

Mississippi to Setup over \$1.2 Billion for Broadband Expansion



Gazebo Gazette

Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves announced Monday, June 26, 2023 that the state will deploy \$1,203,561,563.05 in federal grant funding for the expansion of high-speed internet.

The newly created Office of Broadband Expansion and Accessibility of Mississippi (BEAM) will administer the funding through a competitive grant process over the next several years to reach the approximately 300,000 unserved and 200,000 underserved locations that do not have access to high-speed broadband.

The allocation was made from the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program established through the Infrastructure and Jobs Act. The \$1.2 billion that Mississippi will distribute was

based on the number of locations in the state that do not have access to high-speed internet and the estimated cost associated with these locations.

“I’m proud of the work we’re doing to improve our residents’ connectivity,” said Governor Reeves. “People want to live in areas where they can access broadband and that are connected. That’s why we’ll continue to aggressively build out broadband infrastructure to every region of our state, so all Mississippians can harness the opportunities technology provides them.”

“BEAM knows there is a need to get high-speed internet to all Mississippians. We know this funding will be transformational for so many Mississippians and their communities.” said Sally Doty, Director of BEAM. “BEAM encourages every Mississippian to contribute to the state broadband map at broadbandms.com. If you have slow internet, you can take the speed test on the broadbandms.com website and those speeds will be logged into our state map.”

BEAM will now submit a Five-Year Action Plan detailing their work and plans for the funding. A draft plan will be available for public comment on the BEAM website (www.beam.ms.gov), and comments may be sent to comments@beam.ms.gov until July 28.

BEAM will submit the Five-Year Action Plan to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) in late summer. This will be followed by an Initial Proposal for the first phase of the buildout process due this winter.

Once Mississippi’s Initial Proposal is approved by NTIA, 20% of the funding will be released to the state to begin the competitive grant process. BEAD-funded broadband projects will be built over a five-year period by eligible internet service providers.

This \$1.2 billion in BEAD funding is another investment in Mississippi broadband that will be administered by the BEAM office. Currently BEAM administers the \$32 million Broadband Infrastructure Program (BIP) and applications for the \$151 million available from the Capital Projects Fund (CPF) are currently being accepted.

The governor signed the “Broadband Expansion and Accessibility of Mississippi Act” which created BEAM in 2022 and appointed Doty as the office’s first director.