



Together at the Table

Carriers, Policy, & The Future of Rural Support

WTA Spring Educational Forum

New Orleans | Tuesday, April 14, 2026 | 8:00-8:45 AM

Meet The Panelists



Celia Lewis

Moderator

JSI

DMV (DC, MD, VA)



Janet Britton

General Counsel

REV

Louisiana



Dustin Durden

CEO

Pineland Telephone Cooperative

Georgia



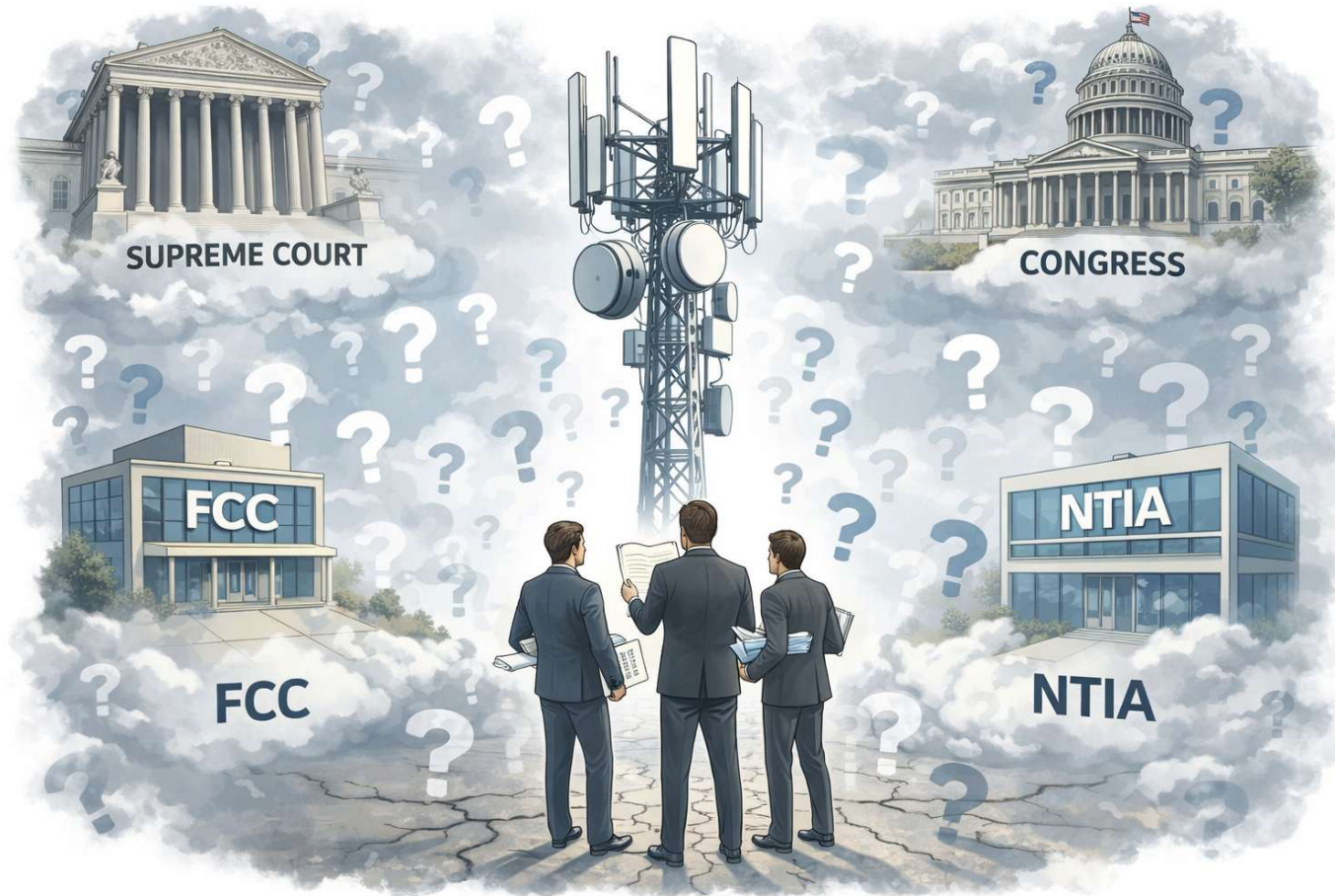
Lauren Sanders

CFO

Big Bend Telephone Company

Texas

The Shifting Policy Environment

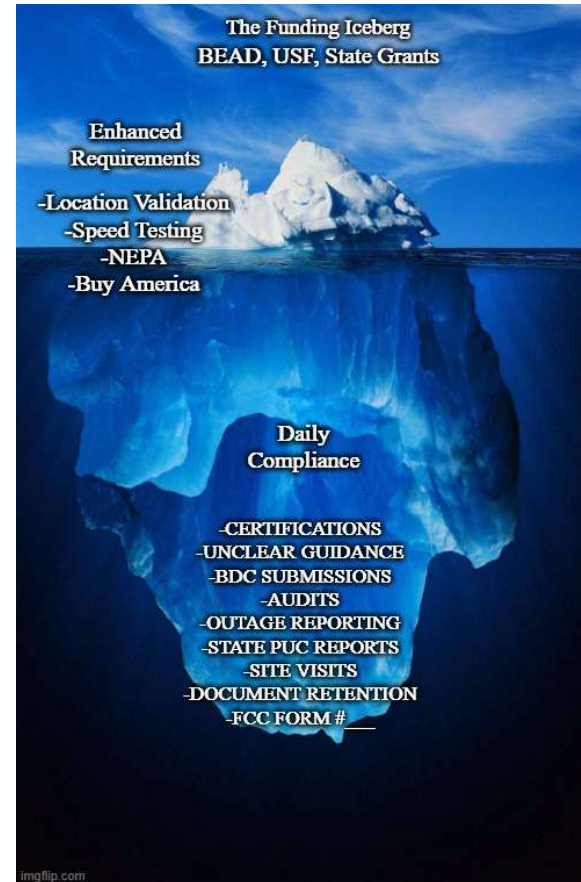


The Compliance Reality



The Compliance Iceberg: What Funding Really Requires

- What you see: funding awards and deployment announcements
- What you manage: massive compliance infrastructure consuming staff, time, and capital
- The reality: compliance burden grows faster than funding



Navigating Funding Uncertainty



