



## County Broadband Profiles Launched



The Wisconsin Broadband Office (WBO) has launched its [County Summary Data](#) on the Broadband Planning page. The WBO has compiled data from all 72 Wisconsin counties to create County specific profiles related to number of locations and advertised internet available. These profiles identify advertised internet access and show the progress that still needs to be made to achieve “Internet for All”. The profiles highlight the total number of Broadband Serviceable Locations (BSLs) i.e., residential and business locations in each county by current advertised service offering category. The profiles also include a count of BSLs that have existing state or federally funded grants in progress, speed tests by county, and affordability analysis based

on median county income and county specific broadband price data. A [state summary](#) is also available on the planning page.

Wisconsin County Broadband Profiles

## Universal Service Fund Grants Nonprofit Access and Lifeline Outreach Accepting Applications

The [Nonprofit Access Grant Program](#) is accepting applications from nonprofit organizations to facilitate affordable access to essential telecommunications services, including internet access, for low-income households, or people with disabilities. FY2024 applications are due at 1:30 p.m. on March 7, 2024. More information and application instructions on the [Program](#) webpage.

The [Lifeline Outreach Grant Program](#) is accepting applications from nonprofit organizations, community-based agencies, institutions of higher education, and local and Tribal governments. This grant is organized under two tracks (Outreach and Education, and Research and Resource) to support low-income customers using the Lifeline Program, which provides a discount on essential telecommunications services. FY2024 applications are due at 1:30 p.m. on March 19, 2024. More information and application instructions can be found on the [Program](#) webpage.

## Prepare for Wisconsin BEAD Challenge

As the WBO works with NTIA to gain final approval of Wisconsin’s draft Initial Proposal Volume 1, staff and partners at UW-Extension have begun preparing early guidance. The Commission has opened the [docket 5-BCH-2024](#) for the BEAD Challenge Process official proceedings. The WBO strongly encourages all interested and eligible entities to [subscribe to the docket](#).

The Commission has also created the [BEAD Challenge Process webpage](#). Staff will be updating this page regularly with technical assistance and updated timelines as we receive information. The Commission encourages all eligible challenge participants (providers, local governments, Tribal governments, and 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(6) non profit organizations) to review the information and resources currently available on the BEAD Challenge Process webpage. Particularly see the [fact sheet on CostQuest licenses](#) and review preliminary data on eligibility by location using the [Wisconsin Broadband Planning Map](#).



Contact [PSCBEADChallenge@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCBEADChallenge@wisconsin.gov) with questions.

## Federal Broadband Updates

### **NTIA Provides directions on the application of Uniform Guidance for BEAD**

The National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA) released a [Policy Notice](#) in January providing guidance on the application of the Uniform Guidance for the BEAD Program. The Uniform Guidance is the Federal Government's framework for grants management, providing rules and requirements for Federal grant programs. Among other things, the policy notice provides flexibility for program income, allows for fixed amount subawards, enables permissionless network upgrades and establishes a ten-year federal interested period for projects.

### **USDA Webinar: ReConnect Program Round 5 Preparing to Apply**

Presented by USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service, the webinar will provide information about the ReConnect Program and help prepare applicants ahead of the next Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). The ReConnect program provides grants and loans to construct broadband to unserved areas. The webinar will help applicants prepare for the next round of ReConnect and review the eligibility requirements. The webinar is February 7, 2024 from noon - 1:30 PM CST. Here is a link to [register](#).

### **Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program Extends Application Period**

The application deadline for the second round of funding for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP) has been extended to March 22, 2024. \$980 million of funding is available to Tribal governments for the deployment of Internet infrastructure, affordability programs, telehealth, and distance learning initiatives on tribal lands. Go to [TBCP Round Two NOFO](#) for more information on second round funding of TBCP.

### **FCC Announces Comment Due Dates for Preventing Digital Discrimination**

To implement the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021, the Federal Communication Commission adopted rules to establish a framework to facilitate equal access to broadband internet access service by preventing digital discrimination of access. On February 1, 2024, the comment due dates were established. Comments are due by March 4, 2024 and reply comments are due by April 1, 2024. The report, order and news release are available [here](#).

## Affordable Connectivity Program Wind Down

The FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program (known as [ACP](#)) is winding down. The FCC benefit program that is helping qualified households afford a broadband plan is projected to end in April 2024, due to a lack of additional funding from Congress. The ACP program will stop accepting new applications and enrollments on February 7, 2024. Households currently enrolled will continue to receive their [ACP benefit](#) through the end of the program and should receive communication from their internet service provider related to the change. See [FCC fact sheet](#).

In Wisconsin, over 400,000 households are enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and will lose discounted internet service when this program ends.

## Articles of Interest

## ["How a departing leader transformed Wisconsin's energy regulation"](#)

By Jana Rose Schleis in The Cap Times February 1, 2024

This article discusses the tenure and leadership of PSC Chair Rebecca Cameron Valcq including the progress made on broadband, Commission accessibility, and clean energy.

## [Broadband Breakthrough: Infrastructure Planning Tools for Rural Farming Communities](#)

By Ann Treacy, published by The Benton Institute for Broadband and Society December 2023

This report follows the journey of five rural counties in Illinois through a broadband planning program. The report focuses on rural farming communities as broadband is a necessary tool to innovate farming practices and allow for sustainable, targeted, and efficient resource use. This report provides tools related to planning for broadband for farming communities and highlights the incredible economic impact of broadband access of agricultural production.

## [Remarks by President Biden on Investing in America and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#)

In Superior, Wisconsin January 25, 2024, from the White House

Read the text of President Biden's speech during a recent visit to Wisconsin. In the speech President Biden touts the coming federal investments in Wisconsin for high-speed internet and the essential role that internet access and affordability play in our economy.

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# Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access February Meeting

The February meeting of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access is scheduled for Wednesday, February 21, 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

### Grant Project Program Review

The PSC works to ensure state and federal grant funding is used for benefit of all Wisconsinites in deploying broadband. Under the terms of the Grant Agreement, the PSC has the authority to request information from grantees to hold them accountable for the funding they received for their projects. To this end, we conduct program reviews of each grant project and request that grantees provide three references of customers that received service.

WBO staff will contact each reference to ask a short series of questions confirming their service access and plan. The Commission also may reach out to other stakeholders, partners, and project supporters in the grant project area. This program review will be conducted along with the standard reporting and GIS requirements for final payment and grant closeout. Please contact your grant specialist if you have questions (state: [PSCBroadbandGrantReimbursement@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCBroadbandGrantReimbursement@wisconsin.gov), federal [PSCFederalBroadbandGrantReimbursement@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCFederalBroadbandGrantReimbursement@wisconsin.gov)).

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## 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 or if you would like to request a staff member attend a meeting or make a presentation to your group. [Email Us](#)

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