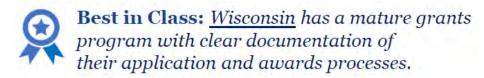# NTIA names Wisconsin Broadband Office Grant Program as "Best in Class"

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) recently published two resources related to best practices for creating and structuring broadband offices, a broadband Office Creation Checklist and Office Creation Toolkit. Wisconsin was named **"Best in Class"** for our mature grant program with clear documentation of the application and award processes.

The toolkit further identified Wisconsin's Broadband Office as:
- Having a clear mission and vision
- Engaging stakeholders through the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access
- Providing mentorship to other states
- Leadership in broadband development in the State
- Hosting a comprehensive website focused on user needs

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is proud of this national recognition of Wisconsin's leadership, stakeholder engagement, and stellar grant program.

FCC Location Fabric Challenge Process Begins

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.

Starting **September 12, 2022,** state, local, and Tribal governments, service providers, and other entities can begin to file **bulk** challenges to data in the Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric (Fabric). The Fabric is a common dataset of all locations where fixed broadband is installed or can be installed. This step in the challenge process is related to getting the location count and geo-coordinates of every broadband serviceable location in Wisconsin reviewed and (as needed) challenged and corrected. Once the Broadband Data Collection broadband maps are published, members of the public will be able to view the maps and submit online challenges to the Fabric data. At a later date, the FCC will announce the process to challenge Fixed Broadband Service Availability.

- FCC announcement on the Bulk Fabric Challenge
- FCC webinar "Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric Bulk Challenge Process"

- Also see the Webinar of Interest listed later in the newsletter

Local and Tribal Governments and Internet Service Providers interested in coordinating with the Wisconsin Broadband Office on Bulk Fabric challenges should e-mail PSCBroadbandData@wisconsin.gov and request a coordinating meeting.

Federal Broadband Updates

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

USDA ReConnect Round 4 Funding Opportunity
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting applications for funding to expand access to high-speed internet for people in rural America nationwide. USDA is making up to $150 million in loans, up to $300 million in loan/grant combinations and up to $700 million in grants available under Round 4 of the ReConnect Program. The Department will use funds appropriated under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.
Application opened: September 6, 2022
Applications close: November 2, 2022

More Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program Funds Awarded in Wisconsin
In late August, the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced an $8 million grant to the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. The Broadband Infrastructure Deployment project proposes to install fiber directly connecting 705 unserved Native American households, 18 unserved Native American businesses, and 4 Native American community anchor institutions with fiber-to-the-premise 940 Mbps/30Mbps service.

FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) Funding Updates
On August 31, the FCC announced that it was ready to authorize AMG Technology Investment Group LLC, dba NextLink Internet, on their winning RDOF bids in Wisconsin. In total, AMG/NextLink won 346 locations in Wisconsin, totaling $1,084,045 in FCC RDOF support. AMG/NextLink was the last outstanding winning bidder in Wisconsin to be announced as either authorized, defaulted, or ready to authorize.

Digital Equity and Inclusion Updates

Lifeline Awareness Week September 12-16
Lifeline Awareness Week is a great opportunity to build awareness around the Lifeline program. Lifeline helps low-income consumers connect to the nation's voice and broadband networks, access emergency services, find jobs, access health care services, connect with family and call for help in an emergency.

In addition to the federal Lifeline program, Wisconsin has a complimentary state Lifeline program. Through Lifeline, low-income consumers who participate in certain public assistance programs or who qualify based on income can receive a discount of up to $18.50 per month off their monthly service bill, and up to an additional $25 per month off for residents on Tribal lands. Information on program eligibility and rules is available at http://www.lifelinesupport.org.

Door County Named a Digital Inclusion Trailblazer
Door County, Wisconsin was recently one of 32 communities to be named a "Digital Inclusion Trailblazer" by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. Trailblazers meet some of the 6 criteria that demonstrate a local government's digital inclusion leadership: full-time

local government staff, a digital inclusion plan, an open access coalition, survey research, funded programming, and demonstrated efforts to increase affordability of home broadband service.

Forest County Broadband Committee Named Digital Navigator Corps Grantee

The National Digital Inclusion Alliance named Forest County Broadband Committee one of 18 organizations that will launch the National Digital Navigator Corps. The grant from NDIA is part of $10 million of support from Google.org, which will go toward the hiring of the community-based digital navigators. Forest County will use the $375,320 grant to hire, train, and support a digital navigator, who will serve the community over a two-and-a-half year period. This will provide County and Tribal residents with the opportunity to learn basic computer usage and how to connect to the internet. For others, there is an opportunity to learn skills to be employable in the workforce. Full press release.

