

SOUTH-CENTRAL ALABAMA BROADBAND COOPERATIVE DISTRICT
TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

The Black Belt Broadband Action Toolkit

Planting seeds of technology in Black Belt soil

SERVING 15 OF ALABAMA'S BLACK BELT COUNTIES

- Bullock
- Butler
- Choctaw
- Conecuh
- Dallas
- Escambia
- Greene
- Hale
- Lowndes
- Macon
- Marengo
- Perry
- Pickens
- Sumter
- Wilcox



OCTOBER 2026

A BROADBAND ACTION GUIDE FOR ALABAMA'S BLACK BELT

USDA Broadband Technical Assistance Program (Cooperative Agreement No. RD-RU-COOP-24-34)



20,661 New Black Belt Locations to Get Internet Access

High-speed internet (broadband) will soon reach every eligible location in the Black Belt through the **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program**. This toolkit explains that change and the opportunities it can open for our communities. It focuses on 15 counties, but the information applies to everyone.

Look for QR codes and short links

Throughout the toolkit, QR codes and short links lead to an interactive map and expanded information online. Scan with your phone's camera or type the link into a browser. They look like this:

scabcd.com/go/toolkit

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WHY IT MATTERS

Importance of Connecting the Black Belt to the World Wide Web

The Good News!
Up to **20,661 homes, businesses, schools and farms** will soon have high-speed internet for the first time – joining the more than 6 billion people in the world who are online.

For thirty years, much of the Black Belt has waited to join the digital economy, while other regions gained better education, healthcare and jobs. Now we have our chance to catch up!

What broadband has done for other rural counties

According to the Center on Rural Innovation's 2024 study, rural counties with high broadband adoption (over 80%) and local fiber saw:

213% higher business growth rates	**44%** higher GDP growth	**18%** higher per capita income growth	**10%** higher self-employment growth

Growth like this can happen here if we all sign up for broadband.

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program makes this possible. It is federally funded, run by the Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs (ADECA), and serves more than 92,000 Alabama locations without broadband.

The Black Belt Broadband Action Toolkit is a joint effort of the South-Central Alabama Broadband Cooperative District and Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension with the support of USDA's Broadband Technical Assistance Program (Cooperative Agreement No. RD-RU-COOP-24-34).

WHY IT MATTERS

Broadband Adoption Is the Key to Prosperity

We might be late to the party—other communities have been using the internet since 1995. The delay may have contributed to a lack of growth in the Black Belt. The chart below gives you a quick snapshot of the condition of many Black Belt counties. Some are losing population and have little local opportunity for young people and young families to stay. **But broadband can change some of that. It has in other rural areas.**



Broadband Prosperity—First Step Is Subscribing

According to national statistics, rural populations with 80% broadband adoption are experiencing stronger economic growth. Based on those reports, **Butler (79%), Marengo (79%), and Pickens (74%)** have a head start. Each county should set similar goals.

15-COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS & BROADBAND ADOPTION RATES

COUNTY	POP.	POVERTY RATE	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	BROADBAND ADOPTION	UNSERVED	UNDERSERVED	BEAD LOCATIONS TOTAL
Bullock	10,357	33%	$29,400	**58%**	48	0	**48**
Butler	18,981	21%	$45,592	**79%**	1,112	155	**1,267**
Choctaw	12,669	19%	$44,613	**69%**	110	50	**160**
Conecuh	11,576	18%	$42,085	**67%**	2,585	673	**3,258**
Dallas	36,858	37%	$35,627	**62%**	2,029	171	**2,200**
Escambia	36,755	22%	$43,841	**72%**	1,902	316	**2,218**
Greene	7,917	34%	$27,800	**58%**	804	4	**808**
Hale	14,286	31%	$30,200	**72%**	781	70	**851**
Lowndes	9,726	35%	$28,600	**62%**	561	25	**586**
Macon	18,068	28%	$33,900	**69%**	795	39	**834**
Marengo	18,863	30%	$31,800	**79%**	394	73	**467**
Perry	8,897	38%	$27,100	**55%**	1,030	92	**1,122**
Pickens	18,925	22%	$45,522	**74%**	2,375	125	**2,500**
Sumter	12,345	36%	$28,900	**66%**	2,399	145	**2,544**
Wilcox	10,373	40%	$25,800	**69%**	1,739	59	**1,798**
Total / Avg	**246,596**	**30%**	**$34,719**	**67%**	**18,664**	**1,997**	**20,661**

Sources: ACS 2022 (population, poverty, income) | ADECA BEAD Final Proposal

Broadband can slow the downward trend and turn it up!

