

Chapter Five
DIGITAL LITERACY



BALLARD COUNTY TELEPHONE BRING FIBEROPTICS TO COMMUNITIES

In January 2014, Ballard Rural Telephone Cooperative received a loan USDA Rural Development for \$24 million to finish installing a fiber-to-the-home broadband network that will be available to 100% of its Ballard County customers. The funds will help narrow the 'digital divide' between rural and metropolitan areas.

A county must have 3Mbps speeds or greater available to 90 percent of housing units with the exception of those they can show to be inaccessible (cost prohibitive) by technology other than wireless – where there must be 1.5Mbps speeds available to 90 percent of housing units. Based on the Dec. 31, 2013, data reported on the National Broadband Map found in the appendix of this application, broadband availability for Ballard County is:

- 98.9% = Total broadband availability
- 98.9% = Wireless availability
- 60.2% = Wireline availability

All availability information is based on download speeds of 3 Mbps or higher and upload speeds of 768 Kbps or higher. According to the National Broadband Map, Ballard County is ranked 37th out of 120 counties. The complete ranking is included and available at <http://www.broadbandmap.gov/rank/all/county/kentucky/percent-population/speed-download-greater-than-3mbps-upload-greater-than-0.768mbps/ascending/>.

The providers listed on the national broadband map with at least 3 Mbps broadband service in Ballard County include:

- *Ballard Rural Telephone Cooperative Corporation (wired)*
- *Zito Media, LP (wired)*
- *AT&T Inc. (wired & wireless)*
- *Verizon Communications (wireless)*

All data came from the National Broadband Map. A broadband profile for Ballard County is included in the appendix on page 56 and available at <http://www.broadbandmap.gov/summarize/state/kentucky/county/ballard>.

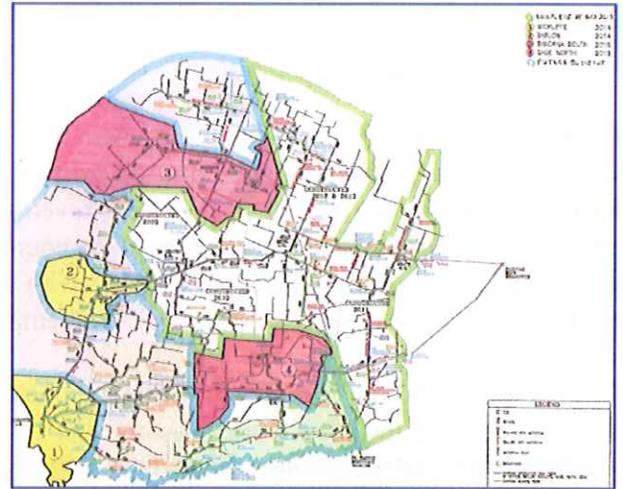
A Commitment to Provide Tomorrow's Fiber to the Home Technology to all Ballard County

Ballard Telephone Cooperative (BTC) serves all of Ballard County and the western part of McCracken County with broadband internet service, as well as landline telephone service and cable television service. BTC is in the process of building a fiber-to-the-home community. The fiber-to-the-home technology is allowing BTC to deliver to our residential and business subscribers the vastly higher bandwidths necessary for more robust video, internet and voice services. We feel in the future, BTC will have the capability to push even more bandwidth without having to change out the existing fiber optic network. Building this fiber-to-the-home project is future proofing our company and our community while allowing our residential and business subscribers some of the best available broadband internet, video, and voice services today and any other technologies available in the future that will ride the BTC fiber optic network.

The map of the BTC serving area indicates deployment of our fiber-to-the-home project. One hundred percent of our McCracken County subscribers with broadband internet and cable television service are served over the fiber-to-the-home technology. All subscribers within the La Center and Kevil exchanges are also on the fiber-to-the-home technology. These exchanges are capable of receiving advertised broadband internet download speeds of up to 50 Mbps with a minimum download speed of 4 Mbps available and upload speeds ranging from 1 Mbp to 5 Mbps. Higher speeds can be achieved if requested by a subscriber and many of our existing fiber-to-the-home subscribers could be converted to gigabit internet service.

In early 2014 BTC was approved for a 24 million dollar loan to deploy fiber-to-the-home to the remainder of broadband subscribers in Ballard County. By early 2015 subscribers in Wickliffe and the immediate surrounding area and most of the subscribers in the Barlow will be cut over to active Ethernet fiber optic services making Wickliffe and Barlow gigabit Ethernet communities. These areas are highlighted in yellow on the map. BTC has awarded bids to contractors for the 2015 build out of fiber-to-the-home in the southern portion of the Bandana exchange and the northern portion of the Gage exchange. These areas of the map are highlighted in dark pink. The remainder of the exchanges of Bandana, Barlow, Gage and Wickliffe will be built out with fiber-to-the-home in 2016, 2017 and completed by the fall of 2018. These areas of the map are outlined in blue.

With any consumer or business in Ballard county having the capability of receiving broadband internet download speeds of 3 Mbps or greater and upload speeds of 768 Kbps or greater, BTC is doing its part through its infrastructure to make Ballard County a “work ready community”. The BTC fiber-to-the-home deployment is allowing consumers and businesses vastly greater broadband internet speeds capable of running today’s and tomorrow’s technologies.



The area on the map outlined in green is complete with fiber-to-the-home. The remainder of the subscribers in Ballard County is served via copper cable. All copper subscribers are capable of receiving broadband internet download speeds of up to 3 Mbps and upload speeds of up to 768 Kbps.



Ballard County eLearning Center in Barlow
In addition to the high broadband availability in Ballard County, the community has found additional ways to increase digital literacy. Local leaders joined Murray State University Regional Outreach staff and board members to official open the new Ballard County eLearning Center in Barlow on September 4, 2014.