- Beyond dollars: making investment decisions when workforce availability and regulatory support are uncertain
- Building financial models that work across multiple scenarios—funding changes, deployment delays, program overlaps
- What strategies help you commit to 20-year network decisions in a 2-year certainty window?



Effective Advocacy and Collaboration



Congress & Federal Agencies Agree:

- Universal Service Supports Rural America
- Broadband is Essential Infrastructure
- All Communities Deserve Connectivity

Now Officials Are Asking:

- Are we getting good VALUE?
- Are Carriers ACCOUNTABLE?
- How do we measure SUCCESS?

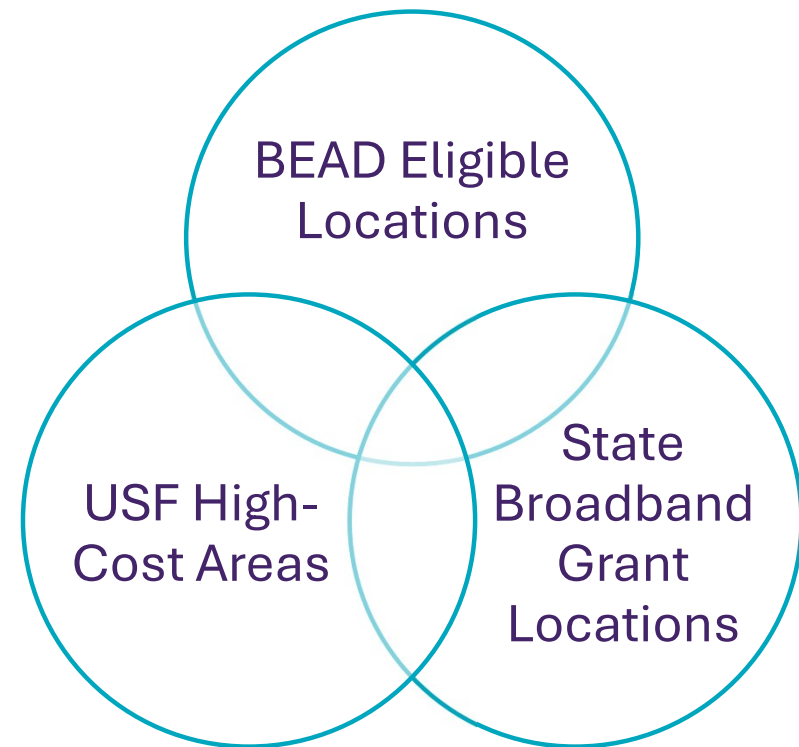
Show Value • Demonstrate Accountability • Document Community Impact

Traditional Support and BEAD Grants



Complementary or Competing?

