ARConnect
The Arkansas State Broadband Office

Broadband Independence County

Regional Workforce Summit

Hal Vandiver, ICBC

March 7, 2024

Vision for Arkansas

ARConnect
The Arkansas State Broadband Office

~~Digital divide~~ by 2030

Three Pillars of Broadband

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Access

Affordability

Digital Skills

ARKANSAS BROADBAND STATEWIDE STATISTICS

Access (Infrastructure)

>$1 billion

In grant awards.
RDOF, ReConnect, State General Funds, CARES, SLFRF, CPF

~330,000

Locations

6,800 IndCo

Affordability

~179,000

Households enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program

1,300 IndCo

~607,000

Households eligible for the ACP

4,200 IndCo

Digital Skills

~274,000

Residents, aged 18-64, may lack basic digital skills

3,000 IndCo

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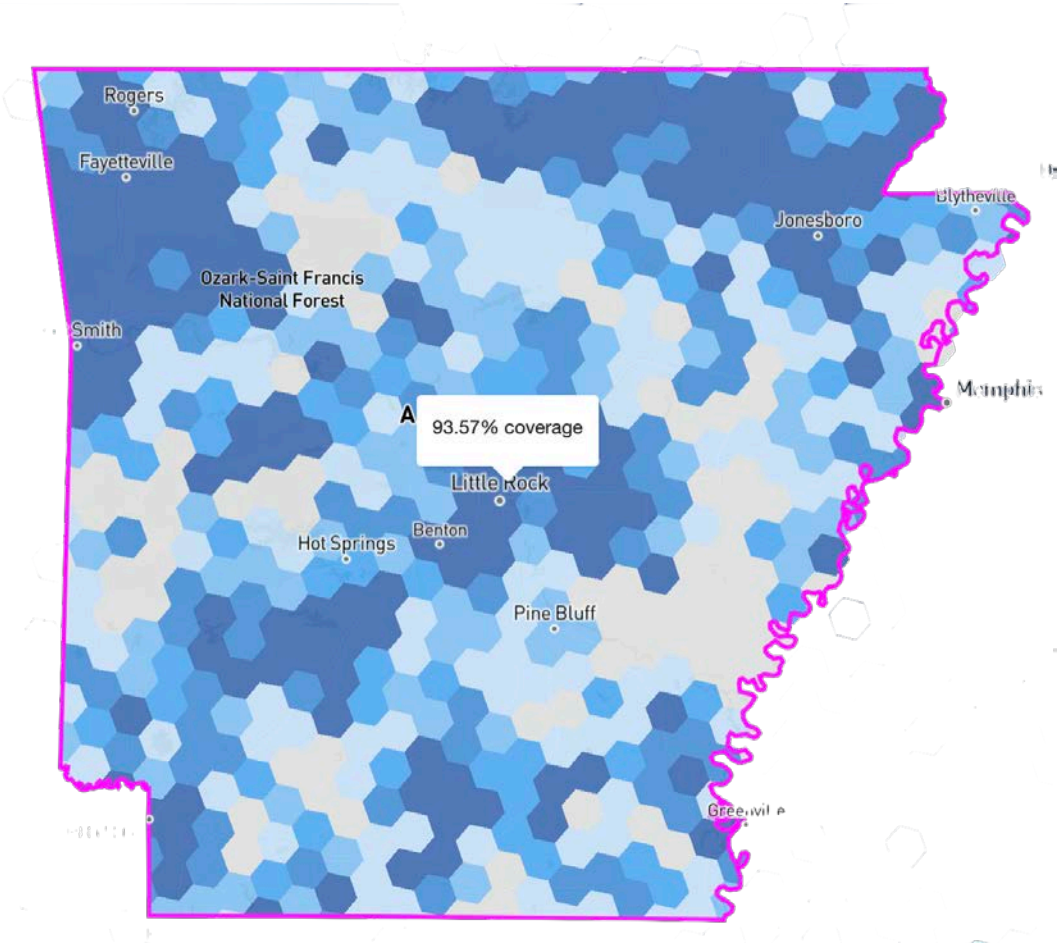
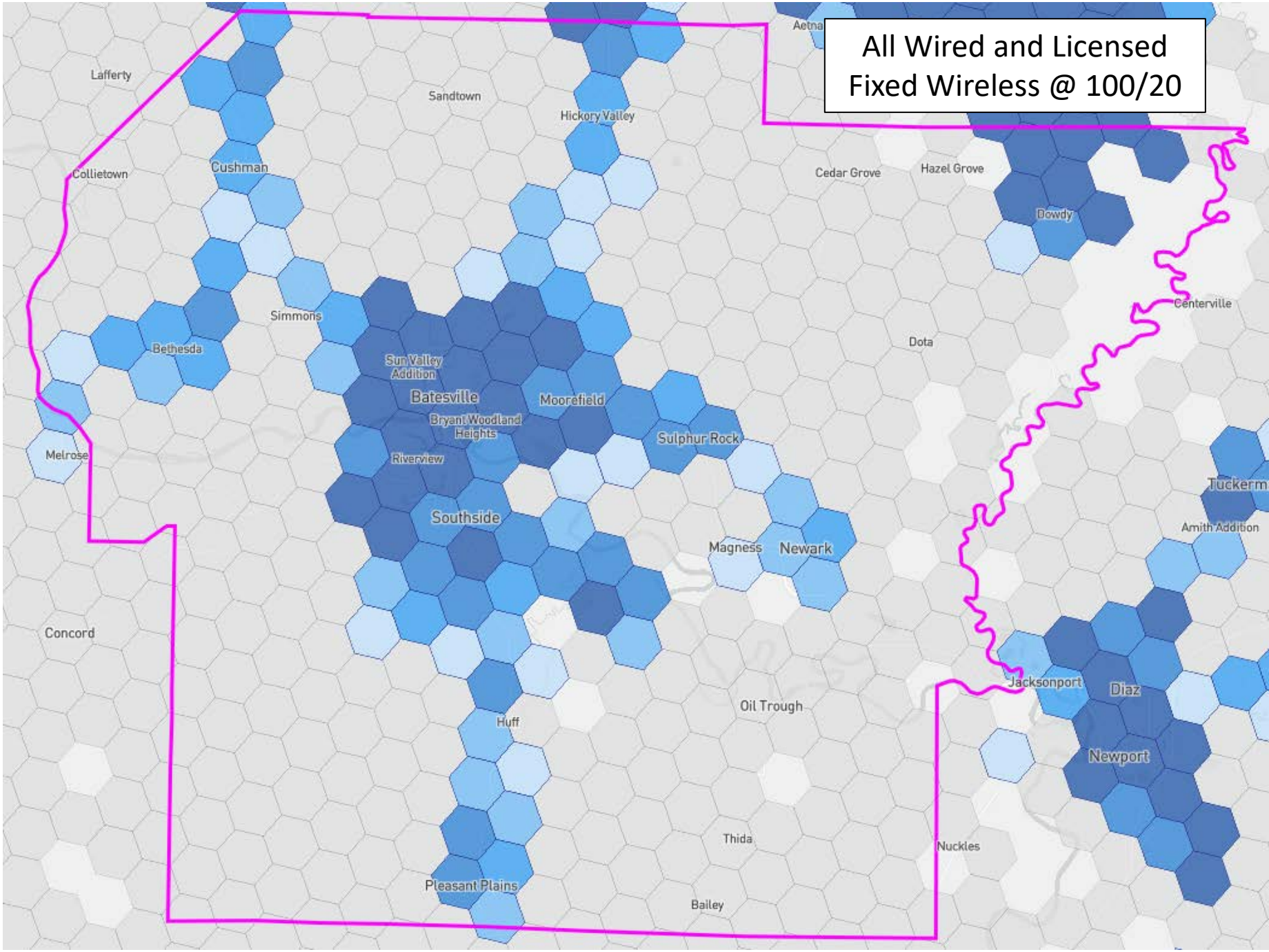
A REMAINING LACK OF BROADBAND ACCESS

