

3.2 Partnerships

Partnerships are critical to broadband deployment in Connecticut. These relationships will ensure efforts throughout the state are aligned, reflect community needs, and are collaborative in nature. DEEP will leverage relationships with these various entities to accomplish its goals as stated in [Section 2.3](#).

Table 5: Partners

Partners	Description of Current or Planned Role in Broadband Deployment and Adoption
Public Service Sector	
Broadband Working Group	The Broadband Working Group provides insight and feedback required to assess the State's resources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of existing initiatives and opportunities for coordination are identified. Agencies represented include DEEP, the Commission, the Connecticut Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Team, OPM's GIS Office, and OCC (General & Office of State Broadband).
<u>The Commission for Educational Technology within the Department of Administrative Services</u>	The State's Commission for Educational Technology, an interagency body within the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), is administering the Digital Equity program in close concert with other broadband initiatives under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and American Rescue Plan Act. The Commission envisions, coordinates, and oversees the integration of technology in Connecticut's schools, libraries, colleges, and universities
<u>Connecticut Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Team (CT BILT)</u>	Commissioner Boughton acts as the Lamont Administration's senior voice on infrastructure and coordinates multi-agency approaches to administering funds from the IIJA. The Commissioner and his infrastructure team work to ensure the investments made with these federal funds are coordinated, strategic, and equitable, including funding to help ensure high-speed internet coverage across the state.
<u>Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM)</u>	CCM is the state's largest, nonpartisan organization of municipal leaders, representing towns and cities of all sizes from all corners of the state, with 168 member municipalities. The Connecticut GIS Office has previously partnered with CCM to develop a survey to help both the State and local governments identify problem areas for broadband service and improve our understanding of the challenges residents face in accessing and using high-speed internet services. CCM will continue to be a key partner to reach local government leaders and use them as a trusted channel to communicate directly with residents. CCM is invited to serve on the DEEP Broadband Advisory Group.
<u>Connecticut Department of Education (CSDE)</u>	The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) moved quickly to support K-12 students with internet access during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Office of the Governor, CSDE, DAS, OPM, and the Commission coordinated with internet companies and school districts to ensure students received the learning devices and internet coverage to meet their needs to participate in high-quality remote learning.

Partners

Description of Current or Planned Role in Broadband Deployment and Adoption

Public Service Sector (continued)

Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL)

The mission of CTDOL is to protect Connecticut's workers from labor law violations and promote global economic competitiveness through strengthening the state's workforce. CTDOL collaborates with business and industry leaders on Registered Apprenticeship programs and other workforce pipeline initiatives, and conducts U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics research including collecting, analyzing, and disseminating workforce data.

Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS)

DSS delivers and funds a wide range of programs and services as Connecticut's multi-faceted health and human services agency. DSS serves about 1 million residents of all ages in all 169 Connecticut cities and towns and supports the basic needs of children, families, older and other adults, including persons with disabilities.

Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)

The mission of CTDOT is to provide a safe and efficient intermodal transportation network that improves the quality of life and promotes economic vitality for the State and the region.

Connecticut Education Network (CEN)

The Connecticut Education Network (CEN) is a state-owned middle-mile network providing non-discriminatory open-access service throughout the state and is primarily focused on connectivity to community anchor institutions (CAI).

Data and Policy Analytics Unit (DAPA) GIS Office within the Office of Policy and Management

The GIS Office leads efforts to map broadband access, adoption, and use in Connecticut. It is supported by federal and state agencies, internet service providers, and a wide variety of local governments, advocacy organizations, and research institutes.

Department of Administrative Services (DAS)

DAS is committed to providing cost-effective services to State agencies, municipalities, and the people of Connecticut. This department oversees Digital Equity efforts through the Commission for Educational Technology.

Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD)

DECD is the lead agency responsible for strengthening Connecticut's competitive position in the rapidly changing, knowledge-based global economy.

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)

DEEP is administering the BEAD Program and works to remove barriers to broadband by developing equitable policies and programs that will expand access to fast, affordable, and reliable internet service.



