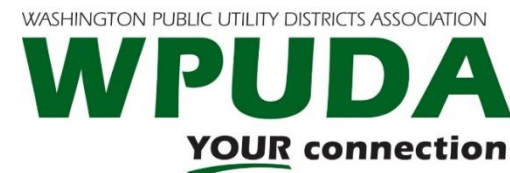


# Public Utility Districts & Broadband in Washington

December 2024 New Legislator Briefing

Stefany Zelepuza, Policy Manager

Washington PUD Association



# PUDs Providing Telecommunications Services



# The State of Washington Public Utility Districts' Telecommunication Systems



October 16, 2018

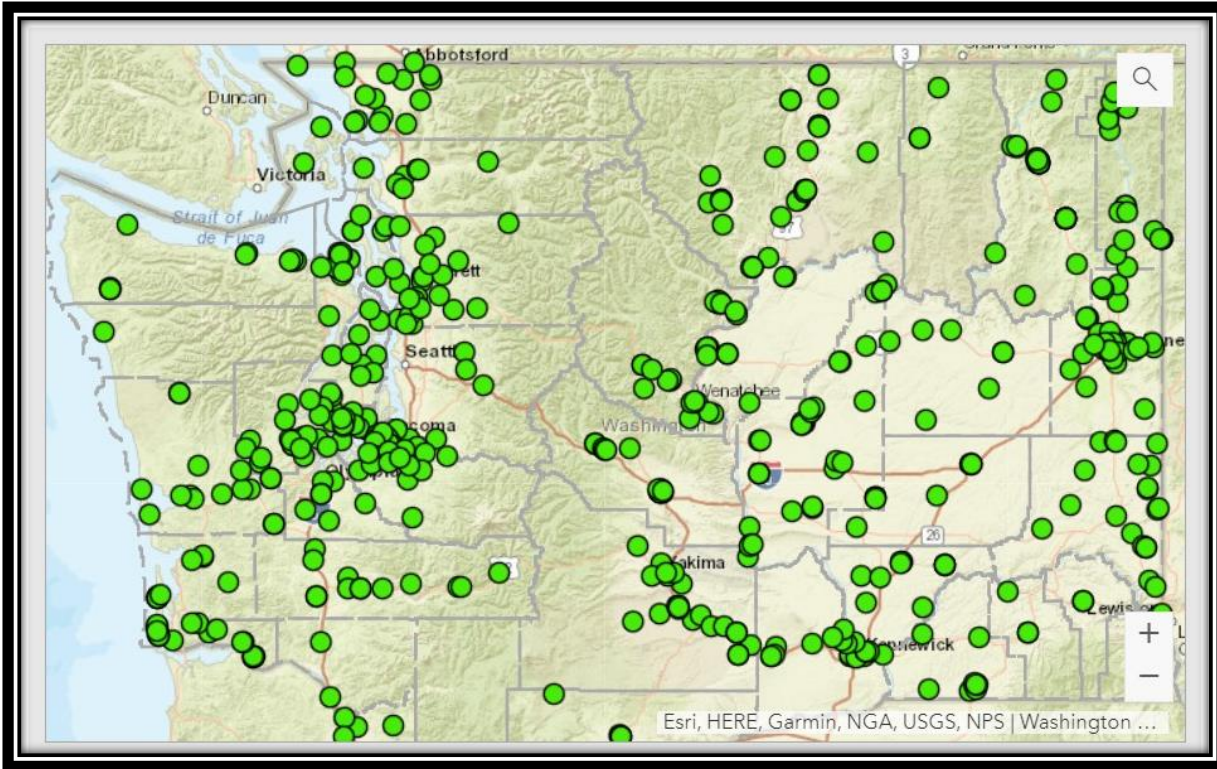
Prepared for the Senate Economic Development and International Trade  
Committee by the Washington Public Utility Districts Association

WASHINGTON PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION  
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## Fast Facts:

- 15 PUDs currently provide wholesale telecommunications services.
- PUDs have invested more than \$607 million in broadband infrastructure.
- PUDs have installed more than 8,900 miles of fiber.
- PUD fiber connects more than 64,000 end-users to broadband service.
- 160 retail internet service providers lease PUD fiber to serve their customers.

