Connect to People

How people use technology matters. Knowing the risks of texting while driving or how to use the Internet safely at any age can help us make better choices. Learn how we're helping to meet the diverse needs of technology consumers and fostering a workplace that supports all employees.
Providing Connectivity to Rural Areas and Undersubscribed Populations

*Materiality Assessment Topics:* Deployment to rural and underserved areas; Investing in education and high-tech skills development; Affordability | Global Reporting Initiative Standard Disclosures: GRI 203-1, GRI 203-2, Affordability MA, Deployment to rural and underserved areas MA

**Issue Summary**

We are in the midst of a communications revolution. High-speed internet has the potential like no other technology to democratize and advance opportunities in all communities by offering increased access to education, healthcare and employment.

**Our Position**

As innovation introduces new opportunities every day, we are helping to increase digital inclusion for rural areas and undersubscribed populations.

**2017 Key Performance Indicators**

- Investment in wired and wireless networks in 2017: $21.6B
- Locations reached by the end of 2017, against a goal to expand all-fiber internet access capability to at least 12.5 million customer locations by mid-2019: 7M+
- Total locations reached by the end of 2017 with internet service capable of speeds of 45 Megabits per second (Mbps) or more: 25.7M+

**Our Action**

We are helping to meet the internet connectivity needs of rural and undersubscribed consumers in 3 ways:
• Our low-cost home internet program;
• Expanding high-speed internet connectivity to largely rural consumers; and
• Educating and empowering consumers to get the most out of their connections.

Low-Cost Home Internet Program

Affordable access to high-speed internet is an important tool for advancing access to education, healthcare and employment—whether households use the internet for school work, to complete an online education, apply for jobs online, research health information, or simply stay in touch with family and friends. In 2017, we continued to help make internet service more affordable for qualifying low-income households in our 21-state wireline footprint with Access from AT&T.¹

Access from AT&T is available to households within our 21-state wireline footprint with at least 1 resident who participates in the U.S. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In California only, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients may also qualify. AT&T assigns eligible households the fastest of these speed tiers that is available at their address for the stated price: 10 Mbps or 5 Mbps for $10 a month; or 3 Mbps, 1.5 Mbps or 768 Kbps for $5 a month.² AT&T waives installation and internet equipment fees for qualifying households. Other eligibility requirements also apply. Visit att.com/access for full details.

As part of our Access from AT&T program outreach efforts, we’ve connected with national, state and local groups that work with low-income individuals and families for their assistance in educating potential participants. These organizations include social services groups and organizations representing veterans, seniors, non-English speakers and other groups. We also are collaborating with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on its ConnectHomeUSA initiative. In 2017, we held 30 events to help increase awareness of our program among HUD residents in ConnectHomeUSA locations within our wireline footprint, and we have committed to hosting 20 such events in 2018. We’ve also reached out to local school districts across our 21-state footprint, asking them to include information about the program in communications to families.

Helping to Meet the Connectivity Needs of Rural Populations

Through our participation in a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program, AT&T has been helping to meet the connectivity needs of customers in largely rural areas and to expand the opportunities enabled by internet access. By the end of 2020, AT&T will have used funds from this FCC program to help deploy, maintain and offer internet access and voice services to 1.1 million mostly rural homes and small business locations in FCC-identified areas.

Fixed Wireless Internet service is one technology we are using as part of this FCC program. Fixed Wireless Internet service delivers internet service through a base station and a fixed
antenna on a customer’s home or building, making it an effective way to provide internet service to customer locations that are difficult to serve through other technologies. We met our FCC requirement to deploy broadband internet access to more than 440,000 locations across 18 states by the end of 2017, bringing high-speed internet access to many for the first time.

The current generation of Fixed Wireless Internet service supports speeds of at least 10 Mbps for download and 1 Mbps for upload. Additionally, many areas where we deliver Fixed Wireless Internet service as part of this initiative will be upgraded to receive mobile LTE services if they do not already have them.

AT&T is also investigating innovative new approaches, such as our Project AirGig, to provide connectivity. This technology could one day deliver low-cost, multi-gigabit internet speeds using a wireless transmission capability near or close to power lines. By using existing infrastructure, such as power lines, Project AirGig may enable a dramatically expanded broadband footprint to provide service in urban and rural parts of the world that currently lack non-satellite internet access. In 2017, we launched 2 Project AirGig trials—one in Georgia and the other internationally.

**Educating Communities**

As we bring more affordable access to more Americans, we are working in communities around the country to provide people with the skills they need to maximize the value of high-speed internet access.

Our Digital You® program informs people about the benefits of internet access through tools, tips, apps, guidance and community education events for people of all ages and levels of online experience. The Digital You website—created in collaboration with Common Sense Media and other experts—provides parents, youth, digital newcomers, people with disabilities, and community leaders with information on the devices they use and how to maintain privacy, safety, and security in an increasingly connected world. The website addresses topics such as how to prevent cyberbullying, managing your online presence and tips on how to use devices.

We also work with organizations including the Family Online Safety Institute, Common Sense Media, iKeepSafe, LULAC and CTIA parents initiative with ConnectSafely to engage communities. For more information about our work to educate communities on internet safety, visit our Promoting Safe Use of Products and Services issue brief.

**Policy Advocacy**

The economics of building and expanding high-speed internet to often sparsely-populated rural areas can be challenging. We believe it takes a collaborative approach between the public and private sectors, as well as smart public policy, to continue connecting more rural areas unserved by terrestrial broadband to the benefits of high-speed internet.
To that end, policies developed at all levels of government need to work with the market and foster continued private-sector investment and innovation by eliminating barriers to network deployment. The private sector has the expertise and a proven track record of meeting consumer demand at the speeds—and with the service options and technologies—consumers want.

The FCC is directing substantial federal resources toward updating its high-cost universal service programs to support high-speed internet deployment, and these programs will make significant progress in bringing high-speed internet service to parts of rural America unserved by terrestrial broadband. These federal programs alone, however, will not achieve the goal of universal internet access. The key to achieving the goal of universal service cannot rest solely (or even primarily) with the government. Public dollars are limited and in high demand for pressing public issues, including education, public safety and repair of aging roads and bridges. The most rational and effective approach, in combination with high-cost support programs such as CAF II, is for government—at the local, state and federal levels—to pursue policies that work with the market to foster the greatest private-sector investment and expansion of internet access possible.

1Consistent with the requirements of the FCC DIRECTV Merger Order.

2NOTE REGARDING INTERNET SPEED AND DATA ALLOWANCES: Internet speed claims represent maximum network service capability speeds. Actual customer speeds may vary based on factors including site traffic, content provider server capacity, internal network management factors and device capabilities, and are not guaranteed. For more information, go to att.com/speed101. Pricing excludes taxes. Service will include a monthly data allowance of either 150GB, 170GB or 1 TB of data/mo. depending on the type and speed of service you receive. If you exceed your monthly data plan allowance, you will be automatically charged $10 for each 50GB of data usage in excess of your data plan, even if less than 50 GB is used. For more information, go to att.com/internet-usage.