**Identifying Digitally Underserved Communities: El Paso, Texas**

The Hunt Institute for Global Competitiveness at The University of Texas at El Paso

**Introduction**

High-speed internet is vital for:
- Telework
- Telehealth
- Remote Education

El Paso, Texas, finds itself as a digitally underserved county. The El Paso Community Foundation and the Rio Grande Council of Governments teamed up to tackle these digital challenges, working in collaboration with the Hunt Institute to conduct a study, develop proactive action plans, and secure private and public investments for enhancing broadband infrastructure in the Paso del Norte region.

**Objective**

This study aims to identify and characterize digitally underserved and unserved communities in El Paso County and elucidate the areas with broadband infrastructure gaps and in most need of funding.

**Methods**

The Hunt Institute mapped specific demographic indicators from the U.S. Census Bureau against broadband connectivity requirements:
- **Data Mapping:** An in-depth analysis was conducted mapping the data related to fixed broadband usage, encompassing both residential and business segments.
- **Speed Evaluation:** The analysis included an evaluation of the maximum advertised download and upload speeds at the census block level, utilizing data sourced from the FCC.
- **Deficiency Identification:** The institute cross-referenced these speed metrics with identified deficiencies in broadband infrastructure within El Paso.
- **Asset Map Creation:** To provide a comprehensive view, the institute utilized a range of databases to create an asset map that visually illustrates the existing broadband infrastructure and service gaps in El Paso, particularly for public broadband access.

**Key Findings**

- **Broadband Speed Disparities:** The study revealed notable disparities in broadband speeds within El Paso County.
- **Socioeconomic Factors:** These areas with slower broadband speeds also tended to have lower median incomes and higher poverty levels. This highlights the intersection of digital connectivity issues with socioeconomic challenges.
- **Broadband Infrastructure Gaps:** The study identified gaps in broadband infrastructure within El Paso County. This information was derived from both existing and external databases, which were used to create maps outlining the current state of broadband infrastructure in the county.
- **Guiding Future Efforts:** These maps serve as valuable tools for guiding future efforts aimed at addressing the broadband needs of digitally underserved communities within El Paso County.

**Results**

**Broadband Speed:**
The map takes into account census tracts with a slower median of the maximum advertised download speeds.

**Socio-economic Indicators:**
These areas must also fall below predetermined cut-off points for several socio-economic indicators, including:
- Population density
- Housing density
- Business density
- Percentage of Hispanic or Latino population
- Median household income
- Percentage of people living below the poverty level

**Conclusions**

- **Data Sources:** This report utilizes data from the U.S. Census Bureau and FCC.
- **Focus on Digital Underservice:** The study identifies digitally underserved areas in El Paso County, primarily in specific Zip Codes and census tracts.
- **Correlation Analysis:** Data on broadband speeds is correlated with key socioeconomic indicators, including population density, Hispanic population percentage, income, and poverty levels.
- **Underserved Areas:** The most affected areas include downtown and central El Paso, along with eastern Lower Valley communities (Clint, Fabens, San Elizario, Tornillo).
- **Impact on Activities:** Slow broadband speeds hinder telework, telehealth, and remote education.
- **Equity Focus:** Addressing these issues is critical for equitable participation in essential activities.

**Acknowledgments**

- **Scan the QR code to access our online interactive maps and report.**

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