# Broadband Access is Essential



The Legislature granted PUDs, Ports and Cities retail broadband authority in 2021 (RCW 54.16.330)

- HB 1336 – Creating and expanding unrestricted authority for public entities to provide telecommunications services to end users.
- SB 5383 – Authorizing a public utility district to provide retail telecommunications services in unserved areas under certain conditions.



# Public Broadband Stakeholders

September 6, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Marfa Cantwell  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Dillane  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Mark Glumensamp Pappas  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Dan Newhouse  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Derek Kilmer  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Pramila Jayapal  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Kim Schrier  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Marjory Spickard  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515

**RE: Funding for the Affordable Connectivity Program**

Dear Senators Murray, and Cantwell, and Representatives Dillane, Larsen, Glumensamp Pappas, Newhouse, McMorris Rodgers, Kilmer, Jayapal, Schrier, Smith, and Strickland,

The infrastructure investment and jobs Act (IIJA) made a historic investment in closing the digital divide, including the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program, Digital Equity Act, and Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP).

In addition to this suite of grant programs, the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) was established. The ACP has helped make broadband affordable for over 20 million households across the country, including over 300,000 households in Washington, including Tribal, urban, rural and remote areas. These households depend on high-speed internet access for basic needs like education, health care, employment, and so much more.

ACP also plays an important role in the success of network deployments funded through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and IJA, which represent some of the hardest to reach areas across our state and country.

Many of these are in distressed areas with high percentages of households that will struggle or be unable to pay for service without the ACP. As such, the depletion of this funding could severely impact the ability to operate, maintain, and upgrade these networks over time.

**Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment (BEAD)  
"Pre-development, Pre-construction Technical Assistance" Funding Program**

Program recommendations of the Public Broadband Stakeholders of Washington

**THE NEED:** In preparation for \$1.23 Billion in BEAD funding allocated to Washington State and managed by the State Broadband Office, we recognize that many public entities such as cities, counties, ports, PUDs and Tribes will need technical assistance in order to be prepared in advance for engagement in the BEAD funding process.

**THE FUNDING SOURCE:** The Governor's proposed supplemental capital budget allocates this \$2.5 million in technical assistance funding from the Public Works Assistance Account. As the Public Works Assistance Account provides vital funding for water and wastewater infrastructure projects and is already oversubscribed, we strongly urge the Legislature to identify an alternate funding source for this purpose.

**CLARIFICATION:** We recommend that the word "subgrantees" be stricken from budget language surrounding this program. Use of this designation may unintentionally limit eligibility of public agencies with an interest in broadband deployment who may or may not be a lead applicant for BEAD funding. The scope of technical assistance needs for public agencies is broader than the pool of applicants for BEAD funding, to include the need for assistance with community outreach, local validation of federal broadband service availability maps, and guidance on local supports for project applications.

**THE AMOUNT:** The capital budget currently includes \$2.5 million for broadband technical assistance. We believe that this is insufficient to address the varying technical assistance needs of public agencies across the state. The Washington State Broadband Office originally requested \$5 million in funding for technical assistance. This group believes that funding of \$10 million will be necessary to fully support the pre-planning challenges that local governmental entities and Tribes will face when implementing \$1.23 Billion of statewide planning, engineering, and construction of broadband infrastructure, to be funded under the BEAD program.

**JOINT PRIORITIES:** In order to allow for more robust engagement among public stakeholders this funding should be available through direct assistance as well as funding disbursement, with priority given to the following categories of technical assistance:

- Community Outreach Surrounding the Challenge
- Mapping Challenges
- Evaluation of Project Applications
- Application Creation - Engineering and Technical

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ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON CITIES

**WASHINGTON PORTS**

**Alignment with State Broadband Goals**

As stated in the introductory remarks of Volume 2, "Washingtonians have ambitious goals for broadband access, including universal service, equitable broadband access and adoption for all underserved populations, and scalable and sustainable "future proof" broadband infrastructure." These are admirable goals which we support and further encourage the WSBO to ensure these goals are the **minimum standard** for the BEAD funding program.

