



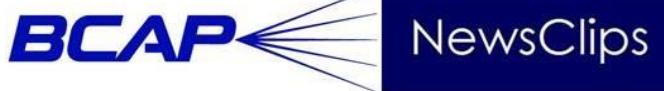
Cloud Communications for Service Providers



Home Phone | Cloud PBX | Collaboration | Business Text Messaging



Member since 2016



December 11, 2020

[Next TV](#)
[CableLabs and SCTE-ISBE Agree on Merger](#)

[Washington Post Regulators want to break up Facebook. That's a technical nightmare, insiders say.](#)

[AdWeek NBCNews.com Dedicates Its Entire Homepage to Coverage of the Coronavirus](#)

[Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Gov. Wolf orders three-week business shutdown as COVID-19 rages in Pennsylvania](#)

[Pennlive Another Pa. senator tests positive for COVID-19](#)

[Associated Press Some Pa. Dems want maskless](#)

More than 2,600 households and businesses in rural parts of Allegheny and Westmoreland counties soon will have access to high-speed internet after the Federal Communication Commission auctioned about \$9.2 billion to companies across the country with the goal of closing the digital divide in rural America. The first phase of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund will bring more than \$368.7 million to 13 companies across Pennsylvania over 10 years to expand broadband services, amounting to almost \$2,000 per household or business.

That breaks down to \$687,000 for almost 900 homes and businesses in Allegheny, and more than \$2 million for more than 1,700 Westmoreland homes and businesses. "This historic auction is great news for the residents of so many rural Pennsylvania communities, who will get access to high-quality broadband service in areas that for too long have been on the wrong side of the digital divide," FCC Chairman Ajit Pai said in a news release.

Most of the 13 companies in the state received multiple awards for different counties including Space Exploration Technologies, which was awarded one of the highest bids. The California-based company, also known as SpaceX, is owned by billionaire Elon Musk, who is also CEO of Tesla. The company was awarded more than \$885 million to expand broadband at 642,925 locations across the country. More than \$67.9 million will be used in 61 out of 67 counties across the state, including Allegheny and Westmoreland.

In Allegheny, \$486,460 will be used for 747 locations, while in Westmoreland, more than \$1.3 million will be used for 1,388 locations. [Business Insider reported](#) SpaceX plans to use the funds for the Starlink satellite-internet project, an initiative that involves placing 42,000 Starlink satellites into orbit with the goal of providing high-speed internet.

Other companies awarded funds in Allegheny include Armstrong Telephone Company's Northern Division, a Butler-based company that received \$20,316 for 36 locations, and Windstream Services, an Arkansas-based company that was awarded \$180,474 for 114 locations. Windstream was also awarded \$668,076 for 326 locations in Westmoreland County. A media representative at

House GOP lawmakers sworn in last

Spotlight PA
The 2020 election cost Pa. counties millions in OT, was most expensive ever, officials say

Associated Press
Pennsylvania blasts Texas' bid to overturn Biden's election

Windstream said they were not permitted by the FCC to speak on the amount awarded.

Armstrong Telephone Company, which has local offices scattered across the region, was awarded a total of \$344,898 for 536 households and business across seven Pennsylvania counties including Butler, Chester, Crawford, Fayette, Mercer, Washington and Allegheny. “We, like many companies, are participating in some of the different government funding options to try to expand rural broadband as quickly as possible,” said David Wittmann, vice president of cable marketing at Armstrong Telephone Company. “We were awarded a few census blocks in certain areas during the most recent process that just concluded.” Wittmann did not have further comment on the topic.

A map specifying which areas received funds can be found on the FCC’s website, fcc.gov, and searching for rural digital opportunity fund phase I results. The covid-19 pandemic brought the need for internet services to the forefront as students attend online classes and adults work from home. In September, Gov. Tom Wolf committed [\\$15 million in federal coronavirus aid](#) money to help schools provide internet services to students who might otherwise struggle with remote learning.

A [2019 Penn State study](#) showed there is not a single county where at least 50% of the population received broadband connectivity, which is defined by the FCC as 25 megabits per second for downloads and 3 Mbps for uploads. In Allegheny County, for example, the median broadband download speed was 20 Mbps, meaning 50% of the study respondents experienced faster speeds and 50% experienced slower speeds. In Westmoreland County, the median broadband download speed was 12.3 Mbps.

Almost all locations in Pennsylvania that were part of the first round of funds will receive access to broadband with speeds of at least 100/20 Mbps. About 64% of households and businesses will receive gigabit-speed broadband.

