

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin: Awards 'Internet for All' planning grants

Posted on Friday, Apr 7, 2023

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MADISON – The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC or Commission) awarded grants under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's 'Internet for All' Initiative, including the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Workforce Planning Program and Digital Equity Outreach Program. The grants will support outreach, coordination, and community engagement efforts that will shape the implementation of these historic programs designed to improve broadband access, affordability, and adoption in Wisconsin.

"I am proud of the Commission's work in awarding the planning grants to local partners—this is an important step forward in ensuring all Wisconsinites have access to high-speed Internet," said PSC Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq. "The grant recipients demonstrated strong community ties, capacity building experience, and a deeply invested interest in bridging Wisconsin's digital divide. These factors make them uniquely qualified to take on the planning responsibilities that will guide the state when implementing these historic programs."

In December 2022, Gov. Tony Evers and the PSC announced the state will receive nearly \$6 million to plan for the deployment and adoption of high-speed Internet through programs under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. In January 2023, the Commission approved plans outlining eligibility criteria for the BEAD Local Planning and Workforce Planning Programs and the Digital Equity Outreach Program.

These grant programs will inform and prepare for the next stages of the 'Internet for All' timeline. Once the planning stage is completed over an approximately one-year period, Wisconsin will begin to implement the statewide plans over the next several

years. Wisconsin could expect an allocation of \$800 million to \$1.1 billion to implement these plans under BEAD. Additional federal funding will help to implement the state's digital equity plan so that all residents have access to a reliable, affordable internet connection.

Prior to announcing the BEAD Workforce Planning Program and Digital Equity Act Program grant recipients, the Commission announced on March 7, 2023 that 77 entities opted into the BEAD Local Planning Program, including all 72 Wisconsin counties and five Tribes, with 48 of these entities collaborating through one of six participating Regional Economic Development Organizations. This means that the total program funding of \$1.5 million will be divided equally among all participants who opted into the program, with a 10 percent increase for those participating through a regional entity to prepare outreach initiatives and local plans for broadband development in their communities.

The Commission made awards to two entities totaling \$100,000 under the BEAD Workforce Planning Grant Program. This program is designed to engage existing entities involved in workforce development—including industry groups, labor organizations, and technical colleges—to plan workforce development strategies, in preparation for BEAD funding and to ensure all Wisconsinites have a pathway to these career opportunities.

The Commission made awards to seven entities totaling \$335,000 under the Digital Equity Outreach Grant. This program will support grant recipients' efforts to collect locally-informed insights into digital equity needs of and solutions for the covered populations they serve. Digital Equity Outreach activities may include but are not limited to interactive workshops, surveys, townhall discussions, data collection, and interviews with covered populations. The deliverables from successful applicants will inform the statewide digital equity plan.

The PSC's Wisconsin Broadband Office will be hosting the Internet for All Wisconsin – Listening Tour and other events to support local communities' planning efforts. Wisconsinites can stay informed by signing up for the [Wisconsin Broadband Office newsletter](#) or visiting the [PSC website](#).

Click [here](#) for a list of the Workforce Planning Grant recipients and [here](#) for a list of the Digital Equity Outreach grant recipients.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).