspx>.

In Connecticut, PA 07-254 created the Broadband Internet Coordinating Council to monitor trends and developments in the state's efforts to develop a state-wide "world-class" communications infrastructure. The council was eliminated in 2011. In 2010, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority received a \$4 million grant from the NTIA to (1) develop guidelines for expanding access to and adoption of broadband services across the state, (2) create a [state website](#) devoted to broadband services, and (3) collect data from the Internet service providers operating in the state. The grant is managed by the state Broadband Policy Coordinator through the Office of Consumer Counsel.

New Hampshire

In 2009, New Hampshire enacted [legislation](#) that created the Director of Broadband Technology Planning and Development within the state's Division of Economic Development. The position is within the state's civil service system for state employees. Among other things, it is charged with:

1. working with regional partners from the private and public sectors to coordinate efforts to provide affordable and accessible broadband to state residents,
2. encouraging and facilitating collaboration between public and private research and development efforts related to broadband technology planning and development,
3. developing a comprehensive state broadband plan and coordinating with partners throughout the state to implement and regularly update it, and
4. seeking resources such as grants from government and nonprofit entities to promote the state's broadband technology planning and development initiatives.

Arkansas

In 2013, Arkansas enacted [legislation](#) that designated the state's Department of Information Systems director as the State Broadband Manager. The position is charged with promoting, developing, and coordinating broadband expansion and appropriate broadband infrastructure for all areas of the state. A copy of the manager's most recent annual report can be found [here](#).

FEDERAL FUNDING

Using over \$4 billion in federal funding appropriated under the ARRA, the NTIA launched the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) and the State Broadband Initiative (SBI). In 2009 and 2010, NTIA invested roughly \$4 billion to fund three types of BTOP projects: (1) public computer center projects that establish or upgrade public computer facilities that provide public broadband access, (2) sustainable broadband adoption projects that focus on increasing broadband use and adoption, and (3) comprehensive community infrastructure projects that deploy new or improved broadband facilities.

NTIA also invested a total of \$293 million in SBI projects in every state. Initiatives funded through SBI grants focused on (1) collecting and verifying broadband availability data for a national broadband map and (2) helping states identify and address obstacles to broadband deployment and adoption by supporting state and local task forces and planning teams. According to BTOP's [March 2015 Quarterly Program Status Report](#), 19 of the 233 total BTOP grants awarded remained active as of September 30, 2014, as did 55 of the 56 SBI grants awarded.

STATE BROADBAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Although there are numerous studies on the impact of expanded broadband use, we were unable to find any recent state-sponsored studies that examined the state-wide economic impact of gigabit broadband services. However, we found the following studies that address some, but not all of those aspects.

1. NTIA has published a [report](#) on the social and economic impacts of its BTOP program (using a 3 Mbps, not gigabit, definition of broadband).
2. The Analysis Group has published a [study](#) on how gigabit broadband may affect gross domestic product based on data from communities that have widespread gigabit broadband access. (The Analysis Group is a private consulting firm and the study was commissioned by the Fiber to the Home Council, a non-profit association of companies and organizations that (a) deliver video, Internet, and voice services over high-bandwidth, next-generation, direct fiber optic connections; (b) manufacture related products; or (c) are involved in fiber optic network planning and building.)

3. In 2012, Utah's Office of the Legislative Auditor General issued a [performance audit](#) of the Utah Telecommunication Open Infrastructure Agency (UTOPIA). UTOPIA is an inter-local agency formed by 11 Utah cities in 2002 to build a wholesale fiber-optic gigabit broadband network. (The audit generally focuses on issues with UTOPIA's development and performance, and not the network's broader economic impact.)
4. In 2014, New York Law School issued "[Understanding the Debate Over Government-Owned Broadband Networks: Context, Lesson Learned, and a Way Forward for Policy Makers,](#)" which contains, among other things, findings and recommendations based on case studies for 10 different municipally owned and operated broadband networks. (The case studies focus on networks owned and operated by individual municipalities, but not on a state-wide basis.)

HYPERLINKS

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New Hampshire Revised Statutes, § 12-A: 59-a, <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/i/12-a/12-a-59-a.htm>, last visited May 1, 2015.

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Analysis Group, "Early Evidence Suggests Gigabit Broadband Drives GDP," http://www.analysisgroup.com/uploadedFiles/Publishing/Articles/Gigabit_Broadband_Sosa.pdf, last visited May 1, 2015.

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