**RCW 43.330.536 Broadband office—Goals.**  
It is a goal of the state of Washington that:  
(1) By 2024, all Washington businesses and residences have access to high-speed broadband that provides minimum download speeds of at least twenty-five megabits per second and minimum upload speeds of at least three megabits per second.  
(2) By 2026, all Washington communities have access to at least one gigabit per second symmetrical broadband service at anchor institutions like schools, hospitals, libraries, and government buildings; and  
(3) By 2028, all Washington businesses and residences have access to at least one provider of broadband with download speeds of at least one hundred fifty megabits per second and upload speeds of at least one hundred fifty megabits per second

By leveraging the BEAD funding allocation in support of the state broadband goals as outlined above we maximize this opportunity to support future proof broadband infrastructure. We would wholeheartedly support the alignment of the BEAD Volume 2 goals with the state broadband office goals as outlined in RCW 43.330.536.

**Project Area Definition**

The public broadband stakeholder group would support either option of county or school district defined project areas. We look forward to the opportunity to review project area groupings, following the following criteria:

- Request for a percentage of and underserved locations, which are geographically incapable which are determined to be the project area maps; BSIs for broadband adoption due to regulatory hurdles; Washingtonians applicant's control, some areas of service as the remainder of the list, including the rationale as stress access, and if applicable.
- Requested from providing broadband and allow for applicants to adjust instances.



# Broadband Funding



[WSBO Webpage](#)

Funding: Grants



[CERB Webpage](#)

Funding: Loans/Grants



[PWB Webpage](#)

Funding: Loans/Grants

[RCW 43.330.536](#)

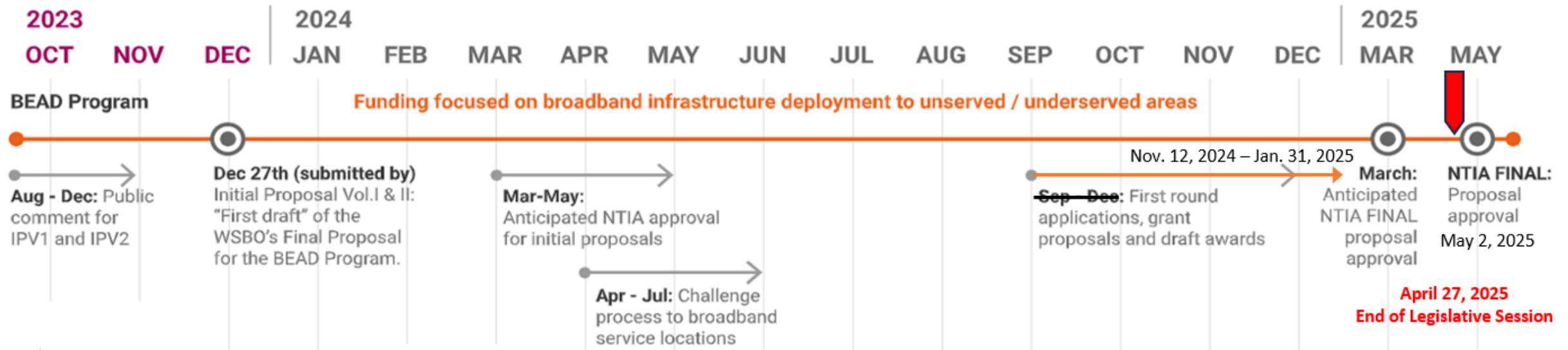
## **Broadband office – Goals.**

*It is the goal of the state of Washington that:*

- 1) By 2024, all Washington businesses and residences have access to high-speed broadband that provides minimum download speeds of at least 25 mbps and minimum upload speeds of at least 3 mbps;*
- 2) By 2026, all Washington communities have access to at least 1 Gbps symmetrical broadband service at anchor institutions like schools, hospitals, libraries, and government buildings; and*
- 3) By 2028, all Washington businesses and residences have access to at least one provider of broadband with download speeds of at least 150 mbps symmetrical broadband service.*