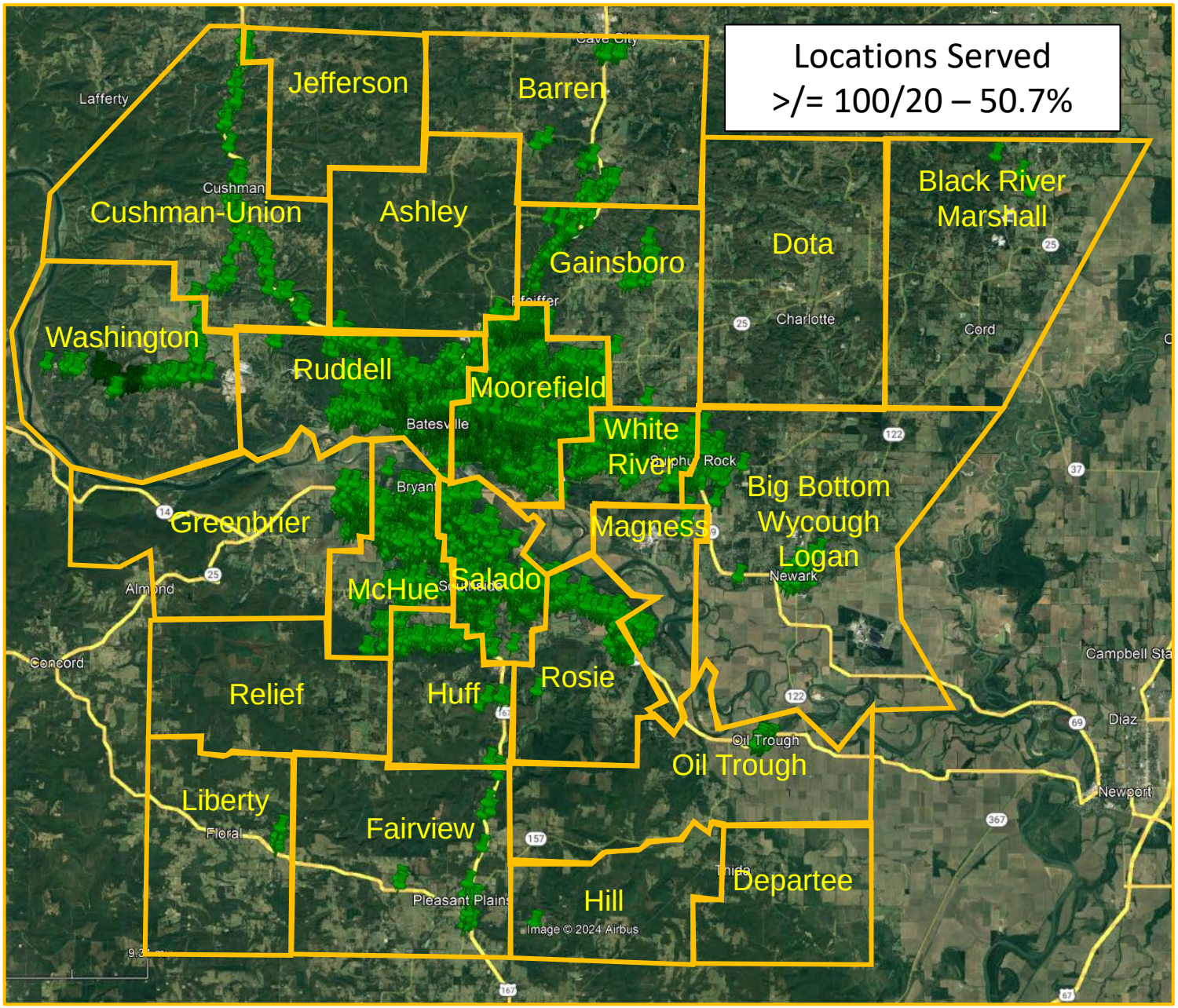


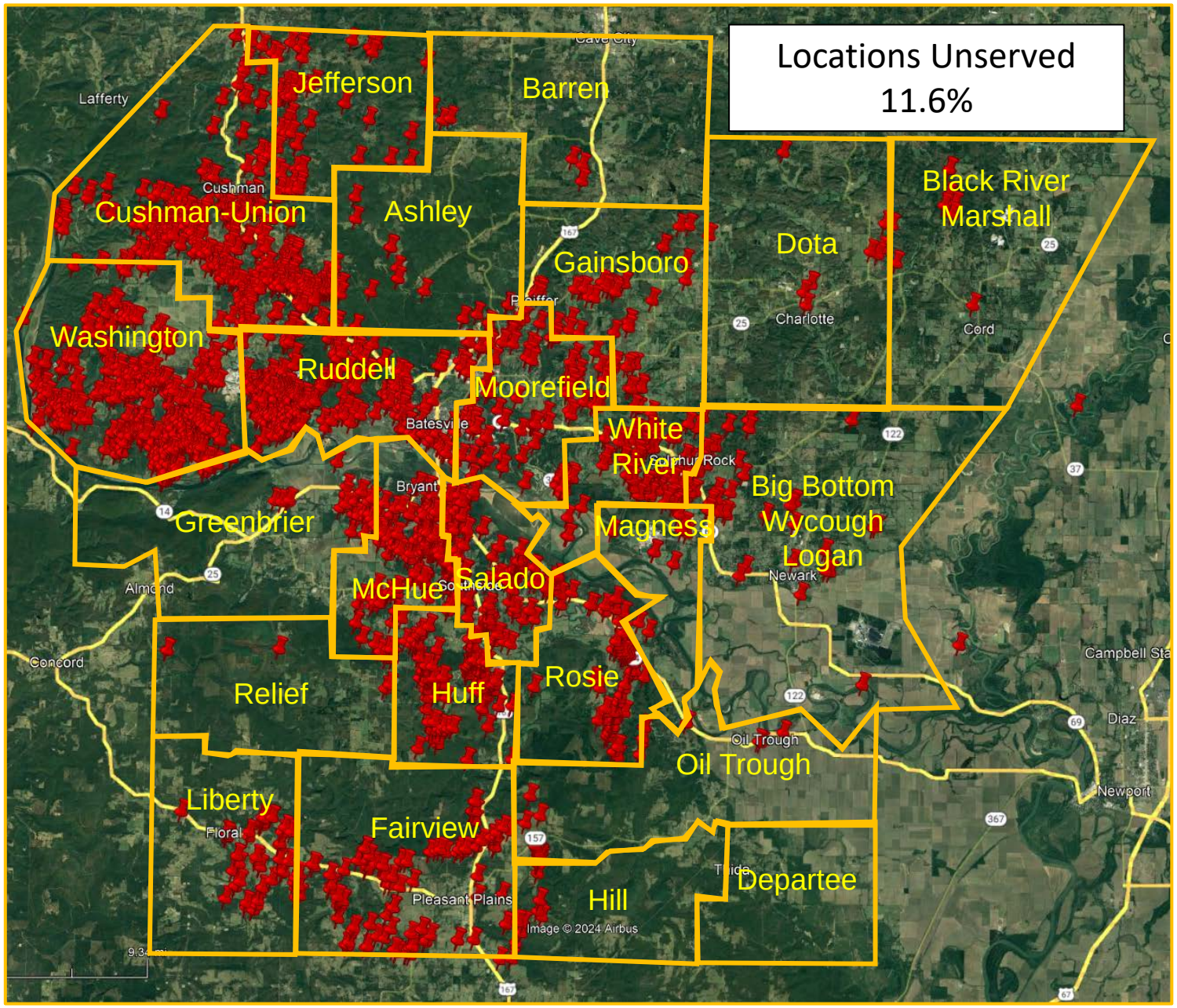
~215,000

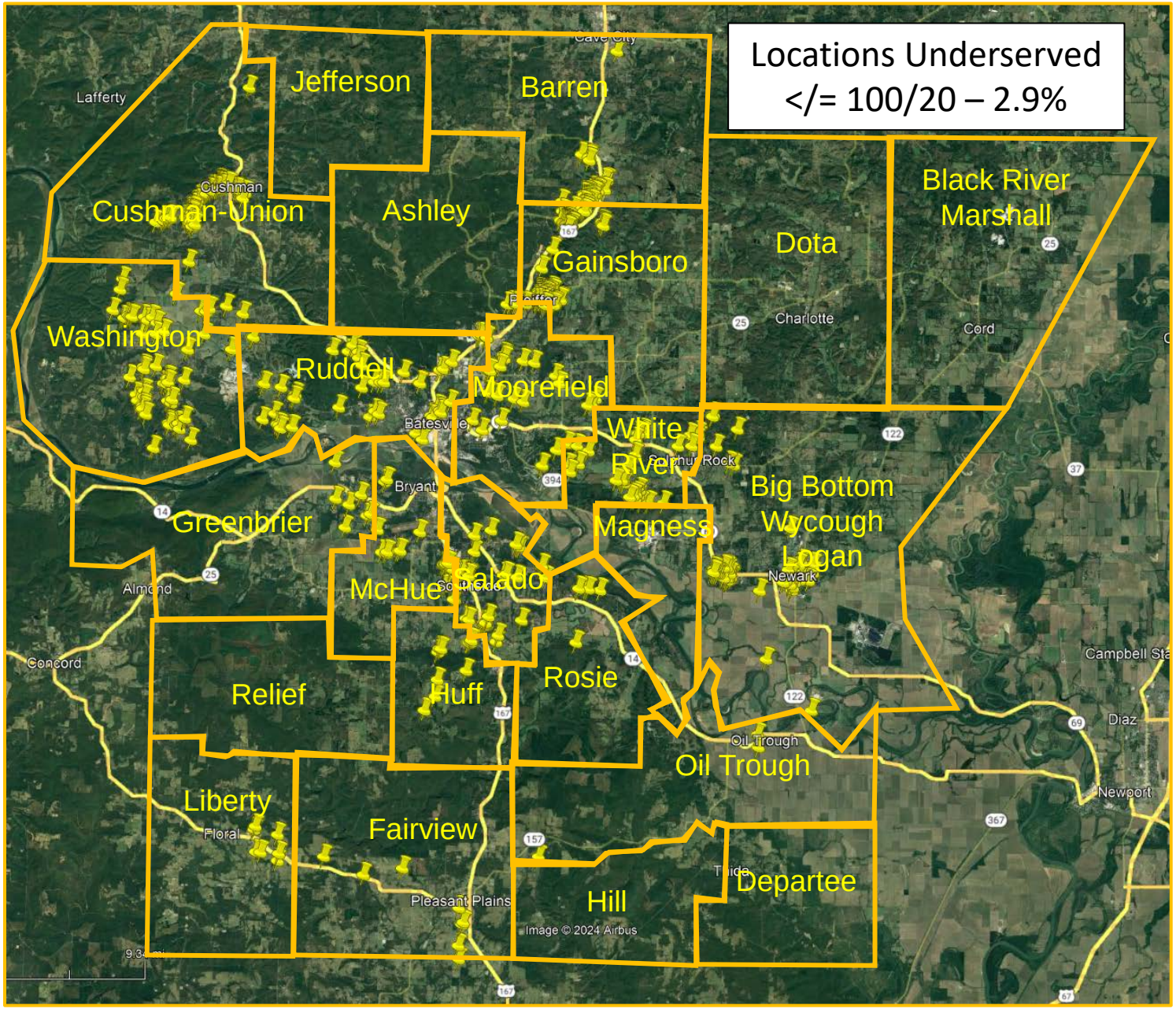
