

**DON'T LEAVE**

**YOUR BROADBAND**

**FUTURE TO CHANCE**

The State of Missouri is receiving **\$1.7 billion dollars** to fund rural broadband infrastructure projects. Don't be a bystander as others make important decisions about your broadband future. The Benton Institute's Broadband Breakthrough Program is designed to place your community at the center of these decisions.

The Broadband Breakthrough program combines education and consulting/technical assistance for community leaders to gather and understand key information to support community efforts to engage and create partnerships through matchmaking with private and cooperative broadband providers.

Participation in this program is free but requires the applicant to establish a dedicated community team.

The application process is simple, Up to ten areas will be selected for the June program. Areas could include parts of a county, an entire county, or multi-county project area. Applications will be approved on a first-come, first-served basis. Non-priority areas will be considered for participation if capacity exists.

With broadband deadlines fast approaching, now is the time to position your community for success. The Missouri Office of Broadband Development awards points to grant applications that show community engagement and ISP partnerships. Our program can help you maximize those points.

**The Broadband Breakthrough program combines education and technical assistance to community leaders to support efforts to create partnerships with broadband providers.**

**up to 10 areas will be selected**

**NO-COST to participate**

*\*Upon completion of the program, select coal-impacted counties are eligible for additional grant writing financial assistance from another financial partner.*

### THE BREAKTHROUGH TEAM

Broadband Breakthrough will combine the Benton Institute's community broadband leadership training with Reid Consulting Group's technical expertise to accelerate broadband network project development.

Benton's work in four states has produced amazing results. In Illinois, 51% of recently awarded broadband funds (\$168 million) went to eleven communities participating in Benton-led programs. These awards are the direct result of communities identifying their own unique visions and preferred partners. Funded projects include partnerships with existing broadband service providers, attraction of new competitive providers, and middle-mile networks supporting rural last-mile deployment.

Reid Consulting Group has been working with communities on broadband partnerships and planning for nearly 20 years. In 2023 RCG completed significant broadband analysis through the Missouri Association of Councils of Government (MACOG) for the targeted communities ([https://macog.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RCG-report\\_MACOG\\_10\\_31\\_23.pdf](https://macog.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RCG-report_MACOG_10_31_23.pdf)).

### TARGETED COUNTIES

- |          |             |               |
|----------|-------------|---------------|
| Audrain  | Jasper      | Oregon        |
| Boone    | Johnson     | Pemiscot      |
| Buchanan | Lafayette   | Perry         |
| Caldwell | Lewis       | Pettis        |
| Cedar    | Lincoln     | Polk          |
| Clark    | Livingston  | Randolph      |
| Clinton  | Madison     | Ripley        |
| Dade     | Maries      | Saline        |
| Dallas   | McDonald    | St. Clair     |
| Dent     | Miller      | Ste Genevieve |
| Greene   | Mississippi | St. Louis     |
| Hickory  | Morgan      | Texas         |
| Holt     | New Madrid  | Warren        |
| Howard   | Newton      | Washington    |
| Howell   | Nodaway     | Wayne         |
| Iron     |             |               |



## PROGRAM ACTIVITIES & GOALS

- **ORIENTATION:** Your Community Team will meet with the Breakthrough Team to discuss broadband reality and the lived experience of your constituents, go over available maps and data, and prepare a Community Broadband Survey.
- **OUTREACH:** The Community Team will distribute the Community Broadband Survey to gauge perception of existing services and demand for improved services. The survey will remain open for approximately 40 days with options for print and online distribution. Your team will be responsible for all survey marketing and any printing/ mailing costs.
- **PREPARATION:** The Breakthrough Team will deliver three weekly Zoom webinars that will prepare Community Teams to develop successful project proposals. Your team should plan to watch and discuss these webinars as a group. Topics include:
  - Broadband Provider Partnerships and Project Development
  - Federal/State/Local Broadband Finance Programs and Tools
  - Successful Grant Applications
- **ANALYSIS:** The Breakthrough Team will meet with each community to examine survey results, review additional maps and data, discuss economic impact factors, evaluate technology options and cost estimates, and identify the best prospective broadband provider partnerships.
- **MATCHMAKING:** The Breakthrough Team will attend up to three “matchmaking” meetings between the Community Team and prospective broadband provider partners. The Breakthrough Team will serve as an information resource and expert community ombudsman.
- **WRAP UP:** The Breakthrough Team will host a final Zoom session to share findings and discuss results from other participating communities.

## HOW TO APPLY

Applications from priority counties will be approved on a first-come, first served basis.

To apply, send an email to Bill Coleman (bcoleman@benton.org) with the following information:

- Primary Contact: name, address, and preferred way to communicate (email, phone, etc.)
- Community Description: boundaries, demographics, proximity to larger communities, etc.
- Broadband Need: details of current broadband situation and any ongoing or past planning, including any use of the MACOG study.
- Team Members: A list of participants and their community affiliations. 8-12 members is ideal.

**This program requires a committed, engaged community team.**

Interested communities are strongly encouraged to contact Bill Coleman at bcoleman@benton.org or 651-491-2551 to schedule a quick program overview presentation.

