



Broadband Expansion Grant Review Continues

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. Here is the [full press release](#).

The applications were due on March 17, 2022. The objection and response period ended on April 21, 2022. The Commission will make decisions in early summer.

The Commission previously released the [application summary](#), the [simple \(flag\) map](#) and the [complex \(spatial\) map](#). The fiscal year 2022 Broadband Expansion Grant Applicant dataset is now available on the Broadband Data website.

Broadband Data

Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Federal Highway Admin New Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Rule

Effective on March 4, 2022, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) implemented a [new rule](#) on broadband infrastructure deployment in the right-of-way (ROW) of applicable federal-aid highway projects. In response, WisDOT has identified a broadband utility coordinator who is responsible for facilitating infrastructure ROW efforts in the State.

WisDOT now has a [webpage](#) and way for broadband providers who are interested in placing infrastructure as a part of the program to register to receive notifications and updates on the state highway improvement program. WisDOT and the PSC will continue to work together to inform Internet Service Providers and other telecommunication carriers of the registration opportunity.

For more information and to register for notifications, [please visit](#).

Federal Broadband Updates

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Rural Playbook

In early April, the White House released a "[Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Rural Playbook](#)." The Playbook provides a roadmap for delivering opportunity and investments in rural America and is intended to help rural communities understand the available infrastructure funding, including funding for broadband provided by the new law.

NTIA Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP) Awards

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has announced awards for four tribal communities in Wisconsin.

- Forest County Potawatomi Community awarded \$125,232 to provide reliable broadband service to the Tribe's critical solar arrays.
- Sokaogon Chippewa Community awarded \$452,162 to cover the costs of broadband internet services for all Mole Lake Reservation households.
- Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians awarded \$442,734 for

a planning study and detailed feasibility analysis to determine the best way to provide broadband services on the Reservation.

- St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin awarded \$302,032 to install last mile fiber service to bring qualifying broadband to unserved Native American households, businesses, and community anchor institutions in the community of Round Lake.

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 [April 15, 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, Reedsburg Utility Commission, 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 and Marquette-Adams Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

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, \$72,808,784.74 has been approved in the first two rounds.

NEW NTIA Broadband Resources for State and Local Government

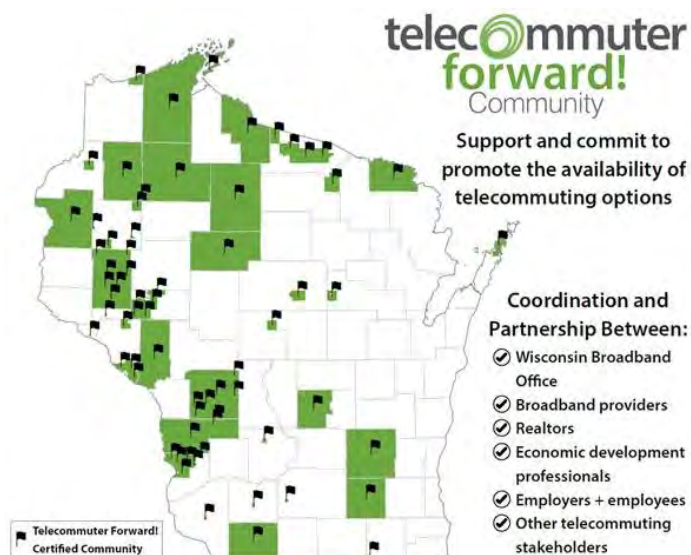
NTIA has developed a series of short resources for state and local governments that provide a simple overview of key points on broadband topics related to preparing for the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

- [Broadband Network Deployment Engineering](#)
- [Economics of Broadband Networks](#)
- [Planning a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy](#)
- [Setting Up Initial Stakeholder Engagement](#)
- [Broadband Policies & Mechanisms](#)
- [Broadband Asset Mapping & Management](#)

New Telecommuter Forward! Communities

Last month, the Wisconsin Broadband Office recognized the communities that have received Broadband Forward! Certification. This month we are highlighting the Telecommuter Forward! communities.