Locations remain unserved or underserved

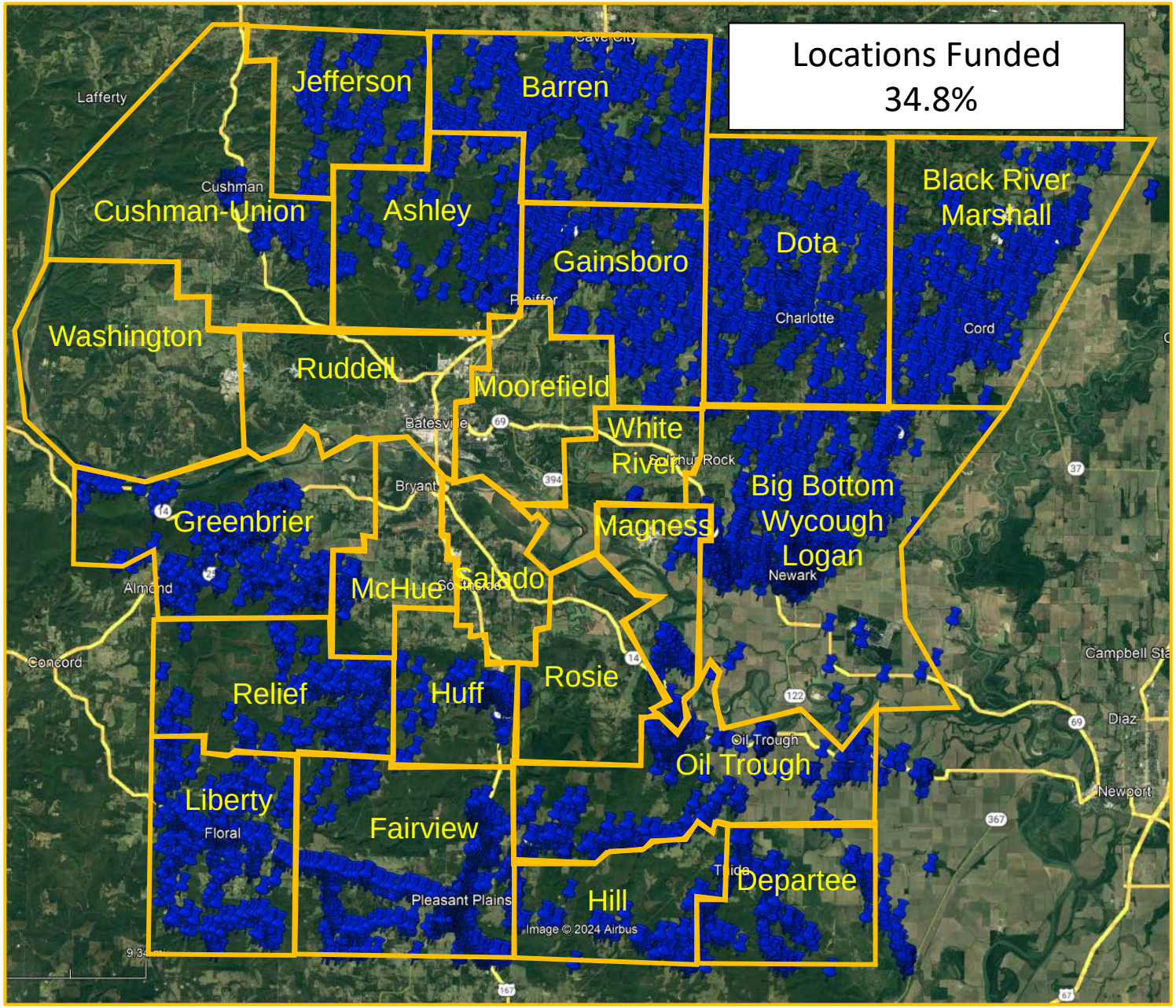
~6,800 Funded and ~3,000 Under/ Unserved in Independence County

