

Broadband in the Tri-State Region: One-Page Summary

Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri | Prepared for the Tri-State Development Policy and Advocacy Committee

The Big Picture

Broadband is essential infrastructure for businesses, farms, schools, and health care. All three states are using federal BEAD funding and facing the same barriers: high rural build costs, permitting delays, supply chain limits, and thin construction crews. Fiber is the preferred long-term solution, with satellite as a short-term or supplemental option.

Why It Matters

- Illinois research shows 213% higher business growth rates in rural counties with broadband.
- Illinois expects broadband grants to add about 11,400 jobs and \$2 billion in economic activity.
- Access is only part of the picture: affordability, devices, and digital skills drive actual use.

State Snapshots

State	Where things stand	Approach
Illinois	Over \$387M granted through Connect Illinois (2020-2026) to connect 45,000+ locations. About \$1B in BEAD to reach roughly 156,000 locations at about \$6,100 each; \$1.6B+ total investment.	Office of Broadband plus U of I Broadband Lab; permitting support and Dig Once; broadband jobs board; digital equity fund.
Iowa	Significant fiber expansion in Southeast Iowa and the Burlington area, per provider ImON Communications.	Provider-led buildout; challenges include county permitting differences, railroad crossings, fiber supply, and workforce.
Missouri	\$1.72B BEAD allocation approved by NTIA; fiber 82%, satellite 12%, fixed wireless 6%, coaxial 1%. About 11,000 locations were removed from eligibility.	Grant agreements next; construction expected late 2026. HB 2886 would raise speed minimums, keep defaulted funds in state, and extend BEAD to 2031.

Shared Challenges

- Rural buildout is the most complex and expensive, with fewer households per mile.
- Permitting rules vary by county and state; federal rules such as domestic sourcing add complexity.
- Fiber supply and construction workforce limit speed; federal changes create uncertainty.
- FCC map accuracy is improving but still limited. Missouri's \$945M in non-deployment funds is a key open question.

Opportunities for Tri-State Development

- Compare permitting and regulatory differences, and share Illinois's permitting tools with providers.
- Exchange provider and community best practices; raise awareness of data tools and funding.
- Explore a regional rural broadband convening.
- Track Missouri's grant agreements and HB 2886, Illinois BEAD awards, and Iowa deployment.

Note: Sources are the April 2, 2026 committee notes, the Chariton Valley update, and the Illinois Office of Broadband deck. Iowa state program data was not available. Illinois figures vary slightly by source (\$386M vs. \$387M; BEAD cited as \$968M, \$1.04B, or nearly \$1B).