



## INTRODUCTION

In 2009, Connect Alaska embarked on a multi-prong state initiative to expand high-speed Internet access to unserved areas while enhancing the adoption and use of broadband statewide. Understanding that broadband has the power to bring world-class opportunities to even the most remote of regions, Connect Alaska committed to carrying out projects, in partnership with the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED), that would help move the state one step closer to universal broadband access and use. Through National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) funding of \$6,378,198, Connect Alaska ran extensive programs over a 5-year period in broadband mapping, capacity building, technical assistance, and application usage and development to help Alaska communities remain competitive in the twenty-first century marketplace through improved technology.

### Mapping

The first step in understanding Alaska's broadband landscape was to produce an accurate, granular broadband availability map that helped to identify unserved and underserved areas. Working with DCCED, Connect Alaska employed industry-standard Geographic Information System (GIS) toolsets and experience to deliver a comprehensive, granular map of existing broadband service. In collaboration with broadband providers, Connect Alaska updated these maps on a semi-annual basis to reflect real-time broadband availability and made the maps accessible to the general public via an interactive portal located at [www.connectak.org](http://www.connectak.org).

### Capacity Building

This project supported the grant program by establishing a broadband office in Anchorage and coordinating broadband activities across relevant agencies. The project provided support for the Alaska Broadband Task Force to both formalize a strategic broadband plan for the state of Alaska and facilitate planning meetings during the grant period for that broadband plan.

### Technical Assistance

This aspect of the Connect Alaska project was designated to research and benchmark activities on broadband needs, usage, and barriers in local communities and also measure the impact of broadband implementation over time. After consultation with the Broadband Task Force, DCCED, the NTIA and other Alaska stakeholders, the project was recalibrated to provide technical assistance to local communities via grant awards. For example, Connect Alaska worked with the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) Consortium for Digital Learning to provide technical assistance in remote Native Alaskan villages that would help develop local institutional capacity to exploit broadband and associated technologies for community empowerment and economic development.

Moreover, under the technical assistance project, Connect Alaska also partnered with the Alaska Broadband Task Force to complete the development of a draft

broadband plan in 2013 with the final comprehensive broadband plan completed in 2014. The release of the draft plan also facilitated a broadband summit where Alaska stakeholders had the opportunity to provide input for the plan prior to its release in 2014.

## Application Usage and Development

This project conducted an assessment on the availability and quality of e-government applications in Alaska, with its final report identifying deficiencies and opportunities for improvement—particularly among remote and rural populations of Alaska. The Alaska Broadband Task Force would use these findings to fund innovative e-government and web 2.0 applications via a sub-grant process that was designed to make government services and data more readily available to communities in Alaska. Subsequently, a sub-grant was awarded to DCCED for the implementation of the Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) system. Business retention and expansion systems are digital tools increasingly sought by economic development organizations to assess the business climate of their regions and to identify key initiatives and projects to focus on, including connectivity and broadband access.

Mapping	Capacity Building	Technical Assistance	Application Usage & Development
Data collection and mapping  Alaska Schools Broadband Audit Report	Connect Alaska broadband office administration  Alaska Broadband Task Force support	Alaska Broadband plan development draft (2013) and final (2014)  Broadband Task Force Summit  Task Force Contractors  AASB Grant Sub-Recipient  Broadband and E-Government Usage	DCCED Business Retention and Expansion project

Through these mapping, capacity building, technical assistance, and application usage and development programs, Alaska is closer to narrowing the digital divide among its residents, especially bringing a wealth of information and opportunity to its numerous citizens who live off the road system in remote and rural villages. This report is designed to memorialize the efforts of Connect Alaska as well as showcase examples of the thousands of stakeholders impacted by Connect Alaska's work to date. By reviewing the numerous projects outlined here, Alaska leaders can build upon the information gathered and analyzed through federal funding opportunities to take steps to further advance broadband coverage across the state.