



## SC Association of Counties

### *Digital Opportunity Department*

South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff | July 30, 2024

# Office of Regulatory Staff

[ORS.SC.GOV](https://ors.sc.gov)

## ORS Mission

The South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) was created with the enactment of Act 175 in 2004.

The Office of Regulatory Staff represents the public interest in utility regulation by considering the concerns of the using and consuming public with respect to public utility services, regardless of the class of customer, and preservation of continued investment in and maintenance of utility facilities so as to provide reliable and high-quality utility services.

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# Investor-Owned Utility Regulators

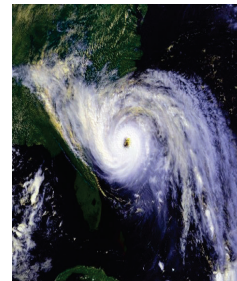
- Electric & Natural Gas
- Water & Wastewater
- Transportation
- Telecommunications
- Safety Programs—Natural Gas Pipeline, Rail Safety



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## Other ORS Services

- Consumer
- Energy Policy
- Solar Leasing and Emerging Technologies
- Emergency Support Function 12
- Broadband
- Digital Opportunity



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<https://ors.sc.gov/broadband/digitalopportunity>

<https://youtu.be/YP1VInv2nFI>



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# About the SCBBO...

*"Our vision is for all South Carolinians to have access to affordable, reliable, highspeed internet, and to gain the necessary skills to benefit from this technology."*  
– SCBBO –



<https://ors.sc.gov/broadband>

- ✓ Office created July 2021
- ✓ 2021-22 Budget Proviso Ratified by SC General Assembly
- ✓ Sections 73.6-73.7
- ✓ Administering Broadband Deployment Grants
  - ✓ Established Broadband Advisory Council (BBAC)
  - ✓ Map/Model statewide broadband availability twice a year
  - ✓ Evaluate grant applications, issue grant awards
  - ✓ Provide management and oversight of funded projects
  - ✓ Eligible Applicants are Internet Service Providers (ISPs)
  - ✓ Financial match is required by the ISP
  - ✓ Prioritize Fiber to the Premise (FTTP)

South Carolina Office of Broadband Coordinator

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## South Carolina Areas of Need March 31, 2023

### Speed Tiers (download / upload)

- ≥ 100 Mbps / 100 Mbps (symmetric)
- ≥ 100 Mbps / 20 Mbps

### Unserviced Housing Units

- 100 or more
- 26 - 99
- 11 - 25
- 1 - 10
- Zero

Data Sources: Based on SC Broadband Office (SCBBO) analysis of FCC Broadband Data Collection, Dec. 31, 2022 submissions that were provided directly to our office by Internet Service Providers. In addition, SCBBO May 2023 Availability Challenge information has also been used to augment and update the base location data. Satellite and mobile broadband services are excluded. Ookla® Speedtest Intelligence® data from Jan. 1, 2019 through Mar. 31, 2023 combined for analysis in the region.

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Additional broadband information may be found at [www.scdigitaldrive.org](http://www.scdigitaldrive.org). Submit comments or questions to [maps@ors.sc.gov](mailto:maps@ors.sc.gov)

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## South Carolina Planning December 31, 2024

