



## Preparing for Internet for All

As the Wisconsin Broadband Office (WBO) works with the federal government to gain final approval of Wisconsin's draft Initial Proposals, staff and partners at UW-Extension have begun preparing early guidance for eligible challengers. 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 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, 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(6) non profit organizations and community anchor institutions) to review the information and resources currently available on the BEAD Challenge Process webpage. Contact [PSCBEADChallenge@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCBEADChallenge@wisconsin.gov) with challenge questions. The timing of the challenge process will be announced after final approval is received.



In addition, the Commission encourages potential BEAD applicants to review the [Sub-grantee Qualification Checklist](#) provided in the evaluation guide created by NTIA (page 14). These qualifications reflect federal requirements that will be a part of Wisconsin's BEAD application process, with detailed requirements for applicant qualifications forthcoming pending NTIA final approval.

## USF Grants: Nonprofit Access, Lifeline Outreach and Telemedicine Equipment 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 and people with disabilities. 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 Wisconsin residents eligible for the Lifeline Program, which provides a discount on essential telecommunications services. Applications are due **at 1:30 p.m. on March 19, 2024**. More information and application instructions can be found on the [Program](#) webpage.

The [Telemedicine Equipment Grant Program](#) is accepting applications from non-profit medical clinics and hospitals and public health agencies to apply for funding to purchase medical telecommunications equipment. Funding may be used to promote technologically advanced medical services, and/or enhance access to medical care in rural or underserved areas of the state, or to underserved populations or to persons with disabilities. Applications are due **at 1:30 p.m. on April 2, 2024**. More information and application instructions on the [Program](#) webpage.

## UW Extension Regional BEAD Workshops

## Getting Ready for BEAD Funding: Permitting, Engagement, and Learning from Experience

Join UW Extension, the Wisconsin Broadband Office and other stakeholders for our broadband regional workshops. UW Extension will host nine workshops throughout the state. These events focus on equipping attendees with the essential knowledge and tools required to successfully navigate the complexities of broadband expansion. The workshops are ideal for elected officials, community leaders, and volunteer committee members involved in broadband expansion efforts, as well as organizations supporting broadband planning and permitting authorities. Register today to secure your spot!

The nine regional workshops will be held:

- March 14, Iowa County Law Enforcement Center in Dodgeville
- March 21, UW-Parkside in Kenosha
- March 22, Fireman's Park Pavilion in Waterloo
- April 10, STEM Innovation Center in Green Bay
- April 16, Vernon County Sheriff's Office in Viroqua
- April 25, Portage County Annex in Stevens Point
- May 1, Flat Creek Lodge in Hayward
- May 14, CESA 10 Offices in Chippewa Falls
- May 22, Northcentral Technical College in Antigo

Registration for each session is \$25 and covers lunch, refreshments and materials.

[Learn More](#)

## Federal Broadband Updates

### NTIA Releases Buy America Build America (BABA) waiver for the BEAD Program

The National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA) released a [Notice of Final Waiver](#) effective February 22, 2024. BABA establishes domestic content procurement preference requirements for Federal financial assistance projects for infrastructure including BEAD. The waiver provides specificity and certainty on when BABA requirements will be waived on products that will be used to build broadband. Read the [press release](#).

### USDA ReConnect Program Round 5 - Opening March 22, 2024

The application window for Round 5 of the USDA ReConnect program will open March 22, 2024 and remain open until May 21, 2024. The ReConnect program provides grants and loans to construct broadband to unserved areas. Application materials and program information can be found [here](#). USDA is hosting a ReConnect NOFO 5 Overview Webinar on March 6, 2024. [Register for webinar here](#).

### 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 Broadband Consumer Labels Coming in 2024

These [labels](#), sometimes referred to as Broadband nutrition labels, will empower consumers with clear, accessible, and accurate information about broadband services. These labels information should enable consumers to make informed choices that align with their needs and budgets without surprising charges or service quality that falls short of their expectations. The new labels will include information on pricing, introductory rates, data allowances and performance.

## Items of Interest

## [Protect Internet Access: Extend the Affordable Connectivity Program Today](#)

By Summer Strand, Chairperson of the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, February 6, 2024

This article discusses the important impact the Affordable Connectivity Program has for Wisconsin families on making the internet affordable and urges Congress to extend the program.

## [Webinar: How Libraries Can Upgrade Their Internet Through the BEAD Program](#)

The SHLB Coalition, American Libraries Association, and Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) hosted a webinar to discuss how libraries can challenge their state's broadband map and if eligible, qualify for the BEAD program. The webinar explains the timeline, process, and evidence needed for a successful challenge. An informational memo can be found [here](#).

## [Public Service Commission on YouTube](#)

Did you know that the Public Service of Commission has a YouTube channel? Commission meetings are live on YouTube and recordings of Commission meetings, public hearings and Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access meetings are available to watch.

*In case you missed it*

## [Wisconsin County Broadband Profiles](#)

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 still needed to achieve "Internet for All".

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

The March meeting of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access is scheduled for **Wednesday, March 20, 2024, from 1:00 - 3:00 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

### **FY2022 State Funded Broadband Expansion Grants**

*Subordinate Lien Attachment H*

As the state-funded FY22 grant round was financed through bonding, all recipients, Award IDs 364-434, completed an Attachment H for purposes of disclosing lending arrangements applicable to their project. Be sure to update your Attachment H should the lending situation change. Attachment H is part of the Grant Agreement and should be updated as needed to ensure compliance with Agreement terms. Contact your grants specialists at [PSCBroadbandGrantReimbursement@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCBroadbandGrantReimbursement@Wisconsin.gov) with any questions.

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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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