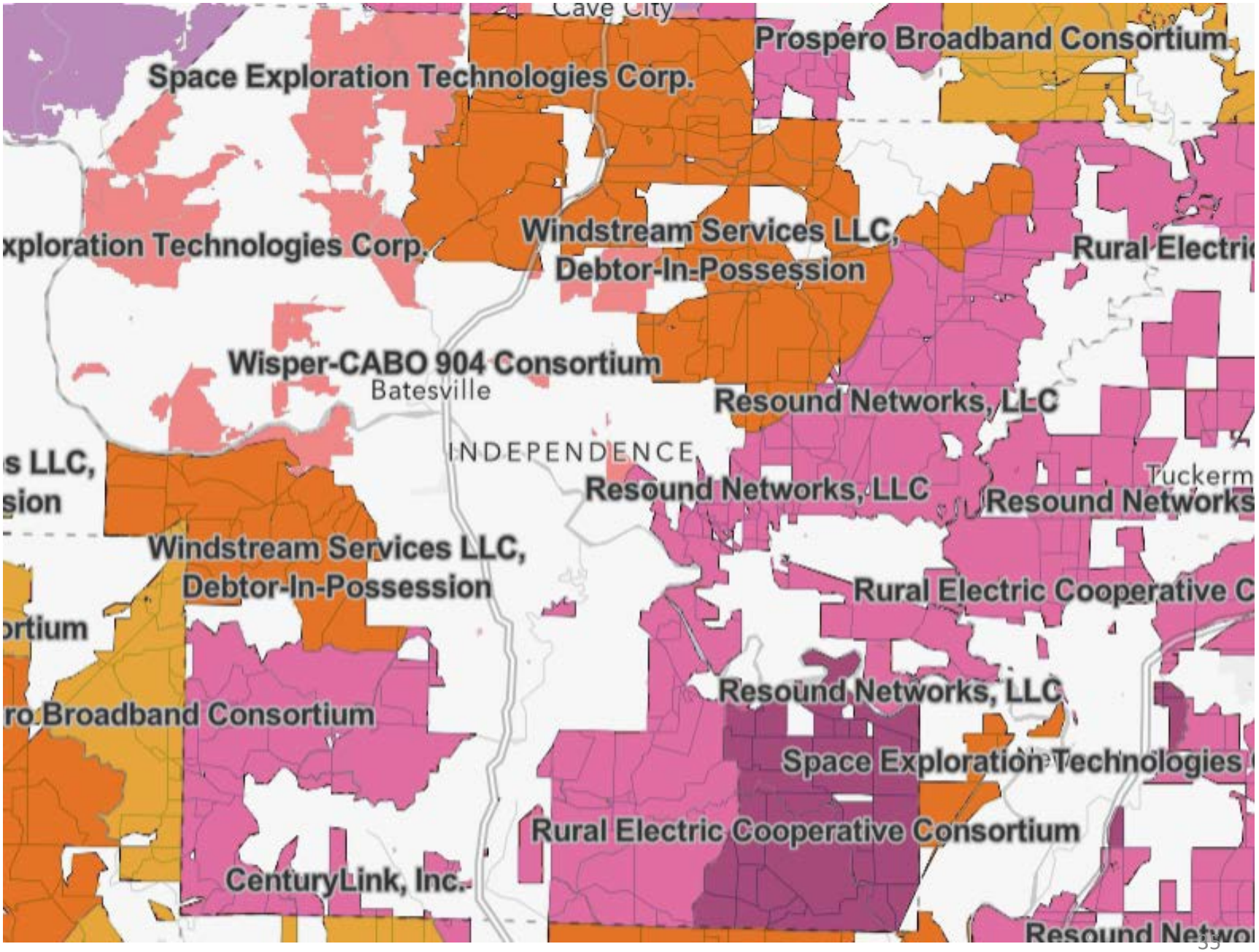

All Wired and Licensed
Fixed Wireless @ 100/20
Aetna
Lafferty
Sandtown
Hickory Valley
Collietown
Cushman
Cedar Grove
Hazel Grove
Dowdy
Centerville
Simmons
Bethesda
Dota
Sun Valley Addition
Batesville
Moorefield
Bryant Woodland Heights
Sulphur Rock
Melrose
Riverview
Tuckerm
Southside
Amith Addition
Magness
Newark
Concord
Jacksonport
Diaz
Oil Trough
Huff
Newport
Thida
Nuckles
Pleasant Plains
Bailey