Partners	Description of Current or Planned Role in Broadband Deployment and Adoption
Public Service Sector (continued)	
<u>Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS)</u>	The Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) is an executive branch that serves as the administrative staff to the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC), which has been tasked with setting strategy and policy for the state's Pre-K through retirement workforce pipeline, and to serve as the prime coordinator for businesses, educators, trainers, state agencies, state workforce boards, non-profits, and others.
Local Governments	City and town municipal leaders will be key to understanding each community's current broadband needs and barriers. Municipal support will also provide opportunities for collaboration and local engagement with residents through trusted partners.
<u>Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (NRZs)</u>	The objective of NRZs is to revitalize neighborhoods through the collaborative involvement of residents, businesses, and government to determine the vision and priorities of the individual neighborhoods and to develop a strategic plan to revitalize their neighborhood. These are valuable partners to engage with Covered Populations and identify barriers to broadband adoption and access.
<u>Office of Policy and Management (OPM)</u>	OPM functions as the Governor's staff agency and plays a central role in state government, providing the information and analysis used to formulate public policy and assisting agencies and municipalities in implementing policy decisions around broadband on the Governor's behalf.
<u>Office of State Broadband within the Office of Consumer Counsel</u>	The Office of State Broadband is housed in the OCC and advocates for the public interest with broadband service providers and provides consumers with information to promote that interest.
<u>Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA)</u>	PURA is a quasi-judicial agency that interprets and applies the statutes and regulations governing all aspects of Connecticut's utility sector, including the expansion of telecommunications infrastructure. PURA is charged with ensuring that Connecticut's investor-owned utilities, including the state's electric, natural gas, water, and telecommunications companies, provide safe, clean, reliable, and affordable utility service and infrastructure.
<u>Connecticut Council of Government (COG)</u>	Connecticut's nine planning regions provide a geographic framework within which municipalities can jointly address common interests and coordinate such interests with state plans and programs. Coordination with COGs is critical to understand the state of broadband in their regions, barriers for their residents, and any broadband programs or projects that are currently underway.
Regional, Municipal and Community-Based Broadband Advisory Groups	Local broadband advisory groups have been developed to support efforts on the ground to expand broadband access. Depending on location, committees may be in early planning or already have broken ground on projects. Serving as a resource for these committees and listening to their barriers will help advise State efforts and initiatives.

Partners	Description of Current or Planned Role in Broadband Deployment and Adoption
Private Sector	
Chambers of Commerce Organizations	Partnerships with Chambers of Commerce will connect DEEP to various stakeholders within the business community.
Internet Service Providers (ISPs)	Through a Request for Information (RFI), meetings, and roundtables, DEEP has developed relationships with providers in Connecticut. Working closely with this group allows DEEP to understand the unique challenges to building broadband infrastructure at a local level. Open discussions and feedback have been incorporated into developing strategies and plans to provide all Connecticut residents with affordable high-speed internet access.
Community-Serving Sector	
<u>Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council (CEEJAC)</u>	The purpose and mission of the CEEJAC is to advise the Commissioner of DEEP on current and historic environmental injustice, pollution reduction, energy equity, climate change mitigation and resiliency, health disparities, and racial inequity issues.
<u>Connecticut Libraries and Partners for Digital Equity</u>	Connecticut Libraries and Partners for Digital Equity advances the collaboration of libraries, community organizations, state agencies, and philanthropic groups to advocate the achievement of digital equity through universal affordable residential broadband adoption, the provision of devices to all who lack them, digital life skills training, and technical support. They aim to amplify community voices and needs through educational presentations and conversations with libraries, library organizations, library partners, and library stakeholders around the state. The group works to ensure that Connecticut residents have the tools necessary to support education, health, well-being, economic prosperity, and the ability to function fully in society.
Faith-Based Organizations	Organizations within the faith community can play a role as a trusted partner, providing digital skill training and promoting broadband adoption among their members. Trusted community partners are critical in promoting digital inclusion and ensuring all community members can access broadband services.
Healthcare Institutions	Many healthcare institutions also serve as centers for community support. There are already efforts underway by many institutions to teach digital skills as an aspect of promoting their telehealth services to deliver healthcare services remotely and are essential in promoting access to healthcare services and improving health outcomes for community members.
Higher Education Academic Institutions	Higher Education Institutions throughout the state are aware of the need for broadband in a modern and connected world. These institutions will be used for data collection and sharing and may be used in the future for digital literacy and skill building initiatives. Currently, the University of Connecticut (UConn) is working with DEEP to gather information from residents regarding digital equity topics such as internet access, barriers, devices, and internet use.



Partners	Description of Current or Planned Role in Broadband Deployment and Adoption
Community-Serving Sector (continued)	
Nonprofit Organizations	Nonprofit organizations will serve as trusted community partners for local coordination outreach to Connecticut residents. Examples include but are not limited to AARP Connecticut, CT Family Support Network, Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 1298, EdAdvance Adult Education, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Stamford Public Education Foundation, Independence Northwest, Inc., New Horizons Village, Inc.
Primary and Secondary Academic Institutions	The Everyone Learns Initiative provided funding for primary and secondary schools to help close the digital divide during the pandemic school closures. Working with educational leaders who are already familiar with the barriers to broadband in their community will help DEEP identify areas with digital disconnects and lead to ensuring that all students can access high-speed internet.
State & Public Libraries	Libraries throughout the state have made large efforts to support digital equity and inclusion. According to CEN's 2021 Annual Report, 72% of libraries in the state are members, providing them high-speed internet access in rural areas that may not otherwise have it. Many libraries across the state also have device borrowing programs and digital skills education offerings.
<u>The University of Connecticut (UConn)</u>	UConn is serving as a research partner for Connecticut's Digital Equity program.