You will see that five (one-third) of our 15 counties have populations of less than 8,000 to slightly more than 10,000. However, the entire list of 15 adds up to nearly 250,000. If we all get connected, along with our neighbors in other Black Belt counties, **we could change things!**

WHY IT MATTERS

People Are Talking About the Internet

We asked your neighbors what they thought about the internet...



We gathered responses from everyday people across the 15 target counties to assess common experiences and frustrations with existing internet service. Here is what we learned.

COST MATTERS

74%

said the monthly cost was too high. **32%** said people had service but canceled because of cost, and **26%** said people lacked a tablet or computer.

A CONNECTION MUST WORK WELL ENOUGH

47%

said their service was not fast or dependable enough for what they needed to do.

POOR INTERNET AFFECTS EVERYDAY LIFE

47%

said poor or unavailable internet made it difficult to work, arrange health appointments, bank online, or stay in touch with family.

HEALTHCARE MAY BE A MAJOR OPPORTUNITY

79%

said they would use an online visit with a doctor or nurse. **88%** said they would use affordable connected-health tools such as home sensors, wearables, or apps.

What do your neighbors say broadband can help with?

Residents mentioned finding jobs, getting healthcare, overcoming transportation barriers, shopping, homework, training, growing a business, learning about technology, and staying connected with family.

Source: SCABCD/TUCE Have-Needs-Next Survey

WHAT BEAD BRINGS

What Kind of Internet Will You Get?

BEAD defines your location as either **unserved** or **underserved.**

Unserved
No reliable service of at least 25/3 Mbps.

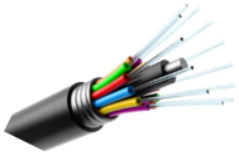
Underserved
Reliable service, but below 100/20 Mbps.

Speed
Measured in megabits per second (Mbps): download/upload.

Latency
The delay for data to reach the internet and return, in milliseconds (ms). Lower is better.

Fiber-Optic Cable

1,000 / 1,000 Mbps
Up & Down

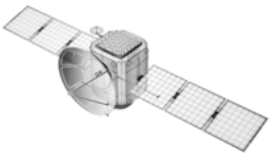


A fiber-optic cable carries data directly to the location. Fiber generally provides the greatest capacity and consistency, but rural construction can be costly because cable must be extended to each area. Fiber also holds up best in bad weather.

Speed	●●●
Reliability	●●●
How soon	●○○

Low Earth Orbit Satellite

100+ Mbps Down
20 Mbps Up



A small rectangular receiver on the roof or on a post at the location sends and receives a signal from a low earth orbit satellite. The satellite relays that signal to a ground station connected to the internet. The receiver needs a clear view of the sky.

Speed	●●○
Reliability	●○○
How soon	●●●

Fixed Wireless

100+ Mbps Down
20 Mbps Up



A nearby tower sends a signal to an antenna at the location. Speeds can vary due to distance from the tower, line of sight, terrain, weather, equipment, and network congestion. Trees, hills, and buildings between the tower and the antenna can weaken the signal.

Speed	●●○
Reliability	●●○
How soon	●●○

~~$1.4 billion~~ → **$460 million**

ORIGINAL BEAD BUDGET — ALABAMA'S REVISED BUDGET

Initially BEAD prioritized fiber as the preferred internet delivery technology. However, Alabama's BEAD budget was reduced after the June 2025 "Benefit of the Bargain" change that encouraged alternative internet providers to compete. Each location now has the lowest-cost option that meets minimum standards, so speed and reliability may vary according to the technology assigned to your location.

BEAD

THE MINIMUM PROMISE

100/20 Mbps

Every BEAD connection must deliver at least 100/20 Mbps, with latency of **100 ms or less**, whatever the technology.

Find your location and BEAD provider on the map (next page)

