STATE BROADBAND PLAN

OUR VISION: ALL WISCONSINITES HAVE THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CAPACITY NEEDED TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN SOCIETY.

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is committed to equitable access to broadband service. High-performance broadband is essential for participation in society, for health and for the economic development of our state. Many thousands of Wisconsin residents do not have access to the minimum speed of 25 megabits per second download and 3 megabits per second upload (25/3 Mbps), thousands more are unable to afford service and throughout the state residents have issues with the speed, quality and performance of their internet. Broadband is now an essential service. Broadband access coupled with digital inclusion activities are critical for economic and educational opportunities, and access to essential services.

OUR MISSION: MAKE HIGH PERFORMANCE BROADBAND MORE ACCESSIBLE, RESILIENT, COMPETITIVE AND AFFORDABLE IN WISCONSIN.

GOALS

Resilient Every Wisconsin community will have access to at least 1 gigabit per second symmetrical broadband service to anchor institutions such as schools, hospitals, government buildings, business parks and enterprise centers by 2024.

Accessible: 97% of Wisconsin homes and businesses will have access to at least one internet service with minimum speeds of 25 megabits per second download and 3 megabits per second upload (25/3 Mbps) by 2025.

Affordable: 75% of households with income below 200% of the federal poverty level have access to fixed, home internet service at a cost of less than $25 per month by 2025.

High Performance: 75% of Wisconsin homes and businesses will have access to at least one internet service with a minimum speed 100/20 Mbps service with preference on symmetrical service, no usage limits and latency low enough to run interactive video applications by 2025.

STRATEGIES

LEADERSHIP AND VISION

Lack of broadband access is a complex yet solvable problem. With a clear vision, strong leadership and the investment of financial resources, significant, measurable, progress is achievable.

How

- Serve as the leader and coordinator of broadband and digital equity programs, data and activities for the State of Wisconsin.
- Staff the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access and provide expertise, information and data as the Task Force executes their charge to recommend policy, programmatic, and funding pathways that advance broadband goals and digital equity.
- Provide interagency leadership, information and alignment of Broadband goals, data and strategies across the state.

DATA BEFORE DEPLOYMENT

Communities, WBO staff and policy makers need excellent data and accurate maps to make decisions on broadband. The current available data on broadband is insufficient. The Wisconsin Broadband Office will strive to know the level of internet access, speed, and cost for every location in the state. The WBO will continue to provide the State expertise on Broadband data.

How

- Continue to update and improve the Wisconsin Broadband Map (WBM).
- Grow our granular data collection program.
- Use data collected by other agencies, crowd-sourced data and the National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM) to continue to improve understanding of access, performance and costs in the State.
- Use American Community Survey and other data to provide information regarding whether broadband is equitably available and affordable for people with disabilities, low-income households, women and minority owned businesses and households that include Black, indigenous and people of color.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

A robust, resilient broadband infrastructure with ubiquitous access for homes, businesses, public services and community anchor institutions is critical for economic development, rural prosperity and access to essential services. Population density, geography and household income impact the return on investment for internet service providing businesses. The use of public grant funds directs and supports broadband infrastructure development to needed locations in the state.

How

- Continue and grow our effective Broadband Expansion Grant program with strategic investments of grant funds to support broadband infrastructure in underserved and unserved areas.
- Promote public-private partnerships, prioritize high performance projects and leverage additional public and private investment in broadband infrastructure.
- Coordinate and combine federal, state, local, and private dollars to broadband infrastructure investments.

DIGITAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION FRAMEWORK

Availability of broadband alone is not enough to solve this problem, targeted strategies for internet adoption, device access, digital literacy, and affordable service are key components of the vision. The WBO will work to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the underrepresented, have access to information technology capacity. This is needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy.

How

- Publish the Wisconsin Digital Equity and Inclusion Plan informed by stakeholder input and data.
- Develop and support intentional activities and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional and structural barriers to broadband access and the use of information technology.
- Disseminate best practices for broadband access, affordability, devices, internet adoption and digital literacy skills training.

PARTNERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Technical assistance, education, and facilitation are often areas that local communities including counties, cities, villages and towns lack in addressing broadband connectivity. Alongside strategic partners, the WBO will work to increase available resources in these areas and help communities develop plans to address these issues. These efforts and resources are a key step in working towards increased availability, affordability, and adoption of broadband technologies.

How

- Update and publish a playbook as a resource for communities and technical assistance providers.
- Promote community certification programs, such as Broadband Forward! and Telecommuter Forward! and provide support for communities through the process.
- Support Broadband Connectors Program work, facilitate connections between communities and providers and between projects and funders.