



PSC Received 74 Applications Requesting \$73.7 Million from State Broadband Expansion Grant Program



The Commission received 74 applications requesting \$73.7 million for the state Broadband Expansion Grant Program. The Commission is expected to award up to \$14.1 million to help expand high speed broadband Internet in the state. These are the remaining state funds available for broadband expansion during the 2021-23 biennial budget.

“State investments are absolutely vital to meet Governor Evers’ goal of getting every home and every business in our state connected to reliable, affordable, high-speed Internet,” said PSC Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq. “The high demand for our State Broadband Expansion Grant funding demonstrates the great need across Wisconsin for improved infrastructure now.”

During the application review, the Commission will evaluate each grant based on, among other factors, matching funds, public-private partnerships, project impact, and economic development. The Commission is expected to announce grant recipients by summer of 2023. Read the full [press release](#).

[Summary of Applications](#)

[Map of Applications](#)

BEAD Local Planning Grant Program Opt-In Forms Coming Due

The [BEAD Local Planning Grant](#) enables eligible entities to opt-in to receive formula funding to participate in broadband planning activities that will inform the state Five-Year Action Plan which will guide broadband deployment and implementation of the BEAD program.

On **Tuesday, March 7th by 1:30 pm**, opt-in forms to participate in the BEAD Local Planning Grant Program are due for **Wisconsin counties**.

On **Tuesday, March 14th by 1:30 pm**, opt-in forms to participate in the BEAD Local Planning Grant Program are due for **federally recognized Tribes**.

[Opt-in Participation Forms](#) must be uploaded to the Commission’s [ERF system](#) under docket ID **5-BP-2023**. Should users have any issues with the ERF system, please consult the [ERF User Manual](#).

In an effort to further assist eligible entities prepare for the BEAD Local Planning Grant Program, the Commission has prepared a [DRAFT overview of deliverables](#) and a [DRAFT grant agreement](#). Please feel free to reach out with questions, comments, or concerns regarding the BEAD Local Planning Grant Program to us at PSCStateBroadbandOffice@wisconsin.gov.

Broadband Planning Webinar Series

Join UW Extension, the Office of Rural Prosperity and the Wisconsin Broadband Office for the second of three webinars as we discuss next steps in Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Planning for Wisconsin Counties, Tribes and Regional Economic Development Organizations (REDOs) on **Monday March 6, 2023 at noon**.

This is the second in a series of webinars on broadband planning and funding for local counties and Tribes. During this session counties and Tribes will be introduced to Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment technical assistance being offered by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, University of Wisconsin Madison-Division of Extension and Wisconsin Broadband Office. Participants will receive the next steps for accessing planning funds from the WI Broadband Offices along with expected deliverables.

This webinar will cover:

- Next steps in accessing BEAD planning funds
- How to effectively engage community
- How to develop a local broadband plan

Register

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Wisconsin Rural Broadband Initiative Virtual Event

Join staff from the Midwest Region's federal agencies and Wisconsin leaders to learn about resources that can be leveraged to support expansion of programs to increase rural connectivity during a virtual session on **Wednesday March 8, 2023 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.** You'll hear from representatives from various state and federal agencies to assist you in leveraging available programs.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Staff will review its [ConnectHomeUSA](#) program. The initiative allows organizations to produce locally-tailored solutions for narrowing the digital divide for HUD-assisted residents. The initiative relies on public-private collaboration and is led locally by Public Housing Authorities or tribes who connect residents to free or affordable in-unit Internet service, free or affordable computer device, and the training to use them.

Invitation

Digital Equity and Inclusion Updates

Affordable Connectivity Program Update

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) provides eligible households \$30 per month off their internet bills. In Wisconsin, **317,000 households** are currently enrolled in the program, and an additional 500,000 households may be eligible. More information about the ACP is available on the Commission's [website](#).

Commission Receives 11 Digital Equity Outreach Grant Applications

The Commission received 11 applications requesting \$1.1 million for [Digital Equity Outreach grants](#) to support the development of the State Digital Equity Plan. The Commission is expected to award up to \$335,000 to support outreach and engagement activities. This program is funded through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law or Internet for All program.

Commission Receives a Record 25 Non-Profit Access Grant Applications

The Commission received 25 applications requesting \$1.3 million for [Non-profit Access](#) for projects to facilitate access to telecommunications service. In addition the Commission received 3 grants for [Lifeline Outreach](#). The Commission is expected to award up to \$500,000 to support non-profits and \$250,000 for Lifeline outreach this spring. These grant programs are funded through the Wisconsin Universal Service Fund.

Wisconsin 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](#).

FCC Accepting Comments on Digital Discrimination

The FCC's Task Force to Prevent Digital Discrimination is currently seeking consumer stories about broadband access. They are asking people to share their unique experience and challenges in obtaining broadband internet service in order to assist the FCC to identify barriers experienced by historically unserved and underserved communities. More information on the Task Force is available [here](#).

NTIA to Host Tribal Broadband Leaders Network Summit

NTIA will be hosting the first in-person meeting of the [Tribal Broadband Leaders Network](#) in Chandler, Arizona on March 23-24. This 1.5 day meeting will provide technical assistance for NTIA programs like BEAD, Digital Equity and TBCP and build relationships with Tribal leaders. Over 170 participants are registered from 70 individual Tribes. Registration is open and if a Tribe is participating, [BEAD Local planning grants](#) could support participation in the summit. [More information is available here](#).

Articles and Resources Worth Reading

A Handbook for Effective Administration of State and Local Digital Equity Programs

Written by Paul Garnett and Deborah Lathen

This Handbook offers key principles and best practices that state and local governments should follow in structuring their digital equity plans and establishing and supporting digital equity programs. This Handbook focuses on the importance of building “digital equity” into broadband availability and adoption programs. Broadband availability and adoption programs should be equitable by design, meaning programs should seek to address underlying social and economic inequalities and focus on groups, areas, and characteristics of greatest need.

[Download the Report](#)

About 3.5 Million Added Broadband Subscribers in 2022

Leichtman Research Group

Leichtman Research Group, Inc. (LRG) found that the largest cable and wireline phone providers and fixed wireless services in the US – representing about 95% of the market – acquired about 3,500,000 net additional broadband Internet subscribers in 2022, compared to a pro forma gain of about 3,725,000 subscribers in 2021. These top broadband providers account for about 110.5 million subscribers, with top cable companies having 75.6 million broadband subscribers, top wireline phone companies having 30.8 million subscribers, and top fixed wireless services having 4.1 million subscribers.

[Press Release](#)

Governor's Task Force on Broadband Next Meeting

The March meeting of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access is scheduled for Wednesday, March 15, 2023 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.

Grant Recipients Corner

Updated Grant Recipient Reimbursement Webinar and Slides Available

For recipients of State Broadband Expansion funding, the Wisconsin Broadband Office has recently posted an [updated webinar](#) and [slide deck](#) on the grant reimbursement process. Grant recipients should make sure they are compiling and submitting the correct documents required for reimbursement. Please watch the webinar and bookmark the slides for future reference.

[FY22 Grant Reimbursement Webinar](#)

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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