

Broadband Mapping

Montana State Library (\$250,000)

Program Description

Montana currently ranks 50th among states for access to affordable, high speed broadband.* As a result, countless Montanans were disenfranchised when the COVID 19 pandemic hit and people were forced to live, work, and learn from home. Through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars, Montana intends to invest significantly and strategically in broadband deployment, targeting unserved and underserved areas of the state. To meet these targets, Montana must know where broadband infrastructure currently exists. However, Montana has not had a coordinated broadband mapping program since the state had American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds after the 2008-2009 Great Recession. Broadband data that are available are collected haphazardly, from a variety of sources, using different mapping standards. Data are not compiled into a single broadband map, and no workflow exists to integrate that data into other statewide datasets, such as structures and addresses, so that the data can be maintained over time. Funding will allow the Montana State Library (MSL) to correct these problems. As the agency charged to develop comprehensive mapping for Montana, staff will leverage existing data and data workflows to create a comprehensive broadband map that will be aligned to Montana’s broadband policies and priorities. The resulting map will be integrated into existing statewide datasets and data workflows for continued maintenance to inform future broadband investment.

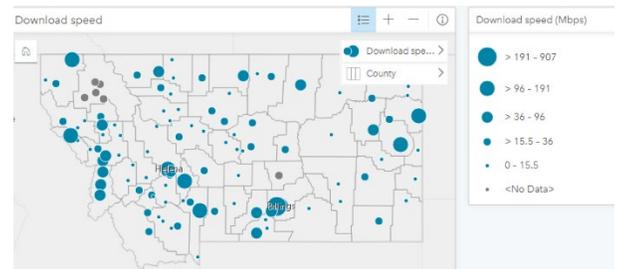


Figure 1: Montana Public Library Broadband Speeds, 2019

*BroadbandNow, 2021, <https://broadbandnow.com/Montana>

Funding	
Total OTHER ARPA Funds	\$250,000
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Estimated Costs	
Contract GIS Analyst	\$160,000
Operational costs	\$90,000
Total	\$250,000

Required Resources

To complete a statewide broadband map, MSL will contract with a GIS professional for a period of approximately two years to research and compile existing broadband data from state, local and tribal governments, the federal government, and private telecommunication providers into a comprehensive and sustainable Montana broadband map. Where data is not available, a contractor may need to travel to conduct assessments of available infrastructure.

Objectives and Measurable Outcomes

The purpose of this project is to create a comprehensive and sustainable Montana broadband map. Compiling and evaluating existing data will help the state invest in broadband capacity quickly and strategically to benefit those most impacted by the lack of broadband during, and as Montana recovers from, the COVID-19 pandemic. As Montana sets broadband policy goals and priorities, broadband mapping will ensure that ARPA funds are invested most effectively to meet those goals.