### Speed Tiers (download / upload)

- ≥ 100 Mbps / 100 Mbps (symmetric)
- ≥ 100 Mbps / 20 Mbps

### Unserviced Housing Units

- 100 or More
- 26 - 99
- 11 - 25
- 1 - 10
- Zero

### Managed Investments

- State
- Federal
- Private

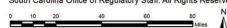
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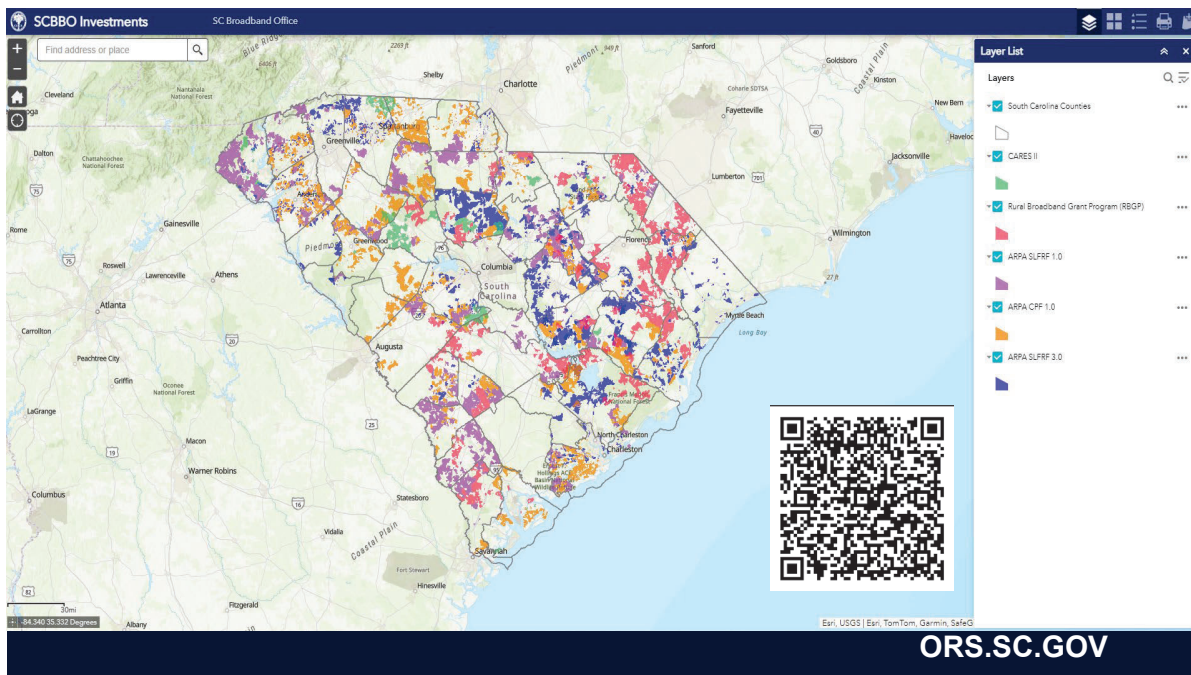


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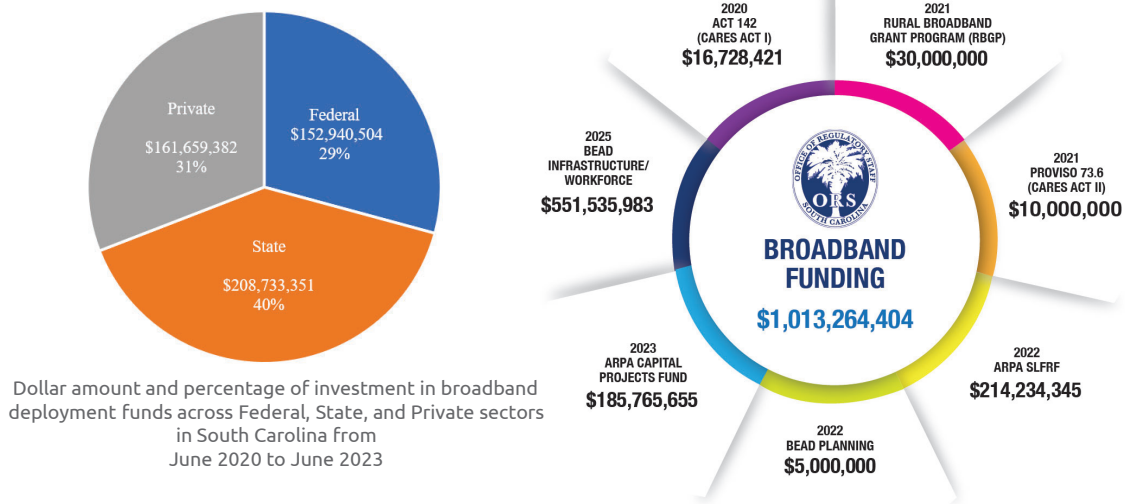
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## Overview of Broadband Investment in SC

