



Kansas Legislative Research Department

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May 23, 2022

FUNDING FOR BROADBAND INTERNET DEVELOPMENT IN KANSAS

The Kansas Senior Care Task Force (Task Force) recommended, in the 2021 Committee Report, that the Kansas Legislative Research Department research funding for broadband internet development in the state. During the Task Force's 2021 interim meetings, conferees noted the importance of broadband access for telehealth for seniors and that current gaps in access and lack of technology hardware continue to be barriers for telehealth.

This memorandum reviews past and anticipated funding for broadband access expansion in the state.

Federal Funding

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), the Office of Broadband Development (KOBD) received \$50.0 million for Connectivity Emergency Response Grants. These grants aim to improve broadband services in underserved and unserved locations. KOBD estimated the funds would enable over 50,000 new connections in homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions; lay more than 695 miles of fiber; and erect 226 towers for fixed wireless services.

Also through the CARES Act, KOBD received \$10.0 million in Broadband Partnership Adoption Grants to improve internet service adoption across low-income households. KOBD distributed more than 30,000 laptops and tablets to schools, libraries, and households. It connected nearly 17,000 households through free or discounted broadband services.

KOBD is also anticipating federal funds from the Coronavirus Capital Project Fund of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA Act) of approximately \$103.0 million and over \$100.0 million from the Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act. Both of these allocations are still pending and pending guidance on allowable expenditures. The ARPA Act also provided \$15.8 million through the Federal Communication Commission for Emergency Connectivity at Libraries and Schools.

In addition to the federal ARPA funds for broadband, the Legislature has allocated the following funds from the ARPA State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLRF). The Legislature added \$10.0 million to the Kansas Department for Health and Environment for a Rural Hospital Innovation Grant program; and \$4.0 million to the Kansas Department of Education for the Kansas Connect and Learn initiative, which provides school districts with matching funds for the Federal Communication Commission's E-rate programs to invest in high-speed broadband build-out.

State Funding

State funding was provided through the Kansas Department of Transportation's Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Plan (IKE). The total allocation equals \$85.0 million over 10 years. So far, KOBD has expended \$5.0 million in infrastructure projects to expand broadband to more than 2,500 households in rural areas. Projects required a 50 percent match by the applicant, resulting in \$10.0 million worth of projects.