

October 21, 2020

MEMORANDUM

On October 19, Governor J.B. Pritzker announced that the state released \$50 million in funding for the second 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 seek progress in digital literacy, adoption, and inclusion while leveraging investment in new broadband infrastructure to spur advances in areas such as economic development, education, precision agriculture, and telehealth. The NOFO includes two specific examples in the weighted point structure directly incentivizing partnerships with hospitals and health systems:

Broadband Access for Illinois homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions (e.g., hospitals and health systems) in unserved or underserved areas; and

- Urban Broadband for access, equity and/or innovation (e.g., telehealth advancement) in qualified Illinois cities or metropolitan areas of 75,000 residents or more.

This availability of additional funding builds on the inaugural round of funding released earlier this year, which supported 28 projects collectively slated to support more than 26,000 new or enhanced connections serving every corner of the state. Click here for the IHA memo providing further details on first round funding. We encourage member hospitals and health systems in regions with underserved access to wireless broadband 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 (e.g., telehealth equipment or pilot programs, electronic medical record improvement, or hospitals and other healthcare clinics).

Grant applications may be submitted between Nov. 1, 2020 and March 1, 2020. Details can be found on the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Connect Illinois webpage. For questions or comments, please contact IHA.

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