- Washburn County
- Town of Jackson (Burnett County)
- Town of Plum Lake
- Town of Freeman
- Town of Seneca (Crawford County)
- Village of Ontario (Vernon County)
- Town of Whitestown
- Town of Utica (Crawford County)
- Town of Three Lakes
- Monroe County
- Town of Buffalo (Buffalo County)
- Marquette County
- Town of Scott (Monroe County)
- Town of Conover
- Town of Wells
- Town of Washington (Eau Claire County)
- Town of Winchester (Vilas County)
- Town of Oakdale
- Town of Portland (Monroe County)



- Town of Leon (Monroe County)

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

Created by 2017 Wisconsin Act 342, Telecommuter Forward! is a voluntary program for local units of government (city, village, town, or county) to signal that the political subdivision supports and commits to promote the availability of telecommuting options. Telecommuter Forward! is often successfully used as a method to market a community and promote economic development.

In total, 68 communities have been certified as Telecommuter Forward!. [More information on the certification.](#)

Digital Equity and Inclusion Updates

Wisconsin Enrolls Over 200,000 households in Affordable Connectivity Program

As of April 18, 2022 the State of Wisconsin has **201,371 households** enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program, the federal program that helps low-income households pay for broadband service and internet-connected devices. Wisconsin has over 90 fixed and mobile broadband providers participating in the program and the number keeps growing.

[List of Wisconsin Providers participating in ACP](#)

WI Help for Homeowners - Assistance with overdue housing bills including internet

Wisconsin Help for Homeowners (WHH) is a new statewide program that can help with overdue bills like mortgage payments, property tax and **internet service**. The program is open to individuals and families who live in Wisconsin with overdue housing-related bills, both with and without a mortgage, who meet income and other eligibility requirements, and have experienced a qualified economic hardship since January 21, 2020.

Internet Service Providers who would like to participate in the program should [email](#) and request to sign up to receive payments from the WHH program.

More information [online](#) or by calling 1-855-2-HOME-WI

Federal Office of Educational Technology announces Digital Equity Initiative

The Office of Ed Tech (OET) announced the Digital Equity Education Roundtables (DEER) Initiative in partnership with the US Department of Education and Digital Promise. These national conversations will help to identify barriers faced by learner communities and identify promising solutions that can lead to real impact on technology for learning.

[More information on DEER](#)

National Digital Distress Metrics and Map Released

Purdue University's Center for Regional Development recently introduced a new metric related to digital inclusion called digital distress. Similar to economic distress, digital distress indicates households not fully benefiting from digital applications. Four variables from the U.S. Census American Community Survey were combined to develop the new indicator.

[Learn More \(Digital Distress: What is it?\)](#)
[View the Digital Distress Map](#)

Governor's Task Force - May Meeting

The May meeting of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access is scheduled for Wednesday, May 11, 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.

Two Articles Worth Reading

Keeping Communities Connected

Building the Broadband Trifecta: Maps, Equity, Infrastructure

The March 2022 report from American Libraries Association "[Keeping Communities Connected](#)" highlights the critical role and heroic efforts that libraries played to connect people to the internet during the pandemic. It further outlines the ongoing need for investments in both broadband infrastructure and digital inclusion activities.

Noelle Knell's piece in the March issue of Government Technology "[Building the Broadband Trifecta: Maps, Equity and Infrastructure](#)" concisely captures three key aspects of getting everyone connected and how they are inextricably linked and vital.

Keeping Connected

Broadband Trifecta

Grant Recipient Corner

REMINDER **State** Broadband Expansion Grant Project Status Reports are due **April 30, 2022**. Recipients 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** e-mail a depiction of the project coverage area in spatial format to PSCBroadbandData@wisconsin.gov



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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