



# Tennessee Broadband Initiative

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**"I am committed to ensuring connectivity in every corner of our state as broadband impacts our goals for health care, education, economic development and beyond."**

- Governor Lee

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## Deployment barriers

### Why are some areas well served with broadband, and others are not?

Capital costs create a challenge for service providers to deploy broadband in some areas. The most common cost increases are due to:

- Population density
  - Geography
- Lack of familiarity with broadband and service plan cost can limit adoption of broadband services.

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## Tennessee Broadband Accessibility Act

### Investment:

- Grants: Any providers can apply for funds to offset the cost of deployment of broadband services to unserved areas.

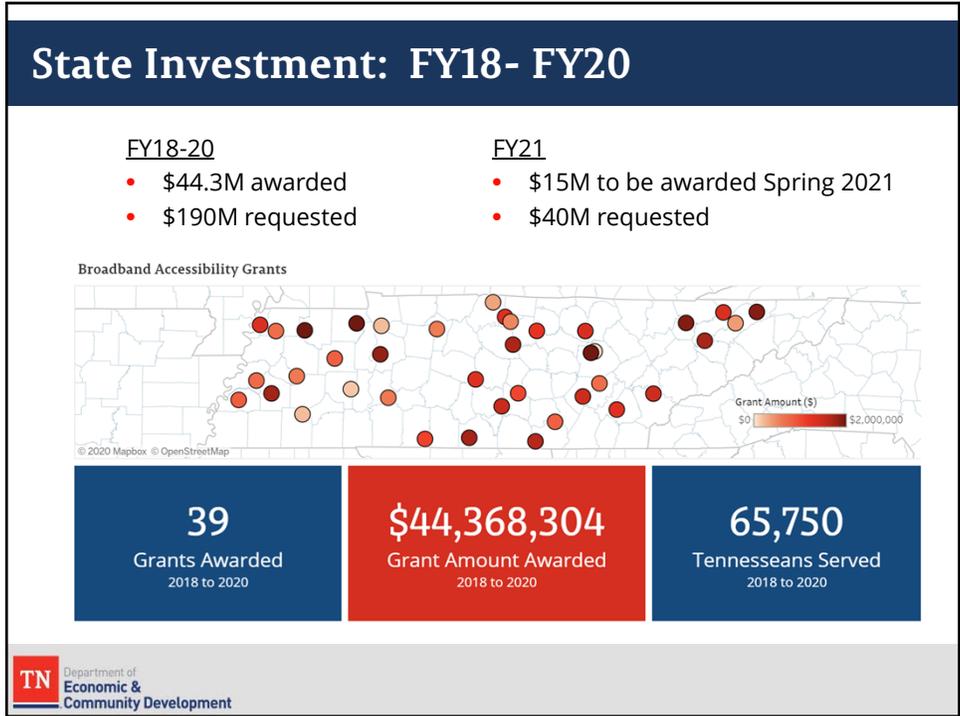
### Deregulation:

- Electric cooperatives may provide broadband internet and video services within their service area.

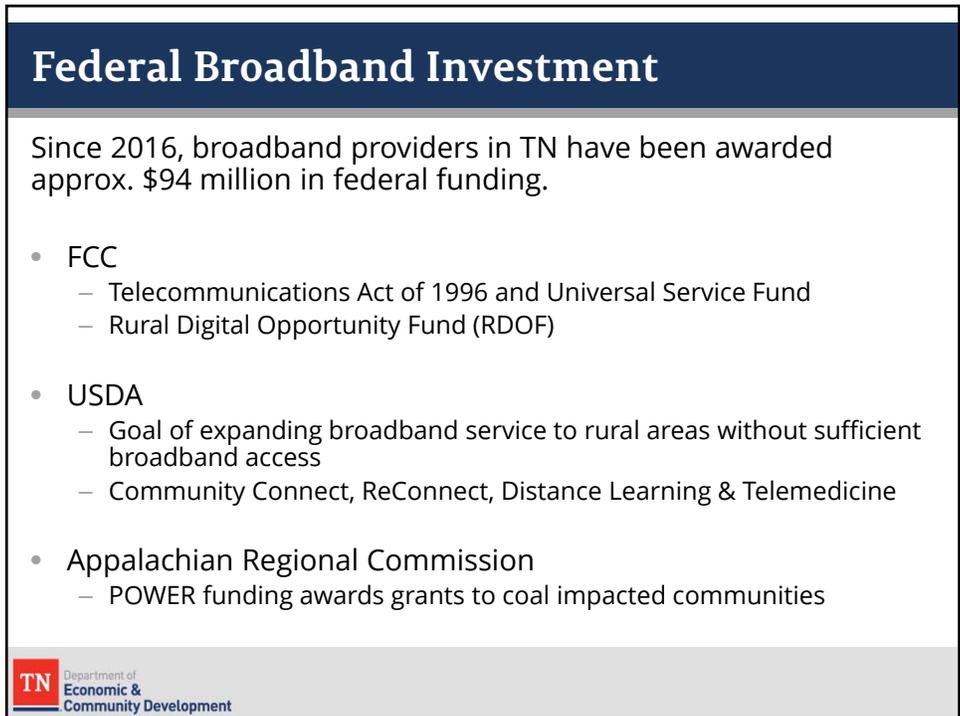
### Digital Inclusion:

- A portion of grant funds are awarded to libraries for digital literacy training, equipment and hot spot devices

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## CARES Act

- In August 2020, Governor Lee dedicated \$61M of TN's Coronavirus Relief Fund to broadband. The project is called the Tennessee Emergency Broadband Fund.
- Projects are scheduled for completion by December 2020. 60,000 Tennesseans will be served.



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## Tennessee Emergency Broadband Fund

Bledsoe County



Robertson County



Marion County



Henry County



Giles County



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## COVID-19 Impact

- Increased needs in remote working, distance learning for both K-12 and post-secondary, telehealth and other areas.
- Highlights the digital divide among communities who cannot access these services at home
- Constituent and providers calls have increased
  - Resources, funding available for students and distance learning
  - Free and public Wi-Fi access
  - Providers in the area and deployment progress

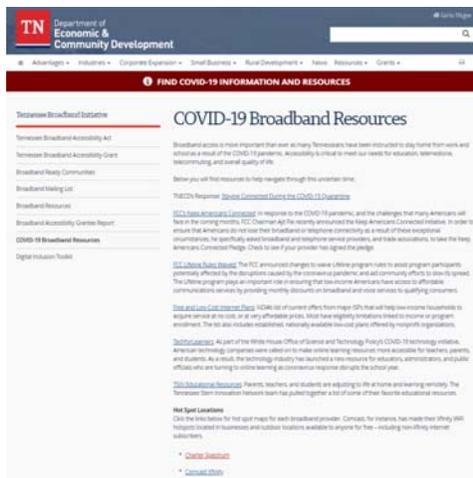


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## COVID-19 Broadband Resources

- [tn.gov/broadband](https://tn.gov/broadband)
  - FCC Keeping Americans Connected Pledge
  - Hot Spot locations
  - Free and Low Cost Internet Plans
  - Provider-Specific Responses
  - Federal and State Educational Tools





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## Final Thoughts

- Since 2018, \$120 million in state dollars (including CARES) has been appropriated to fund broadband deployment in TN.
- 125,000 Tennesseans will receive high-speed internet service as a result of the \$105 million awarded to date.  
*Note: FY21 \$15 million has not yet been awarded.*
- 500,000 Tennesseans still lack broadband access, so there's more work to do!

## Questions?

### **Crystal Ivey**

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