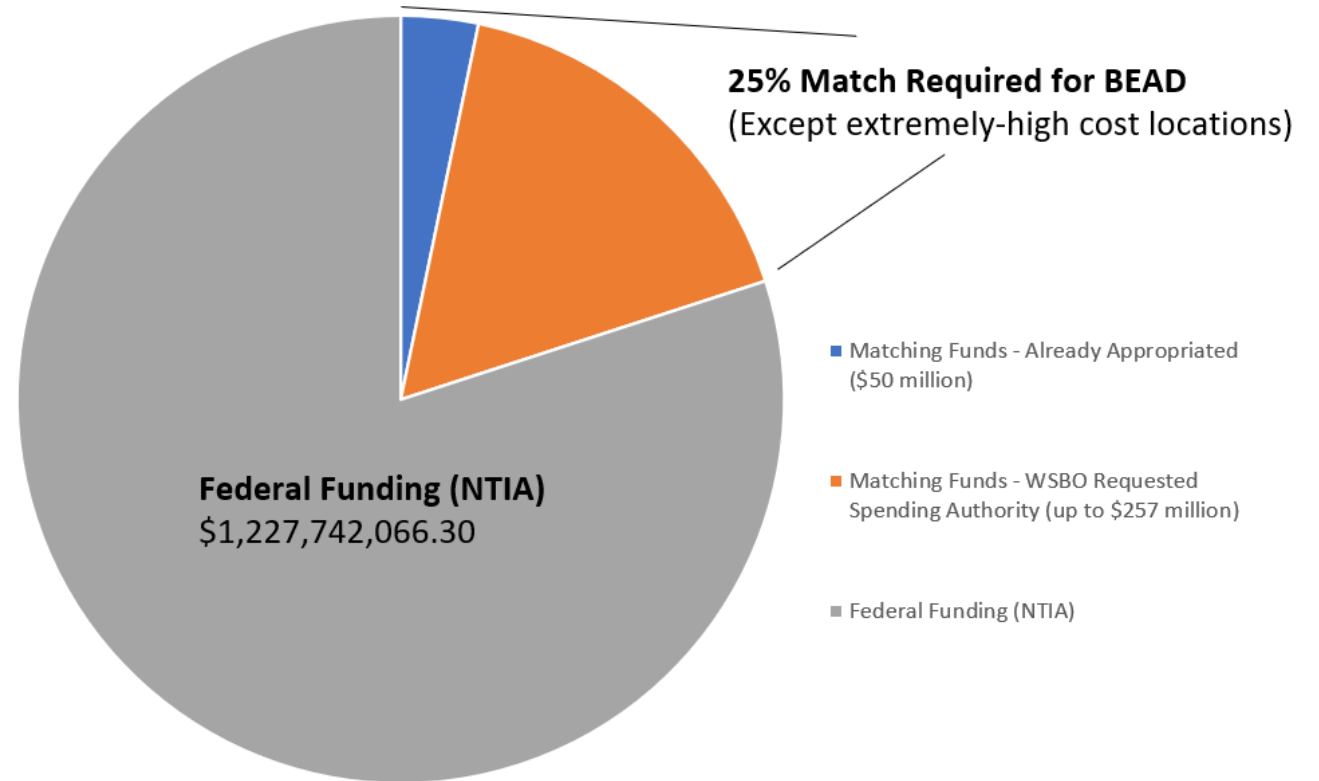
# What is BEAD?

- Washington state has been allocated more than \$1.2 billion in federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).
- Funding will be distributed through the Washington State Broadband Office (WSBO).



# WPUDA Broadband Priorities for the 2025 Legislative Session

The legislature has committed to fully fund the 25% required match for public entity BEAD subgrantees, to maximize the benefit of federal dollars coming to Washington State for broadband deployment to unserved and underserved areas of the state.





# Questions?

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