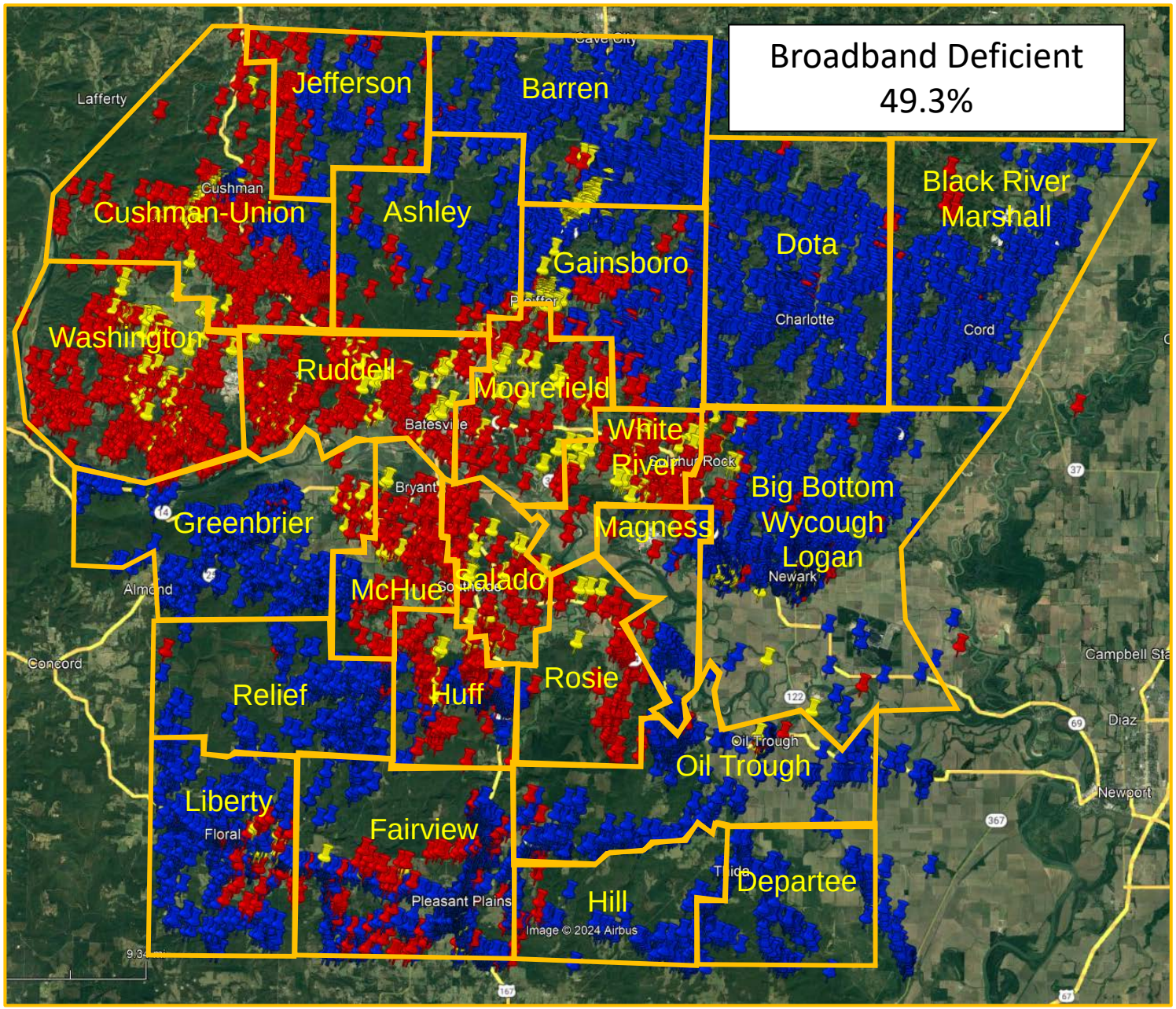

Locations Served
>/= 100/20 – 50.7%
Jefferson
Barren
Lafferty
Cushman
Cushman-Union
Ashley
Gainsboro
Dota
Black River
Marshall
Charlotte
Cord
Washington
Ruddell
Moorefield
Batesville
White
River
Greenbrier
Bryant
Magness
Big Bottom
Wycough
Logan
Newark
Almond
McHue
Salado
Concord
Relief
Huff
Rosie
Oil Trough
Oil Trough
Diaz
Campbell Sta
Liberty
Floral
Fairview
Newport
Pleasant Plains
Hill
Departee
Image © 2024 Airbus


Locations Unserved
11.6%
Jefferson
Barren
Cushman-Union
Ashley
Gainsboro
Dota
Black River
Marshall
Washington
Ruddell
Moorefield
White
River
Big Bottom
Wycough
Logan
Greenbrier
Magness
Salado
McHue
Relief
Huff
Rosie
Oil Trough
Liberty
Fairview
Hill
Departee
Lafferty
Cushman
Charlotte
Cord
Batesville
Bryant
Newark
Almond
Concord
Floral
Pleasant Plains
Diaz
Newport
Image © 2024 Airbus


Locations Underserved
</= 100/20 – 2.9%
Jefferson
Barren
Lafferty
Cushman
Cushman-Union
Ashley
Gainsboro
Dota
Black River
Marshall
Charlotte
Cord
Washington
Ruddell
Moorefield
White
River
Batesville
Bryant
Greenbrier
Magness
Big Bottom
Wycough
Logan
Newark
Almond
McHue
Salado
Concord
Relief
Huff
Rosie
Oil Trough
Liberty
Floral
Fairview
Pleasant Plains
Hill
Departee
Diaz
Newport
Campbell Sta
Image © 2024 Airbus


Locations Funded
34.8%
Lafferty
Jefferson
Barren
Cushman
Cushman-Union
Ashley
Gainsboro
Dota
Charlotte
Black River
Marshall
Cord
Washington
Ruddell
Moorefield
Batesville
White
River
Bryant
Greenbrier
Magness
Big Bottom
Wycough
Logan
Newark
Almond
McHue
Salado
Concord
Relief
Huff
Rosie
Campbell Sta
Diaz
Oil Trough
Oil Trough
Liberty
Floral
Fairview
Newport
Pleasant Plains
Hill
Departee
Image © 2024 Airbus


Cave City
Prospero Broadband Consortium
Space Exploration Technologies Corp.
xploration Technologies Corp.
Windstream Services LLC,
Debtor-In-Possession
Rural Electri
Wisper-CABO 904 Consortium
Batesville
Resound Networks, LLC
INDEPENDENCE
s LLC,
sion
Resound Networks, LLC
Tuckerm
Resound Networks
Windstream Services LLC,
Debtor-In-Possession
Rural Electric Cooperative C
ortium
Resound Networks, LLC
ro Broadband Consortium
Space Exploration Technologies
Rural Electric Cooperative Consortium
CenturyLink, Inc.
Resound Netwo


Broadband Deficient
49.3%
Jefferson
Barren
Cushman-Union
Ashley
Gainsboro
Dota
Black River
Marshall
Washington
Ruddell
Moorefield
White
River
Greenbrier
Magness
Big Bottom
Wycough
Logan
McHue
Salado
Relief
Huff
Rosie
Oil Trough
Liberty
Fairview
Hill
Departee
Lafferty
Cushman
Charlotte
Cord
Batesville
Bryant
Almond
Concord
Pleasant Plains
Floral
Newark
Diaz
Newport
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Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act

(Infrastructure & Digital Opportunity)

INFRASTRUCTURE

- ~$1 billion non-competitive, formula-based grant
  - Allocation based on the new FCC broadband availability map
  - First installment of 20% (~$200 million)
- ~$700 million estimated cost to connect remaining unserved/underserved locations
- Objective to think of broadband not only as an asset or platform, but also as an enabler
  - Produce positive, enhanced outcomes and transform lives and the Arkansas economy