**Applications accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until June 28, 2024.**

## MORE ABOUT OUR TEAM



*The Benton Institute for Broadband & Society is an over 40-year-old nonprofit working to make sure everyone can use and benefit from high quality, affordable broadband. We strengthen local, state, and national leadership by providing the timely information, rigorous evidence, practical guidance, and advocacy needed to articulate and implement a broadband for all agenda.*

*Over the past several years, Benton has led community engagement and broadband planning programs in Illinois, Ohio, Arkansas, and Tennessee. We are currently developing work in Oklahoma and Missouri.*

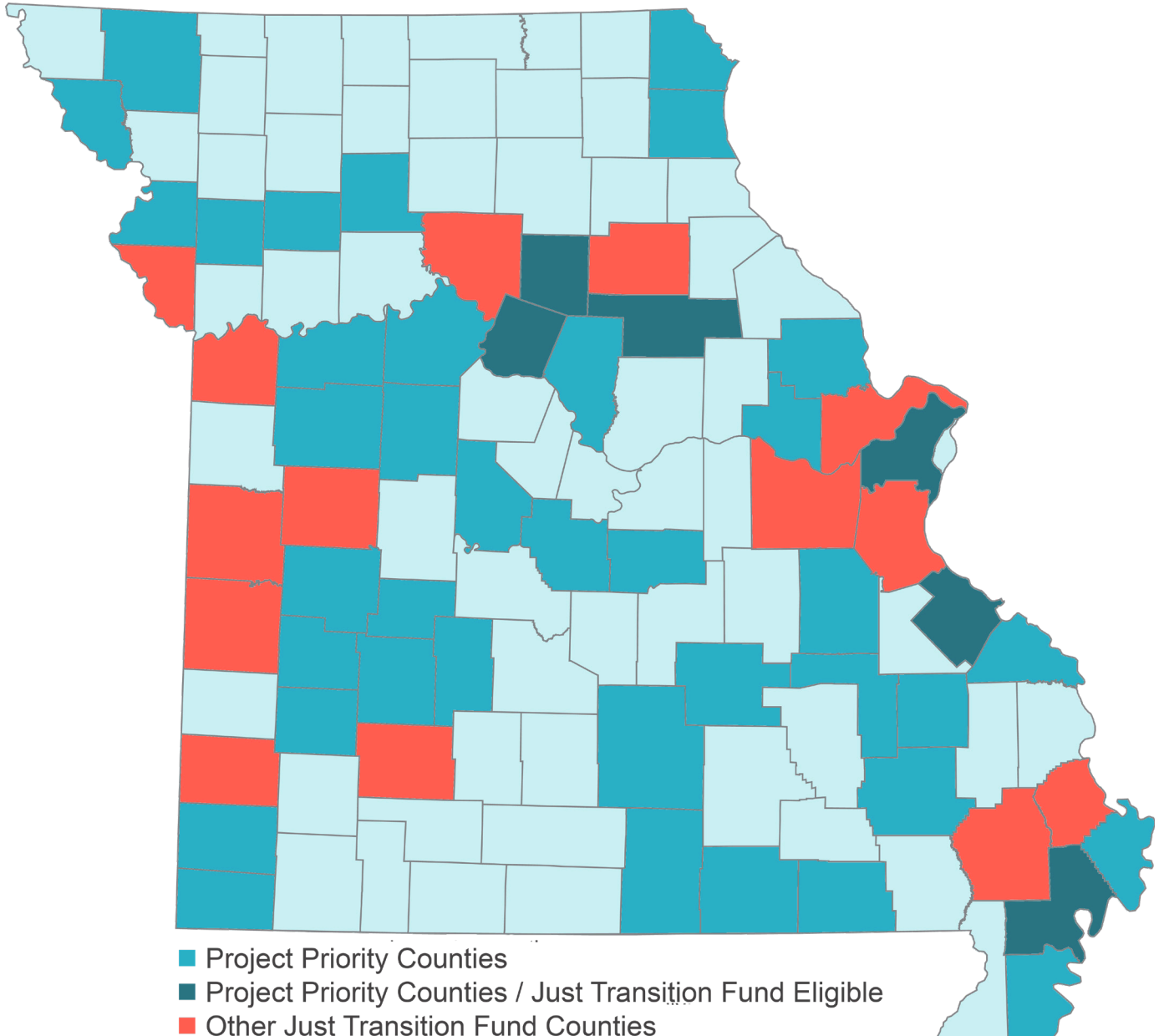


*Reid Consulting Group (RCG) has worked in both urban and rural settings to conduct last-mile and middle-mile feasibility, planning, and engineering projects for councils of government, state agencies, ISPs, electric utilities, and local governments. RCG fiber projects exceed 6,000 miles across 18 states with a total project value of \$1.6 billion supported by \$330 million in grants.*

*In 2023 RCG prepared the Broadband Modeling and Engineering Feasibility Study (October 31, 2023) for the Missouri Association of Councils of Government (MACOG) with a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), and the Missouri Department of Economic Development (DED) Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG). Reid received support from the Missouri Office of Broadband Development throughout the study process.*

# TARGETED COUNTIES

APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED ON A FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED BASIS UNTIL JUNE 28, 2024.



Building on broadband planning work already completed, Benton Institute for Broadband & Society has identified priority counties (in blue) which will receive preference in the application process.

Audrain, Howard, New Madrid, Randolph, and Ste. Genevieve counties are a priority of both Benton Institute and the Just Transition Fund. These counties (in blue with a red hatch) and adjacent counties (in red) may be eligible re eligible for additional JTF planning and grant writing resources upon completion of the Benton program. Contact us for confirmation of eligibility.

*Counties that are not shown as a priority are eligible to apply for the program and encouraged to do so as it is likely that there will be program capacity.*