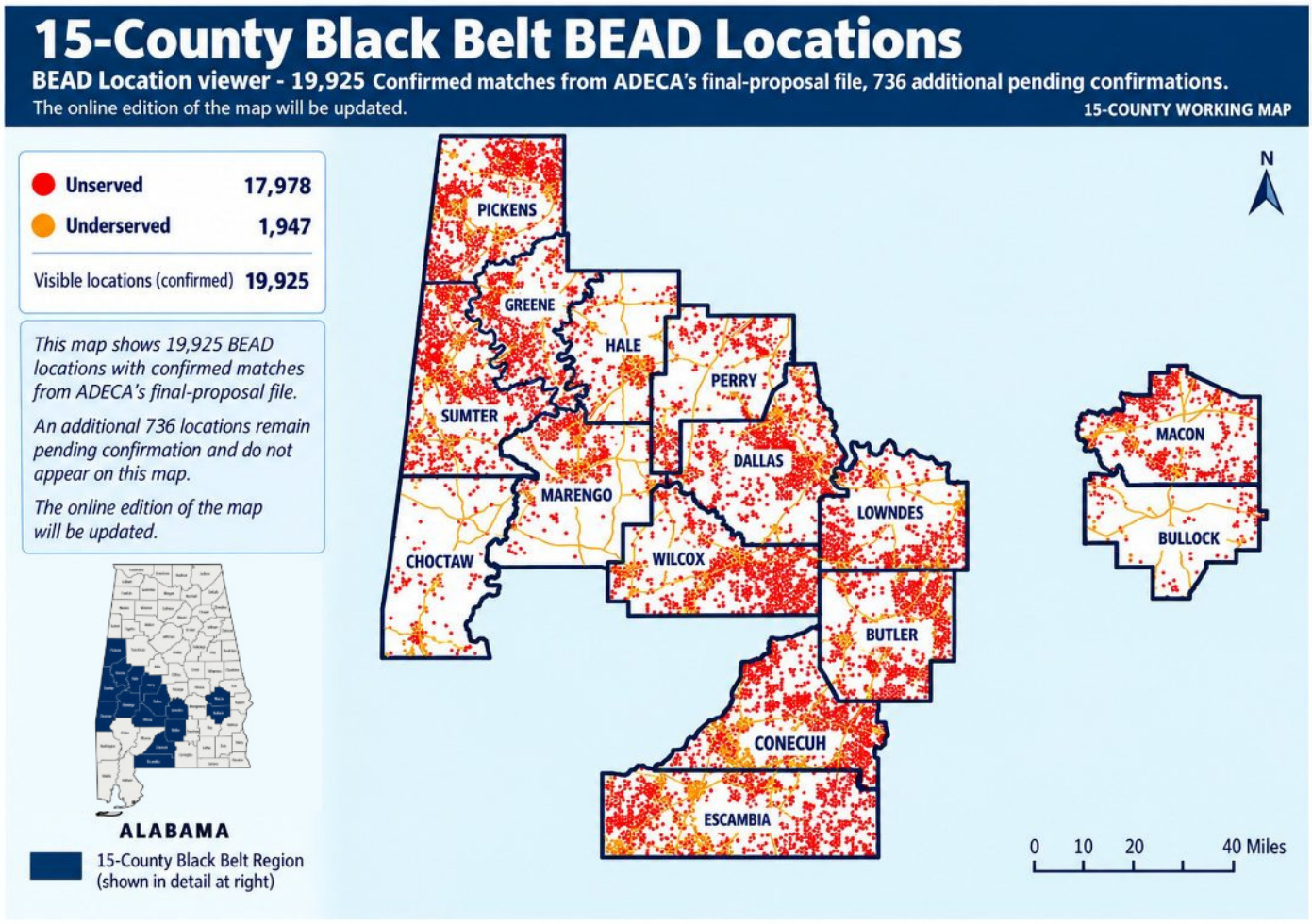
The next two pages show an interactive map (scan the QR code or use the URL) and a chart of each county's locations by technology. In these 15 counties, BEAD locations get fiber or satellite only; the current plan includes no fixed wireless.

WHAT BEAD BRINGS

20,661 New Black Belt Broadband Locations

Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Conecuh, Dallas, Escambia, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Perry, Pickens, Sumter, & Wilcox Counties

15-COUNTY BLACK BELT BEAD LOCATIONS — Unserved and underserved locations · 15-county working map



Explore the Map

See where broadband expansion is planned in your community. Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to explore an interactive map of the 19,925 confirmed BEAD locations shown, plus 736 more that will be added to an updated map.

Select a county, then filter by All, Unserved, or Underserved locations. Click any point on the map to see more information, including the location, planned technology, and selected internet service provider.

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/map

Why do Bullock and Choctaw show so few BEAD locations?

Our BEAD location map counts only locations eligible for the BEAD program. They represent remaining locations after most others have already been provided access by earlier programs. BEAD locations are the ones that still have no internet access, or whose service is unreliable.

