

Broadband & 5G Internet

Problem:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, small businesses all over the country have been forced to utilize widespread telework and expand their online presence, or even create a brand new one. With a shift in operations comes a change in expenses and the need for reliable internet access, especially for small businesses operating under the strain of the pandemic. The power, speed, and bandwidth of 5G technology can transform the way small businesses work and operate to become more resilient and remain competitive.

- Broadband internet access is key for small-business growth and wireless solutions, such as 5G, can play a critical role in providing nationwide access. 5G technology uses shorter, higher-frequency bands of the radio spectrum, promising lower latency, faster speeds and greater load capacity.
- Reliable broadband technology must be available to all regions of the country to empower individuals and businesses in our new online landscape.
- The lack of consistent access and the fact that people and businesses within a couple of miles of each other have disparate technologies is no longer a working model. The pandemic showed just how important internet connectivity is, even more so for small businesses with limited resources.
- The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the total e-commerce sales for the third quarter of 2020 totaled \$209.5 billion--an increase of 36.7 percent from the same quarter in 2019. E-commerce sales also accounted for 14.3 percent of total sales.
- Currently, 36 percent of consumers shop online weekly, a 28 percent increase from prior to the pandemic.
- The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is currently developing the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, established via the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. The \$3.2 billion would enable eligible households to receive a discount on the cost of broadband service and certain connected devices during the pandemic.

Solution:

Ensuring affordable and reliable broadband internet access throughout the U.S. is crucial. It allows small-business owners to stay connected, expand their online operations, and it drives innovation. With the increase speed and reliable mobility provided by 5G, small businesses will be able to leverage new opportunities in their industry and better meet the demands of their customers.

- Policymakers should embrace efforts to improve technology and invest in internet infrastructure.
- A key goal of any infrastructure package should be to enhance connectivity to rural communities to open more opportunities for people to start, operate, and grow their businesses, regardless of where they live.