

Broadband Policy Resources & Key Advice from Broadband Leaders

At a crucial moment for closing the digital divide, the NewDEAL Forum is compiling key resources to help state and local policymakers make the most of federal broadband funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the American Rescue Plan. See below for support with affordability, ending the homework gap for students, and improving data on connectivity in your community. Also, [check out a full recording of our recent event](#), featuring NewDEAL Alumnus Andy Berke, the Biden Administration’s Special Representative for Broadband and many more speakers.

New Tools and Resources for Policymakers

Digital Equity Dashboard

Microsoft [released a new interactive tool](#) to help identify digital equity gaps. The dashboard evaluates each census tract, examining 20 different indicators of digital equity — such as broadband access, usage, education, and poverty rates — and generates an aggregated “score” of digital inequity for that community.

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) Adoption Toolkit

Education SuperHighway is piloting a new [ACP Adoption Toolkit](#) to help local leaders raise awareness and increase enrollment in the program, which provides eligible households with a \$30 monthly discount off internet service. The toolkit contains action plans, tools, and customizable resources to help quickly launch an awareness campaign. The ESH team is working directly with select communities on outreach and awareness. Let us know if you are interested in learning more about how to sign up your community for this support.

Federal Funding Opportunities Overview

Common Sense has created a [Connecting All Students resource page](#) with briefs and reports that provide recommendations and best practices to close the homework gap. Also check out their [summary of the many federal funding streams](#) available to address the digital divide, and [their recommendations for crafting smart state legislation on broadband](#). Let us know if you are interested in technical assistance with state legislation.

Leveraging Data for Better Mapping and Greater Impact

In a recent op-ed, NewDEAL CEO Debbie Cox Bultan and Results for America’s Nichole Dunn share how state and local leaders can [use data to maximize the impact of the infrastructure law and ensure broadband access for all](#).



NewDEAL and NewDEAL Forum Reports

The NewDEAL Forum’s Broadband Task Force report [“Bridging the Digital Divide”](#) and the NewDEAL Equity Initiative’s [“Closing the Digital Divide”](#) provide case studies on how states, counties, and cities can address their specific broadband needs in an equitable manner. The reports highlight models for making progress on improving mapping, tackling infrastructure and rural connectivity, improving K-12 student access, expanding access to telehealth, and supporting digital skills training.

Broadband Virtual Event Takeaways

The Forum's Broadband Policy Group hosted a virtual event, [which you can watch here](#), to discuss how policymakers can prepare to deploy over \$65 billion in federal funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for broadband equity and access, including funds specifically for state digital equity plans. Featured speakers included:



Andy Berke, NewDEAL Alumnus and Special Representative at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, who spoke about the important role state and local leaders will play in putting the funding into action to deliver transformative projects for their communities.



Veneeth Iyengar, Executive Director at ConnectLA & Eric Frederick, Executive Director at Connect Michigan, who shared their perspective from their State Offices of Broadband, which will play a central role in the planning and implementation of the federal funds. They emphasized:

- **Community Engagement** and the importance of connecting with underrepresented communities to design a state's 5-year BEAD plan.
- **Elevating Equity** and making it a core part of their efforts by understanding that connectivity issues are broader than just access and include affordability and digital skills training.
- **Integrated Partnerships** between federal, state, local, and industry partners, which will be essential to understanding community needs and putting the funding into action.



Dr. Susan Enfield, Superintendent of Washoe County School District in Nevada, joined **Common Sense's Amina Fazlullah and Drew Garner** in leading an engaging discussion on the importance of reaching disconnected students. They highlighted these points:

- With over 16 million students still "persistently in the digital divide," they stressed the urgency for additional funding to build upon successful policy solutions such as the [Emergency Connectivity Fund](#) which connected 12 million students during the pandemic.
- They advised policymakers to be vigilant against burdensome policy proposals that could limit the effectiveness of federal funding and offered their assistance in evaluating laws. [Click here](#) for their detailed recommendations on crafting smart legislation.

We encourage Leaders to use the resources provided here to help close the digital gap in their communities:

- [Watch the full conversation here.](#)
- Read [Common Sense Media's detailed recommendations for broadband legislation.](#)
- Check out the NewDEAL Forum Broadband Task Force's report "[Bridging the Digital Divide](#)" for more ideas worth stealing.