WHAT BEAD BRINGS

Who Gets What? BEAD Technology and Service Providers by County

19,925 confirmed assigned locations · **62.2% Fiber · 37.8% Satellite**

ASSIGNED TECHNOLOGY AND PROVIDER, ALL 15 COUNTIES

Fiber Satellite

COUNTY	SHARE OF ASSIGNED LOCATIONS	TOTAL	ASSIGNED PROVIDERS · LOCATIONS
Bullock	100%	48	**SpaceX** 48
Butler	55% / 45%	1,267	**Connect Holding II** 694 Amazon Leo 540 · SpaceX 33
Choctaw	100%	160	**SpaceX** 160
Conecuh	96%	3,258	**SP Broadband** 3,136 **SpaceX** 122
Dallas	79% / 21%	1,882	**AT&T** 1,487 Amazon Leo 379 · SpaceX 16
Escambia	62% / 38%	2,193	**SP Broadband** 1,369 Amazon Leo 758 · SpaceX 66
Greene	38% / 62%	808	**Yellowhammer** 310 Amazon Leo 478 · SpaceX 20
Hale	85% / 15%	849	**Yellowhammer** 718 Amazon Leo 109 · SpaceX 22
Lowndes	50% / 50%	501	**Ardmore Tel.** 251 Amazon Leo 210 · SpaceX 40
Macon	64% / 36%	834	**Windstream** 531 SpaceX 297 · Amazon Leo 6
Marengo	88% / 12%	465	**Yellowhammer** 408 Amazon Leo 45 · SpaceX 12
Perry	89% / 11%	1,082	**Yellowhammer** 964 Amazon Leo 117 · SpaceX 1
Pickens	72% / 28%	2,500	**Connect Holding II** 1,792 Amazon Leo 633 · SpaceX 75
Sumter	29% / 71%	2,544	**Yellowhammer** 729 Amazon Leo 1,751 · SpaceX 64
Wilcox	100%	1,534	**SpaceX** 1,534

Data Notes

- 19,925 represents confirmed locations as of the printed date of this toolkit. 736 locations, shown on the map, are designated but not yet confirmed.
- Fiber and Satellite percentages are calculated from confirmed BEAD assigned locations. There are no Fixed Wireless BEAD broadband technologies among the 15 counties.
- Source: ADECA final proposal deployment records / 15-county confirmed map, SCABCD/TUCE, Sept. 2026.

WHAT BEAD BRINGS

Can You Afford Not to Have It?

BEAD can bring service to a location, but it cannot make that service affordable. The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) stopped taking new households in February 2024 and ended June 1, 2024. BEAD providers must offer a "low-cost" option, but they set their own terms.

What the BEAD "low-cost" option means

For ten years, every BEAD provider must offer at least one low-cost plan to eligible households. Each provider sets its own price and rules, so "low cost" is not one statewide price, and it does not replace the ACP.

Ask for the "Low-Cost Option" before you sign.



CURRENT ADVERTISED MONTHLY INTERNET PRICES — BEAD PRICES COULD VARY

Alabama providers, September 2026

TECHNOLOGY	ADVERTISED	WHAT CUSTOMERS SHOULD KNOW
Fiber-Optic Cable	**$35** promo / **$60** regular	As of this printing, none of the BEAD providers have published their rates. The rates quoted here are for your information and may vary based on speeds offered, and be subject to terms such as auto pay, paperless billing, an initial discount that changes in a year, taxes and fees.
Fixed Wireless	**$60–$80**	
LEO Satellite	**$55 / $85 / $130**	

Prices sampled from Alabama providers, September 2026. The interactive map lists the providers at your location, so you can contact them and check price, speed and availability for your address.

It may add a bill...but save in the long run

- **Save on travel:** A telehealth visit can replace a long round trip, saving gas and a day's pay.
- **Earn more:** Apply for jobs, train online, or sell products and services from home.
- **Spend less:** Shop and pay bills online and do homework at home instead of driving to find Wi-Fi.

ONE REMAINING DISCOUNT PROGRAM

Lifeline

$9.25 /mo off

Lifeline takes up to $9.25 a month off an eligible household's phone or internet bill.

- ✓ You qualify if household income is at or below **135%** of the federal poverty guideline, **or**
- ✓ someone in the household gets **SNAP, Medicaid** or another qualifying program.

One benefit per household, from a participating provider.

Ask your BEAD provider if it participates in Lifeline

The interactive map lists the providers at your location so you can contact them directly.

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/affordability

WHAT BROADBAND CAN DO

Broadband & Healthcare

Half of Black Belt adults live with high blood pressure.

We cannot learn or earn if we are sick—broadband has a partial answer.