The first phase of the FCC’s Rural Digital Opportunity Fund originally allocated \$16 billion for companies across the country. The remaining \$6.8 billion will be rolled over into the phase two auction, which brings the total budget to \$11.2 billion. An additional \$9 billion will be distributed over the next decade, with the goal of bringing 5G wireless broadband connectivity to underserved areas of rural America. – ***Pittsburgh Tribune-Review***

Governor Tom Wolf Thursday announced that more than 327,000 Pennsylvanians will gain access to high-speed Internet service through the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) [Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I auction](#). Thirteen providers in Pennsylvania successfully bid in the auction and will provide high-speed Internet access in locations [across the state](#) that are underserved or do not have access to broadband that meets current federal standard. The FCC will allocate \$368.7 million to these providers over the next 10 years. Virtually every Pennsylvania county will benefit from the broadband build out supported by this funding.

“In the 21st century, reliable high-speed internet service is a critical utility for homes and businesses alike. The lack of this technology in our communities inhibits our students and educators, businesses, the healthcare system and more from truly connecting locally and globally. If we want to support our economy, give our students the tools to learn, and improve quality of life, we must expand broadband access,” Gov. Wolf said. “The current pandemic has vividly demonstrated the pressing need to expand high speed internet access to enable telehealth and allow students to connect with their classmates and teachers. As a result of this auction, hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians will gain this access, which is a significant step toward bridging the digital divide.”

The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund is an effort by the FCC to ensure high-speed Internet access in underserved communities. In total, the FCC will

allocate \$9.2 billion to 180 bidders, who will deploy high-speed broadband to more than 5.2 million unserved homes and businesses across the country. Nearly a million Pennsylvanians lack access to reliable high-speed internet access, according to the FCC.

Ensuring that all Pennsylvanians have access to high-speed Internet access is a top priority of the Wolf Administration. The governor's [Restore Pennsylvania](#) plan, a \$4.5 billion bipartisan proposal funded through a commonsense severance tax, would provide funding to completely bridge the digital divide in every community in Pennsylvania. Funding would be available to support installation of infrastructure to bring high speed internet to every corner of the commonwealth.

Similarly, the [Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission](#) (PUC) has also [strongly advocated](#) for universal access to broadband and a presence in the federal auction process. "I commend the Public Utility Commissioners for their strong leadership in expanding broadband to underserved areas, and pursuing every available dollar for the state, as well as the many stakeholders—including particularly Penn State University's Rural Extension Program—that have helped to lay groundwork to ensure the success of bidders in the most recent auction." Gov. Wolf said. "I look forward to continuing to work with the Commissioners, Penn State, and other committed stakeholders to make progress towards our goal of universal broadband access across the commonwealth." – *WHTM-TV, Harrisburg*

Xfinity X1 and Flex platforms are getting two new streaming services to add to their already strong collection, Comcast and The Walt Disney Company announced Thursday. The companies agreed to give Comcast the rights to distribute the [Disney+](#) and ESPN+ streaming services through the Xfinity platforms, which already hosts other services like Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, CBS All Access, Peacock and more. "With the addition of Disney+ and ESPN+, our X1 and Flex customers will soon have the ability to easily find and watch the complete range of Disney shows and sports," Rebecca Heap, Senior Vice President, Video and Entertainment, Comcast Cable said. "Whether it's live, on demand or streamed via an app, unifying content is our strength and we're pleased to add Disney+ and ESPN+ to our aggregation platforms, all accessible with the award-winning Xfinity voice remote."

The new streaming services will launch of Xfinity platforms in the first quarter of 2021, according to the announcement. Existing Disney+ and ESPN+ customers will be able to log in through the X1 and Flex platforms, while new customers will have new ways to sign up including through Xfinity.

"Creating seamless experiences for consumers to easily access Disney+ and ESPN+ wherever they enjoy their entertainment is a top priority for us and we are incredibly excited about the upcoming launches on Comcast's Xfinity X1 and Flex platform," Michael Paull, President, Disney+ and ESPN+ said. "From day one we have set out to make our streaming services available both widely and broadly to audiences and we're excited to extend this promise to the millions of Xfinity customers."

The ESPN app will also give customers access to live streams of ESPN networks that are including in their Xfinity package. – [Pennlive; and in Bloomberg, "Disney's New Streaming Star Just Might Outshine Netflix"](#)



**Broadband
Cable Association
of Pennsylvania**

127 State Street Harrisburg, PA 17101
717-214-2000 (f) 717-214-2020
bcapa.com

First in Broadband.
The Future of Broadband.®