

October 1, 2024

Dear Fiber Broadband Association Members,

What a difference a quarter makes! In the first half of 2024, FBA reported that the supply side of the fiber industry continued to struggle as network operators worked down COVID-related excess inventory, in addition to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) slower-than-anticipated approval of initial proposals for the states' \$42.45B of Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program's fiber infrastructure prioritized grant program. The exciting news is that FTTH-related inventory has largely normalized, and NTIA has now approved 49 out of 56 initial proposals for BEAD funding. These states and territories are now in the process of opening their funding application windows, and we should see the first awards later this year. Every state broadband director I have spoken with is working toward putting their project in position for its fiber deployment construction programs to be underway as soon as the ground thaws next spring.

Speaking of fiber deployment, the Fiber Broadband Association, in conjunction with the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society, Georgetown Law School Institute for Technology Law & Policy, the American Association for Public Broadband, Brightspeed, and GFiber, published a strategic paper titled "[Permitting Success: Closing the Digital Divide Through Local Broadband Permitting](#)." This paper, which is a result of the FBA Permitting Summit held in the spring, will help local governments and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) navigate broadband network construction challenges and maximize investments in broadband connectivity for all Americans.

Further, FBA issued the following studies and whitepapers over the quarter:

- "[Broadband Market Workforce Needs](#)," FBA, Power & Communications Contractors Association (PCCA), and Continuum Capital. This study identifies the broadband workforce requirements, by job codes, for the contiguous 48 states in aggregate and is broken out by state.
- "[Fiber Broadband Deployment Is Paramount To Achieving Zero Carbon Footprint](#)," FBA Sustainability Working Group. This study finds that Fiber-To-The-Home reduces carbon footprint by 93% when compared to DOCSIS 4.0 HFC networks.
- "[Accelerating Utility Locates](#)," FBA Deployment Specialist Working Group. This whitepaper provides best practices to eliminate delays and to streamline construction workflows for time efficiency.

- [“Gigabit Fiber Can Add \\$326B to US GDP,”](#) FBA Technology Committee and RVA LLC Market Research & Consulting (RVA). This study finds that subscribing to Gigabit+ service will contribute \$326B in the nation in productivity gains.
- [“Fiber 101 Series: Application Considerations for Aerial Fiber Drops, Aerial Fiber Deployment Messenger Strand and Lashing Wire,”](#) FBA Technology Committee. This series is a collection of concise technical briefs designed to demystify and clarify technical fiber topics.

FBA Performance

In the third quarter, the Fiber Broadband Association’s growth continues to accelerate. As of August 31, our revenue was \$1.38M favorable to budget, while expenses came in \$794K below budget. Our ongoing strong financial performance is a result of membership growth, record attendance at our annual Fiber Connect 2024 conference held in Nashville at the end of July, the ongoing success of our Regional Fiber Connect Workshop Series, investments, and non-conference sponsorships. FBA added 35 net new member companies, including new two tribal members, bringing our North American membership to over 560 companies, including 39 Tribal Nations.

Fiber Connect 2024

Fiber Connect 2024 set a new attendance record with nearly 5,000 registrants and exceeded our expectations in every way. FC24 fully lived up to its theme, *“Accelerating Our Fiber Future,”* with 275 expert speakers, 75 sessions, two pre-conference educational tracks, seven main conference educational tracks, 43 breakout sessions, a series of five “Ted Talk” style Operator Light Talks, The C-Suite Forum, Fiber Meet Ups, Technology Deep Dives with the Broadband Forum, the return of our Proof-of-Concept demos, The State Broadband Summit, Broadband Policy Symposium, Overbuilder Toolkit, Women in Fiber Luncheon, Award Luncheon, and 281 exhibitors in our biggest Expo Hall yet with 50,000 sq ft of exhibits. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information and NTIA Administrator Alan Davidson reaffirmed the program’s fiber preference and promised our audience that it would have all the state BEAD initial proposals “largely” approved by the end of summer and we are thrilled that NTIA is living up to that promise.

