Texas Regional Broadband Program Kick-off
February 3, 2026

Agenda/Table of Contents

- Overview of the Texas Regional Broadband Program

- COG Participation Overview

- Program Roles and Responsibilities

- Program Templates

    ➢ *Lunch/Break*

- Reporting, Monitoring, and Compliance Overview

- Budget, Reimbursement & Financial Tracking

- KPMG Session: Onboarding, SmartGrants & Compliance

- Program Timeline, Office Hours & Ongoing Support

- Open Discussion and Q&A

Overview of the Texas Regional Broadband Program

- The BDO and TARC have partnered to launch a new statewide initiative on digital access and opportunity entitled the "Texas Regional Broadband Program" (TRBP).

- The program funds COGs to designate essential staff for implementing activities and assessing broadband needs, empowering them to lead in creating sustainable digital access solutions.

- Assessments of the state's digital landscape revealed a critical need for expanded local capacity to address broadband and digital opportunity issues.

Overview of the Texas Regional Broadband Program

Program Goals	Action
Develop local expertise	Fund and support planning commissions to hire a Regional Digital Access Specialist.
Facilitate collaboration	Convene stakeholders and partners to build strong regional networks.
Regional planning	Guide the development of comprehensive regional digital opportunity plans that align with statewide goals.
Provide Resources	Offer ongoing technical assistance and educational resources to support Regional Digital Access Specialists in their local efforts.

Overview of the Texas Regional Broadband Program

Expected Impact	
Short-term	Regions will have a dedicated leader (Regional Digital Access Specialist) and a clear, data-driven plan for their community.
Medium-term	An increase in coordinated, regional efforts to improve digital access and skills, moving from planning to action.
Long-term	This program will increase economic resilience and quality of life by ensuring all Texans can participate in and benefit from the digital world.

COG Participation Overview

- Statewide participation and coverage
  - COG Applications have been received and will ensure coverage across all **254 Texas counties**
  - Strong statewide demand for regional broadband and digital opportunity planning capacity
  - Clear variation in regional needs, readiness levels and existing assets
  - Confirms the need for a flexible but consistent statewide framework
- Selection & Onboarding Process
  - COG Program Agreements and onboarding materials are in development and will be circulated once approved
  - Budget Workbooks have been sent to each participating COG and are currently being completed to ensure proposed expenses are eligible

Program Roles and Responsibilities

Organization	Roles and Responsibilities
COGs	Leads on-the-groundwork, including community engagement, developing and implementing plans and strategies, and fostering local partnerships.
TARC	Serves as the program's fiscal agent and administer the funds. They will oversee the day-to-day operations and provide essential support to COGs.
SME	Provides technical assistance and subject-matter expertise to support COGs in broadband and digital opportunity planning. Assists with data analysis, best practices, strategy development and implementation guidance.
BDO	Authorizes the funding and provides guidance for success of the program, ensuring it remains aligned with the BDO's statewide mission to bridge the digital divide.

Program Templates and Planning Tools Overview

➢ **Regional Plan for Broadband and Digital Opportunity Guidance Packet**
Primary planning tool used by COGs to develop their Regional Digital Opportunity (RDO) Plan. Guides assessment of broadband needs and assets, identification of goals and strategies, and documentation of partnerships and implementation approaches.

- **Needs & Asset Assessment Summary**
  - Supports baseline data collection by documenting existing broadband conditions, demographic and economic context, local assets, and service gaps. Informs goal setting, strategy development, and prioritization of regional needs.
- **Goal & KPI Guidance**
  - Provides a standardized menu of approved goals, strategies, and performance indicators to support consistent planning and reporting across all regions. Aligns regional efforts with statewide benchmarks and reporting expectations.
- **KPI Tracking Table & Highlights**
  - Allows COGs to track progress toward selected goals and key performance indicators.

➢ **Regional Digital Opportunity Plan Checklist**
Serves as a companion tool to the Planning Template to ensure regional plans are complete, consistent, and actionable. Establishes phased planning expectations over the three-year program and aligns with contract requirements.

Program Templates and Planning Tools Overview

➢ **Monthly Activity Updates – COGs**
  Captures regional activities, staffing, stakeholder engagement, plan development, partnerships, outputs, and KPI progress. Supports program monitoring, reimbursement documentation, and quarterly statewide reporting.

➢ **Invoice Coversheet & Budget Reimbursement Template**
  Provides a standardized format for submitting reimbursement requests. Ensures financial documentation is complete, compliant, and aligned with approved budgets, contract requirements, and TxGMS reporting standards.

Reporting, Monitoring & Compliance Overview

COGs

- Tracking regional activities to contribute to TARC quarterly reports
- Progress is submitted as monthly updates to TARC
- Key reporting elements include:
  - Staffing and training of Regional Digital Access Specialists
  - Status updates on the Regional Digital Opportunity Plans
  - Partnerships and outputs
  - Goals and KPI outcomes

TARC

- TARC synthesizes all data and prepares quarterly reports for BDO
- Tracks program-wide progress and feeds into state-level reporting
- Outlines COG participation and staffing, status of Regional Digital Opportunity work and plans, and partnership development
- COG activities support documentation and reimbursement

Budget, Reimbursement & Financial Tracking

Grant Amount & Purpose	Each participating COG will receive an approved TRBP grant allocation (approx. **$107,000 per COG per year for (3) years**) to support regional broadband and digital opportunity planning activities over the program period. Grant funds are intended to build planning capacity and support implementation-ready outcomes and may only be used for eligible, approved program costs.
Approved Budget Workbook	To ensure consistency statewide, all COGs are required to use the TRBP Budget Workbook Template, which: • Standardizes cost categories and descriptions • Aligns directly with the Interlocal Cooperation Contract (ICC) and TxGMS requirements
A Watermarked Example Budget Workbook	Is provided for reference only and illustrates allowable cost structures and formatting expectations. **Important:** COGs should not add, delete, or modify budget categories beyond what is included in the approved template.

