



TAMMY BALDWIN

United States Senator *for* WISCONSIN

Historic Investments to Improve Broadband Access Throughout Wisconsin

In 2021, Senator Baldwin supported & helped pass legislation that:

- Improves broadband access across the state - Wisconsin will receive at least \$100 million and likely much more to help expand coverage, giving access to the 318,000+ Wisconsin residents who currently lack service
- Provides discounts on monthly internet bills through the Affordable Connectivity Benefit – at least 22% of Wisconsin families will be eligible
- Supports funding programs to focus on the skills Wisconsinites need to take advantage of internet connectivity and participate in the digital economy

For Public and Private Entities

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds: Passed as part of the American Rescue Plan Act, the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds deliver \$350 billion directly to state, local, and Tribal governments to support their response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. These funds were intended to be flexible, providing governments with resources to address local needs, including:

- Fighting the pandemic and supporting families and businesses struggling with its public health and economic impacts.
- Maintaining vital public services, even amid declines in revenue.
- Building a strong, resilient, and equitable recovery by making investments that support long-term growth and opportunity.

On January 6, 2022, the Department of the Treasury released a final rule implementing the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. Notably, the final rule significantly broadened eligible broadband infrastructure investments to address challenges with broadband access, affordability, and reliability.

- **Funding Type:** Funds are allocated to state, local, and Tribal governments. Information regarding allocations and allocation methodology can be found [here](#).
- **Use of Funds:** Recipients may fund high-speed broadband infrastructure in areas of need that the recipient identifies, such as areas without access to adequate speeds, affordable options, or where connections are inconsistent or unreliable; completed projects must participate in a low-income subsidy program.
- **Deadline:** Funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024, and expended by December 31, 2026.
- **Additional Details:** The Department of the Treasury’s final rule implementing the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds can be found [here](#), and an overview of the final rule can be found [here](#).

New Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (\$42 billion): The bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides the National Telecommunications and Information Administration with \$42.4 billion to implement the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program. This new program will help states partner with local communities and other stakeholders to fund the infrastructure buildouts needed to connect more Americans to reliable, high-speed, and affordable internet service.

- **Funding:** Each state will be allocated a “minimum initial amount” of \$100 million for high-speed internet expansion and/or affordability. Additional funding will be available to states based on a formula that considers the number of unserved and high-cost locations in the state.
- **Eligibility:** State governments.
- **Use of Funds:** States may competitively award sub-grants to carry out the broadband-deployment activities. States will be required to work with broadband providers to ensure that each broadband provider that receives funding offers at least one affordable service plan. States may partner with nonprofits, private companies, local governments, cooperatives, and public utilities to deploy high-speed internet networks.
- **Applying:** Applications will begin in February. Deadline TBD. For more details on this program, [click here](#)

New Middle Mile Grant Program (\$1 billion): The bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides National Telecommunications and Information

Administration with \$1 billion to create the Middle Mile Grant program. Grants from this program will be expended over the course of five years on a technology-neutral and competitive basis to eligible entities for the construction, improvement, or acquisition of middle mile infrastructure that will reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas to the internet backbone.

- **Funding Type:** Grants.
- **Use of Funds:** Construction, improvement, or acquisition of middle mile infrastructure that will reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas to the internet backbone.
- **Eligibility:** States, local and Tribal governments, technology companies, electric utilities, utility cooperatives, public utility districts, telecommunications companies, telecommunications cooperatives, nonprofit foundations, nonprofit corporations, nonprofit institutions, nonprofit associations, regional planning councils, Native entities, and economic development authorities.
- **Application Information:** Deadline TBD. Continue to check the [BroadbandUSA Website](#) for updates. You can also sign up to receive updates from the [BroadbandUSA listserv](#)

ReConnect Program (\$2 billion): Reconnect Program offers loans, grants, and loan/grant combinations to deploy high-speed internet to rural areas. Through the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Congress provides the U.S. Department of Agriculture with an additional \$2 billion for Reconnect awards, which represents a \$1.29 billion increase over what was provided in the fiscal year 2021.

