



Labor Standards in Broadband Buildout Explainer

In January 2022, [Governor Hochul announced the ConnectALL initiative](#) providing \$1 billion in public and private funds to deliver affordable broadband to millions of New Yorkers and create new investments in the state's digital infrastructure - all with the goal of connecting previously underserved communities to broadband.

The components of the ConnectALL initiative include:

Broadband Assessment Program and Interactive Map

Following a successful campaign in 2021 to include funding for broadband data mapping in the FY22 Budget, The Broadband Assessment Program, administered by the Public Service Commission, will provide New York details on availability and reliability of broadband infrastructure statewide, and improve the ability to target broadband expansion to focus on areas where connectivity is needed. Consumers will also have the ability to search for broadband providers and review what services are available in their area.

Grant Programs

Three grant programs will be offered to provide funding to local municipalities and other entities to plan and build accessible broadband infrastructure. The State will coordinate with municipalities in every corner of New York to ensure funding is directed where it's most needed focusing on municipal infrastructure, rural broadband, and connectivity innovation.

Affordability

\$30-a-month Affordability Subsidy for low-income households, and funding the retrofitting of all affordable housing projects with broadband installations.

Digital Equity Program

Ensuring that equitable access to broadband statewide.

However, New York State currently lacks the labor regulations regarding broadband providers necessary for these services to be delivered safely and effectively.

In order to cut costs, internet providers increasingly rely on a multilayered structure of subcontractors that lack accountability to the public and to their employees. Frequently these contractors:

- Are non-union
- Lack adequate safety training
- Have very high turnover
- Undermine the wages and standards established by union-represented telecom employees through collective bargaining agreements.

These cost-cutting measures have resulted in a disturbing record of accidents, causing

- Damage to utilities, public property, and homes
- Serious risks to workers and public safety

Broadband providers should uphold high standards in construction of the communications networks that New Yorkers rely on.

Our Proposed Budget Language calls for preference to be given to ContactALL applicants who are high-road employers able to demonstrate that the workforce performing the contract will meet the following criteria:

- High standards of safety training, certification, and/or licensure for all relevant workers
- High level of in-house training tied to certifications, titles, and/or uniform wage scales to ensure that deployment is done at a high standard
- Policies that support job pipelines for locally-based and traditionally marginalized communities
- Relevant work will be performed by a directly employed workforce, or policies and/or practices to ensure that any employees of contractors meet the above criteria
- Robust compliance with workplace protections and measures in place to ensure future labor compliance

The proposed budget language also calls for an enforcement mechanism including

- A web-based portal to track compliance with the high-road employer provisions above.
- Progress reports on the commitments made in ConnectALL applications, tracked through the portal.
- Data on
 - Whether the workforce will be directly employed a subcontracted workforce
 - The entities that the proposed subgrantee plans to subcontract with in carrying out the proposed work
 - The job titles and size of the workforce (FTE positions) required to carry out the proposed work over the course of the project and the entity that will employ each portion of the workforce
 - A description of job titles needed to carry out the work as well as safety training and certification, wage scales, and training programs.
 - A description of any health and safety committees in the worksite

- A description of any policies or practices that encourage career pathways and hiring for marginalized communities
- A statement from applicants on violations of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and state labor and employment laws within the last six years.

If the information entered into the portal indicates a failure to comply with the commitments made in the ConnectALL application requirements, an automatic notice of noncompliance will be sent to the Economic Development Corporation. Annual tracking of compliance shall be accessible to the public via the New York State Department of Labor website.

