
What **Universal Service and Access Funds** mean for **digital inclusion**

April 8, 2024



**Global Digital Inclusion
Partnership**

About us



About GDIP

The **Global Digital Inclusion Partnership** is a coalition of public, private, and civil society organizations

working to bring internet connectivity to the global majority and ensure everyone is meaningfully connected by 2030. GDIP advances digital opportunities to empower and support people's lives and agency, leading to inclusive digital societies.





GDIP: Our name is our mission

**Advance universal, meaningful access in
low- and middle-income countries to secure
digital inclusion for everyone by 2030.**

Our vision is to make affordable and
meaningful access a reality for all.



Universal Service and Access Funds (USAFs) - invest in a mission mindset to achieve universal meaningful connectivity



USAFs must be innovative to meet the needs of this century

- Governments focused on building a digital economy, must use USAFs to invest in inclusive solutions - rather than simply as an intervention to address market failures.
- USAFs as well as public access projects are effective policy interventions to support affordable meaningful connectivity.
- USAFs are critical institutions for building a digital economy - the evolving digital divides, across gender, geography and class/income line - require new approaches and tactics to address these challenges.



USAFs are well positioned to take charge of the mission for universal meaningful access - applying Mazucato's theory

Table 2. Example policies and practices as pillars of moonshot thinking.

Pillar	Focus Area	Example Gov't/USAF Policy
VALUE	<i>Creating and pursuing values other than profit through market mechanisms</i>	Community-led and peer-to-peer digital skillbuilding
MARKETS	<i>Shaping markets rather than just rescuing market failures</i>	Device subsidisation
ORGANISATIONS	<i>Developing public sector capacity and enabling cross-functional government strategy</i>	Multi-stakeholder universal access policies and national broadband plans
FINANCE	<i>Providing essential capital support and using fiscal policy coherently</i>	Device taxation, fronting capital for major investments with multi-year returns
DISTRIBUTION	<i>Building infrastructure that guarantee affordable access, regardless of ability to pay</i>	Public access points, municipal networks, and open backbone infrastructure
PARTNERSHIP	<i>Engaging a wide diversity of actors across the sector in support of the mission</i>	USAF-backed projects for new innovations and complementary methods
PARTICIPATION	<i>Governing with transparency to enable inclusive participation</i>	USAF board compositions, with private sector and civil society inputs

Reimagining USAFs is a prerequisite for the next generation of broadband policy that is inclusive, sustainable, and driven by innovation.

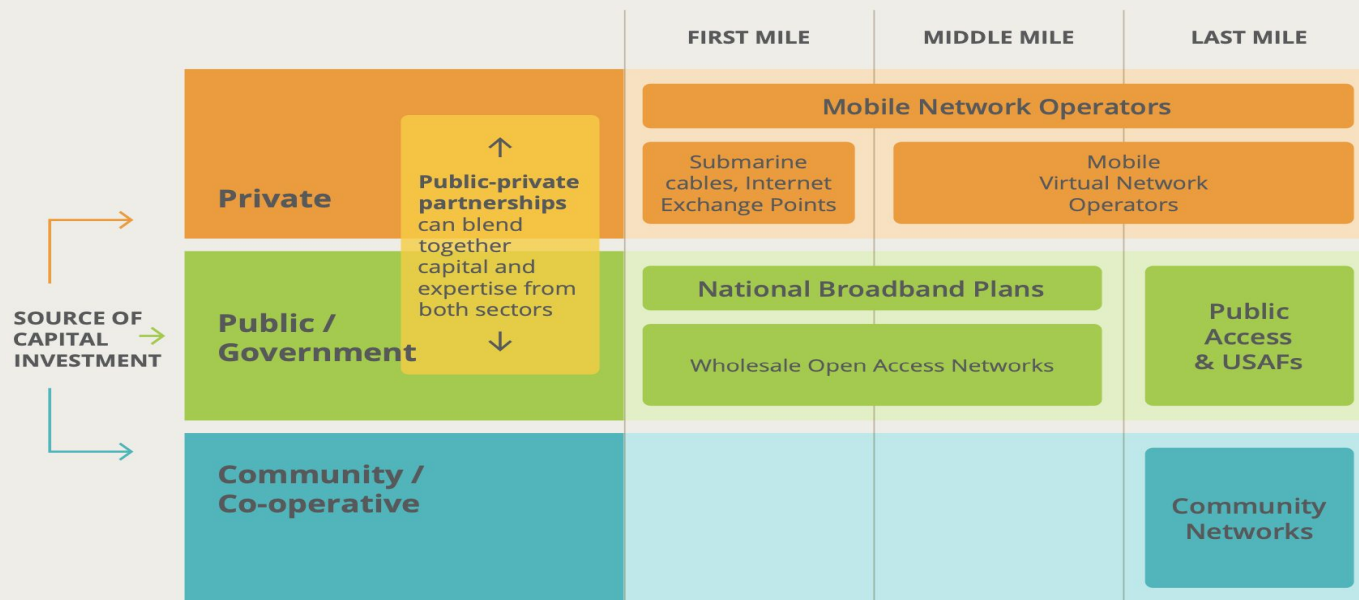


USAFs: from theory to practice

1. **Pursuing public value creation through universal access**
 - a. USAFs can address current gaps/divides by supporting projects and programs that deliver on the social value of universal internet access.
2. **Shaping broadband markets towards affordability**
 - a. Universal Service & Access Funds can make unique contributions in moving markets forward by expanding the availability of new technologies within society and reducing cost barriers for users on the margins.
3. **Building competence and confidence in public sector**
 - a. In drafting national broadband plans and universal access strategies, governments have the opportunity to align multiple departments and stakeholders across **the sector towards a mission-oriented approach for universal affordable broadband.**
4. **Financing bold investments for connectivity** (next slide)
5. **Distributing affordable data to the greatest number**
6. **Supporting new partnerships for universal access**
 - a. Universal access strategies should not rely on a single business model and should explore partnerships with private sector to provide affordable meaningful access
7. **Encouraging broad participation in USAF governance and strategy**
 - a. Open, co-designed with people and communities

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Figure D. Sources of Capital Investment in ICT.



Source: [Alliance for Affordable Internet, 2019](#)



The mission of USAFs is more important than ever

1

Adopt a universal access strategy with a modern, ambitious USAF mandate that includes institutional coordination in policy design and implementation stages

2

Commit adequate resources — financial, political, and human — to the USAF to deliver on its mandate

3

Open USAFs with transparency and wide stakeholdership, and build a coalition of actors for universal internet access

Source: Alliance for Affordable Internet, 2021

Thank you.

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