15-COUNTY BLACK BELT HEALTH CONDITIONS — Share of adults · Source: CDC PLACES 2024

COUNTY	HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE	DIABETES	OBESITY	HEART DISEASE	STROKE	UNINSURED
Bullock	**54.2%**	21.5%	49.8%	10.1%	6.5%	13.5%
Butler	**51.0%**	18.9%	40.4%	9.1%	5.5%	11.3%
Choctaw	**52.7%**	20.1%	44.4%	10.0%	6.0%	11.0%
Conecuh	**54.7%**	22.1%	46.4%	11.1%	6.7%	12.7%
Dallas	**55.2%**	22.4%	50.1%	10.3%	6.7%	13.8%
Escambia	**48.6%**	18.5%	43.9%	9.5%	5.5%	13.1%
Greene	**59.8%**	**27.1%**	52.7%	**11.9%**	**8.4%**	14.6%
Hale	**51.1%**	19.7%	47.6%	9.0%	5.8%	12.4%
Lowndes	**56.5%**	24.1%	51.2%	10.4%	7.2%	13.9%
Macon	**50.6%**	20.0%	46.7%	8.2%	5.7%	11.2%
Marengo	**51.5%**	19.8%	43.1%	9.0%	5.5%	11.5%
Perry	**56.9%**	24.6%	52.9%	10.9%	7.4%	13.8%
Pickens	**48.3%**	18.0%	48.0%	8.7%	5.2%	13.4%
Sumter	**50.0%**	19.7%	47.2%	8.5%	5.8%	11.1%
Wilcox	**56.7%**	23.8%	51.2%	10.8%	7.3%	14.4%
15-County Average	**53.2%**	**21.4%**	**47.7%**	**9.8%**	**6.3%**	**12.8%**
U.S. Average	**35%**	**11%**	**36%**	—	—	—

Critical chronic health factors prevail in the Black Belt

53.2% **high blood pressure** vs. 35% nationally

21.4% **diabetes** vs. 11% · one in five adults

47.7% **obesity** vs. 36% · nearly half

Every county is above the national rate on all three. **Greene County** has the highest rates of high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Left unchecked, these conditions lead to heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure and amputations.

These are not one-visit illnesses

They are managed week to week by checking blood pressure and blood sugar, adjusting medicine and keeping follow-ups. That is hard when the doctor is a long drive away and a day off work means lost pay.

A home connection lets readings go straight to a nurse, lets patients ask questions by video, and helps catch problems before they become emergencies.

When broadband service reaches your home

- Sign up for your doctor's or clinic's patient portal for test results, messages and appointments.
- Ask whether your clinic offers video visits or remote blood pressure and glucose monitoring.
- Check whether Medicare, Medicaid or your insurance covers telehealth visits.

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/health

WHAT BROADBAND CAN DO

Telehealth Comes to the Black Belt

A doctor's visit, closer to home.



An OnMed Care Station clinic


The remote provider's view of a patient

OnMed, already in five Black Belt counties

OnMed Telehealth Clinics are in public spaces, like the library in Akron, Hale County. Currently there are **OnMed** personal clinics operating at the Boligee Community Center (Greene County), the Akron Public Library (Hale County), the Elijah Tracy Shaw III Community Center in Catherine (Wilcox County), the Gainesville Municipal Complex (Sumter County), and Tuskegee University (Macon County) in Margaret Murray Washington Hall.

Auburn University's Rural Health Initiative is sponsoring a growing network of telehealth clinics located in public spaces in the Black Belt. No appointment is needed and services are free. **OnMed** says to bring a valid photo ID and your health plan Member ID card if you have insurance, but insurance is not necessary.



OnMed might be expanding.

In August, Governor Kay Ivey announced **$144 million** in **Rural Health Transformation Grants**—with **$4M** to Auburn for a virtual clinic network to expand preventive and primary care. Contact **Auburn University's Rural Health Initiative** or your county Extension office.

DID YOU KNOW?

You can see a doctor and monitor your health from home

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) has partnered with local county health departments. Through your health department you can access **UAB specialists** who also may place blood pressure and blood sugar monitors in your home—reducing the number of times you have to visit a doctor—and quickly alerting you and your provider if something is wrong.

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/health

Who pays for telehealth?

COVERED

Medicare

Pays for telehealth visits if your doctor provides them.

LIMITED

Medicaid

Coverage is more limited.

OTHER OPTIONS

Local clinics & national services

Community clinics may provide telehealth, as do national for-profit services that treat common ailments and provide prescriptions.

EDUCATION & JOBS

Broadband Opens Education & Career Pathways







We need a Black Belt regional strategy to uplift our education programs

16% of adults in our region do not have a high school diploma compared to 8.5% of the rest of the population. That limits the local job market. Broadband helps students finish homework, lets schools offer more varied classes, prepares graduates for work, and makes the region more attractive to employers.

