

February 12, 2020

**ILLINOIS HEALTH AND HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
M E M O R A N D U M**

SUBJECT: \$50 Million Broadband Investment Encourages Hospital Partnership

On Feb. 5, Governor J.B. Pritzker [announced](#) that the state released \$50 million in funding for the first round of matching grants of [Connect Illinois](#), the state's \$420 million statewide broadband expansion. The [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO) states that applicants must identify and demonstrate broadband-driven economic development in their proposals, with **two specific examples in the weighted point structure directly incentivizing partnership with hospitals and health systems:**

- For healthcare, the proposed impact on telehealth, electronic medical records, or related uses; and
- The proposed impact on community anchor institutions such as public libraries, hospitals, schools, social service centers, community gathering centers, or other health care clinics.

We encourage member hospitals and health systems in regions with unserved or underserved access to wireless broadband (as defined below) to work with local telecommunication entities and community partners on these applications.

Connect Illinois, which aims to provide universal access to basic broadband for homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions by 2024, is centered on three main outcomes: education, telehealth and economic development. Applicants are required to provide at least 50% non-state matching funds for each proposal, with a higher application score when the non-state match reaches 55% or more. **The non-state matching funds for this grant opportunity allow that a portion of the funding may be used for economic development as described in the examples above (e.g., telehealth equipment or pilot programs, electronic medical record improvement, or hospitals and other healthcare clinics).**

Grant Applications Details

Grant applications are due by April 3 at 5:00 p.m. Details can be found on the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's [Connect Illinois Broadband Grant Application webpage](#). **On Thursday, Feb. 13 from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m., a Connect Illinois Broadband Grant webinar will be led by Matt Schmit, Deputy Director for Broadband, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. To register for the free webinar, [click here](#).** Eligible applicants include the following entities:

- An incorporated business or partnership;
- A political subdivision;

- A nonprofit organization;
- A cooperative association; and
- A limited liability corporation organized for the purpose of expanding broadband access.

Broadband infrastructure projects must be located in areas where households, businesses, **or community anchor institutions** lack access to wireline broadband service that can be classified as **unserved** and/or **underserved**:

- **Unserved**: One of the institutions listed above lack access to wireline broadband service of at least 25/3 Mbps; and,
- **Underserved**: One of the institutions listed above have wireline broadband access of at least 25/3 Mbps but less than 100/20 Mbps.

Applications also may be considered on the basis of three categories of focus:

- Broadband access for Illinois homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions;
- Broadband innovation for economic development and related applications; or
- Urban broadband for access and/or innovation in qualified Illinois cities or metropolitan areas of 75,000 residents or more.

Although successful projects may – and are encouraged to – produce positive impact toward both broadband access and broadband innovation, applicants must indicate under which of the three categories an application is intended to be considered. Up to \$5 million per project in state-based grants will be available during the first round of funding, and priority consideration will be given to projects that leverage certain non-state funding – from private, federal, and/or local sources – totaling 50 percent or more of eligible total project costs.

Although the maximum individual grant amount is \$5 million, applicants are encouraged to submit multiple proposals. As noted, applicants are required to provide at least 50% of non-state funding to match awarded grant dollars, effectively doubling the size of the nation's largest state competitive grant program to expand high-speed internet to \$100 million in 2020. Greater weight will be given to applications prioritizing local partnerships with community anchors, including hospitals, that demonstrate community health and safety benefits in advancing broadband-related efforts like telehealth. Applicants will also be asked to quantify the demonstrated impact of improved broadband within community anchors and other institutions.

Subsequent rounds will follow over the course of several years, as \$400 million has been appropriated and authorized as available funding, and Connect Illinois Broadband Grant Program awarded project work must be completed by June 30, 2023.