Advisory Issued Regarding Provider Enrollment in ACP

In early September, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) of the Federal Communications Commission warned that some Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) providers and their agents are making fraudulent program enrollments by using the same child or dependent to qualify multiple households for simultaneous ACP support. OIG issued this advisory to alert consumers and providers to an improper and fraudulent enrollment practice by some providers of Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) services. No providers in Wisconsin were part of the advisory.

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.

Webinar of Interest

Presented By: Benton Institute for Broadband and Society and the National Broadband Mapping Coalition

"From the Ground Up: Broadband Mapping By and For Communities"

A free, online panel discussion on **September 26 at 2:00 pm CT** to learn about how communities and states are collecting data on local broadband availability as the Federal Communications Commission rolls out the Broadband Data Collection (BDC) program. National broadband availability data collected by the FCC has long been widely criticized for a lack of granularity and overstating the level and quality of broadband service to American households. BDC aims to improve this coverage data.

Local data is essential to help communities plan and direct their own broadband solutions. However, the uncertainty around the potential need to challenge the accuracy of the BDC data complicates these efforts. During the event on September 26, the panelists will discuss these community data collection and mapping efforts, highlighting promising approaches for collaboration and best practices for speed test surveys. Panelists will also discuss how states and communities can be best prepared for the challenge process to ensure they have access to the federal funds they need to address broadband availability.

Register Here

Another Webinar of Interest

Affordability &Trust: Tips for Impactful Digital Inclusion Work

On **October 5, 2022 at 1:00 pm CT**, learn how to create a more equitable and inclusive approach to advancing digital equity. Digital inclusion practitioners, community leaders and state and local leaders are looking for the most effective digital equity solutions and how to best allocate federal funds. It is critical that these stakeholders have a roadmap for how to use funds from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act so they can create educational, economic and social equity in their communities. This webinar will discuss the implications of EveryoneOn's recent national research and NDIA's digital equity guides and toolkits, including an introduction to some new resources.

Speakers:
Angela Siefer, Executive Director, NDIA
Norma Fernandez, CEO, EveryoneOn
Dr. John B. Horrigan, digital divide researcher and Benton Institute Senior Fellow

Register Here

Governor's Task Force - September Meeting

The September meeting of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access is scheduled to take place virtually on Wednesday, **September 21, 2022 from 1:00 - 3:00 pm CT.** The Task Force will kick off year three and discuss the focus for the year. The Task Force will accept public comment at the meeting.

The meeting is posted on the PSC calendar and the agenda includes information for the public to listen.

Grant Recipient Corner

ARPA-Funded Broadband Access Grants
Quarterly Reports
Reminder that federal quarterly reports for ARPA Broadband Access Grants are due **October 10**, by 4:00 pm CT. The reports should be uploaded to ERF in docket 5-BF-2022.

Updated ARPA quarterly reporting instructions (written), webinar (video 10.13 minutes) and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) can be found on the PSC website.

The PSC is gathering geospatial data on ARPA Broadband Access Grants projects to report to the U.S. Department of Treasury to satisfy new federal requirements.

Subrecipients have all received an email with a PDF detailing specific information on what data is needed and in what format it should be submitted. The PSC mapping team has provided empty spatial files to help you collect this data. Please note, this request is for **all planned locations** and not just locations that have been connected thus far.

State-Funded Broadband Expansion Grants
Interim and Final Project Status Reports
Interim project status reports are due **October 31** unless a final reimbursement request is submitted on or before that date.

[Final project status reports](#) are required for all completed projects (i.e., all deliverables have been met), and all final reimbursement requests require the filing of a final project status report. Final reports and final reimbursement requests are required within 30 days of the performance period end date and may be filed earlier if the project is finished earlier. The performance period for [FY2020 grants](#) ends October 31.

Filing reminders*:* Upload both interim and final project status reports to [ERF](#), the Commission's Electronic Records Filing System that provides public access to information about awarded projects, etc. Send all state grant reimbursement requests to PSCBroadbandGrantReimbursement@Wisconsin.gov and final project spatial data to PSCBroadbandData@wisconsin.gov. When uploading to ERF or emailing about a project, please include the grant fiscal year, entity name, and project name in your uploads and subject lines.

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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