

TNECD Announces Approval of Proposal to Invest \$813 million in Broadband Expansion

- *Tennessee's receives approval on its initial proposal for \$813 million in funding through the BEAD Program*
- *TNECD introduces upcoming broadband infrastructure grant round for fall 2024*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TNECD) announced today the approval of Tennessee's initial proposal for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program.

The department has been allocated \$813 million as part of its initial proposal for the BEAD Program, which the state will use to locate high-speed broadband internet to all remaining unserved and underserved residential and business locations in Tennessee by 2028. Receiving this approval by the U.S. Department of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) allows TNECD to begin deploying the allocated funding.

“High-speed internet has become an essential part of daily life for all Tennesseans,” said Gov. Bill Lee. “This funding will allow us to make additional strategic investments to expand broadband infrastructure in rural areas and expand opportunity for success in education and the workplace.”

During Gov. Lee's Administration, TNECD has invested over \$715M in state and federal broadband funding to bridge the digital divide in Tennessee. Prior to 2021, more than 20% of Tennessee lacked access to high-speed internet. Today, that total is less than 5%, according to the Federal Communications Commission.

“I am proud to take part in announcing another milestone in broadband funding for the state. We have made significant strides to expand high-speed internet under Gov. Lee's leadership and receiving approval of our proposed \$813 million in funding is a critical step in further expanding broadband service statewide, which will in turn ensure Tennesseans have better access to high-quality job training,” said TNECD Commissioner Stuart C. McWhorter.

TNECD submitted its initial proposal in December 2023, and prior to submission, the department conducted listening sessions with internet service providers and community stakeholders statewide to ensure that industry and stakeholder feedback was included in the proposal.

TNECD anticipates opening the grant round for BEAD funding in November, pending approval of TNECD's [challenge process](#) results by NTIA. Eligible applicants are those authorized to provide retail broadband in the state of Tennessee.

A Notice of Intent Form and the published eligible locations are available on [TNECD's website](#) until October 9, 2024. Submission of the Notice of Intent Form is a requirement of TNECD's BEAD funded grant program and allows the state to verify NTIA's required gating criteria for applicants.

In addition, program eligibility maps with designated grant boundaries will be publicly available in late August on TNECD's [broadband website](#).

Following the BEAD funded grant round, TNECD is required to submit all proposed awards to NTIA for approval in the form of a final proposal. Once approved, TNECD will begin disbursing grant funding to awardees.

To learn more about Tennessee's broadband initiatives or apply for these programs, please visit [here](#).

About the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development

The Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development's mission is to develop strategies that help make Tennessee the No. 1 location in the Southeast for high quality jobs. To grow and strengthen Tennessee, the department seeks to attract new corporate investment to the state and works with Tennessee companies to facilitate expansion and economic growth. Find us on the web: tnecd.com. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Like us on [Facebook](#). Subscribe to our [YouTube](#) channel.

TNECD Media Contact

Lindsey Tipton

Director of Communications

(615) 339-6608

Lindsey.Tipton@tn.gov

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