



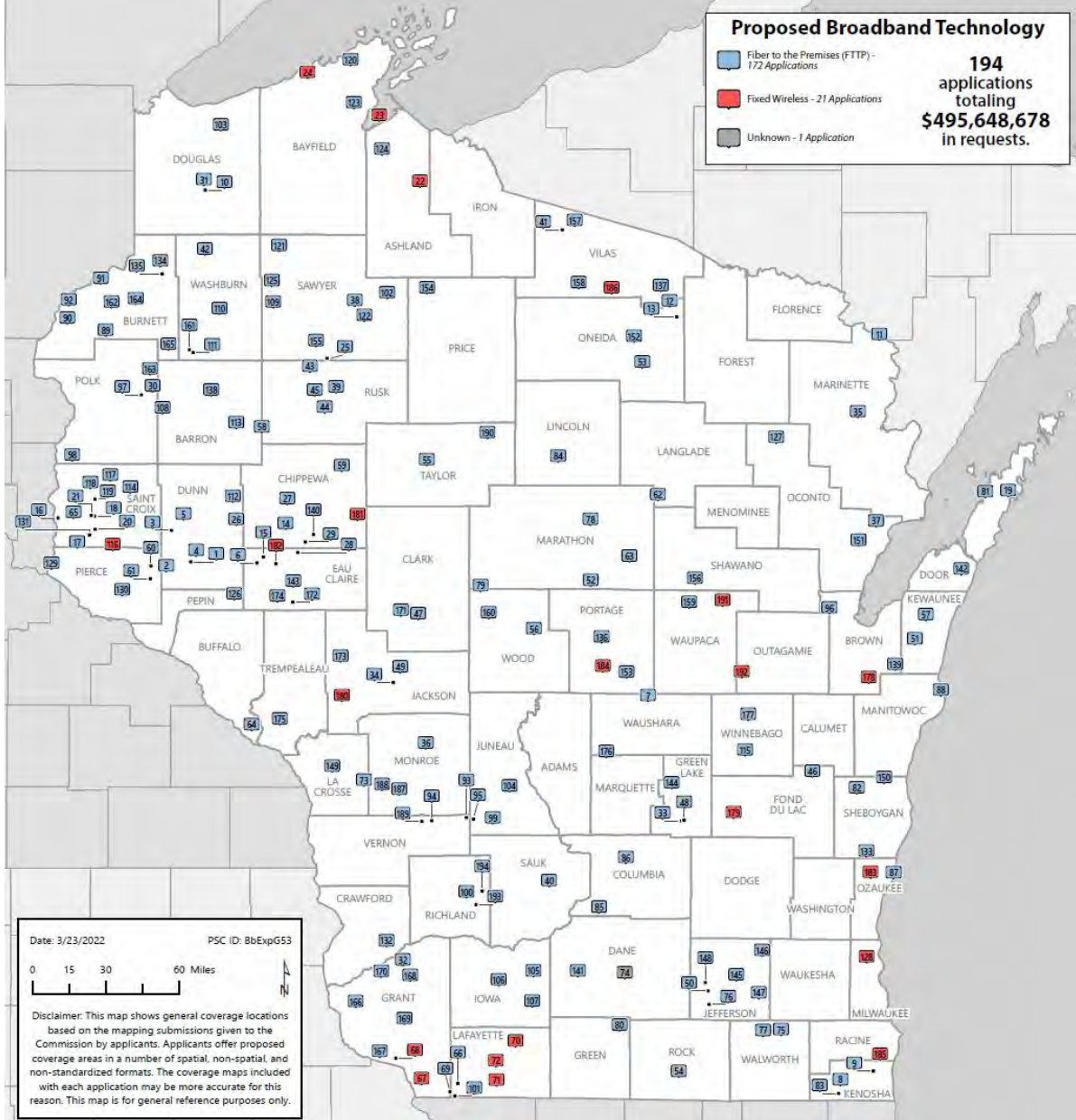
194 Applications Requesting More Than \$495 Million for Broadband Expansion Received

The Commission received 194 applications requesting more than \$495 million for the state's Broadband Expansion Grant Program. Funding for the grants was provided by the 2021 - 23 biennial budget, signed by Gov. Evers in July 2021. Since Gov. Evers has been in office, the state has awarded \$164 million to 262 projects to expand broadband statewide. As a result, more than 300,000 homes and businesses will be connected to high-speed internet following the completion of all previously funded projects.

The PSC's State Broadband Office made the first round of grant applications available on Dec. 1, 2021, due on March 17, 2022. PSC will evaluate each grant based on the matching funds, public-private partnerships, economic development, scalability, impact, and the proposed service area's existing broadband service needs. Here is the [full press release](#).

