

CASE STUDY

How Loudoun County, VA Secured Over \$17M in Broadband Funding Using Ookla Data to Create Accurate Maps and Challenge FCC Data

Virginia's Loudoun County is interwoven with rural and suburban landscapes, making it especially difficult for policymakers to understand where the county's residents are — or are not — able to access the Internet. FCC Form 477 broadband availability data shows that nearly 100% of Loudoun residents have access to what the FCC defines as broadband (25 Mbps download, 3 Mbps upload). This is inconsistent with the connectivity experiences of county residents, so Loudoun Broadband Alliance (LBA) set out to create an accurate, reliable broadband access mapping methodology using real-world network performance data.

Loudoun Broadband Alliance (LBA) chose Ookla® Speedtest Intelligence® to research residents' actual connectivity and network performance. With this data, LBA identified a large number of unserved households in contrast to FCC data which showed them as served. Loudoun County was subsequently awarded over \$17 million of funding to help eliminate the broadband gap.

"Where Loudoun was not previously eligible for any funding, Ookla data helped us show that FCC Form 477 data was inaccurate. Ookla data was instrumental in our research and our findings helped support Loudoun County's award of \$17 million in state-allocated funding. This funding is invaluable as we work toward our mission to promote the development of accessible, reliable, and affordable broadband Internet access for the underserved in Loudoun County, Virginia."

— Kevin A. Noll, Co-Founder and President, Loudoun Broadband Alliance

Benefits



Secured \$17M in federal funding by pinpointing where FCC data was inaccurate



Identified underserved areas in the county where residents do not have access to broadband

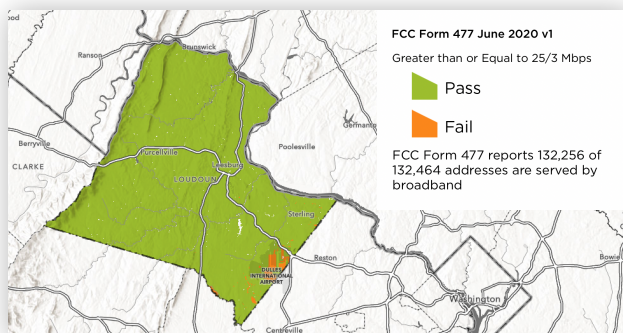


Produced an accurate, actionable broadband map to inform policy decisions and allocate funding to specific ISPs based on needs

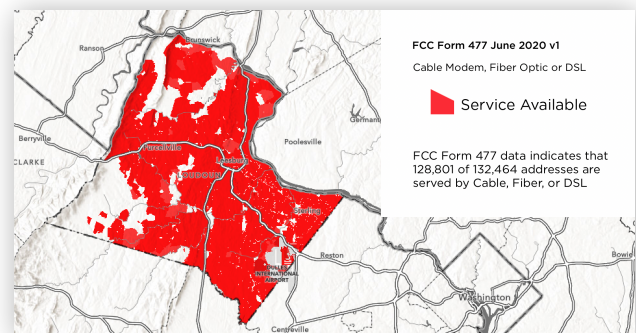
The Situation

In an effort to close the digital divide in rural and urban communities across the nation, the United States federal government has allocated billions of dollars in broadband funding with the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act. Funding allocation is based on current federal broadband mapping through FCC Form 477 data. For Loudoun County, FCC data reported:

99.8% of addresses are served by broadband



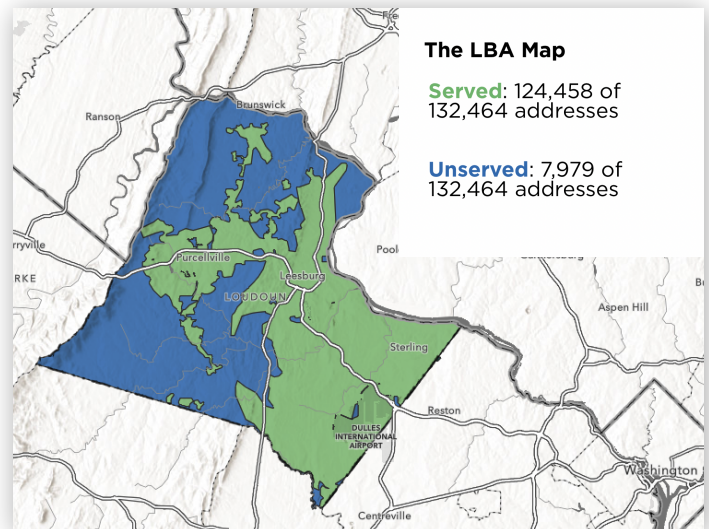
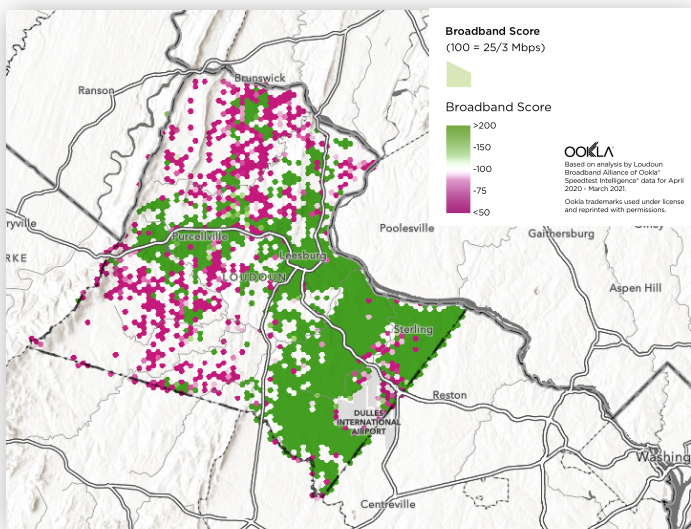
97.2% of addresses are served by Cable, Fiber, or DSL



However, the FCC's findings were not reflective of the real-world network experience of Loudoun County residents. LBA used Speedtest Intelligence data in conjunction with other publicly available datasets to get a more accurate picture of broadband accessibility in their county.

The Solution

Through analysis of Speedtest Intelligence data, LBA developed a broadband score, where a score of 100 means that the geolocation has access to FCC minimum broadband requirements. Green areas on the map show locations that are meeting that threshold while the pink spots represent locations where residents do not have access to broadband at all. Aggregating Ookla with LBA's own local surveys and research, LBA was able to create their own map that showed a more accurate broadband availability map for the county.



The Outcome

Contrary to the FCC's finding that 99.8% of residents have access to broadband, LBA found that only 93.9% of residents have access to broadband with a minimum download speed of 25 Mbps. This means more than 6% of the addresses (over 8,000 housing units) in the county are underserved. Furthermore, the FCC has been called upon to raise the definition of broadband to a new standard of 100 Mbps download. Under this new definition, more than 10% of the residents of Loudoun County lack access to high-speed Internet. Speedtest results plot where those poor connections exist on the map — demonstrating the precise geographic boundaries of the digital divide, illustrated with real-world network performance data.

As a result of this work, Loudoun County was awarded over \$17M in state-allocated funding through the VATI grant program. LBA demonstrated that accurate and actionable broadband maps can influence policymakers. Ookla empowers local governments to produce accurate broadband maps, challenge FCC data, and secure funding to eliminate the broadband gap in their communities.