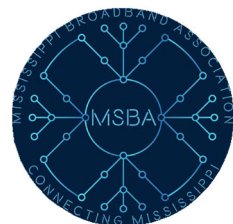


Mississippi Broadband Association

MSBA - Connecting MS



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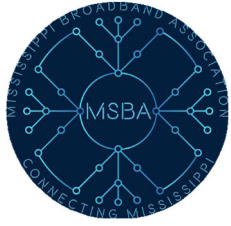
Mississippi Broadband Association Connect and Literacy Fund (MSBA C&L Fund) Fact Sheet

Overview: The Mississippi Broadband Association Connect and Literacy Fund (MSBA C&L Fund) is a 10-year dedicated initiative aimed at overcoming barriers to digital opportunities in the state of Mississippi. Recognizing the critical importance of affordable internet connectivity, network sustainability, digital literacy, and access to technology devices. The fund was established to address these disparities and empower communities through affordable connectivity, community-based literacy programs, and the distribution of individual devices to end-users that will in turn significantly impact our state's economy, education, telehealth services, workforce development and network sustainability.

Goals:

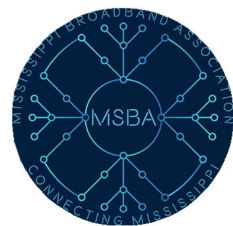
1. **Affordable Connectivity:** MSBA strives to ensure every community across MS regardless of their socio-economic status or geographic location has access to affordable high-speed fiber based broadband services. By collaborating with internet service providers (ISPs) and local communities, MSBA plans to help reduce the financial barriers that prevent many individuals and families from accessing reliable broadband connectivity. MSBA is encouraging ISPs to offer highspeed low-cost options at affordable rates. MSBA also plans to work with local and national non-profits to educate individuals about the *Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) that provides a \$30 per month federal subsite for broadband services. MSBA will incorporate an ACP sign-up drive in partnership Education Superhighway, MS Alliance of Non-Profits and local community group across MS during the community-based literacy class discuss below. The goal of the program is to get 150,000 homes connected to affordable broadband services through either the ACP or low-cost plans offered by Internet Service Providers. Additional areas of focus as it pertains to the ISPs: \$0 Upfront device cost, Debt forgiveness programs and prepaid consumer options. Currently approximately 233,000 households participate in the ACP program in MS however another 300,000 qualify for the service under the current program requirements that don't take participate mainly due to trust and awareness.
2. **Community-Based Literacy:** Recognizing that digital literacy is essential in today's technology-driven world, the fund plans to support community-based initiatives that promote digital skills. These programs are designed to empower individuals of all ages to navigate the digital landscape with confidence, enabling them to harness the educational, telehealth, economic, and social opportunities provided by the broadband services. MSBA plans to seek partnerships with MS State Extension Service, MS Community colleges and other anchor institutions across the state to host these literacy workshops. There will be no cost associated with the training for the individual that qualify for ACP and/or the requirements of the program. If ACP for any reason ceases to be a federal program, MSBA will follow the following: 135% of Poverty Income Level which is 65% less that ACP is today, TANF or Free and Reduced Lunch requirements. Those individuals that don't qualify for the \$0 literacy training will pay a \$50 registration fee. The class is a 15 hour in person commitment that will provide introductory and basic understanding of broadband and device operations allowing the individual to fully take advantage of the digital world. The plan goal is to provide training to 36,000 households across MS.