Budget, Reimbursement & Financial Tracking

Allowable Cost Categories

Personnel & Fringe Benefits	• Salaries and fringe benefits for staff assigned to TRBP-related duties • Activities may include planning coordination, stakeholder engagement, data collection, reporting, and program administration • Time must be supported by appropriate payroll or timesheet documentation
Travel	• Identify the number of trips, reasons for and destination of trips, number of travelers, and the estimated cost per trip • All travel costs must not exceed the GSA travel reimbursement rates • Out of region travel must be approved by TARC/BDO
Supplies & Equipment	• Provide a list of purchased supplies, broken out into as much detail as possible. • Identify individual items with a unit acquisition cost of $5k or greater, and the cost of the item
Miscellaneous	• This includes costs not covered in the indirect costs but necessary to administer the program (i.e., contractual, postage, telephone, etc.) Please add detailed descriptions

Budget, Reimbursement & Financial Tracking

Allowable Cost Categories – Continued

Meeting Costs
- Costs associated with capacity-building activities, workshops, trainings, and stakeholder engagement efforts related to digital opportunity planning.
- Provide a description of the meeting and detailed list of costs.

Indirect Costs
- As defined in the 2 CFR 200.1 "Indirect Cost". Must be supported by an approved ICRA furnished to TARC for the applicable grant period.

Costs Not Covered by the TRBP Grant
- Costs incurred outside the approved program period
- Activities not directly related to TRBP planning, coordination, or reporting

Invoicing & Reimbursement Overview

Each reimbursement request must include a **complete invoice package** consisting of:

1. **Invoice Coversheet (COG's Financial Statement)**
   Serves as the financial summary page
   Identifies the COG, reporting period, and reimbursement amount requested
2. **Invoice**
   Summarizes expenses by approved budget category
   Confirms amounts do not exceed approved allocations
3. **Budget Workbook**
   Itemizes all expenses by category
   Must align exactly with the approved budget template
4. **Supporting Documentation Packet**
   General ledger and income/expense statements

   As part of the invoicing structure and requirements, a sample invoicing packet and process will be part of the onboarding program tools.

Invoicing & Reimbursement Overview

Program Effective Date & Pre-Award Costs

o TRBP program effective date is **February 1, 2026**

o Certain pre-award expenses will be allowable and identified in the COG Program Agreement

o At this time, allowable pre-award costs are limited to the **TRBP Kick-Off Training** and the **Texas Broadband Summit** hosted by the Texas Rural Funders and the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas

  • Additional training and support opportunities will be offered as the program moves forward.

o Today's session provides a high-level overview of budget and invoicing requirements

o Additional budget and finance training opportunities will be offered prior to the first reimbursement request period

Invoicing & Reimbursement Overview

Key Takeaways

o TRBP funds are reimbursed on a **cost-reimbursement basis**

o COGs may request reimbursement for eligible, incurred, and paid expenses within the approved program period

o Timely, complete, and well-organized invoice packets support faster review and payment

o Reimbursement is contingent upon review and approval by TARC, BDO and the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (CPA)

o Expenses are tracked on a **monthly time-period** and should be submitted on a **quarterly basis consistent with the quarterly reporting schedule** as noted in the COG Program Agreement

o Late or incomplete submissions may delay reimbursement

o CPA, BDO or TARC may request additional documentation at any point

o Reimbursement requests may be placed on hold until all documentation is verified

Office Hours & Ongoing Support

Program Timeline, Office Hours & Ongoing Support

- **COG Program Agreements:** Will be circulated soon

- **Budget Workbooks:** Send as completed for review

- **Monthly Reporting:** Begins after program launch

- **First Reimbursement Period:** February 1 – April 30, 2026; Due June 1, 2026

- **Office Hours: May shift to a monthly cadence** hosted by TARC/BDO for participating COGs
    - Intended to provide:
        - Real-time clarification on program, budget, and reporting questions
        - Support for planning tools and templates
        - Space to flag issues early before they become compliance concerns

Open Discussion & Q&A

Next Steps

Next Steps for COGs

- Review templates & guidance documents
- Confirm designated staff roles and internal coordination
- Begin organizing budget, finance, and reporting processes internally
- Plan early engagement and data-gathering activities
- Review onboarding materials once Program Agreements are circulated

Be on the Lookout

- Follow-up communications from TARC, including:
  - Updated FAQ based on today's discussion
    - Send questions to Alex Guerrero, Director of Regional Initiatives, at alexg@txregionalcouncil.org
  - Program Agreement coming soon
  - Training and office hour schedules

Thank you for your partnership and leadership!

Questions raised today will help shape future guidance, trainings, and office hour topics.