15-COUNTY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Sources: EIG DCI 2023; NCES IPEDS; ACS 2022

COUNTY	NO HS DIPLOMA	HS DIPLOMA ONLY	SOME COLLEGE	BACHELOR'S DEGREE +	HBCUS	OTHER UNIVERSITY OR COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Bullock	**26.0%**	19.7%	24.5%	9.0%		
Butler	**12.4%**	48.0%	26.5%	13.8%		
Choctaw	**15.8%**	38.2%	31.2%	13.9%		Coastal Alabama CC
Conecuh	**12.5%**	48.3%	27.9%	13.1%		
Dallas	**12.9%**	24.4%	31.0%	17.0%	Selma University	Wallace Community College
Escambia	**17.5%**	44.4%	25.4%	12.5%		Coastal Alabama CC
Greene	**18.0%**	17.6%	23.9%	12.5%		
Hale	**18.1%**	26.5%	26.9%	16.8%		
Lowndes	**16.8%**	25.9%	25.4%	13.9%		
Macon	**15.8%**	28.0%	31.7%	20.7%	Tuskegee University	
Marengo	**14.4%**	29.3%	30.8%	20.4%		
Perry	**17.8%**	25.6%	22.7%	16.8%		
Pickens	**16.1%**	41.1%	29.3%	13.7%		Bevill State Community College
Sumter	**14.2%**	31.8%	25.0%	14.0%		University of West Alabama
Wilcox	**16.5%**	28.0%	23.5%	11.0%		

→ TURN THE PAGE

Learn next how broadband brings new jobs and career opportunities to the Black Belt.

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/teachers

EDUCATION & JOBS

The Black Belt Digital Workforce Academy

BEAD alone is expected to create 1,200–1,700 Alabama jobs for broadband technicians, utility installers and maintenance workers, and our area is short on all of them. Short-term training plus job experience can lead to other high-wage careers.

SCABCD/TUCE Announce...

The South-Central Alabama Broadband Cooperative District & Tuskegee Extension plan to open the Black Belt Digital Workforce Academy offering **the first certified broadband technician training program in Hayneville, Lowndes County.**

With support from the Just Transition Fund, SCABCD/TUCE will partner with C-Tech—a national industry-standard training program that offers five certifications, all used in the broadband industry, including fiber optics, copper, computer networks and more.

Training takes **4½ weeks (150 hours)** and needs no high school diploma or prior experience. Veterans and justice-involved individuals are eligible.

BLACK BELT DIGITAL WORKFORCE ACADEMY
Certified Broadband Training Program
Bridging the Gap Between Education and Industry



C-Tech has certified more than 195,000 trainees over 30 years.

C-TECH

Five industry certifications

C-Tech delivers five industry-standard certifications that open doors across broadband and related fields including data, security, utilities, cellular and more.

Hands-on instruction

Hands-on multi-certification courses are taught by certified instructors using C-Tech's curriculum.

STARTING WAGES FOR C-TECH CERTIFIED TECHNICIANS

CERTIFICATION AREA	HOURLY WAGE
OSP Fiber Installation Technician	$19.50–$22.00 /hr
Network Cabling Specialist	$19.50–$22.00 /hr
Fusion Splicing Technician	$22.00–$25.50 /hr
Wireless/DAS Systems Technician	$20.50–$24.00 /hr
Grounding & Bonding Technician	$19.50–$21.00 /hr

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT

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WHAT BROADBAND CAN DO

Health, Wealth, Service & Opportunity

Broadband can enhance every part of community life. Each summary below links to more information online: scan the QR code or type the URL in a browser for practical tools for home, work or your organization.



Students & Families

Home internet is essential for school success. About 24% of rural students lack fixed broadband at home, and Pew found nearly one in four lower-income teens sometimes can't finish homework for lack of reliable internet or a computer.

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/students

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/teachers

Teachers & Schools

Computer science classes are linked to higher earnings, especially for underserved students, yet rural students have less access to them. As AI spreads through school and work, AI literacy matters alongside basic digital skills.





Older Adults

More than one in five rural residents is 65 or older. Affordable internet can reduce isolation and support family contact, shopping, banking and telehealth. Older adults may also need trusted instruction, accessible devices and protection from scams.

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/seniors

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/workforce

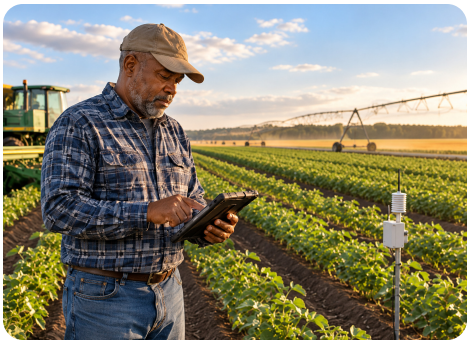
Workers

Most jobs now need some digital skill, and workers who have it earn more, yet many lack basic skills or local training. Rural veterans often bring technical and leadership experience but face barriers of distance, age, disability or few local digital jobs.



