



## \$33 Million Digital Connectivity and Navigator Grant Program Announced

Governor Evers recently announced the U.S. Department of the Treasury's approval of the state's plan to use \$33 million in federal funds from the Capital Projects Fund (CPF) for the Digital Connectivity and Navigators Program, to help address high-speed internet access, affordability, and adoption in the state. This is the second of the two programs supported by CPF funding administered by the Commission. Non-profits and eligible entities will apply for grants to deploy computing devices, install Wi-Fi equipment in targeted apartment buildings, and provide digital navigation services to make use of the devices for work, education, and health monitoring.

Grant instructions and application materials for the Digital Connectivity and Navigators Program will be posted to the PSC Broadband webpage in the coming weeks. The grant application window is expected to open in spring 2024. You can stay up-to-date by subscribing to the docket [5-CPF-2024](#).

Last month, Gov. Evers and the PSC [announced](#) the Wisconsin Broadband Office received 124 applications requesting \$221.6 million for the Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program, with \$42 million available to be awarded. The ratio of requested funding to available funding is the highest for any grant round since the first in 2014, demonstrating high demand for continued investments in the state's broadband infrastructure.

Treasury's Capital Projects Fund Wisconsin fact sheet can be found [here](#). Governor Evers Press Release is [here](#).

## Internet for All Wisconsin Update All Documents Submitted



## WBO INTERNET FOR ALL WRAPPED ✓

- ✓ Wisconsin Digital Equity Plan Drafted
- ✓ Draft Plan comment period
- ✓ Digital Equity Plan approved by Commission
- ✓ Digital Equity Plan submitted to NTIA
- ✓ BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 1 Drafted
- ✓ Draft Volume 1 comment period
- ✓ Volume 1 approved by the Commission
- ✓ BEAD Volume 1 submitted to NTIA
- ✓ BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2 Drafted
- ✓ Draft Volume 2 comment period
- ✓ Volume 2 approved by the Commission
- ✓ BEAD Volume 2 submitted to NTIA



## Wisconsin Broadband Office 2023 Year in Review

Phew, 2023 has been a busy and productive year for the Wisconsin Broadband Office! Here are a few of the many highlights from the year.

Starting in January the WBO facilitated widespread outreach for Wisconsinites to “[Badger the FCC](#)” by identifying and challenging inaccuracies from the FCC National Broadband Map. Challenges from residents, bulk challenges from the WBO, and improved reporting by broadband providers resulted in over 46,000 additional locations being correctly identified as unserved. As a result, the National map is better, and Wisconsin is receiving more federal funding to build broadband infrastructure through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program.

In February the Commission began accepting applications for the [State Broadband Expansion Grant program](#). The Commission received 74 applications requesting \$73.7 million and in June awarded \$16.6 million for 24 of those projects. When complete, these projects will expand broadband internet to 6,042 homes and 276 businesses in 19 counties. The grant awards are leveraging over \$25 million of matching funds from recipients.

In February, March and April and the Commission created three new planning and outreach grants to ensure local communities and community organizations could access funding to support and enhance Wisconsin's Internet for All planning efforts. The Commission awarded \$1.5 million in [BEAD Local Planning grants](#), \$100,000 in BEAD Workforce Planning grants and \$335,000 in Digital Equity Outreach grants.

In April and May, the WBO hosted the [Internet for All Wisconsin Listening Tour](#), a series of nine in-person and two virtual public input sessions to help develop the Wisconsin Five-Year Action Plan and Wisconsin Digital Equity Plan. From Rhinelander to Platteville, and Milwaukee to Hayward, Commissioners and WBO staff heard directly from local leaders and community members about the unique access and affordability challenges that exist in our state's different regions. Hundreds of Wisconsin residents participated in the listening tour, sharing local insights and making recommendations.

In June, the WBO launched the [Internet Discount Finder](#) a tool that helps families determine if they might be eligible for a discount on internet service and if a discount is offered where they live. Throughout all of 2023 over 100,000 more Wisconsin households enrolled in the [Affordable Connectivity Program \(ACP\)](#), in total 420,000 Wisconsin households are enrolled in the program, which provides a \$30 per month discount. In early 2024, federal funding for the program ACP will be depleted and this important affordability program could end.