***Affordable Connectivity Program is on track to be defunded in April 2024 if Congress doesn't pass a gap funding and program reform.**



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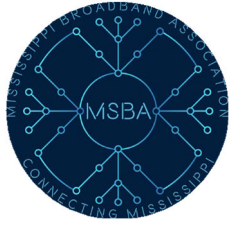


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- 3. Individual Device Distribution:** MSBA C&L Fund is committed to ensuring that 20,000 individuals have access to the necessary large screen devices for online learning, telehealth services, workforce development, remote work opportunities, and to just staying connected with others. The fund plans to collaborate with educational institutions, community centers, private philanthropy, business community and nonprofit organizations to receive donated refurbished devices or collect funding to purchase large screen devices such as laptops and tablets. MSBA and its partners plan to distribute devices to every individual whose needs are pre-screen and completes our literacy program thus eliminating the barrier of device ownership in the home. There will be a \$25 copay for the cost of the device for those that qualify for ACP or criteria listed above for our digital literacy information. Those individuals that do not qualify for a \$25 device will be able to purchase a device once they complete our training class through our program on a cost-plus base of 20%. Those individuals that don't take our literacy program but want to purchase a device can do so through our device partners at discounted prices.
- 4. Network Sustainability:** MSBA is committed to helping Internet Service Providers across our state with take rate issues and network sustainability in high cost, low-income areas. The challenges of high-cost deployment and lower than average take rate due to poverty, digital literacy issues and device ownership will affect network sustainability if actions are not taken to address the issues. MSBA's plan to address affordable connectivity, community-based literacy issues and access to individual devices will be instrumental in achieving sustainable networks.

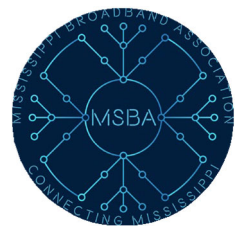
Key Initiatives:

- 1. Broadband Partnerships:** MSBA plans to collaborate with broadband providers and community leaders across the state to insure an affordable internet connectivity for unserved and underserved communities. These partnerships facilitate the expansion of broadband infrastructure and reduce the cost of internet access for eligible residents.
- 2. Broadband Affordability:** Ensuring those households in genuine need of support finds ways to access affordable broadband services to take advantage of the opportunity it affords.
- 3. Digital Literacy Workshops:** MSBA C&L Fund hopes to help organize and sponsor digital literacy workshops, training sessions, and seminars in local communities via proposed partners such as MS State Extension Service, Community Colleges and other anchor agencies. These educational events cover a range of topics but not limited to basic computer skills, online safety, digital communication, and utilizing online resources effectively.
- 4. Device Distribution Drives:** Through partnerships with educational institutions, community organizations, and businesses, the fund plan to distribute devices at the end of our literacy workshop, ensuring that individuals who lack the necessary devices can access tools essential for online participation.



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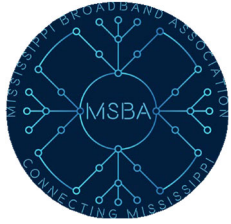
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Impact: The MSBA C&L Fund's initiatives have a far-reaching impact on individuals, families, and communities across Mississippi:

- **Education:** Improved access to online educational resources enables students to access virtual learning materials and engage in remote education opportunities, regardless of their geographical location.
- **Employment:** Enhanced digital literacy skills increase individuals' employability by allowing them to access online job portals, submit applications, and participate in remote work opportunities.
- **Workforce Development:** The fund will allow access to remote learning and classroom support opportunities to ensure everyone has access to digital learning opportunities and the skill that can be obtained by the individual.
- **Healthcare and Services:** Reliable internet access enables Mississippians to access telehealth services, government resources, and other essential online services, improving their overall quality of life.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Improved digital skills and connectivity open doors to remote work, online job searches, and entrepreneurship, boosting economic prospects for individuals and communities.
- **Community Engagement:** Digital literacy programs foster stronger community connections by enabling residents to stay informed, engage in online civic participation, and connect with others through social platforms.
- **Precision Agriculture:** Ensuring rural farmers have access and understand how to utilize connectivity in their day-to-day activities to increase profits and yields.
- **Social Opportunities:** The fund's efforts help bridge the digital divide, reducing social isolation and fostering connections among MS residents.
- **Sustainability of Network:** A Digital literate community's take rates increase and maintain those connections thus ensure sustainable of networks for the ISPs.