- Multiple funding sources for the same areas sound like opportunity—until programs conflict
- BEAD comes with certification requirements that may restrict other federal funding
- The strategic challenge becomes evaluating your long-term sustainability when program rules force choices



Community Engagement



Beyond Speed Tests: Telling the Whole Story

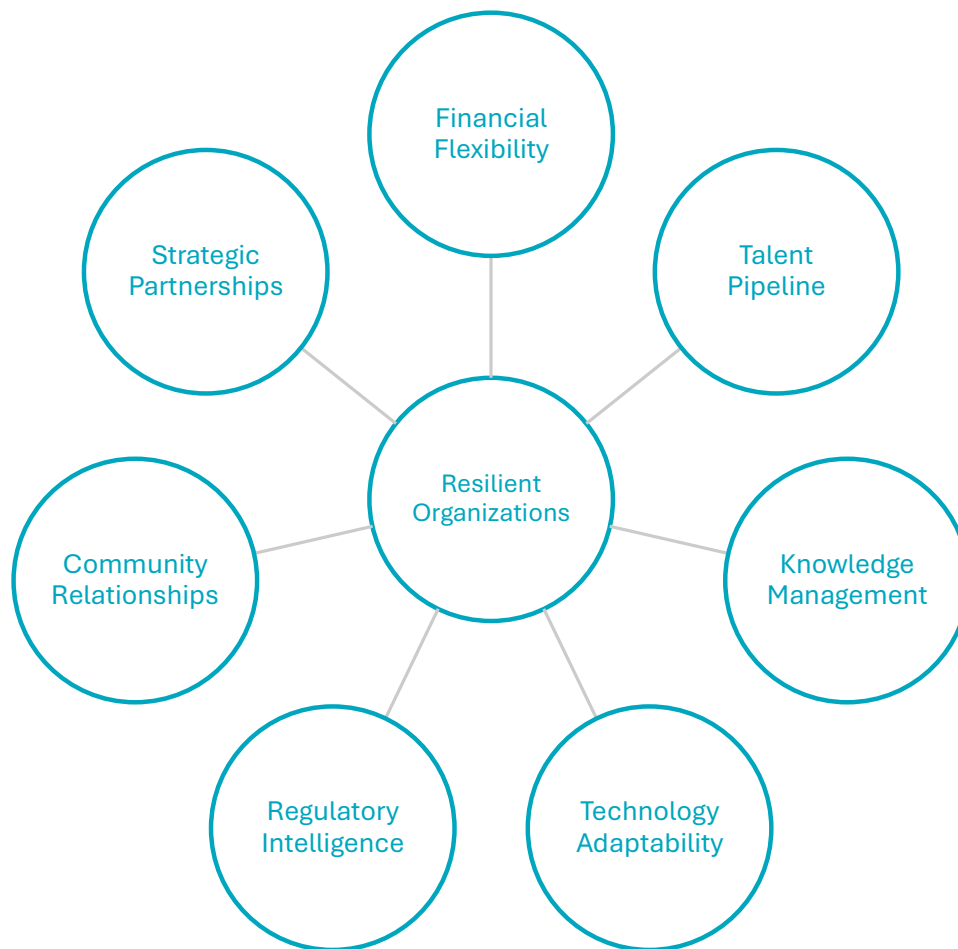
What Regulators Want

- Speed Tests
- Coverage Maps
- Compliance Reports
- Financial Data

What Communities Experience

- “Telemedicine saved my father’s life”
- “My kids are able to do their homework at home”
- “My business growth skyrocketed after we got online”
- “I can video chat with my grandchildren”

Building Resilient Organizations



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Thank You!

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For more information about JSI or to continue the conversation, please contact Celia Lewis at Celia.Lewis@jsitel.com.