

Gov. Walker: Highlights workforce development & broadband expansion initiatives at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College

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MADISON – Governor Scott Walker visited Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC) in Rice Lake today to highlight the college's new Broadband Academy and the 2017-19 budget's workforce development initiatives and historic investment in broadband expansion.

"Access to high speed internet connections is important for business, education, health care, and quality of life," said Governor Walker. "Generations ago, electricity changed the way my grandparents farmed; today, access to high speed internet connections will have a similar impact on rural Wisconsin. That's why our state budget includes an additional \$35.5 million towards broadband expansion in Wisconsin. But we know that to be successful, we also need a highly-skilled workforce to support this expansion. That's why WITC's unique-to-Wisconsin Broadband Academy is so important."

[WITC's Broadband Academy](#) teaches the fundamentals of broadband services and how broadband networks operate with different technologies. The Broadband Academy offers the most up-to-date technical content and provides professional development and cross training to employees, underemployed or unemployed individuals within WITC's embedded certificates.

Courses in the Broadband Academy are open to high school students and seamlessly transfer into WITC's broadband technologies technical diploma so graduates can continue their education. The Broadband Technologies program provides training for occupations in four distinct areas of the telecommunications industry — telephone, cable TV, computer information systems, and wireless communications. The program is unique in Wisconsin and only offered at WITC. The Academy's skilled and dependable workforce will become increasingly important as new funding from the 2017-19 budget become available, including:

- An additional \$13 million for broadband expansion grants, the largest amount of funding ever for the program. The budget also provides for a sustained level of funding for the broadband grant program in the future, at a rate of \$2 million per year beginning in fiscal year 2019.
- Increased funding for the Infrastructure Grant Program through Technology for Educational Achievement (TEACH) by \$22.5 million. This will allow more school districts to apply for grants for allowable costs under the Infrastructure Grant Program. Allowable costs include reimbursing eligible school districts for improving information technology infrastructure. Funding is available for installing mobile hot spots on buses and mobile hot spots for students to check out from school libraries.
- An additional \$7.5 million in Broadband Expansion Grants for Fiscal Year 2018 to help underserved areas of the state. The second round of grants were made available by the state budget and will be distributed by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. Applications are due to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin by January 25, 2018. Application instructions and additional information can be found [here](#).

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