The program can also fund the acquisition or upgrade of an existing system not currently providing sufficient internet access. This funding is available to businesses, cooperatives, public entities, and federally recognized Indian Tribes to improve service in areas where at least 90% of households do not have access to internet at speeds of at least 100/20 Mbps.

- **Funding Type:** Grants and Loans. More information on award levels can be found [here](#).
- **Use of Funds:** Deploy high-speed internet to rural areas, upgrade existing systems.

- **Eligibility:** Businesses, cooperatives, public entities, and federally recognized Indian Tribes in areas where at least 90% of households do not have access to internet at speeds of at least 100/20 Mbps.
- **Applying:** Deadline February 22, 2022. Continue to check [USDA's Reconnect Loan and Grant Program Website](#) for updates.

Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program (\$1.25 Billion): Through the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Congress provides the National Telecommunications and Information Administration with \$2.75 billion in new funding to establish three new programs aimed at ensuring that more Americans have the skills, technologies and support needed to take advantage of internet connectivity. These programs will promote the meaningful adoption and use of internet services across certain targeted populations, including low-income households, seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities. The Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program will provide \$1.25 billion to non-state entities to carry out digital equity projects. Details on the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program can be found below.

- **Funding:** Grants.
- **Eligibility:** State and local governments, foundations, nonprofits, colleges and universities, school districts, Tribal governments, and entities that carry out workforce development programs.
- **Use of Funds:** Grants will be required to support at least one of the following activities:
 - Develop and implement digital inclusion activities that benefit covered populations.
 - Facilitate the adoption of high-speed internet by covered populations for educational and employment opportunities.
 - Implement training programs for covered populations that cover basic, advanced, and applied skills, or other workforce development programs.
 - Provide equipment, networking capability, hardware and software, or digital network technology for high-speed internet services to covered populations at low or no cost.

- Construct, upgrade, expand, or operate new or existing public access computing centers for covered populations through community anchor institutions.
- **Application Information:** Deadline TBD. Continue to check the [Grant Programs Website](#) for updates.

For Individuals

Affordable Connectivity Program (\$14 billion): The bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides over \$14 billion to establish the Affordable Connectivity Program at the Federal Communications Commission. This long-term program has replaced the temporary Emergency Broadband Benefit program, which was created to provide monthly discounts to eligible households struggling to afford internet service.

- **Funding:** Eligible households will receive a discount up to \$30 per month toward internet service. Households on Tribal lands can receive up to a \$75 discount. Funds will be paid directly to participating internet service providers with discounts passed along to the consumer's monthly bills.
- **Eligibility:** A household is eligible if a member of the household meets at least one of the criteria below:
 - Has an income that is at or below 200% of the [federal poverty guidelines](#).
 - Participates in certain assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, Social Security, or Lifeline.
 - Participates in Tribal-specific programs, such as Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.
 - Is approved to receive benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision in the 2019-2020, 2020-2021, or 2021-2022 school year.
 - Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year.

- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income program.

- **Start Date:** December 31, 2021.

Individuals who applied for the temporary Emergency Benefit Program can receive monthly discounts under that program until March 31, 2022. For more details on the Emergency Broadband Benefit and the new Affordable Connectivity Program, please visit the Federal Communication Commission's [website](#).

Resources for Tribal Entities

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (\$2 billion): The bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides \$2 billion in dedicated funds to expand high-speed internet on tribal lands. This funding builds upon the \$1 billion in funding provided in previous legislation to establish the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program.

- **Funding Type:** Grants.
- **Anticipated Award Amounts:** Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Projects: \$1 million to \$50 million. Broadband Adoption and Use Projects: \$50,000 to \$2.5 million.
- **Use of Funds:** High-speed internet infrastructure deployment; internet affordability programs; distance learning; telehealth; digital inclusion efforts; and internet adoption activities.
- **Eligibility:** Tribal governments, tribal colleges and universities, tribal organizations, and Native corporations.
- **Application Information:** Deadline TBD. Continue to check the [BroadbandUSA Website](#) for updates.