Broadband Data Due to FCC Sept. 1, 2022

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is in the process of updating its current broadband maps with more detailed and precise information on the availability of fixed and mobile broadband services. This process is called the Broadband Data Collection (BDC). BDC will give the FCC, industry, Wisconsin and local and Tribal entities a strong starting point to improve the accuracy of existing maps and better target resources where they are most needed.

The deadline for providers to meet this requirement is September 1, 2022. Full participation by Internet Service Providers serving Wisconsin residents and communities is critical. Submitting data on time is required to participate in the BEAD program.

Wisconsin Federal Program Officer Carah Koch writes, "we know that having a highly-detailed and accurate map of where high-speed internet is and isn't available is crucial to delivering Internet for All. It's critical that all providers submit their data to the FCC by the September 1st deadline. Providers who submit data after the deadline or fail to submit any data won't be eligible for grant dollars from the Broadband Access, Equity and Deployment (BEAD) program. Make sure to get your data in on time, and please visit FCC.gov/BroadbandData if you need additional resources or need to ask a question."

Broadband Data Collection

USDA ReConnect Round 4 Funding Opportunity

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Under Secretary Xochitl Torres Small announced that the Department will begin accepting applications on September 6 for funding to expand access to high-speed internet for millions of people in rural America nationwide. USDA is making the funding available under Round 4 of the ReConnect Program, which received new funding from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

"High-speed internet connects people and businesses to new markets and helps people in rural America build brighter futures," Torres Small said. "For too long, too many rural communities have been left out of the digital economy. This funding will help everyone in America – regardless of where they live – because rural people provide the everyday essentials our country depends on."

The Department will begin accepting applications on September 6 for up to $150 million in loans, up to $300 million in loan/grant combinations, and up to $700 million in grants. The Department will use funds appropriated under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

The application deadline is November 2.

FCC Rejects Application of LTD Broadband For Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF)

On August 10, 2022, the FCC rejected the long-form application of LTD Broadband to receive support through the RDOF program. The FCC determined that LTD's application failed to demonstrate that they could deliver the promised service. As such, LTD Broadband is in default on all winning bids not already announced as defaulted. Starlink's long-form application was also announced as rejected, but Starlink did not have any winning bids in Wisconsin.

"After careful legal, technical, and policy review, we are rejecting these applications. Consumers deserve reliable and affordable high-speed broadband," said Chairwoman Rosenworcel. "We must put scarce universal service dollars to their best possible use as we move into a digital future that demands ever more powerful and faster networks. We cannot afford to subsidize ventures that are not delivering the promised speeds or are not likely to meet program requirements."

In Phase I of the RDOF reverse auction, LTD Broadband won 88,070 locations in Wisconsin and $189,270,184.10 in support, the most funding of any bidder. The funds that were tentatively awarded in auction will be returned to the Federal Universal Service Fund (USF).

Federal Broadband Update: Enabling Middle Mile

Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program
The new middle mile program will provide $1 billion in funding for the construction, improvement, or acquisition of middle mile infrastructure, and to reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas of the country. Governments, industry, non-profits and partnerships are among the eligible entities to apply.
Notice of funding opportunity released (NOFO)
Application opened: June 21, 2022
Applications close: September 30, 2022

NTIA's Middle Mile Grant Program New FAQ
The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) published its third round of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program. The FAQ document is intended to clarify and provide guidance on information set forth in the NOFO and includes review and scoring process.

If you have any additional questions not covered in the NOFO or FAQ document, please send an email to MiddleMile@ntia.gov.

Middle Mile Grant Program State Coordination on Broadband Projects
The NOFO for Middle Mile applications requires that prospective non-State and non-Tribal Government applications must, prior to submitting an application, coordinate and consult with the State Broadband Office to ensure that the proposal is consistent with the State's Broadband plan and priorities. Prospective applicants should reach out by sending an email to begin the simple process of coordinating with the Wisconsin Broadband Office.

Requests for coordination are due by September 14, 2022.

Digital Equity and Inclusion Updates

FCC Establishes Affordable Connectivity Outreach (ACP) Grant Program
In August, the [FCC established an Outreach Grant Program](#) for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The ACP helps connect families and households struggling to afford internet services. The Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program will provide funding to support eligible partners in their outreach efforts to increase awareness of the ACP. A key objective of the grant program is to expand and support diverse and impactful outreach efforts to underconnected communities, including persons with disabilities. The Notice of Funding Opportunity will be release soon with additional details.

ACP Eligibility and Application Tool on Commission site in English and Spanish
The Commission has recently added a new tool to our website to help Wisconsin residents determine eligibility for the Affordable Connectivity Program, a program that provides a discount of up to $30 per month toward internet service for eligible households. The new tool is on the Commission website in English and Spanish. The tools can guide Wisconsin residents through a few questions to determine their eligibility and direct them to finding service.

[NEW ACP Tool](#)

Microsoft's New Digital Equity Data Dashboard
Microsoft released a new Digital Equity Data Dashboard to help create better understanding of the economic opportunity gaps in towns, cities and neighborhoods. The new tool aggregates public data from the Census Bureau, Federal Communications Commission (FCC), BroadbandNow and Microsoft's own Broadband Usage Data. It goes census tract-by-census tract, examining 20 different indicators of digital equity – such as broadband access, usage, education and poverty rate. It is a useful tool for communities and policy makers for digital equity planning.

[Microsoft Digital Equity Dashboard](#)

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.](#)

Eight Tribes in Wisconsin submitted Digital Equity Planning Grant Letters of Intent
The following Tribes submitted letters of intent for the federal Digital Equity Planning Grant Program.

1. Forest County Potawatomi Community
2. Ho-Chunk Nation

3. Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
4. Menominee Indian Tribe
5. Oneida Nation
6. Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians of
7. St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin
8. Stockbridge Munsee Community

470 Tribes from across the country submitted letters of intent for the Digital Equity Planning Grant program. These letters came from 29 states and you can see a full list, organized by state, here.

Articles of Interest

The Pew Charitable Trusts:

Four Informative Technical Assistance Fact Sheets

Pew Charitable Trusts recently published four technical assistance documents detailing the fundamentals of broadband policy and frequently asked questions. These are excellent resources for community planning.

- How does broadband infrastructure get built?
- How do speed, infrastructure, access, and adoption inform broadband policy?
- How do Americans connect to the internet?
- How does the internet work and what are the implications for broadband policy?

Fact Sheets

State Grant Recipient Corner: Agreements & Reports

Grant Agreements
State Broadband Grant Agreements - Coming Soon
FY22 Recipients: The Commission formally awarded State Broadband Expansion Grants on 7/28/22 via its Order. The Commission is working to finalize and deliver those grant Agreements and reimbursement request forms as soon as possible. The Broadband Office will also offer a webinar in the fall on requesting reimbursement and reporting requirements, which will be posted on our State Broadband Expansion Grants webpage.

Reporting Reminders
All state awardees with open Grants from prior years: Please be sure to use the most current project status report forms, which are on our webpage under the Resources heading. On the Final report form, please take note of the information beneath the signature line, where there are details for filing a depiction of the project's final coverage area. Recipients should email this data to our state Broadband Data email box. For your convenience, both the interim and final forms contain links to ERF, the Commission's Electronic Records Filing system where all Reports should be filed.

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

Join Our Mailing List