Preliminary Timeline for BEAD Implementation

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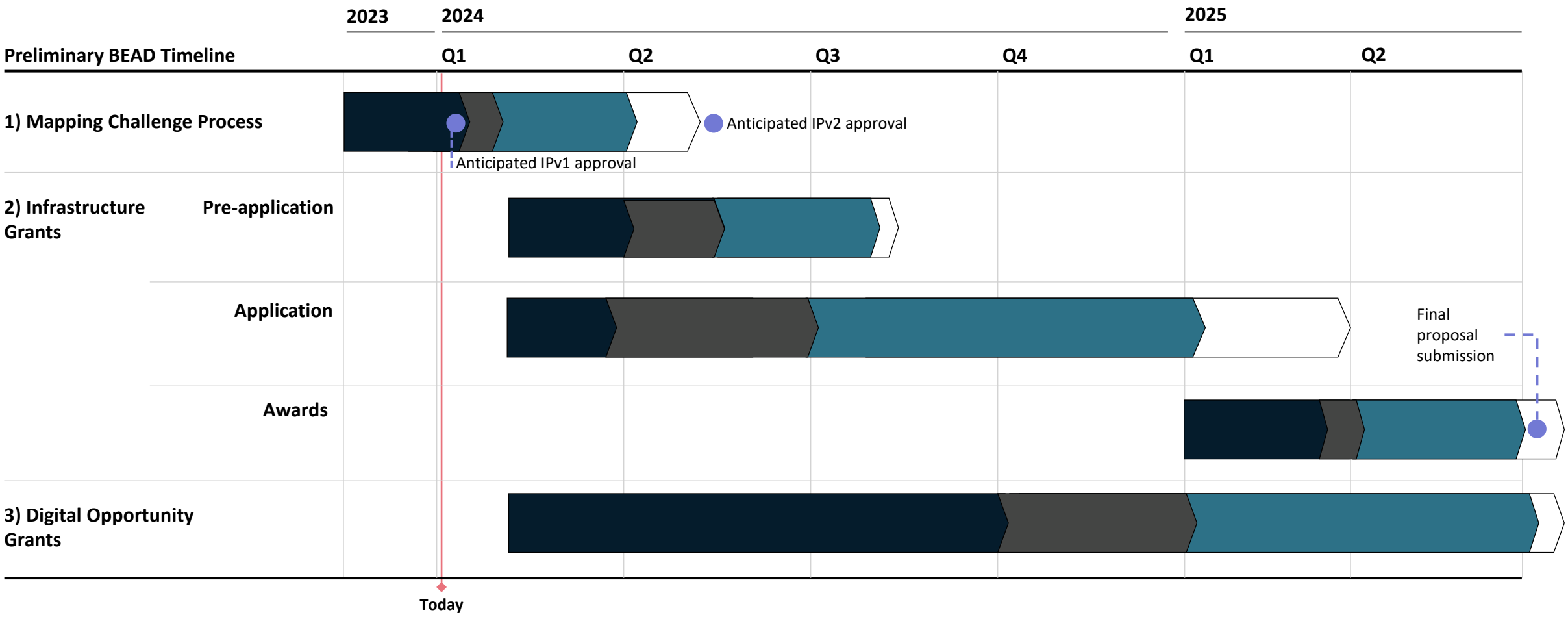


Affordable Connectivity Program
Helping Households Connect

The Affordable Connectivity Program is an FCC program that helps connect families and households struggling to afford internet service.

The Affordable Connectivity Program provides:

- Up to $30/month discount for broadband service;
- Up to $75/month discount for households on qualifying Tribal lands; and
- A one-time discount of up to $100 for a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet purchased through a participating provider if the household contributes more than $10 but less than $50 toward the purchase price.

The Affordable Connectivity Program is limited to one monthly service discount and one device discount per household.

Who Is Eligible?

A household is eligible for the Affordable Connectivity Program if the household income is at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, or if a member of the household meets at least *one* of the criteria below:

- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year;
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income internet program;
- Participates in one of these assistance programs:
  - SNAP
  - Medicaid
  - Federal Public Housing Assistance
  - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
  - WIC
  - Veterans Pension or Survivor Benefits
  - or Lifeline;
- Participates in one of these assistance programs and lives on Qualifying Tribal lands:
  - Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
  - Tribal TANF
  - Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
  - Tribal Head Start (income based)

Check out fcc.gov/ACP for a **Consumer FAQ** and other program resources.

Two-Steps to Enroll

1. Go to AffordableConnectivity.gov to submit an application or print out a mail-in application; and
2. Contact your preferred participating provider to select a plan and have the discount applied to your bill.

Some providers may have an alternative application that they will ask you to complete.

Eligible households must **both apply for the program and contact a participating provider to select a service plan.**

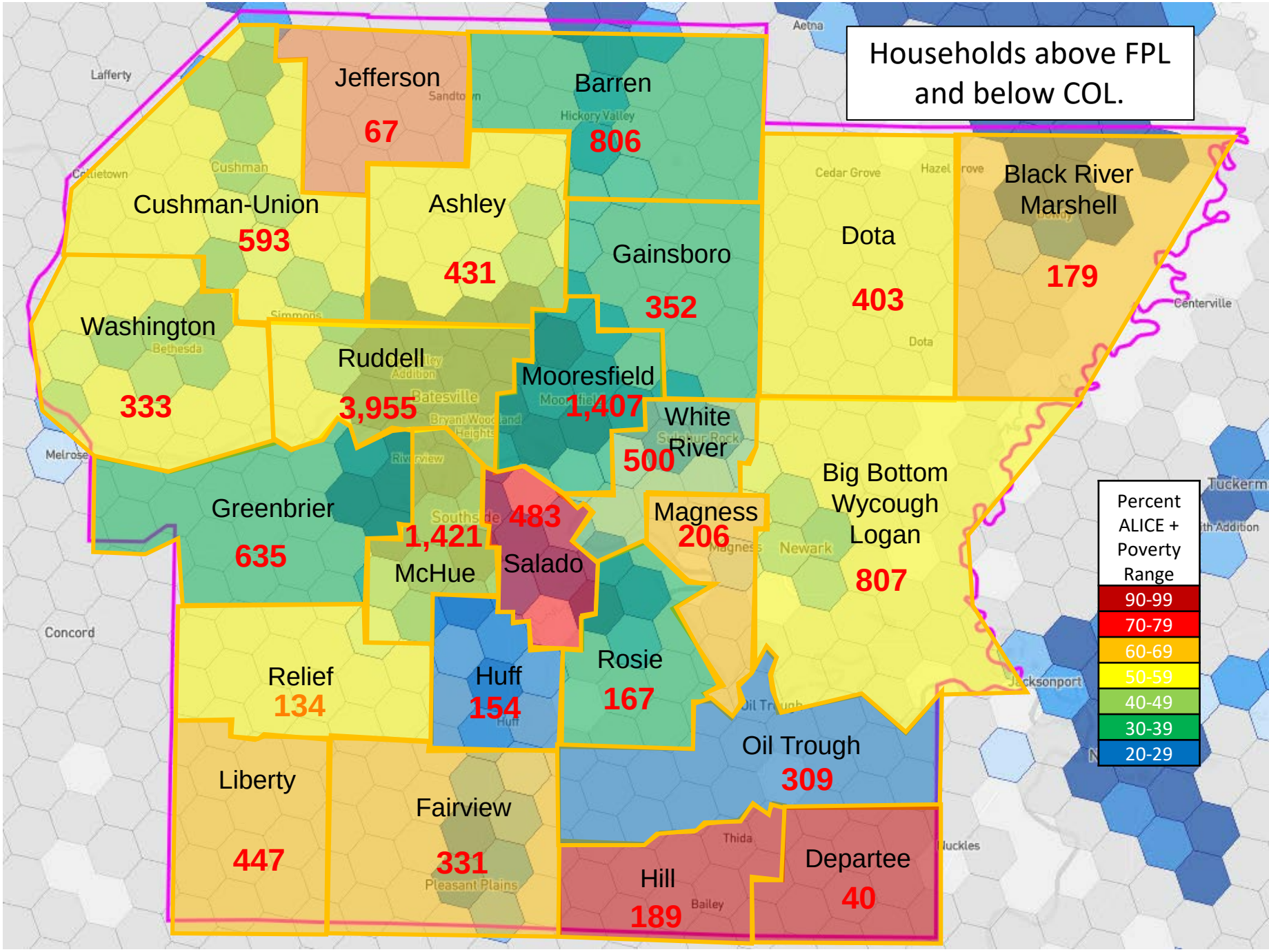
Call 877-384-2575

or find more information about the Affordable Connectivity Program at fcc.gov/ACP