WHAT BROADBAND CAN DO

Health, Wealth, Service & Opportunity



Farmers & Landowners

Broadband helps farms compete through precision agriculture, wider markets, online purchasing, equipment support, weather data, records and training. USDA estimates connected precision tools can raise yields and cut costs.

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/farmers

SMART FARM BONUS

scabcd.com/go/agriculture

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/business

Local Businesses

Dependable broadband lets rural businesses use e-commerce, digital marketing, online payments and cloud tools to reach customers beyond their area. Women entrepreneurs and other small-business owners can find customers far from home.





Faith Leaders

Faith leaders can extend care and community connection beyond the church walls. Broadband supports livestreamed services for homebound congregants, remote pastoral check-ins, rapid coordination of events and benevolence requests, community bulletins, prayer requests, and emergency communication.

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/faith

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/health

Healthcare

Telehealth matters most where hospital closures and distance limit in-person care. Video visits, patient portals and home monitoring improve access, but patients also need affordable service, the right device, privacy awareness and digital skills.



WHAT BROADBAND CAN DO

Health, Wealth, Service & Opportunity



Libraries

Libraries offer free public internet for residents without service at home. Many also teach basic digital skills and provide one-on-one help, digital collections and remote-learning resources.

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/libraries

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/nonprofits

Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofits, community-action agencies and charities use broadband to raise funds and to find and apply for grants. Reliable service also supports staff training, member contact and grant management.





Local Government

Broadband helps local governments improve services and reach residents through reporting systems, grant portals, GIS, digital records and online permits. Residents can get alerts, tax information, court dates and records without traveling to an office.

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/government

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/home-business

Home-Based Business

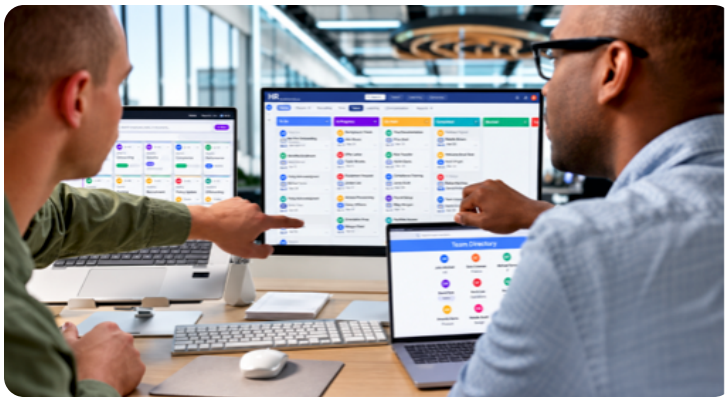
Home-based businesses create jobs and income without commercial rent. A seamstress can sell online, a bookkeeper can serve distant clients, and a handyman can book jobs and get paid online. CORI found more business formation, self-employment and income in well-connected rural counties.



GETTING READY

Digital Literacy & Digital Skills

*Today's workplace is **not** changing...the workplace **has** already changed.*



In 2023 the National Skills Coalition and Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta reported:

92%
of U.S. jobs now require digital skills

1 in 3
workers lack foundational digital skills

That includes entry-level and frontline jobs that never used to need a computer.

Good News – Closing the gap pays off. Jobs requiring even one digital skill pay about **23% more**.

Get Started at → DIGITALLEARN.ORG

WHAT YOU CAN LEARN ON DIGITALLEARN.ORG

Free, self-paced courses · 5 to 30 minutes each

BASIC DIGITAL LITERACY

- Computer basics
- Internet basics
- Email & mobile
- Staying safe online

EVERYDAY APPLICATIONS

- Telehealth & MyHealthFinder
- Zoom & Facebook
- Maps, YouTube, cloud storage
- Buying tickets

WORKPLACE SKILLS

- Job search & resumes
- Word documents
- Excel formulas & charts
- PowerPoint & Publisher

Workshops are coming

SCABCD/TUCE will hold Digital Literacy/Skills workshops in coming months. Get a head start now with **DigitalLearn.org**: free video courses from the Public Library Association and AT&T, in English and Spanish, on a computer, tablet or phone.

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/digital-skills

GETTING READY

Let's Talk About Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI is becoming a new digital skill

Artificial intelligence, or AI, is a computer tool you can type to or talk to in everyday language. It seeks out and explains information, helps you write, organizes ideas, analyzes problems and suggests next steps.

It works like a companion that can help you accomplish your goals. It can draw on more information than any library, but it can make mistakes.

If you can ask a question, you can try AI. Use it as a helper—not the final word.



BROADBAND connects you → **DIGITAL SKILLS** help you learn & use digital skills → **AI** helps you get things done

What can AI help you do?