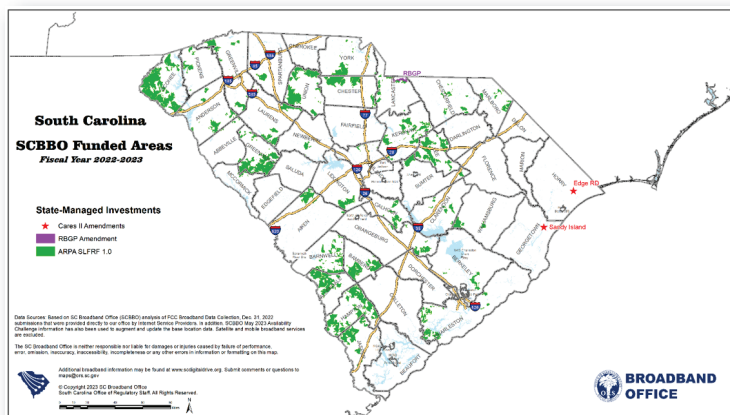


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## Funded Areas 2022-2023

### American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) grant program

- 61 projects
- 15 different ISPs
- 34 counties
- SCBBO financial commitment \$154,574,520
- Total of all project budgets \$251,306,950
- Match rate 38% (non-ARPA funds)
- Scheduled completion NLT December 31, 2024.



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## ARPA Accelerated Deployment Grant Program (ADGP)

- Awarding up to \$25 million across 10 ISPs
- 50% match reimbursement for work performed in unserved areas between March 2021 – June 2022 with private investment
- Funding across 25 counties

## ARPA Capital Project Fund (CPF) Grant Program

- Applications were due July 2023
- Financial match of up to 75% permissible
- Will award up to \$185.8 million
- Awards made December 2023

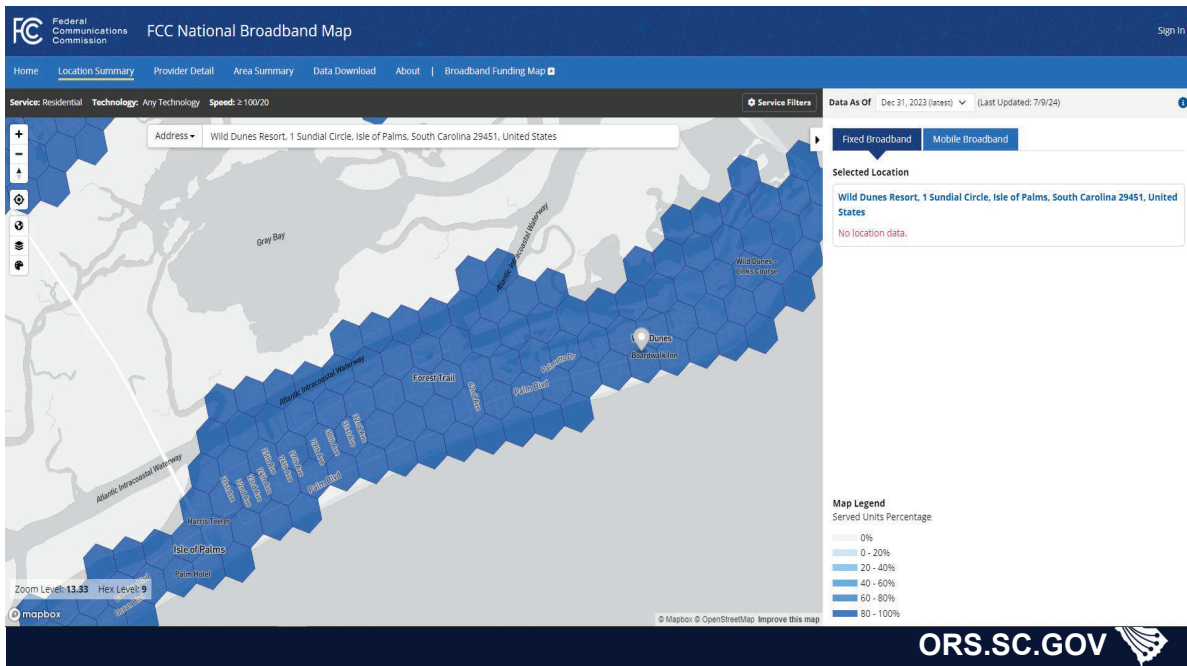
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## Overview of SC BEAD Grant Program