The Commission is accepting written comments in opposition to grant applications until 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 14, 2022. Grant applicants who wish to respond to opposition comments must do so by 4:00 p.m. on Thursday April 21, 2022. [Notice of Objection period](#).

Links to the summary, the simple (flag) map and the complex (spatial) map are below.



Summary of Applications

Simple Map

Complex Map

Federal Broadband Updates

NTIA's Broadband Programs Technical Assistance Webinars

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth is hosting a series of technical assistance webinars prior to the release of the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act broadband programs. The technical assistance webinars are designed to help prospective applicants understand the grant programs.

- Webinar 1: Network Engineering and Economics [Recording](#)
- Webinar 2: Engagement and Partnerships [Recording coming soon](#)
- Webinar 3: Enabling Conditions, Wed. April 6; 2:30 - 4:00 p.m. ET [Register](#)
- Webinar 4: Digital Equity and Inclusion, Wed. April 27; 2:30 - 4:00 pm. ET [Register](#)
- Webinar 5: Managing Costs & Supply Chains, Wed. May 11; 2:30 - 4:00 p.m. ET [Register](#)

FCC New Broadband Data Collection to begin by June 30, 2022

The Federal Communication Commission announced the inaugural broadband data collection filing timeline. All facilities-based providers of fixed and mobile broadband internet service can begin submitting broadband availability data under the new standards starting June 30, 2022 and must submit the data by September 1, 2022. Additional

information about the timeline and Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability (DATA) act is available [here](#).

FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) Funding Authorizations

The FCC continues to review long-form applications of winning bidders in the [RDOF Auction 904](#) on a rolling basis. As of [March 25, 2022](#) the following winners have been *authorized* for funding in Wisconsin: Baldwin Telecom, Inc., Bruce Telephone Company, Inc., Charter Fiberlink CCO, LLC, Cuba City Telephone Exchange Co., La Valle Telephone Cooperative, Inc., Lakeland Communications Group, LLC, Richland-Grant Telephone Cooperative, Inc., and Somerset Telephone Co. Inc.

The following winners are *ready to authorize* in Wisconsin: CenturyTel of the Midwest - Wisconsin, LLC, Marquette-Adams Telephone Cooperative, Inc. and Reedsburg Utility Commission.

Emergency Connectivity Fund 3rd Filing Window Announced

The FCC [announced](#) a third application filing window for the [Emergency Connectivity Fund \(ECF\)](#) program with a minimum of \$1 billion dollars available across the nation for eligible schools and libraries. The 3rd filing window will open Thursday April 28, 2022 and close on Friday May 13, 2022. In Wisconsin \$70,774,613 has been approved in the first two rounds.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

The White House has released a "[Guidebook to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Governments, and Other Partners](#)." The guidebook provides a nice overview of each broadband related program in the law including brief descriptions and eligible uses for each program. The broadband section begins on page 385.

New Broadband Forward! Communities

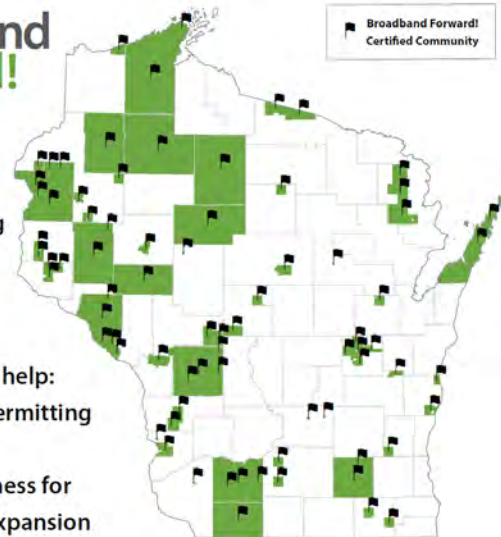
- Town of Martell
- Town of Kinnickinnic
- Eau Claire County
- Town of Erin
- Town of Ellsworth
- Town of Seneca (Crawford County)
- Monroe County
- Town of Buffalo (Buffalo County)
- Town of Gilman
- Town of Scott (Monroe County)
- Town of Wells
- Town of Springdale
- Town of Cicero
- Town of Oakdale
- Town of Vinland
- Town of Winchester (Winnebago County)

**broadband
forward!**
Community

Take the first steps in reducing obstacles to broadband investment

Certification can help:

- ✓ Streamline permitting process
- ✓ Signal eagerness for broadband expansion



The Wisconsin Broadband Office is excited to recognize the communities that have received certification as a Broadband Forward! community in the past year.

