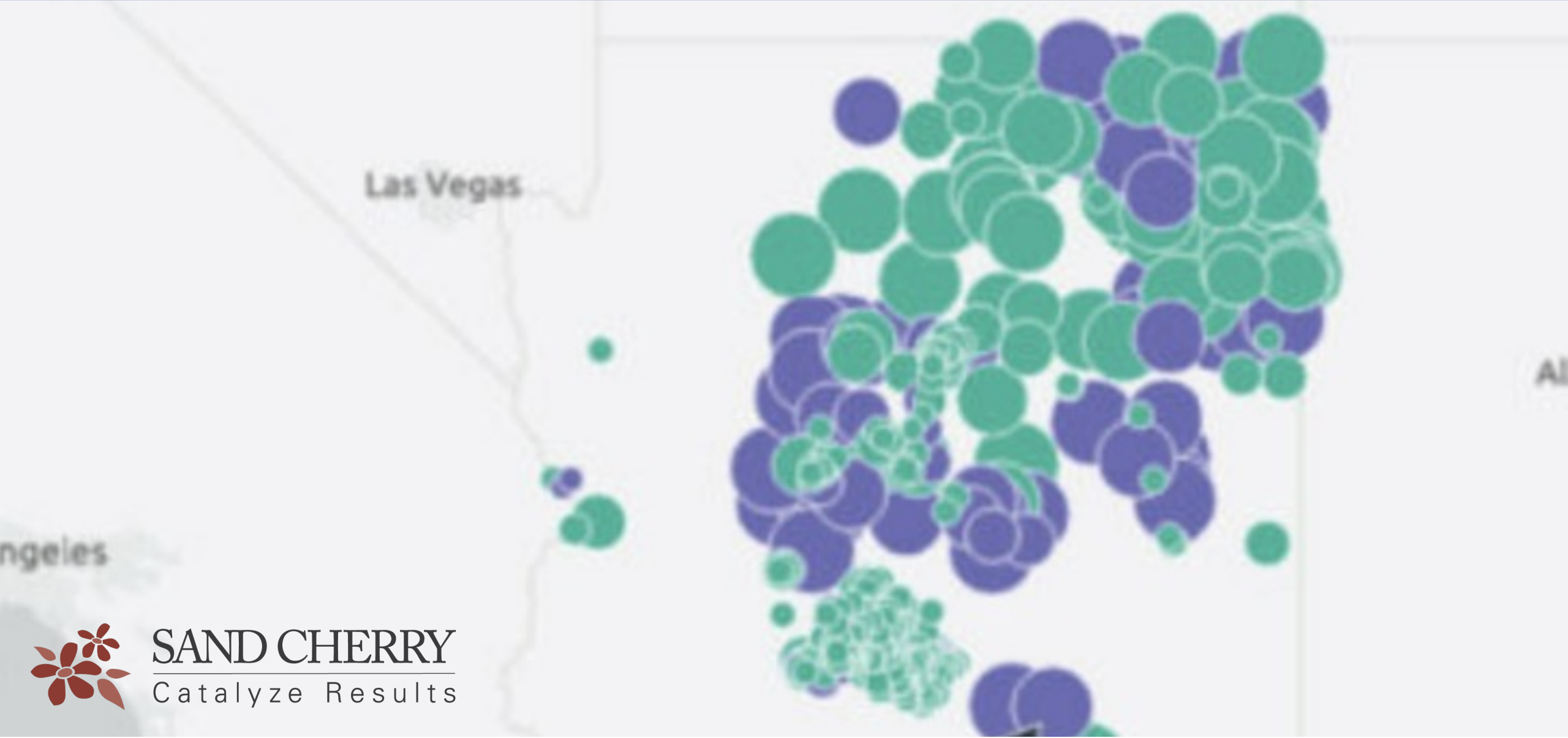


## Hot Pursuit of the 'Last' Last Mile

*It is no small task to identify the full extent of the U.S. digital divide. New mapping methodology promises to sharpen our understanding and suggests that the un-/underserved U.S. population may be as high as 25M.*



**SAND CHERRY**  
Catalyze Results

# Broadband Data Mapping Background

Accurately mapping broadband availability has been historically difficult, leading to uncertainty about the size of the digital divide. With substantial funding now available, new methods are being employed to improve data collection.

- A crucial step in the NTIA's broadband deployment and equity programs is the release of data maps which display areas where broadband service is lacking. The location and volume of these underserved and unserved locations dictate available funding for program participants.
- For the greater part of the last decade, the FCC's broadband coverage maps have been based on '**Form 477**' data, which comes from biannual reporting of Internet Service Providers (ISPs). This data has lacked sufficient granularity.
  - Entire census blocks (about 20 households on average) have been counted as 'covered' if just one household had sufficient internet service.
  - Leads to inaccurate mapping of funding needs. A 2020 FCC estimate predicted there were 14.5 million homes or small businesses which were either underserved or unserved. Using additional tools some analysts now predict this figure could be greater than 25 million locations.
- The NTIA received funding in 2018 to work with the FCC to update the **National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM)**, a complex GIS resource which draws from nearly 400 public and private data sources to provide better insights and information for funding decision-making.
  - 39 US states, three territories, and eight federal agencies (USDA, BIA, EDA, MBDA) have opted into the NBAM thus far.
- In March 2020, the **Broadband DATA Act** established the framework for a new comprehensive broadband database. This led to the establishment of the **Broadband Data Collection (BDC)** program and the **Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric** dataset.
  - Previous data covered 7.5 million housing blocks. Under the BDC program, reporting increases to over 114 million individual locations.
  - Internet service providers are required to file their data to the Broadband Data Collection program by **September 1<sup>st</sup>**
  - Resulting datasets will be the basis for determining locations which qualify for Federal funding under these programs.

# Broadband Data Collection Program Overview

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The Broadband Data Collection (BDC) program is a coordinated, large-scale effort by the FCC to improve the accuracy of broadband availability mapping in order to more effectively target and close the digital divide.

- Objective:**
- Single, comprehensive master database that improves accuracy and completeness of information on whether (and how well) individual building premises are served by broadband. Expands number of data sources and precision of data.
  - Measured serviceability datapoints increases from ~7.5M to ~114M.
- Timeline:**
- BDC system opened for ‘filings’ on 6/30/22; All internet service providers required to report serviceability by 9/1/22.
  - Going forward, the BDC data will be ‘refreshed’ twice a year on the same schedule as the previous Form 477 filing dates.
- Who Participates:**
- Facilities-based providers of fixed and mobile broadband internet access with one or more end user connections are required to report serviceability.
  - State, local, tribal governments and federal agencies provide ‘verified’ broadband availability data.
  - Third-party groups may also submit their own ‘verified data’.
- Data Validation:**
- Mobile speed tests must be validated by the FCC, to prove broadband service is sufficient where ISPs claim it is provided.
- Challenge Process:**
- Consumers, state, local, and tribal governmental entities, are given the opportunity to challenge the accuracy of the coverage maps and broadband availability data. Providers then must either submit a rebuttal to the challenge or concede the challenge within a 60-day period of being notified.
- Where is BDC Housed?:** - FCC ‘Broadband Data Collection’ Webpage (<https://www.FCC.gov/BroadbandData>)



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