Affordable Connectivity Program

- ACP is an FCC benefit program that helps ensure that households can afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare and more.
- Our County has an estimated 4,200 households that are eligible for assistance and only 1,268 households currently participate.
- Complete details can be found at: Affordable Connectivity Program | Federal Communications Commission (fcc.gov)

ICBC
Independence County Broadband Committee


Households above FPL and below COL.
Jefferson
67
Barren
806
Cushman-Union
593
Ashley
431
Gainsboro
352
Dota
403
Black River
Marshell
179
Washington
333
Ruddell
3,955
Mooresfield
1,407
White River
500
Greenbrier
635
1,421
483
Salado
McHue
Magness
206
Big Bottom
Wycough
Logan
807
Relief
134
Huff
154
Rosie
167
Oil Trough
309
Liberty
447
Fairview
331
Hill
189
Departee
40
Percent ALICE + Poverty Range
90-99
70-79
60-69
50-59
40-49
30-39
20-29

DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY

- ~$20 million non-competitive, formula-based grant
- Partner and collaborate with Heartland Forward, and other stakeholders throughout the state, to produce a robust digital opportunity plan targeting certain covered populations, including:
  - Households earning less than 150% of the federal poverty guidelines (**28%**)
  - Individuals over the age of 60 (**24%**)
  - Incarcerated individuals (state) (**1%**)
  - Veterans (**6%**)
  - Disabled (**18%**)
  - Individuals with a language barrier (**19%**)
  - Racial and ethnic minorities (**28%**)
  - Rural Residents (**55%**)

87.4%

(~2,637,000 Arkansans)

Overview of the Digital Skills Plan

Vision for Digital Opportunity

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The Arkansas State Broadband Office

By 2030, every person, family, and community in Arkansas – regardless of location and income – will have access to:

- Affordable, reliable high-speed internet service in their homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions (i.e., libraries, schools, healthcare providers)
- The opportunity to enroll in basic computer skills training
- A computer, tablet, or mobile device

Barriers to Digital Opportunity

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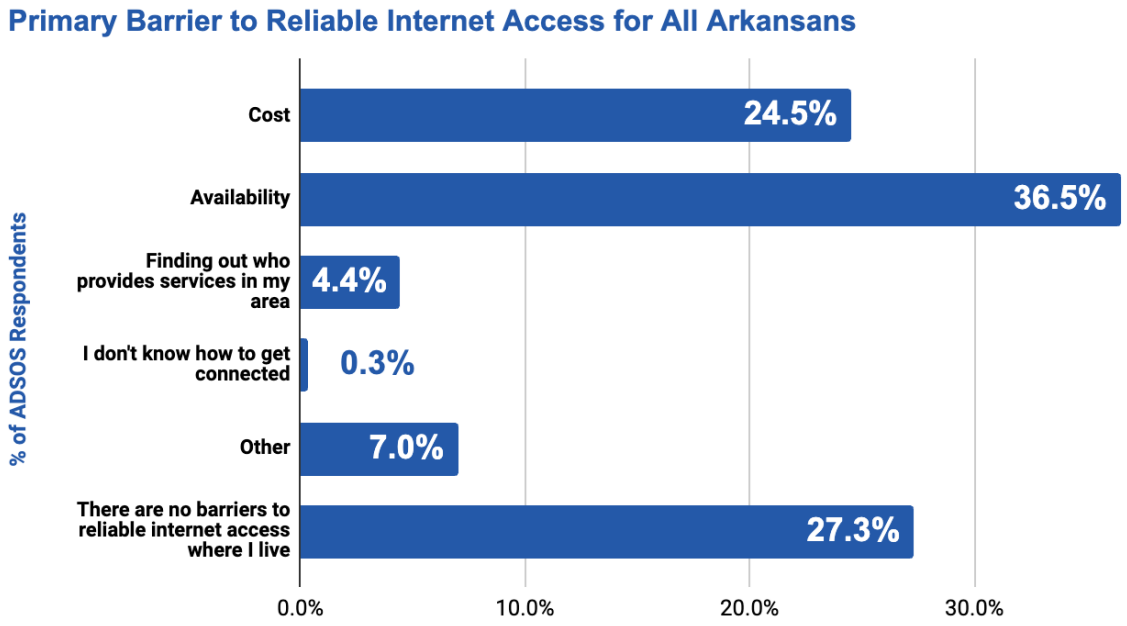
The Arkansas State Broadband Office

Despite having dozens of existing digital opportunity assets, **there is still room for improvement when it comes to digital skills programming and curriculum in Arkansas.** The state is also in the process of expanding its broadband infrastructure and **bringing internet service to 100% of homes and businesses across the state.**



Barriers to Digital Opportunity

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The Arkansas State Broadband Office

In-person meetings, focus groups, and the survey highlighted the following barriers:

- Lack of reliable at-home broadband infrastructure across all parts of the state
- Issues with service reliability and slow internet speeds in areas where infrastructure exists
- Differences in internet access between urban and rural communities
- High service costs and low awareness of, and uptake in, Affordable Connectivity program
- Customer service challenges with internet service providers (ISPs)
- Limited opportunities for digital skills training, especially for Individuals with a language barrier

The Path Forward

How We Achieve Digital Opportunity

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Goal 1	**Increase the Availability and Affordability of Internet Service**
Goal 2	**Improve Digital Skills**
Goal 3	**Leverage Existing State Agencies, Programs, and Organizations**
Goal 4	**Increase Access to Affordable Digital Devices**
Goal 5	**Engage All in Digital Opportunity Efforts**

Implementation Timeline*

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The Arkansas State Broadband Office

Activity	2024				2025				2026				2027	2028	2029	2030
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
Goal 1		*Increase the Availability and Affordability of Internet Service in Arkansas*														
Goal 2			*Improve Arkansans' Digital Skills by Implementing Digital Skills Training Opportunities*													
Goal 3	*Leverage State Agencies, Programs, and Organizations to Keep Arkansans Connected, Safe, and Healthy, and Prioritize Accessibility*															
Goal 4	*Increase Access to Affordable Digital Devices*															
Goal 5	*Engage All Interested Arkansans and Community Partners in Digital Opportunity Efforts*															