- \$551.5 Million for Broadband Deployment (“Internet for ALL”) and Non-Deployment Activities
- Up to 75% federal / 25% non-federal match
- Priority to fund:
  1. Unserved Residential - No technology options available
  2. Underserved Residential - DSL, Fixed Wireless, and Older Cable
  3. Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) – Facilities which lack 1Gbps symmetric service
  4. Other Non-Deployment Activities

Pending approval of BEAD Initial Proposal Volumes 1 & 2

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2023

- Initial Proposal submittal (Volume 1 & 2)
- Establish framework for affordability (low-cost plans & middle-class affordability plan)
- NTP for Capital Projects Fund (CPF)-funded projects (Q4)
- Deploy remaining state funds
- Initiate procurement for software solution for BEAD challenge process

2024

- Initial Proposal approval and Digital Equity Plan submittal
- Run Challenge Process (Q2/Q3) and Deduplication Process
- Subgrantee Selection Process (Q2 - Q4)
- Begin spending eligible Broadband-related workforce deployment (Initial 20% of eligible funds)
- Begin deployment of Extremely High-Cost locations
- Deployment of remaining ARPA funds

2025

- Deploy full BEAD funding
- Final Proposal submittal (including full selection of subgrantees, Q1)
- Project completion of CPF and SLFRF funded projects (Q4)

2026

- Finish construction at remaining underserved locations
- Start of construction at CAI locations
- Construction evaluation on BEAD related projects

2027

- Construction evaluation on BEAD related projects

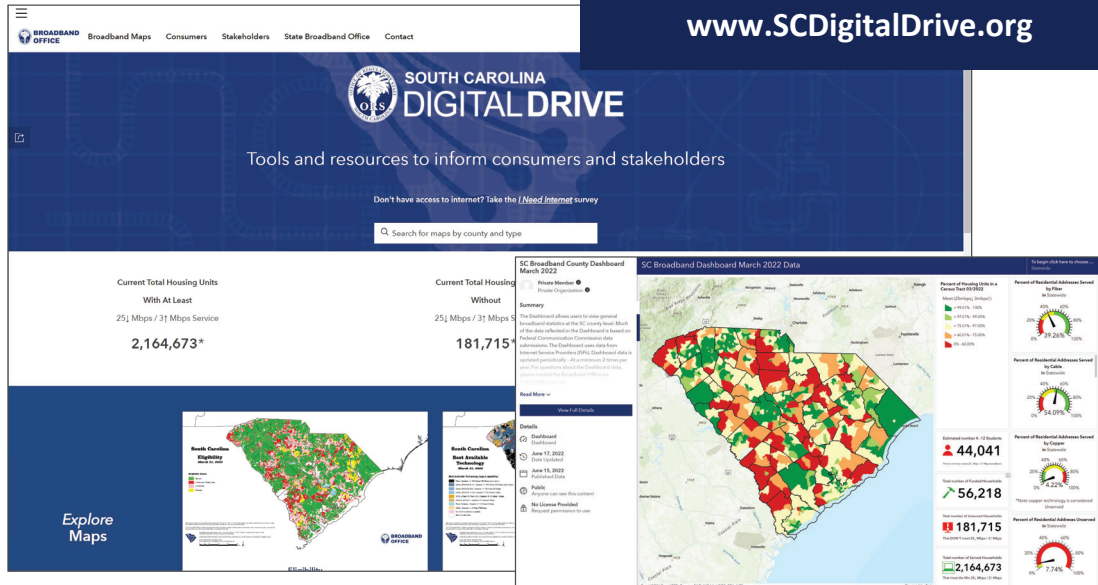
2028

- Finish construction of remaining underserved locations
- Establish access for all Extremely High-Cost locations
- Construction evaluation on BEAD related projects

## Estimated Timeline for Universal Service

*SCBBO goal that all South Carolinians have access to reliable, resilient high-speed Internet at 25/3 Mbps by 2026 and 100/20 Mbps by 2028*

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# Digital Opportunity Department

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## DOD Vision

All South Carolinians have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet and the necessary skills to benefit from this technology.



