

The Florida Office of Broadband: Federal Funding Opportunities

Katie Smith, Director
Florida Office of Broadband

January 27, 2023



FLORIDA OFFICE OF BROADBAND

Established: July 1, 2020, at the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

Statutory Authority: Sections 288.9961, 288.9962, and 288.9963, F.S.

The Office of Broadband is responsible for:

- Developing, marketing, and promoting broadband Internet services in the state.
- Creating a strategic plan to increase the use of broadband Internet services in the state.
- Reviewing and verifying public input regarding transmission speeds and availability of broadband Internet services throughout the state.
- Building and facilitating Local Technology Planning Teams (LTPT) or partnerships.
- Participating in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proceedings that are related to the geographic availability and deployment of broadband Internet in Florida.
- Establishing the Broadband Opportunity Program and rulemaking for the program to award grants to applicants who seek to expand broadband to unserved areas.
- Developing a map of broadband Internet service availability throughout the state.

THE FLORIDA STRATEGIC PLAN FOR BROADBAND

The Florida Strategic Plan for Broadband was delivered to the Governor, President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives on June 30, 2022.

The plan includes:

- Public input received during broadband workshops held in February 2021.
- Results and public comments received from the survey conducted in March 2021.
- Information and data collected from the Local Technology Planning Team meetings held around the state.
- Input and comments collected through stakeholder interviews conducted by the University of Florida, Public Utilities Research Center in 2022.
- Public input received through the Florida Broadband Availability Map.

WHY THE STRATEGIC PLAN IS IMPORTANT

The **Florida Strategic Plan for Broadband** is vital to the state's goals of expanding and improving access to broadband Internet service throughout Florida and outlines 25 specific Strategies for a Connected Economy.

The Plan:

- Makes Florida more competitive for federal broadband funding opportunities.
- Provides a roadmap for state decisionmakers on short and long-term implementation strategies.
- Informs units of local government what the state's priorities are for broadband infrastructure implementation.
- Informs private industry sectors about the opportunities for potential growth from the expansion of technology networks.

THE ROLE OF THE STATE

The State plays a leadership role in accountability and, through the execution of the Strategic Plan, plans to make Florida a national leader in broadband Internet activity.

The state is responsible for overseeing all broadband Internet expansion initiatives that take place in the state of Florida (Section 288.9961(3), F.S.).

- Ensuring broadband Internet availability and adoption.
- Ensuring use is sustainable in every rural community for a resilient Florida future.
- Supporting and facilitating communities to achieve these goals.
- Working with local and state government agencies, community organizations, and private businesses to ensure expansion measures throughout the state.

HOW COMMUNITIES CAN USE THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The **Florida Strategic Plan for Broadband** is a valuable guide for communities as they seek state and federal broadband funding opportunities.

By following the guidance of the Plan, communities will be able to prepare and submit strong broadband project applications which:

- Document community engagement and activities coordinated with the Local Technology Planning Teams.
- Document that broadband needs are not being met by other resources.
- Explain how their proposed projects align with the strategies outlined in the Plan.
- Prioritize providing service to unserved and underserved communities.
- Explain expected, measurable economic development impacts on their communities.

BROADBAND EQUITY, ACCESS AND DEPLOYMENT (BEAD)

The Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Program was established in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021.

Period of Performance: All funds must be expended within four years of the date of award.

Purpose:

- Broadband planning, deployment, mapping, and adoption activities related primarily to unserved locations.
- Priority placed on providing last mile infrastructure designed to provide connectivity directly to the end user.

PROSPERITY THROUGH A CONNECTED FLORIDA

The Office of Broadband submitted the **Prosperity Through a Connected Florida** project proposal in August 2022. In November 2022, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) awarded the Office **\$5 million** for the Five-Year Action Plan.

Prosperity Through a Connected Florida will identify Florida's broadband Internet availability and affordability, incorporate the Florida Digital Adoption and Use Plan, Florida Strategic Plan for Broadband and serve as a benchmark for adopting strategies, goals, and measures to successfully connect all Floridians.

Purpose:

The project is focused on advancing the objectives of the BEAD Program in conjunction with the Florida Strategic Plan for Broadband, including deploying broadband internet to all unserved locations and identifying the most efficient deployment models.

PROSPERITY THROUGH A CONNECTED FLORIDA

The **project** intends to utilize the following eligible activities:

- Conduct research and data collection.
- Provide technical assistance.
- Increase the operating capacity of the Office of Broadband.
- Perform asset mapping.
- Assist with local coordination and contracted support.

PROCUREMENT

The Office has posted a **Request For Proposal (RFP)** in MyFloridaMarketPlace (MFMP) to procure a vendor to draft the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan.

- The procurement is posted in MFMP until February 21, 2023 and is available for review on the Office of Broadband website, www.FloridaJobs.org/Broadband.
- The selected vendor will draft the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and the Florida Digital Adoption and Use Plan through the NTIA Digital Equity Planning Grant.

CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND

The Capital Projects Fund (CPF) was established in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021. ARPA appropriated \$10 billion to provide payments to states to “carry out capital improvement projects”. Florida was allocated **\$366,036,869**. The CPF grant funding was included in the Governor’s FY 2022-2023 Freedom First Budget.

Period of Performance: All funds must be expended by December 31, 2026.

For a Capital Project to be eligible to utilize Capital Projects Fund grant funds, it must meet all the following criteria:

- The Project invests in capital assets designed to directly enable work, education, and health monitoring.
- The Project is designed to address a critical need that resulted from, was made apparent, or exacerbated by the pandemic.
- The Project is designed to address a critical need of the community to be served by it.

CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND

The Office intends to use funds from the CPF to deploy broadband Internet infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas throughout the state, prioritizing rural areas.

There are three types of programs that are associated with the CPF:

- **Broadband Infrastructure Projects** (70 percent of the total CPF allocation).
- **Digital Connectivity Technology Projects** (5 percent of the total CPF allocation).
- **Multi-Purpose Community Facilities** (25 percent of the CPF allocation).

In November 2022, the **Office of Broadband received \$247.8 million from the U.S. Treasury** for the Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure Program.

CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND

The Office will open the **application window in early Spring 2023**.

- The application and scoring criteria for CPF infrastructure projects will be posted to the Office website prior to opening the application window.
- Applications will be accepted through the Broadband Application Portal, accessible on the Office website.
- Technical Assistance webinars will be hosted by the Office prior to opening the application window.
- All additional CPF program information will be posted to the Office website prior to opening the application window.

LINKS TO IMPORTANT RESOURCES

The Florida Office of Broadband website (www.FloridaJobs.org/Broadband) hosts the following resources:

- The Florida Strategic Plan for Broadband.
- The Faster Florida Broadband Map.
- Florida's Broadband Availability Map and Internet Speed Test.
- Local Technology Planning Teams Broadband Planning Toolkit.
- State and federal broadband funding opportunities.

Link to Strategic Plan

- <https://FloridaJobs.org/docs/default-source/Community-Planning-Development>

Link to Florida Statute 2288.9961, Promotion of broadband adoption; Florida Office of Broadband

- <https://www.flsenate.gov/laws/statutes/2021/288.9961>

Link to the Broadband Opportunity Program Page

- <https://www.FloridaJobs.org/Community-Planning-and-Development>

Thank You



If you have questions about this presentation or need to discuss a future project, please contact our office.

www.FloridaJobs.org/Broadband



Katie Smith, Director
Florida Office of Broadband
Email: Broadband@DEO.MyFlorida.com