

NETWORK (/NETWORK)

The Need for (Broadband) Speed

It's 2015 and too many Americans still lack broadband Internet service. What's the problem and who should fix it?

BY COLIN WOOD ([HTTP://WWW.GOVTECH.COM/AUTHORS/COLIN-WOOD.HTML](http://www.govtech.com/authors/colin-wood.html)) / OCTOBER 9, 2015



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Although broadband Internet service has expanded over the past few years, there are still millions of Americans for whom a fast connection to the Web remains unavailable or unaffordable.

In June, the FCC reported that 17 percent of the U.S. population — 55 million people — lacks access to advanced broadband, which the agency defines as providing download speeds of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) and upload speeds of 3 Mbps. The broadband gap is widest in rural communities, where half of Americans can't get advanced broadband service.

But this isn't just a rural issue. Big cities struggle connectivity with too. Los Angeles CIO Ted Ross says almost a third of residents in the nation's second-largest metropolis don't have broadband Internet in their homes. Affordability often is an issue. A recent report from the Pew Research Center found that high-speed service often is too expensive for lower income families with school-age children. About a third of these families don't have broadband at home, according to the report, putting these students at a serious disadvantage.

Given the importance of high-speed Internet access to everything from finding jobs and doing homework to e-commerce and entertainment, we asked representatives from government, industry and nonprofits why the broadband equity gap exists and how to fix it. Here's who we talked to and what they had to say.

THE NEED FOR SPEED

Universal Broadband: Whose Responsibility Is It?

(<http://www.govtech.com/network/Universal-Broadband-Whose-Responsibility-Is-It.html>)

Broadband Barriers: What Is the Biggest Hurdle to Universal Access? (<http://www.govtech.com/network/Broadband-Barriers-What-Is-the-Biggest-Hurdle-to-Universal-Access.html>)

Universal Broadband: How Can Barriers to Access Be Overcome? (<http://www.govtech.com/network/Universal-Broadband-How-Can-Barriers-to-Access-Be-Overcome.html>)

Broadband's Future: Where Will We Be in 10 Years? (<http://www.govtech.com/network/Broadbands-Future-Where-Will-We-Be-in-10-Years.html>)

Barriers to Broadband [INFOGRAPHIC] (<http://www.govtech.com/network/Barriers-to-Broadband-Infographic.html>)

REPRESENTATIVES

Robert Bell / *Executive Director, Intelligent Community Forum (ICF)*

Bell leads research, analysis and content development at the ICF, a nonprofit think tank he co-founded focused on technology and broadband as enablers of economic development. Among his activities while at the ICF are the annual Intelligent Communities Awards program and economic development missions to cities around the United States and Asia.

Doug Brake / *Telecommunications Policy Analyst, Information Technology & Innovation Foundation*

Brake specializes in spectrum-sharing mechanisms, wireless enforcement and broadband policy. Among his past work is a stint at the FCC helping implement the Advanced Communications Services section of the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act.

Heather Burnett Gold / *President and CEO, Fiber to the Home (FTTH) Council Americas*

At the helm of the nonprofit FTTH since 2011, Burnett Gold advances the work of companies and organizations involved in providing video, Internet and/or voice communications over next-generation fiber networks. She has also worked in the telecom industry for more than 27 years, most recently in external affairs for XO Communications.

Joanne Hovis / *Co-founder and CEO, Coalition for Local Internet Choice (CLIC)*

Also the president of CTC Technology & Energy communications engineering consultancy, Hovis co-founded CLIC in May 2014 to help empower local communities to make broadband choices in their own interests.

Miguel Gamiño / *Chief Information Officer, City and County of San Francisco*

Gamiño has officially led San Francisco's technology efforts since December 2014, with an annual operating budget of more than \$87 million. At the Department of Technology, the four core service areas he oversees are operation and infrastructure services and support, policy and planning services, customer support services, and media services.

John Jones / *Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Government Relations, CenturyLink*

Jones has been with CenturyLink, the third largest U.S. telecom company, for 21 years. An active member of the Technology Council for the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, Jones also serves on the boards of the Louisiana Telecommunications Association and the Governor's Workforce Investment Council.

Ric Lumbard / *Executive Director, Iowa Communications Network (ICN)*

Appointed to his current position in September 2014, Lumbard has 25 years of experience in telecommunications, including with Raytheon Corporation and USWEST Communications. At ICN, Lumbard leads efforts to leverage broadband assets and partnerships for high-quality telecom services for education, medical, judicial and governmental entities in Iowa.

Michael Mattmiller / *Chief Technology Officer, Seattle*

Holding the position of CTO since June 2014, Mattmiller is the head of the Seattle Department of Information Technology and its annual budget of roughly \$42 million. Previously, he was a technology consultant at Microsoft and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Chris Mitchell / *Director of the Community Broadband Networks Initiative, Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR)*

A leading voice on community broadband, Mitchell's advocacy work focuses on helping communities hold telecommunications companies accountable. Mitchell runs the website MuniNetworks.org and maintains a comprehensive map of community-owned broadband networks on the ILSR site.

Bernie O'Donnell / *Past President, National Association of State Technology Directors*

O'Donnell has spent 25 years with the state of Connecticut, where he now serves as director of the communications services unit within the Department of Administrative Services/Bureau of Enterprise Systems and Technology. He is responsible for statewide telecommunications solutions and consulting with agencies on their specialized needs.



Colin Wood (<http://www.govtech.com/authors/Colin-Wood.html>) | Staff Writer

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