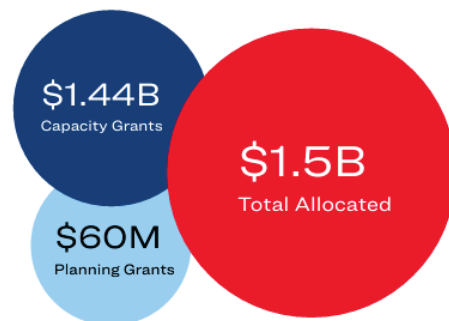
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## Funding

**Infrastructure Investments & Jobs Act (IIJA)** is a \$65 Billion investment to develop and implement systemic solutions to bridge the digital divide.

- **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD)** provides \$42.45 billion for infrastructure development and adoption programs.
- **Digital Equity Act (DEA)** allocated \$2.75 billion for Digital Equity adoption and use.

### Funding Allocations

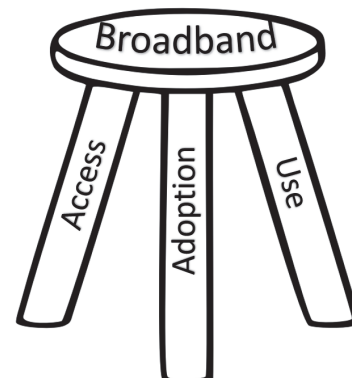


**Total Allocated:** \$1.5 billion  
(\$60 million planning grants + \$1.44 billion capacity grants)

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## Digital Equity Act Grant Programs

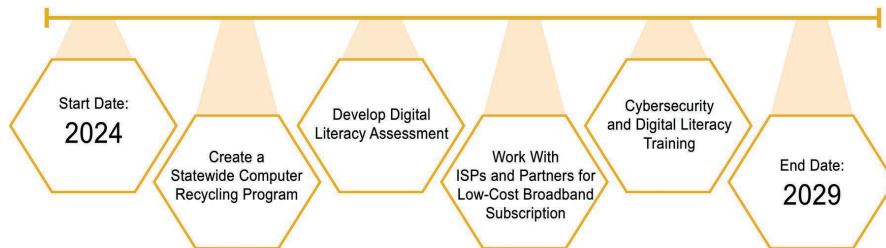
- **Planning Grant**
  - Approved April 2, 2024
- **Capacity Grant**
  - Submitted May 24, 2024
  - Expected \$12.8 million in late Fall 2024
- **Competitive Grant**
  - Coming soon



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# Timeline

- October 2023: ORS received DOD
- February 2024: DE Plan submitted to NTIA for review
- April 2024: DE Plan Approved
- March 2024: Capacity Grant NOFO released
- May 2024: Capacity Grant Submitted to NTIA for review



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## Digital Equity Plan

- Outlines goals for Digital Opportunity in SC
- Identifies target populations in SC
- Categorizes existing resources for digital literacy in SC
- Develops framework for Digital Opportunity Department initiatives



DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN

South Carolina  
Office of Regulatory Staff:  
Digital Opportunity Department

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## Covered Populations

- Low-income individuals
- Aging individuals
- Racial/ethnic minorities
- Rural residents
- Veterans
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with a language barrier
- Incarcerated individuals

Based upon guidance by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the DOD will focus on assisting several target populations.



