

infrastructure throughout Wisconsin and complement the important federal broadband investments made by the Biden administration. In the absence of this proposed funding, for the 2023-2025 biennium, State Broadband Expansion Grants are budgeted \$2,000,000 each year derived from universal service fees. Budgeted funding may be supplemented by additional amounts from underspending of prior grants and other universal service programs.

### Federal Grants

The WBO has administered numerous federal grants in recent years. Current and anticipated federal grant funding includes the following.

Federal funds currently administered by the WBO:

- \$5.4 million in CARES Act funds for 12 shovel-ready broadband infrastructure projects to build new or improved service. Projects were completed in 2020.
- \$100 million in ARPA State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds for broadband infrastructure. Funding has been awarded and projects are underway with expected completion dates through 2025.
- \$5 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law BEAD Program planning funds.
- \$952,192 in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Digital Equity Program planning funds.
- \$42 million in ARPA Capital Projects Fund allocations for broadband infrastructure. A grant round opened in August 2023 for deployment of this funding, with infrastructure completed by 2026.

Federal funds anticipated by the WBO:

- \$1,050,823,573.71 in funding under the BEAD program for infrastructure deployment, in addition to the previously allocated \$5,000,000 for planning purposes. Funding is anticipated to be allocated beginning in 2024 and expended through 2030.
- Additional funding from ARPA Capital Projects Fund allocations for Digital Connectivity Technology Projects. Allocation of funding is pending U.S. Department of Treasury approval. Once awarded, funding will be deployed for use through 2026.
- \$25 million to \$30 million in Digital Equity State Capacity Grants to support implementation of the State Digital Equity Plan, anticipated in 2025 and expended through 2029.

## **4.6 Partnerships**

### **4.6.1 State Agencies**

#### University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension (UW Extension)

The WBO has partnered with [UW Extension](#) to implement key local coordination, capacity building, and outreach functions related to BEAD planning. Extension's effort includes webinars, workshops, and toolkits to develop local capacity to plan and implement broadband deployment projects. Further, UW Extension maintains one-on-one technical assistance for local units of government and other broadband stakeholders.

In spring 2023, UW Extension also worked in consultation with WBO staff to design and implement a comprehensive survey for counties and Tribes on broadband and digital equity. The survey collected qualitative and quantitative data related to local and regional broadband service needs and an inventory of assets related to adoption, affordability, equity, and access.

The survey collected data on local planning efforts, data, and active groups. The survey was sent to all 72 counties, Wisconsin's 11 federally recognized Tribes. The data and planning insights gathered from that survey have informed this plan and the Wisconsin Digital Equity Plan.

#### Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), Office of Rural Prosperity

The Commission entered into a memorandum of understanding with WEDC and they are currently implementing a technical assistance program consisting of targeted workshops, advising, and resources to support Regional Economic Development Organizations in planning for BEAD subgrants. Efforts engage regional economic development and planning leaders and cultivate expertise in broadband planning, including leadership training and provision of a resources for regions to build broadband planning capacity. The outcome of this activity will be improved capacity for regional leaders and economic development practitioners to facilitate broadband planning, ensuring expeditious allocation of funding that aligns with the vision and needs of local communities.

#### Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI)

DPI [collected data from schools](#) directly related to students access to the internet, access to internet enabled devices and performance of the internet access. The Commission has entered a data use agreement with DPI in order to gain access to data on measures of digital equity for households with school age children. The data will inform the Digital Equity Plan and future planning efforts. DPI has collaborated with the Commission for many years, assisting the PSC in the formation of a Digital Equity and Inclusion Stakeholder group. Further, DPI has a member that attends planning meetings with the Digital Equity Outreach Team.