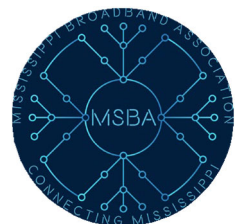
How to Get Involved:

1. **Donations:** Individuals, businesses, and organizations can contribute to the MSBA Connect and Literacy Fund in three ways: financially, volunteer, in-kind support and specified device donations. These all play a vital role in supporting the fund's initiatives and making a tangible impact on removing the barriers to digital opportunities across MS.



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Financial contributions can be made online through the fund's official website or by contacting the fund's administration directly.

Financial Support: https://cffms.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?funit_id=2650

Mail to our 501 C(3) Partner – Community Foundation of MS

Community Foundation of MS

MSBA Connect and Literacy Fund

119 South President Street, 1st Floor
Jackson, MS 39201

Donation of Hardware or refurbishing services: quinnjordan@msba.info

2. Partnerships: Broadband Providers and Operators: Internet service providers can partner with the MSBA to expand their reach and collaborate on projects aimed at providing affordable connectivity to unserved areas. By working together, broadband providers can contribute to closing the digital divide and ensuring more residents have access to reliable internet services.

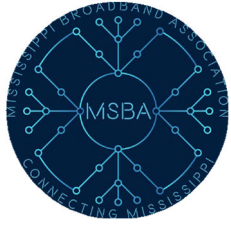
3. Educational Institutions: Community Colleges and Universities can partner with the fund to integrate digital literacy education into their curriculum, organize workshops, and facilitate device distribution among students and their families. Such collaborations empower the next generation with essential digital skills.

4. Community Organizations: Nonprofits, community centers, and local organizations can join forces with the fund to organize events, workshops, and awareness campaigns focused on digital literacy and internet access. These partnerships can amplify the fund's efforts and ensure they reach a wider audience.

5. Job Centers and Program Directors: These groups in areas that currently have or in the process of getting broadband service should add sign up for Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). Individuals that qualify for services like but not limited to SNAP and TANF qualify for ACP. <https://www.fcc.gov/acp>

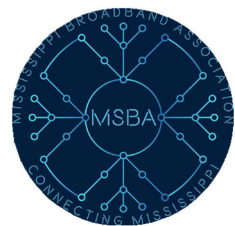
5. Volunteer Opportunities: Volunteers are integral to the success of the MSBA C&L Fund. Individuals who are passionate about addressing the digital divide can contribute by volunteering their time, skills, and knowledge. Volunteer opportunities include:

- **Digital Literacy Workshops:** Assist in organizing and conducting digital literacy workshops, teaching participants essential computer skills, online safety practices, and effective internet usage.
- **ACP Sign up Events:** Participating in Affordable Connectivity Program sign up events around our State
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Participate in awareness campaigns to spread the word about the fund's initiatives and the importance of digital inclusion.
- **Community Engagement:** Engage with local communities, listen to their needs, and provide support in areas that align with the fund's mission.



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Conclusion: The Mississippi Broadband Association Connect and Literacy Fund is committed to removing barriers to digital opportunities in Mississippi by ensuring affordable connectivity, promoting digital literacy, and providing access to large screen devices that in turn help sustain our broadband networks. Through collaborative efforts and community-driven initiatives, the fund aims to empower all Mississippians to fully participate in the digital age, fostering economic growth, education, telehealth, workforce, and other opportunities throughout the state.

Existing Partnerships:

- Nonprofits and Philanthropy
 - Education Superhighway
 - MS Nonprofits and Philanthropy
 - Digitunity
 - Communities Unlimited
 - Tech Goes Home Tennessee
 - Connect Humanity
 - Delta Compass and WCEA
 - Mega Pop (North MS)
- Industry
 - 8 - MS Internet Service Providers
 - 2- National Construction Companies
- Higher Education
 - Hinds Community College
 - Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
 - Coahoma Community College
 - Ole Miss (ACP Outreach grant)