



IBEW POLICY BRIEF

Chapter 13: Broadband

The IBEW policies support efforts to ensure all Americans can access affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband, particularly those expanding access to rural, unserved, and underserved communities. In addition, high-speed broadband has become necessary for vital medical care and education services.

Recent Developments

Broadband Funding in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) includes a historic investment of \$65 billion in broadband infrastructure funding to ensure that all Americans have access to high-speed broadband internet. Funding will spread across several grant programs for states and communities.

The \$42.45 Billion BEAD Program

The most extensive broadband grant program created under BIL is the \$42.5 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program. BEAD supplies grants to states to accelerate broadband deployment.

The Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) will administer the program. Each state will receive a minimum of \$100 million, with 10 percent set aside for underserved high-cost areas. States must certify they met 100 percent of "unserved" regions before funding deployment begins in "underserved" areas.

Other BIL Broadband Programs

NTIA will also offer broadband infrastructure funding for the following:

- Digital equity grants: \$2.75 billion to establish two new grant programs to promote digital inclusion and equity in historically underserved communities
- Tribal broadband connectivity fund: \$2 billion
- Middle-mile broadband infrastructure: \$1 billion
- Rural communities: \$2 billion
- Appalachian Regional Commission's High-Speed Internet Initiative: \$100 million

Broadband in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds program, a part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), provided \$350 billion in emergency funding for water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure investments. In addition, the Biden administration included labor standards in the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. Requirements include requiring companies receiving funds through this program to pay their workers at least prevailing wages or provide significant wage and hour information to the federal government.

ARPA also includes \$10 billion in Coronavirus Capital Projects Funds. The Department of Treasury will administer the funding. Treasury officials have stated that they prefer states to use these funds for broadband.

Broadband in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 created the Broadband Infrastructure Program, designed to support broadband infrastructure deployment in unserved areas, predominantly rural areas. Agencies have awarded grants to Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, West Virginia, and Guam from this program.

Pending Priorities

The IBEW supports policies that ensure federal taxpayer dollars encourage unions and collective bargaining.

Ensuring Unionized High-Road Employers Get the Funding

The IBEW's primary objective is to ensure high-road unionized employers are first in line to receive federal and state grants for building broadband service infrastructure. Meeting this objective requires federal and state agencies responsible for disbursing broadband funding to mandate that a contractor has a demonstrated record of compliance with labor and employment laws. Federal and state agencies can do this through pre-certification and required reporting of violations. Agencies can also attach standards to ensure workers are paid at least the prevailing wage and exclude low-road contractors and subcontractors from receiving government contracts.


The U.S. Department of Commerce released the BEAD Program notice of funding opportunity (NOFO). The language in the NOFO demonstrated that the Biden Administration had followed through with its promise to support the creation of middle-class, union jobs in the telecommunications sector. Within the guidelines, the BEAD NOFO requires that:

- States consult and coordinate with labor unions to develop their buildout plans. States must document and certify this engagement to be eligible for funding
- States prioritize employers and contractors with a demonstrated record of compliance with federal labor and employment laws

- States ensure the use of a highly skilled workforce to build the BEAD-financed broadband network. A requirement fulfilled through using graduates of registered apprenticeships or other joint labor-management training programs
- The BEAD Program strongly encourages and incentivizes paying workers prevailing wages and using a unionized workforce or project labor agreement
- Companies that don't certify that they are paying their workers prevailing wages are to report important information about the quality of the jobs they are creating
- Companies disclose their plans for the continuity of the workforce
- The BEAD Program provides authority and encourages the use of labor peace agreements

The IBEW supports incorporating labor standards and bid preferences for responsible contractors on broadband grant programs, encouraging highly skilled family-supporting job creation.

Chapter Resources

Hyperlink	URL	QR
Broadband Funding Resources:		
BEAD Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)	https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/BEAD%20NOFO.pdf	
The BroadbandUSA Federal Funding Guide	https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/sites/default/files/2021-07/FY21%20Federal%20Funding%20Guide%20Updated%2007-12-21-compressed.pdf	
The BroadbandUSA Interactive State Broadband Programs Guide	https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/states	

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