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Gov. Lee Announces \$61 Million in Emergency Broadband Grants

Nashville, Tenn. – Tennessee Governor Bill Lee and the Financial Stimulus Accountability Group today announced \$61 million will be awarded in Tennessee Emergency Broadband Fund grants to improve access to broadband internet across the state. The grants are funded through the State’s Coronavirus Relief Fund allotment from the federal government and distributed through the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has only further elevated the importance of access to reliable, affordable broadband internet to facilitate telemedicine, distance learning, and telecommuting,” said Gov. Lee. “I thank the members of our Financial Stimulus Accountability Group and the Department of Economic and Community Development for their work in distributing these funds to shovel-ready projects that will directly benefit Tennesseans.”

“The emergence of COVID-19 greatly accelerated the need for widespread access to broadband. As all of us adjust to the new normal of social distance, technology becomes even more critical to study, work and socialize,” said Lt. Gov. Randy McNally. “These dollars will allow for implementation of greatly needed projects crucial to bringing us together virtually as we strive to stay apart physically.”

“This \$61 million investment in additional broadband grants, in conjunction with the \$60 million the General Assembly has already appropriated, will continue to increase access to high speed internet services across Tennessee. Our families, schools, businesses, and health care communities will benefit from this enhanced broadband infrastructure,”

said House Speaker Cameron Sexton. “I appreciate Gov. Lee, Lt. Gov. McNally, our Accountability Group members and the General Assembly for their ongoing efforts to help strengthen Tennessee’s infrastructure; we will continue working together to identify and create solutions that address both our immediate and our emerging, long-term needs.”

ECD received 84 applications for \$89.1 million in funding. Following review and a public comment period, 62 projects representing \$61.1 million will be funded. The remaining \$28 million in projects were denied due to a number of factors including project feasibility, applicant experience, and public comments received from existing broadband providers. Unfunded applicants will be invited to submit an application for the Tennessee Broadband Accessibility Grant Program, funded at \$15 million this year, where applicants are given significantly more time to complete project builds.

Pursuant to federal guidelines, these projects are limited to those that would enhance access to individuals and families affected during the COVID-19 pandemic by the lack of broadband access in their area. Eligible entities included those authorized to provide broadband services in Tennessee, and eligible areas were limited to those unserved or underserved locations lacking all equipment necessary to provide a broadband connection capable of supporting telemedicine, distance learning, and telecommuting.

More information on the Tennessee Emergency Broadband Fund can be found [here](#).

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