

BACKGROUND

Since 2010, Connected Texas, under the direction of the state, has served as the broadband resource providing information, insight, and expertise to various stakeholders throughout the state. Support provided to stakeholders has varied based on the specific stakeholder group and need, but Connected Texas has been able to share its resources and expertise in an effort to improve the broadband landscape across the state. The number of stakeholders supported is vast and includes the Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas Public Utilities Commission, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Education Agency, Texas Computer Education Association, Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Economic Development Council, Texas Department of Information Resources, the University of Texas, and many more.

The program office, established in Austin, served as a go-to resource and primary champion of broadband as it related to adoption, access, and use within the state. Updates were provided to program partners and stakeholders throughout the state through periodic status reports, continual direct interactions, addressing requests for information or data, and raising awareness of broadband-related news and information through a variety of media. Outreach staff distributed 64 press releases statewide, maintained a program blog and social media pages, and distributed regular e-newsletters to subscribers.

Throughout the project, representatives served as subject matter experts in the areas of impacting broadband access, adoption, and use, while program data was often highlighted by media outlets in pieces related to technological advancement efforts.

The program manager testified at the Texas State Senate Hearing on Virtual Education conducted on October 8, 2012, as requested by the state legislature (senate committee on education). The testimony was in response to an apparent disparity in broadband availability between rural and metro K-12 facilities. The result of this testimony and related commendations, including the call for the drafting of a bill (House Bill 1926), can be found in the

Committee Report to the 83rd Legislature, specifically pages 9 and 10. H.B. 1926, later signed into law, required the Texas Education Agency to conduct a thorough statewide assessment of broadband availability to all K-12 facilities by the end of year 2015.

In September 2013, the program manager participated in the first (of three) panel series presented by *The Texas Tribune* named "Demographic Change and the Digital Divide." The focus of the three-part series was the impact of the digital divide in a state with a fast-growing and rapidly changing population. Co-Panelists included: a former state representative who is also the head of Google Fiber in Austin, a current state representative, and the executive director of Austin Free-Net. The event was held at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs on the University of Texas at Austin campus. The conversation was live streamed through, and later archived, on The Texas Tribune's website.

On March 14, 2014, program representatives conducted an informational webinar regarding the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rural Broadband Experiments. The webinar drew substantial interest from stakeholders and representatives of partner organizations and entities in the state. In addition, staff supported over a dozen organizations including municipalities, providers, and regional entities with more specific information on the FCC Rural Broadband Experiments in order for the organizations to pursue funding.

Data was also used to support programs such as the Texas Connects Coalition, FirstNet, Connect America Fund, and more. Texas Connects Coalition, a Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) awardee, used SBI program broadband information to add value to their Internet and computer training classes and locations, while staff and program data also lent support to the Texas Department of Public Safety's FirstNet Grant Application.