Public Policy

The third quarter was another strong quarter for the Fiber Broadband Association’s Public Policy Committee. Some of the key highlights during the quarter included the following:

On July 10, 2024, the FBA held a fly-in in Washington, DC, meeting with 21 bi-partisan, bi-cameral congressional offices to reinforce FBA members' top fiber-related public priorities. 30 FBA member companies participated in this event.

Des Moines State Capitol – Workforce Development

On September 11, 2024, FBA public policy committee members met with state legislators and broadband leaders to discuss FBA members' fiber-related public policy and workforce development priorities.

FBA Comments Filed

- FBA submitted comments on NTIA's proposed guidance on Alternative Technology Guidance for BEAD.

FBA Workforce Development

FBA's Optical Telecom Installer Certification (OpTIC Path™) program continues to gain nationwide traction, adding schools in three additional states during the quarter. The OpTIC Path program is now underway in 15 states. We have graduated 574 students and are on track to graduate a total of 1,085 fiber optic technicians by the end of the year. We are also pleased to report that 87% of our graduates are veterans.

FBA LATAM

The LATAM Chapter is gearing up for its third Fiber Connect LATAM event this year, which is being held in Panama City, Panama, on October 1 and 2. The FBA LATAM Chapter continues to gain traction and is providing a positive contribution to the organization.

Fiber Council Global Alliance (FCGA)

FBA Chair Jimmy Todd and I attended the FCGA Global Summit in Kuala Lumpur from September 4-6. The summit strongly focused on sharing best practices from each region as we work toward ensuring every home and business across the globe is connected with fiber. The highlight of the event was the deep dive discussion on the AI-driven growth and demand for fiber (and other critical resources) for Hyperscalers.

Results Against Q3 Goals

As we close the third quarter, the following is our progress against our Q3 2024 goals:

- ✓ Capacity attendance at FBA's Regional Fiber Connect events, with Iowa (precision agriculture) being our highest-rated event of the year so far.

From the Office of the President & CEO

- ✓ Record turnout at Fiber Connect 2024 in Nashville, with 25% growth year-over-year.
- ✓ Successful DC Fly-In with 30 FBA member companies meeting with 21 Congressional offices.
- ✓ Continue to ramp and scale our OpTIC Path fiber technician training program nationwide as we progress toward 1,085 graduates by year-end.
- ✓ Develop a Canadian presence as we prepare for our Regional Fiber Connect Workshop in Calgary, Alberta, on October 8, 2024.
- ✓ Continued strong growth in membership, dedicated focus on key areas such as the needs of Tribal members, uniting the industry, and investing in our volunteer leadership.

As we head into the final quarter of 2024, I am very excited about our upcoming events in Panama, Calgary, Albuquerque (Tribal focus), and most importantly, our 2024 Premier Members Meeting at the Cheeca Lodge in Islamorada, Florida, from December 8-10.

So far, 2024 has been the strongest year in FBA history, but I feel we are just getting started. I am highly encouraged by our workforce development progress and momentum, the strength of our board and committee/working group leadership, and the velocity and quality of our research, whitepapers, and best practices. I could not be prouder of the FBA staff, our strategic partners, and the heavy lifting and engagement by our board and volunteer leadership. Our chairman, Jimmy Todd, CEO of Nex-Tech, has traveled with me around the world to advance fiber and our members' top priorities. We continue to make material progress toward our mission and the opportunity to connect every American with fiber by the end of the decade. *When Fiber Leads, The Future Follows.*

Plans for our Association, members, industry, and the communities we serve are well underway for 2025, and I'm excited for what our future holds. As always, you can reach me 24/7 on my cell phone (listed below) or by email. If I or anyone on my staff can help you and your company accelerate the deployment of fiber, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



Gary Bolton



From the Office of the President & CEO

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