Created by 2015 Wisconsin Act 278, Broadband Forward! is a voluntary program for local units of government (city, village, town, or county) to signal that the political subdivision has taken steps to reduce obstacles to broadband infrastructure investment. We like to think of it as 'rolling out the welcome mat' for potential broadband expansion.

In total, 77 communities have been certified as Broadband Forward!. [More information of the certification.](#)

Digital Equity and Inclusion Updates

Affordable Connectivity Program

As of March 21, 2022 the State of Wisconsin has **189,724 households** enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program, the federal program that helps low-income households pay for broadband service and internet connected devices. Below are links to outreach materials. Please continue to help spread the word.

[ACP Outreach Toolkit](#)

[One-page Summary for Organizations](#)

Notice of Inquiry on Elimination of Digital Discrimination Open for Comments

The FCC recently [announced](#) it is seeking comments in their proceeding on the prevention and elimination of digital discrimination. As part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Congress found that access to affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband is essential to full participation in modern life and that subscribers should benefit from equal access to broadband service. The FCC is tasked with adopting rules to prevent digital discrimination based on income level, race, ethnicity, color, religion, or national origin. Initial comments are due on May 16th. [Notice of Inquiry on Preventing Digital Discrimination.](#)

NEW Digital Inclusion Coalition Guidebook

The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) recently published a guidebook for digital inclusion coalitions. The guidebook is intended for individuals and organizations committed to advancing digital equity in their community. The free guidebook provides an overview of coalition models, best practices, lessons learned and specific recommendations from the field of digital equity.

[Link to download the guidebook](#)

Digital Equity and Inclusion Stakeholder Group

The State of Wisconsin Digital Equity and Inclusion Stakeholder group meets monthly to inform the State Digital Equity and Inclusion Plan and work to strengthen the digital equity ecosystems in the State. In addition, the group has been discussing developing a digital navigator model, how to increase participation in the Affordable Connectivity Program and learning from other members. If you are interested in joining the stakeholder group please [email](#).

Governor's Task Force - Next Meeting

The March meeting of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access is scheduled for Wednesday, April 13, 2022 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. The Task Force will continue work on preparing their annual report on Broadband Access to the Governor and Legislature which is due by June 30th.

The meeting will be posted on the [PSC calendar](#) and the agenda will include information for the public to listen.

LAST CALL! Request for Middle Mile Comments

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin Requesting Comments on Middle Mile

The Commission is committed to expanding broadband service in unserved and underserved areas of the state. To assist in the deployment of expanded service, the Commission directed staff to investigate how to best support and coordinate the construction of middle mile fiber routes, and prepare informational recommendations for the Commission. The Commission requests comments from interested parties on the topic of construction of middle mile broadband infrastructure. The Commission is interested in how to evaluate middle mile proposals in grant programs and also how to structure the grant awards to best reinforce existing routes or build out new middle mile routes to reach areas that currently have inadequate broadband service.

Worth Reading

Wisconsin Efforts Highlighted Nationally

Wisconsin's efforts to close the digital divide and connect all residents to broadband were recently highlighted in the March 2022 issue of *Government Technology*. Wisconsin's growing broadband coverage data collection program and other data strategies were explored in Jed Pressgrove's article *Absent New FCC Broadband Maps, Local Govs Plot Coverage*. Likewise, Wisconsin's Digital Equity and Inclusion Stakeholder group's work is featured in the same issue in the article, *Digital Equity Takes Center Stage in U.S. Cities Post COVID* by Zach Quaintance. Check out the articles below.

Mapping

Digital Equity

Grant Recipient Corner

State Expansion Grants

State Project Status Reports are due April 30, 2022, for all currently open State grant rounds. You should use the most current report form, which can always be found on our [Broadband Grants webpage](#).

If your project is not completed, file an [interim project status report](#).

If your project is completed (all project milestones met), then file a [final Project Status Report](#) along with your final reimbursement request **and** a depiction of the project coverage area in spatial format at the address level.

Always file your project status reports on [ERE](#), the Commission's Electronic Records Filing system, and be sure to give it descriptive words that help identify the grant to which it pertains.

Federal ARPA Grants

For grant recipients with awards from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Broadband Access Grants the federal grant team will be posting a webinar on the Broadband grant reimbursement process.

The pre-recorded webinar will be available on the [PSC Broadband grant webpage](#) in the federal grant section the first week of April.

All grant recipients should watch the webinar before submitting reimbursement.



WBO Newsletter



The Wisconsin Broadband Office will send out regular communication to internet service providers, grant applicants and broadband stakeholders. We aim to be relevant and share timely information from our office.

Please reach out if anyone from the

Wisconsin Broadband Office can be of assistance. [Email Us](#)

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