At the end of June, after a year of hard work and meetings, the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access submitted their [2023 Annual Report](#) to the Governor and Wisconsin State Legislature. The 2023 report included recommendations on preparing to capitalize on the federal funds, supporting local communities, supporting workforce development, improving mapping and data capabilities, and continuing to facilitate broadband affordability and adoption.

On June 30, the State of Wisconsin received the allocation letter for Wisconsin for the federal BEAD Program which is part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Wisconsin was allocated **\$1,055,823,573** for affordable, reliable, high-speed internet for all.

In July the WBO launched a campaign to increase participation in the [Wisconsin Internet Self Report](#) (WISER) survey. WBO mailed 30,000 postcards, took hundreds of phone calls and had over 10,000 surveys completed in a few months. This information, along with the huge increase in mapping data, community data, and other Broadband Intelligence was used to inform planning for BEAD and the development of the Digital Equity Plan.

In August the WBO submitted the [BEAD Five-Year Action Plan](#) which outlines the goals and objectives for improved internet access for all to NTIA.

On August 14<sup>th</sup> the Commission opened the new [Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure grant](#) program and began accepting applications. In total, 124 applications were received requesting \$221.6 million in funding.

In September and October, the WBO made several significant improvements to our maps and tools that Wisconsinites and communities use to get better information on broadband access, cost, performance and grant awards. The WBO updated the [Broadband Grant Footprint](#) to include all the grant awards the Commission has funded in the history of the program. In October, a [new Wisconsin Broadband Planning Map](#) was released. The new map combines access data, internet surveys, speed test data, and information on where state and federal funds have been awarded.

Also in September, the Wisconsin [Draft Digital Equity Plan](#) went out for public comment and in October, the plan was approved by the Commission and submitted to NTIA.

In November and December, the WBO drafted and posted the BEAD [Initial Proposal Volume 1](#) and [Volume 2](#), which describes how the state will award BEAD funding. Over the course of the Internet for All planning process, the Commission received over 100 public comments. The Commission reviewed and approved both volumes and the WBO has submitted them to NTIA for review. On December 14, the new [Digital Connectivity and Navigator Grant program](#) was announced and will open in early 2024.

And finally, in 2023 **internet access got much better**. Over 100,000 Wisconsin residents got new or improved access to high-speed internet and tens of thousands more residents have committed projects that will provide broadband in the coming years. Wisconsin is getting more and more connected. Forward.

## Wisconsin BEAD Challenge Coming Soon

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. 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](#).

The Commission will use Broadband Serviceable Location (BSL) ID numbers for 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 Tier D or E license from CostQuest Associates.

More information will be posted on the [Internet for All](#) webpage soon. Contact [PSCBEADChallenge@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCBEADChallenge@wisconsin.gov) with questions.

---

## Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access January Meeting

The January meeting of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access is scheduled for Wednesday, January 24, 2024 from 1:00 - 2:30 pm CT. The meeting will be virtual.

The meeting agenda will be posted on the [PSC Events Calendar](#) and will include information on how members of the public can watch and listen to the meeting. Public comments are invited at the beginning of the meeting.

## Grant Recipient Corner

### For State Funded Broadband Expansion Grants

**FY23:** With the introduction of the new PSC Grants System, we hope you are setting up your accounts and getting familiar with the system. If you watched our grant management [webinar](#), you learned that expenses can only be accepted or denied. When support documents are lacking, grant specialists can only deny the expense. This does not mean that the expense is permanently ineligible. Instead, it means that recipients can collect the proper support and resubmit the request. As always, please reach out to your grant specialist team with questions.

**FY21:** As of November 30, 2023, FY21 grants are expired. Be sure to file your final reports on ERF and submit your final reimbursement requests by 12/31/2023. If you are unable to meet this deadline or you are still constructing your project, please reach out to your Grants Specialist to request an extension. Extension requests are also due by 12/31/2023.

---

## 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](#)

[Unsubscribe sarah.bradley@wisconsin.gov](#)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by [alyssa.kenney@wisconsin.gov](#) powered by



Try email marketing for free today!