

NTIA Accepts State Digital Equity Plan

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin
Wednesday, 13 March 2024 10:32 -

<http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/broadband-town-mtg-cross-s450.png>



Wisconsin now eligible to receive approximately \$24 million to \$30 million in Digital Equity Capacity Grant funding to implement the state’s Digital Equity Plan over a five-year period.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers and the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) announced today that Wisconsin’s [Digital Equity Plan](#) was accepted by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). The NTIA’s acceptance of the plan marks an important step toward implementing the plan, which will guide the state’s strategy to improve digital opportunities and support digital equity, helping ensure every Wisconsinite has the skills, resources, and broadband service necessary to fully participate in society and the economy. With today’s announcement, Wisconsin is now eligible to receive approximately \$24 million to \$30 million in Digital Equity Capacity Grant funding to implement the state’s Digital Equity Plan over a five-year period.



“This announcement today builds on our work over the last five years to support digital equity and close the digital divide in our state, and thanks to these efforts, now more than 410,000

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homes and businesses will get connected to new or improved high-speed internet access,” said Gov. Evers. “I want to thank our federal partners for accepting our plan and the Biden Administration for making critical funding opportunities available. I look forward to seeing how this process will continue to progress.”



“The Digital Equity Plan will help us address persistent barriers to internet access, affordability, and adoption in our state,” said PSC Chairperson Summer Strand. “I would like to thank all the residents who participated in the development process along with our dedicated partners who shaped this plan over the last year by providing valuable insight and offering long-term solutions to bridge Wisconsin’s digital divide. We look forward to continued engagement with our stakeholders as we begin the implementation phase of this Plan.”

In October 2022, NTIA allocated \$952,197 to Wisconsin to conduct outreach and engagement activities to develop the state’s Digital Equity Plan. In the subsequent months, the PSC worked with new and existing partners to create and carry out an extensive outreach strategy to develop the state’s Digital Equity Plan. Engagement activities included the Internet for All Wisconsin Listening Tour, the Governor’s Task Force on Broadband Access meetings, consultations with Native Nations, Wisconsin Digital Equity and Inclusion Stakeholder Group meetings, broadband surveying and mapping, and direct outreach with state agencies, nonprofits, healthcare organizations, businesses, local units of government, volunteer organizations, philanthropy, educational institutions, and others.

In September 2023, the Commission released a draft of the Digital Equity Plan for public comment. Following the public comment period, the Commission reviewed the public comments and finalized the plan before submitting it to NTIA.

The Digital Equity Plan is one of three components of the [Digital Equity Act](#). Passed under President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the Digital Equity Act is intended to ensure that all communities can access and use affordable, reliable high-speed internet to meet their needs and improve their lives. The Wisconsin Digital Equity Plan is designed to align with and complement BIL’s Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program to fund broadband infrastructure deployment and achieve high-speed internet access for all. Digital Equity Act funding will be directed toward specific populations that have disproportionately faced internet access, affordability, and adoption barriers.

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The other components of the Digital Equity Act are the State Capacity Grant Program, which will be administered by the Commission beginning later in 2024, and the Competitive Grant Program, which will be administered by NTIA beginning in 2025.