



PSC Received 124 Applications Requesting More than \$221 Million from Capital Project Fund

The Commission received 124 applications requesting \$221.6 million for the Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program. PSC is expected to award up to \$42 million under the Capital Projects Fund (CPF) to administer Broadband Infrastructure Grants and invest in broadband construction and deployment that will provide high-quality internet to locations that lack access to adequate, affordable service. The ratio of requested funding to available funding is the highest for any grant round since the first in 2014.

"I want to thank Gov. Evers for his ongoing commitment to addressing the internet access and affordability challenges in our state," said PSC Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq. "We know that continued investments are necessary to meet the clear, consistent demand for broadband infrastructure and help us connect more communities as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible."

The CPF is designed to address the barriers to internet access that existed before but were made worse by the coronavirus pandemic. Broadband Infrastructure Grant funds will be used to make necessary investments in broadband infrastructure designed to provide consistent, reliable, and high-performance broadband service to areas most impacted by the coronavirus pandemic in Wisconsin. The funding is available to construct broadband infrastructure projects to deploy reliable internet service that will meet or exceed 100/100 Megabits per second (Mbps) symmetrical speed internet service and include at least one low-cost option for work, education, and health monitoring.

A list of the all the applications is available [here](#).

A flag map of all the applications is available [here](#).

A complex mapping application with all the proposed projects is available [here](#).

The objection period for Capital Project Funds is open until November 30, 2023, at 1:30 p.m. The responses to objections are due by December 14, 2023, at 1:30 p.m.

A letter detailing the objection and response periods is available [here](#).

BEAD Initial Proposal Vol. 2 Draft Public Comment Due December 11 by 1:30 pm



On November 10, Commission released a draft of Wisconsin's Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment (BEAD) Initial Proposal Volume 2 for public comment. Central to the BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2 is the proposed design of the subgrantee selection process. The other requirements of Volume 2 describe in detail the WBO's plan to ensure labor standards and protections are strongly enforced; plans to prepare

workforce for broadband deployment; an assessment of climate threats and mitigation options relevant to broadband infrastructure; a process for supporting and tracking supplier diversity; assets and resources for cost and barrier reduction; affordability measures including a low-cost service requirement; and compliance and regulatory provisions.

Public comments will be accepted until Monday December 11, 2023, at 1:30 PM. Public

comment can be submitted two ways, on the [public comment](#) under page or by uploading a document to docket 5-BP-2023, using the [PSC's Electronic Records Filing \(ERF\) System](#).

DRAFT Initial Proposal Vol. 2

BEAD Vol. 2 Overview and Information Webinar

On December 1, 2023, at 2:00 p.m. the Wisconsin Broadband Office with our Federal Program Officer Carah Koch from NTIA will host a webinar to review the **DRAFT** BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2. The purpose of the webinar will be to provide an overview and information of the **DRAFT** proposal. During the webinar we will review the federal program requirements from the Bi-partisan Infrastructure Law and Notice of Funding Opportunity for BEAD and review the **DRAFT** initial proposal for how Wisconsin will meet these requirements. Please note this webinar is just a preliminary review of the draft for the BEAD initial proposal Volume 2, the goal is to provide information during the comment period.

[Webinar Registration](#)

Getting Ready for the Wisconsin BEAD Challenge

The BEAD challenge is the process the state will use to determine and verify the list of locations and community anchor institutions that are eligible for BEAD funding. The BEAD Challenge process for Wisconsin is anticipated to begin in January 2024, after NTIA reviews and approves a BEAD Challenge Process for Wisconsin.

Internet service providers, local and Tribal governments and non-profit organizations are eligible and invited to participate in the challenge process. In order to facilitate a fair and transparent challenge process the Commission has opened the docket [5-BCH-2024](#) for the BEAD Challenge Process. The WBO strongly encourages all interested and eligible entities to [subscribe to the docket](#). Starting in late November the Commission will begin to send data requests to internet service providers to ensure that the WBO has the most up to date information available regarding broadband service and enforceable funding commitments.



The Commission will use Broadband Serviceable Location (BSL) ID numbers to communicate about the challenge process. Eligible challengers may use the forthcoming BEAD challenge map to retrieve a small number of BSL IDs or for larger challenges may wish to download BSL ID numbers. Entities using lists of BSL IDs will need a free NTIA Tier D or E license from CostQuest Associates.

The WBO suggests the interested entities begin pursuing an NTIA Tier E license as soon as possible. [NTIA Tier E License Request here](#). [NTIA Tier D License Request here](#). Additional license [support and information here](#).

Federal Broadband Updates

NTIA Provides Updated Guidance for Letter of Credit

On November 1, 2023, NTIA announced a waiver that modifies the letter of credit (LOC) requirements for sub-grantees of all eligible entities. The updated waiver allows credit

unions to issue LOCs, allows the use of performance bonds, allows Wisconsin to reduce the obligation upon completion of milestones, and allows for an alternative initial LOC or bond percentage. See the [announcement](#). See the [waiver](#).

FCC Releases 3rd Update to the National Broadband Map

On November 14, 2023, the FCC released the most recent broadband availability data and updated the National Broadband Map and related data sets. The updated map shows the number of unserved locations is decreasing and that challenges and audits continue to improve the map. See the [announcement](#). See the [map](#).

FCC Adopts Rules to Prevent Digital Discrimination

On November 15, 2023, the FCC adopted final rules to prevent digital discrimination of access to broadband service based on income level, race, ethnicity, color, religion or national origin. Under these rules, the FCC can protect consumers by directly addressing companies' policies and practices if they differentially impact consumers' access to broadband internet access service or are intended to do so, and by applying these protections to ensure communities see equitable broadband deployment, network upgrades, and maintenance. See the [press release](#).

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program Accepting Round 2 Applications

NTIA announced the availability of nearly \$1 billion in funding to expand Internet access and adoption on Tribal Lands. This second round of funding from the Internet for All initiative's Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP) will make up to approximately \$980 million available for Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities for the deployment of Internet infrastructure on Tribal Lands, affordability programs, telehealth and distance learning initiatives. Applications are due by January 23, 2024. [More information here](#).

Affordability Connectivity Program Updates

In Wisconsin, over 400,000 households are enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The ACP provides a \$30 (or \$75 on Tribal Lands) discount for internet service to eligible households. It is estimated that 46% of eligible Wisconsin families are enrolled in the benefit program above the national average of 40%. Libraries, school districts, non-profits and state agencies have all helped with ACP outreach in the state of Wisconsin. Currently, the funding for ACP will be depleted by early 2024. Without federal action program will end and the discount will stop for enrolled families.

Pew Charitable Trust published a fact sheet in August of 2023 related to ACP.

[Federal Funding for Affordable Broadband Plans Critical to Achieving Universal Access](#)

Twenty-six governors including Wisconsin Governor Evers sent a letter to Congress on November 13, 2023 urging continuation of this crucial program.

[Governors' Letter to Congress](#)

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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