

Providing Access, Leveraging Opportunity: 5 Ways to Prepare for Broadband Expansion



The internet has become a utility as vital to daily life as water and electricity; yet, [over 14 million people](#) in the United States lack access to reliable broadband service. As RDOF awards and infrastructure planning shine a spotlight on high-speed internet expansion in the United States, electric co-operatives and broadband providers have the opportunity to spark growth both in their businesses and in their communities at large. **Here are five key steps to take as you prepare for broadband expansion:**

1 Invest in communication and training for customer service representatives.

Your customer service representatives (CSR) must be able to navigate multiple systems while creating an exceptional experience for the customer. Simplifying your CSR team's jobs as much as possible will make it easier for them to onboard subscribers and keep them happy once they're customers. In addition to providing CSRs with user-friendly customer relationship management (CRM) software and clear documentation, create scripts that include key talking points, walk them through role playing sessions to prepare for common customer interactions, and provide ongoing training and communication so they can anticipate and successfully address subscribers' concerns and questions.

2 Carefully consider the cost of infrastructure expansion.

Fiber is the future of the internet, but the cost of building infrastructure often makes expanding to new communities impractical (depending on the site, the cost of connecting an anchor can range from [\\$56,000 to \\$112,000](#)). Compare the cost of expanding your infrastructure to the ROI of each new subscriber, and look for ways to save costs by leveraging existing networks.

3 Look for opportunities to negotiate your expenses.

As you weigh funding against expansion costs, negotiation is key to saving money. If you have leased circuits that are more than two years old, for example, it's likely that you're overpaying for them. The market cost of bandwidth is often declining (the most popular tier of broadband from 5 years ago is now [over 20% cheaper and nearly 16% faster](#)) but your rental rates aren't always adjusted to reflect that decrease. Make sure you're not only getting what you pay for, but that what you pay reflects the current market price.

4 Talk to your local government about additional funding.

Funding and support for broadband expansion is not just available on a [federal level](#); there are also options available at the state level that could help your organization secure additional resources. However, government officials often rely on an antiquated definition of broadband to make decisions about infrastructure and funding, and it's up to telecom providers to advocate for a more realistic, future-proof definition of the service. Search for and contact your local representatives, set up one-on-one meetings, or visit [house.gov](#) to search town halls by zip code.

5 Think outside the home.

The conversation around broadband expansion is rightfully focused on bringing the service to previously unserved homes; but as you plot the best path forward for your organization, consider the commercial side of the equation, too. While it can be a competitive arena, commercial broadband also comes with additional stability and growth potential. Be sure to do your due diligence as you decide whether to compete on the consumer side, the commercial side, or both.

From building new infrastructure to merging existing teams to reassessing product strategy, there are many things to consider as you work to expand broadband service in your communities. If you have questions, we're always here to help.