**Tentative, and subject to NTIA approval.*

Reading the Digital Skills and Opportunity Plan

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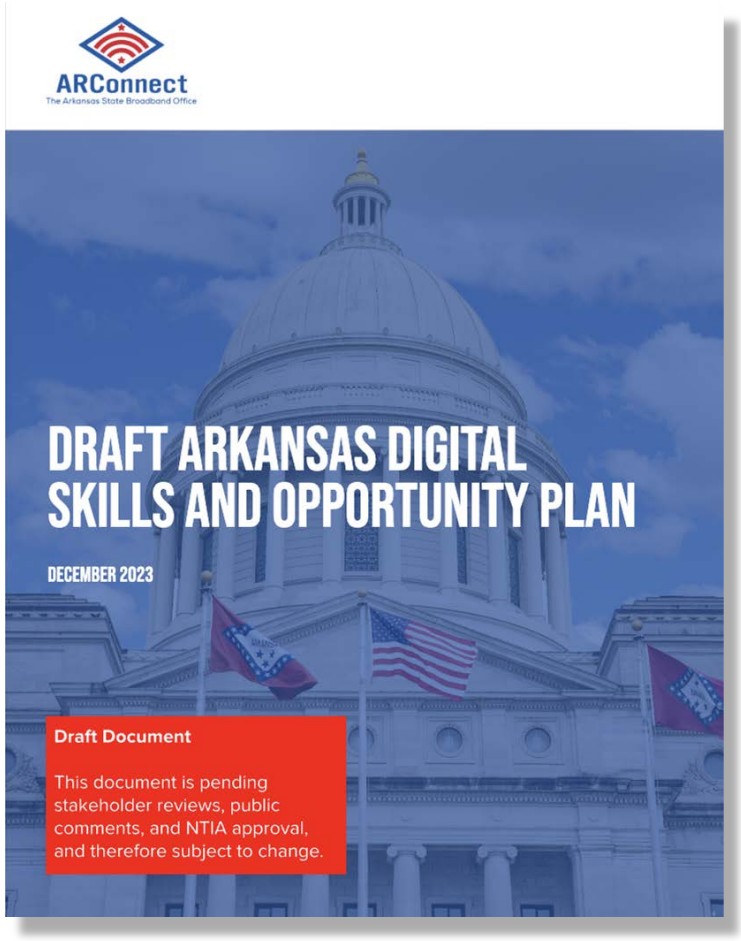
The Arkansas State Broadband Office

The full version of the Digital Skills and Opportunity Plan is available for you to download on ARConnect's website at **broadband.arkansas.gov.**

The file can be viewed on mobile devices, tablets, and computers.



What is next?

Thinking of broadband not only as an asset or platform, but as an **enabler**!

OUR FOUR KEY FOCUS AREAS

Education *How can broadband serve as an enabler to better educate our state's children and expand workforce opportunities?*

Healthcare *How can broadband serve as an enabler to tackle mental health, drug abuse, and increase preventative care in our rural communities?*

Small Business *How can broadband serve as an enabler to foster innovation, support small business, and enhance economic opportunity?*

Agriculture *How can broadband serve as an enabler to tackle our state's food deserts, enhance precision agriculture, and increase crop yields?*

Independence County Broadband Committee (ICBC)

- Created June 2023, appointed by County Judge Jeffery:

• Kevin Jeffery	County Judge
• Jessica Angel	Batesville School System
• John Bradley	WRMC - IT
• Brandon Dayberry	WR Services & Solutions
• Brian Shonk	UACCB Chancellor
• Jamie Rayford	Batesville Area Chamber COO
• Hal Vandiver	Retired Businessman

ICBC
Independence County Broadband Committee

Arkansas' Broadband Planning Efforts

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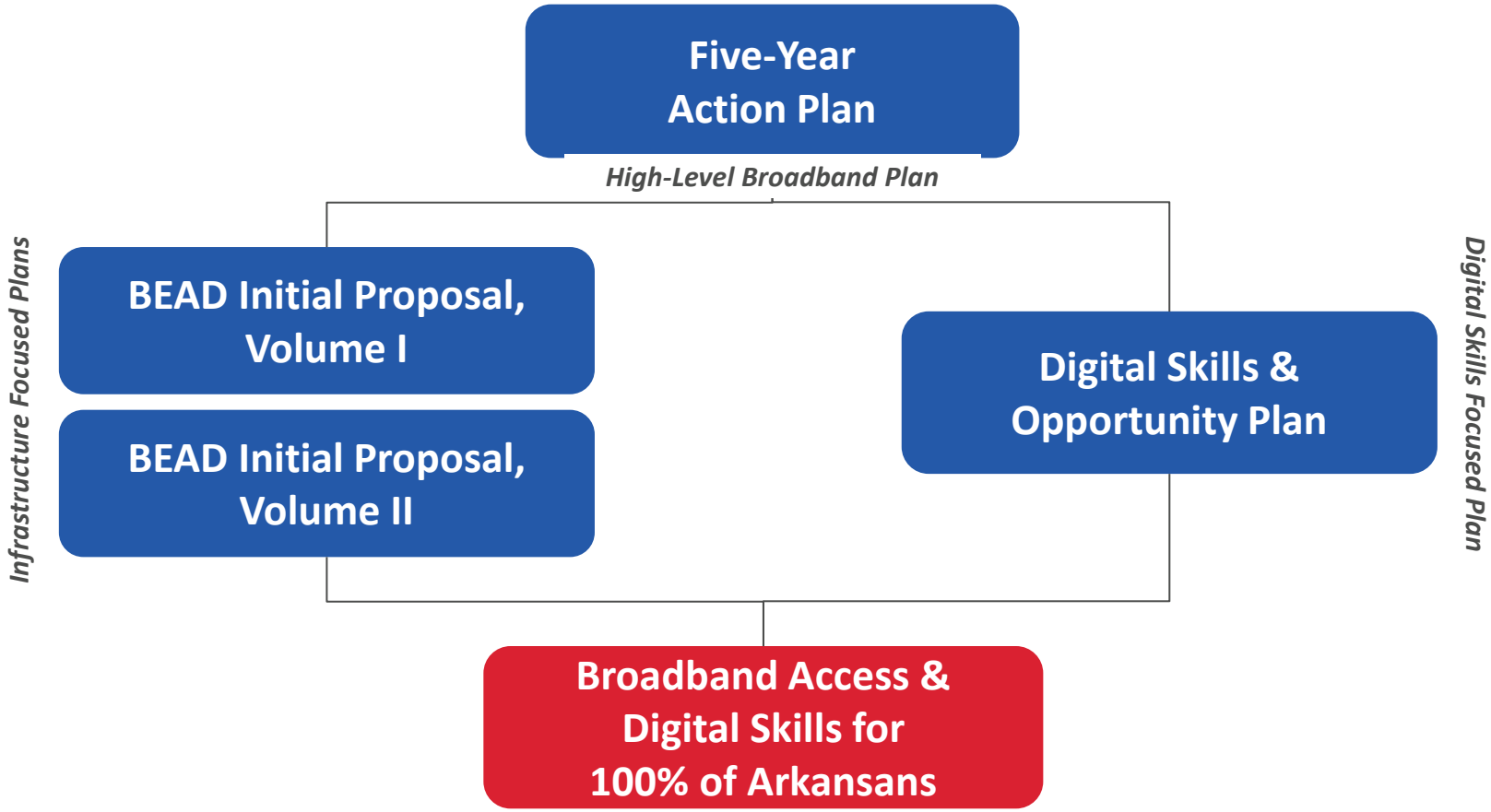

Learn more ….

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www.broadband.arkansas.gov

www.icbroadband.org

www.unitedforalice.org

www.fcc.gov.acp

Thank You