



About Connect Arkansas

Connect Arkansas, a private, non-profit, is implementing a community-based initiative that will link all Arkansans, especially in rural areas, to the internet. On March 28, 2007, Governor Beebe signed the *Connect Arkansas Broadband Act* into law to ensure the creation of a competitive broadband, or *high speed internet*, infrastructure that will not only improve personal lives, but also the economic capabilities and prospects of all Arkansans.

In economic development, education, and healthcare, broadband is a key strategic component.

Arkansas and Broadband

According to the *2007 State New Economy Index*, which ranks states based on their ability to compete in the new economy, Arkansas currently ranks 47th in the nation. Arkansas also ranks 47th in deployment of broadband telecommunications.

In a recent survey of 608 registered Arkansas voters:

- ❖ **29%** have “never used the internet;”
- ❖ **7%** were unsure of what broadband, or high speed internet access, meant;
- ❖ **30%** would not subscribe to the service even if it was affordable and was available ;
- ❖ **51%** do not have broadband service.

High-speed telecommunications is as critical to connect our regional economies as four-lane highways. Businesses increasingly rely on the internet super-highway and need that access to compete worldwide.

- Governor Mike Beebe

Our Focus

To facilitate broadband access across Arkansas, Connect Arkansas, a “delivery platform neutral” entity, will focus on three major components:

- **Determination of existing broadband infrastructure in Arkansas.** An important step in facilitating access is to create an understanding of local needs. By mapping the state’s existing broadband infrastructure, Connect Arkansas will provide a level of detail that is currently not available in Arkansas. These maps will show where access is available, and more importantly, where access is not available.
- **Education.** Connect Arkansas will work with community leaders to develop a strategic plan for IT, while working with local communities and existing organizations to provide public internet access and computer training.
- **Equipment & Access.** Through the *Breaking Boundaries with Broadband Program*, Connect Arkansas will work with existing community programs and create programs as needed to promote increased internet use and ownership of computer devices.

Creating Impact

At the Community Level. The work of Connect Arkansas helps to build stronger communities. Through the creation of a competitive, local telecommunications infrastructure, communities will be able to sustain high-value jobs and provide a greater quality of life.

For the State. According to the CSE Freedom Foundation, full broadband deployment in Arkansas will create *8,200 new jobs* and add more than *\$2.6 billion annually* to the Gross State Product (GSP).