Health
Prepare questions for a doctor's visit

Jobs
Help write a resume, complete an application, or practice for an interview

Farm & Business
Help plan, price, market or organize a business

School
Tutor a lesson or subject, or explain math, science and English problems

Everyday Life
Plan a budget, explain forms, draft letters, sort bills, and organize tasks.

Try AI: Just Ask a Question

1. Open a free AI app, like ChatGPT or Gemini.
2. Tap the microphone and ask your question out loud, the way you would ask a friend.
3. Listen to the answer, or read it. Not clear? Ask again in your own words.

You say: "I have a job interview tomorrow at a grocery store. Ask me some practice questions, one at a time."

AI answers: "Sure! First question: Tell me a little about yourself and why you want to work here."

Then ask: "How did I do? How can I make my answer better?"

Use the same steps for homework, car parts, health questions and more.

Use AI Safely

1. **Keep private information private.** Never enter Social Security, bank, password or medical-record numbers.
2. **Check important answers.** AI can be wrong. Double-check health, money, legal and government information. AI does not replace your doctor, lawyer or benefits office.
3. **Watch for fake AI.** AI can create fake voices, pictures and messages. Stop and verify.

Other prompts to try: "Help me write a resume." • "Give me five ways to sell vegetables online." • "Explain this homework step by step."

Try It Free Before Spending Money

You do not have to buy anything to experiment with AI. Free versions of ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot and Claude are available. Start small: ask about something you know and see how AI responds.

SCABCD/TUCE will work with County Broadband Task Forces to bring Digital Skills and AI learning opportunities to Black Belt communities.

MORE INFO

scabcd.com/go/ai

GETTING READY

What's Next? You've Got to Get Organized!

It takes people to power the promise of the internet.

Community by community, and county to county, universal access will help boost the local economy. The internet is a tool for equity, growth, and development, but the benefit depends on how fully we use it. It will take people and community action to get the most out of BEAD and the other broadband infrastructure being built in the Black Belt.

Organize a County Broadband Task Force

SCABCD/TUCE asks the groups we have been meeting with, and others, to form a County Broadband Task Force organized around the most urgent broadband issues: Access, Adoption, Digital Literacy & Skills, Education, Healthcare, Jobs, and Economic Development.

Aim for 80% broadband adoption so your county can grow!



Who Should Be at the Table

- ✓ **Residents waiting for broadband**
- ✓ **Young people**
- ✓ **Seniors**
- ✓ **Working people and job seekers**
- ✓ **County commission, mayors and councils**
- ✓ **The public library**
- ✓ **Healthcare providers**
- ✓ **Churches, senior centers and civic clubs**
- ✓ **Extension office, chamber and businesses**
- ✓ **Teachers**
- ✓ **School board members**

First Steps

- **Find the gaps:** learn who has service, who is waiting for BEAD, and who has not signed up.
- **Hold sign-up events** so families can ask providers about low-cost plans and Lifeline.
- **Train digital navigators:** volunteers who help neighbors get online and stay safe.
- **Report problems** with construction, service or pricing to SCABCD and ADECA.



Join or start your county's task force

info@scabcd.com

Tel: **334-865-2654**

scabcd.com/go/action



The Gee's Bend Quilt Collective

SPOTLIGHT ON GEE'S BEND

Doing Business Worldwide: The Quilters of Gee's Bend, Wilcox County

The Ladies of Gee's Bend are an example of what broadband can do. Their cooperative makes beautiful hand-sewn quilts and markets them right from Gee's Bend to the whole world. With just a few clicks, you could be one of potentially **6 billion** Quilters of Gee's Bend customers connected to the World Wide Web.

VISIT

geesbend.org

> ***"The seeds are planted. Now it's our turn to learn and grow: get connected, build digital skills, and keep your Task Force at the table."***

Building a Future of Our Own Design

The soil and people of the Black Belt shaped much of Alabama's history. The future lies in the digital age and digital economy. Here, the Black Belt is decades behind. But we have, or soon will have, the tools with which to build a future of our own design.

BEAD will bring high-speed broadband to more than **20,000 Black Belt locations**, many for the first time. Satellite service can start right away, but fiber will take longer. That's why your local Broadband Task Force needs to stay active and engaged with local officials and community leaders.

SCABCD and TUCE will be with you through our outreach agents and the planned Black Belt Digital Workforce Academy. We picture a Black Belt where our children build their futures here and our towns grow, and we invite every leader, educator, pastor, farmer and neighbor to join us.

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→ WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE TOOLKIT

The entire toolkit and its additional resources will always be found at **scabcd.com**. We will keep updating it and keep you informed of BEAD's progress. It will remain a resource for forming your County Broadband Task Force and for the rollout of Digital Navigators and Digital Champions.