## 4.6.2 Subgrantees

### BEAD Local Planning Grant Program

Recipients of BEAD Local Planning Grant funds contribute to local coordination, outreach, and planning efforts to inform the Five-Year Action Plan, Initial Proposal, and State Digital Equity Plan. Subgrantees include:

- Centergy on behalf of Adams, Lincoln, Marathon, Portage, and Wood counties
  - Madison Region Economic Partnership on behalf of Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Jefferson and Sauk counties
  - Milwaukee 7 on behalf of Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha counties
  - The New North on behalf of Brown, Calumet, Door, Florence, Fond du Lac, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Sheboygan, Waushara and Winnebago counties
  - Prosperity Southwest on behalf of Crawford, Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette and Richland counties
  - Visions Northwest on behalf of Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer and Washburn counties, and the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buffalo County</li> <li>• Chippewa County</li> <li>• Clark County</li> <li>• Dunn County</li> <li>• Eau Claire County</li> <li>• Forest County</li> <li>• Ho-Chunk Nation</li> <li>• Jackson County</li> <li>• Juneau County</li> <li>• La Crosse County</li> <li>• Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa</li> <li>• Langlade County</li> <li>• Monroe County</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oneida County</li> <li>• Pepin County</li> <li>• Pierce County</li> <li>• Polk County</li> <li>• Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa</li> <li>• Rock County</li> <li>• St. Croix County</li> <li>• Taylor County</li> <li>• Trempealeau County</li> <li>• Vernon County</li> <li>• Vilas County</li> <li>• Waupaca County</li> </ul> |
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### BEAD Workforce Planning Grant Program

Recipients of BEAD Workforce Planning Grant funds conduct workforce planning and outreach work that will inform this Five-Year Action Plan and the Initial Proposal. Subgrantees include:

- Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, Inc. (WRTP) - BIG STEP
- Urban League of Racine & Kenosha

### Digital Equity Outreach Grant Program

Recipients of Digital Equity Outreach Grant funds conduct outreach to covered populations identified in the Digital Equity Act to understand the barriers and needs of these groups, which will inform the State Digital Equity Plan. Subgrantees include:

- United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County
- River Valley Commons, Inc.
- Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board, Inc.
- Indianhead Community Action Agency
- United Way of Wisconsin
- Connect to Compete, Inc. (EveryoneOn)
- Urban League of Racine and Kenosha

### 4.6.3 Other Entities

#### Breaking Point Solutions

In partnership with North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and in support of the 9 Regions Broadband convening and local units of government, the WEDC has funded the purchase of the Breaking Point Solutions OptiMap software, a [speed testing tool](#) to identify areas of Wisconsin where actual service speed is insufficient. Software includes [visualizations of speed test data](#), as well as other analysis dashboards for broadband planning purposes. OptiMap speed test data has been incorporated as part of the Commission's access analysis and statewide planning effort and has helped inform understanding of actual service experiences around Wisconsin. Funding for the software is provided by the PSC as part of Wisconsin's BEAD planning allocation.

#### CostQuest Associates

As a subgrantee and partner of NTIA, the U.S. Department of Treasury and FCC, the PSC leverages data related to the [Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric](#) (BSLF) to implement its planning and grantmaking efforts. The BSLF is a product maintained by CostQuest Associates and licensed by NTIA, FCC, and Treasury. The Fabric contains confidential information, and thus federal partners and CostQuest share this data through a license agreement with the Commission and selected broadband stakeholders in Wisconsin, including grant recipients, providers, municipalities, and nonprofits. BSLF data informs planning efforts, identification of areas lacking broadband service, and serves as the foundation for future grant allocation efforts.

### 4.7 Asset Inventory

Access to broadband remains challenging for a significant share of Wisconsin households and businesses, but the outlook is improving. Renewed urgency, heightened resources, and significant involvement from stakeholders at all levels of government and the private sector have built consensus and focus on universal deployment.

Through the PSC's ongoing broadband efforts and related partnerships, a diverse set of existing assets have been identified. Important insights from the Governor's Task on Broadband Access 2023 Report and the PSC's Internet for All Listening Tour have been incorporated. The PSC Digital Equity Outreach Team engaged both groups working to improve digital equity, and individuals who are experiencing digital inequities to understand what assets exist and what barriers persist.

PSC awarded \$1.5 million in funding to county and regional partners to conduct planning and outreach efforts and has collected insights from that effort. The PSC engaged counties and federally recognized Tribes through a survey developed in partnership with UW-Extension. The survey was designed to collect critical information about broadband availability, access, and