

Gov. Evers: Announces federal internet for all grant awards

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers, together with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC), today announced the state will receive \$5,952,197 to plan for the deployment and adoption of affordable, equitable, and reliable high-speed internet throughout the state. This investment, awarded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), is part of the Internet for All initiative under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, signed by President Biden in 2021.

“The investments I’m proud to announce today represent the start of a once-in-a-generation opportunity for Wisconsin and will help us achieve our mission to expand broadband statewide,” said Gov. Evers. “Since becoming governor, we’ve made historic progress to connect more than 387,000 homes and businesses to reliable, high-speed internet. These new investments will help bolster our ongoing work and give local communities the support needed to build critical broadband infrastructure and ensure high-speed internet access for all.”

On November 21, the NTIA awarded \$5 million to the PSC’s Wisconsin Broadband Office to support the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program planning process. Wisconsin will learn its total BEAD allocation in 2023 after the federal government finalizes allocations of infrastructure funding based on the formula in the law. Using currently available data, Wisconsin could expect an allocation of \$700 million to \$1.1 billion for broadband expansion under BEAD.

“Digital equity is crucial to ensure that everyone in Wisconsin has access to healthcare, education, and remote work opportunities,” said Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. “I thank Governor Evers for his efforts to connect unserved and underserved areas as part of the Internet for All initiative.”

BEAD was created to build quality infrastructure where it is needed and increase the adoption of high-speed internet. BEAD planning funds will support capacity building with regional and local government partners, technical assistance and outreach events, broadband mapping, and workforce planning efforts. After the planning process, future BEAD infrastructure funding will be used to deploy and upgrade high-speed internet statewide. Unserved households and businesses lacking 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 3 Mbps upload will be considered the highest priority under the BEAD Program.

Alongside BEAD, in September, the NTIA awarded \$952,197 in Digital Equity Act funding to the PSC for the creation of a state digital equity plan. The goal of Digital Equity Act programs is to ensure all communities can access and use affordable, reliable high-speed internet to meet their needs and improve their lives. With the planning grant, Wisconsin will create a robust and inclusive five-year statewide digital equity plan that will serve as a strategic guide and implementation plan for increasing digital equity in the state and preparing for future digital equity capacity grant funding.

“The PSC is thrilled to spearhead the ‘Internet for All’ programs to close Wisconsin’s digital divide,” said PSC Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq. “These projects continue the governor’s proven track record of improving broadband access by connecting unserved and underserved areas in our state. We look forward to working with state, local, and Tribal leaders, stakeholders, and Wisconsin residents to identify strategic use of these investments.”

This announcement builds off the already historic investments Gov. Evers has made to expand broadband in Wisconsin. Since Gov. Evers took office in 2019, Wisconsin has disbursed or committed more than \$340 million towards broadband expansion efforts, including \$145 million in federal funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The PSC recently developed the [Broadband Grant Footprint](#), a new interactive mapping tool to show where in the state projects are being build that were awarded broadband grant funding by the PSC.

Wisconsin’s Broadband Grant Program has been nationally recognized. In August, the state’s Broadband Office was named “Best in Class” by the NTIA for “clear documentation of their application and award processes.”

More information about these programs will be available in the coming weeks and

months. Wisconsinites are encouraged to monitor the PSC website at psc.wi.gov and the PSC's [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: Internet for All](#) webpage for the latest updates.