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# Digital Equity Outcomes

- **Economic and workforce development**

- Possible metrics include: size of workforce; number of digital navigators providing training; number of available technology jobs

- **Education**

- Possible metrics include: number of institutions teaching digital literacy; digital navigators receiving training; number of devices available in correlation to number of students; digital literacy courses held

- **Health**

- Possible metrics include: number of telehealth users; rate of telehealth use in rural communities; availability of online forms

- **Civic and social engagement**

- Possible metrics include: number of minigrants deployed; number of people reached by migrant recipients; number of digital literacy events held; percentage of households with a broadband subscription

- **Delivery of other essential services**

- Possible metrics include: number of people receiving emergency alerts; number of people who can receive reverse 911 calls; number of people reached by the Emergency Management Division through social media and online services

As identified at 47 U.S.C. 1723 (c)(1)(C)

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## Digital Equity Plan Implementation



### Goal 1: Broadband Affordability

Objective: All households and businesses in South Carolina can subscribe to Broadband service at an affordable rate.



### Goal 2: Online Accessibility and Inclusivity

Objective: Every resident of South Carolina has access to reliable high-speed Broadband service in their home and business.



### Goal 3: Digital Literacy

Objective: Every resident of South Carolina has access to education and training necessary to use Broadband to advance their personal goals and increase South Carolina's technology workforce competitiveness.



### Goal 4: Online Privacy and Cybersecurity

Objective: Every resident of South Carolina can safely and securely utilize Broadband services.



### Goal 5: Device Availability and Affordability

Objective: Every resident of South Carolina can access a desktop or laptop computer at home or in an accessible location.

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## Digital Equity Plan Initiatives



### 1. Secure SC



### 2. Digital Navigators



### 3. Minigrants



### 4. Device Recycling



### 5. BBAC

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## SecureSC

- Cybersecurity month in October
- SecureSC website
- Toolkits for community organizations to host events
- Cybersecurity and privacy resources for South Carolinians
- Digital literacy resources for South Carolinians

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## Digital Navigators

- “Trusted guides who assist community members with ongoing, individualized support for accessing affordable and appropriate connectivity, devices, and digital skills” (NDIA)
- Train the trainer programs
- Create statewide “best practices” for Digital Navigator curriculum
- Create statewide certification program
- Create statewide database of trusted Digital Navigators

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## Minigrants

- Small funding pools
- For programs led by trusted community organizations
- Funding across every part of South Carolina
- Six-month period of performance for pilot year
- Mid-performance period and final reports to evaluate efficacy

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## Device Recycling

- Infrastructure is in place – now everyone needs devices to be able to utilize it
- Device availability at low or no cost
- Evaluation of existing device refurbishment and recycling
- Establishing best practices and pricing structure

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## Broadband Advisory Council

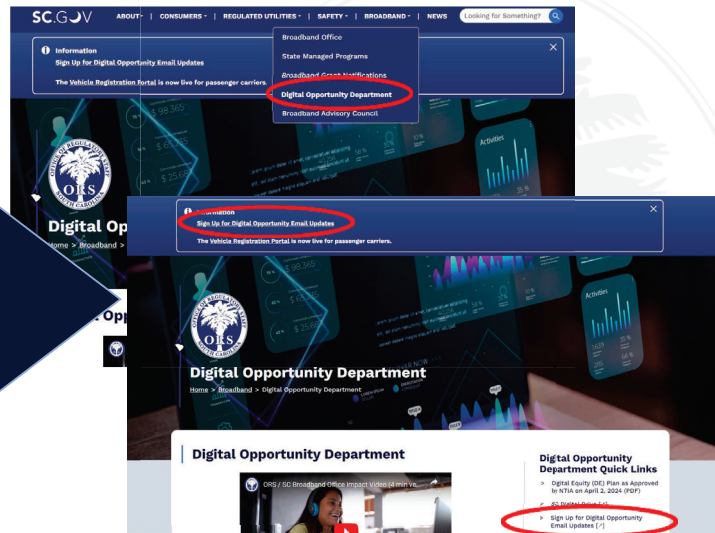
- Community organizations, government agencies, and related companies working together to address digital literacy concerns, align resources, and serve as a trusted voice between Digital Equity programs and the communities they serve
- Board members and consulting members
- Quarterly meetings in-person in different parts of the State

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**Where can I find more information?**

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**Thank you!  
Questions?**

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