

Swain Broadband Committee: Commissioners Report

2023 Update on Committee Activity,
Grant Awards, and Funding Needs

October 3, 2023



Committee Members

Service Length: 2017-2023

1. John Tyndall
- 2.* Karen Cook
3. Mark Tyson
- 4.* Jason Gardner
- 5.* Leonard Winchester
- 6.* Jeff Delfield
7. Juliet Jacobsen Kastorff
- 8.* Julie Thorner

***Committee Member since 2017**



Swain County Government Invitees

Kevin King - County Manager

Roger Parsons - Commissioner

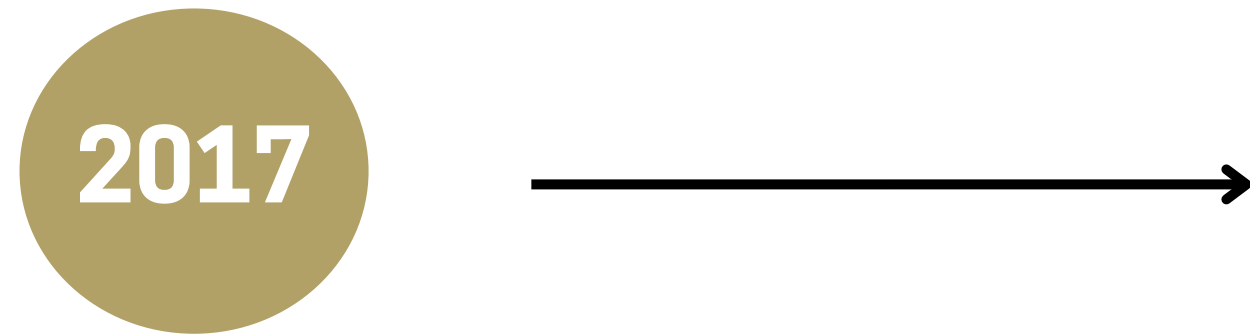
Our Broadband Committee Partners



Appalachian
Regional
Commission



Timeline of Activities



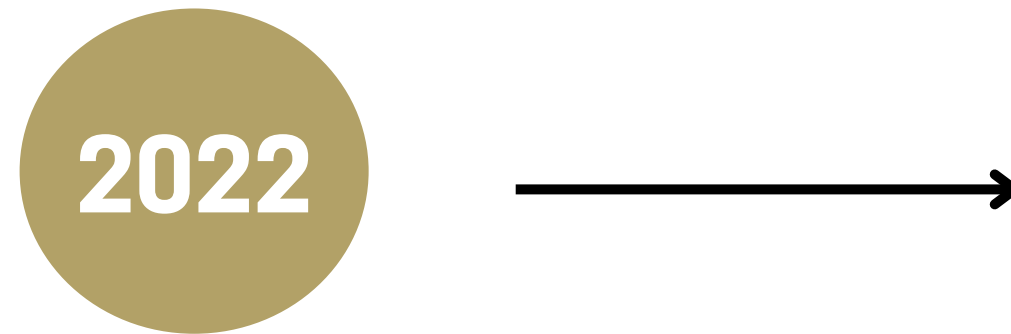
Committee Established 2017

INVENTORIED: Broadband internet services availability and quality in Swain County.

IDENTIFIED: Available Federal and State Grant Programs and any match requirements.

PREPARED: Swain County to support grant applications via allocating required matching funds, advising on community needs.

DEVELOPED: Strong communications with NCDIT, area internet providers, and regional partners.



Assisted ISPs to Win Grants

SUPPORTED: ISP Applications for as many grants as Swain County was eligible for.

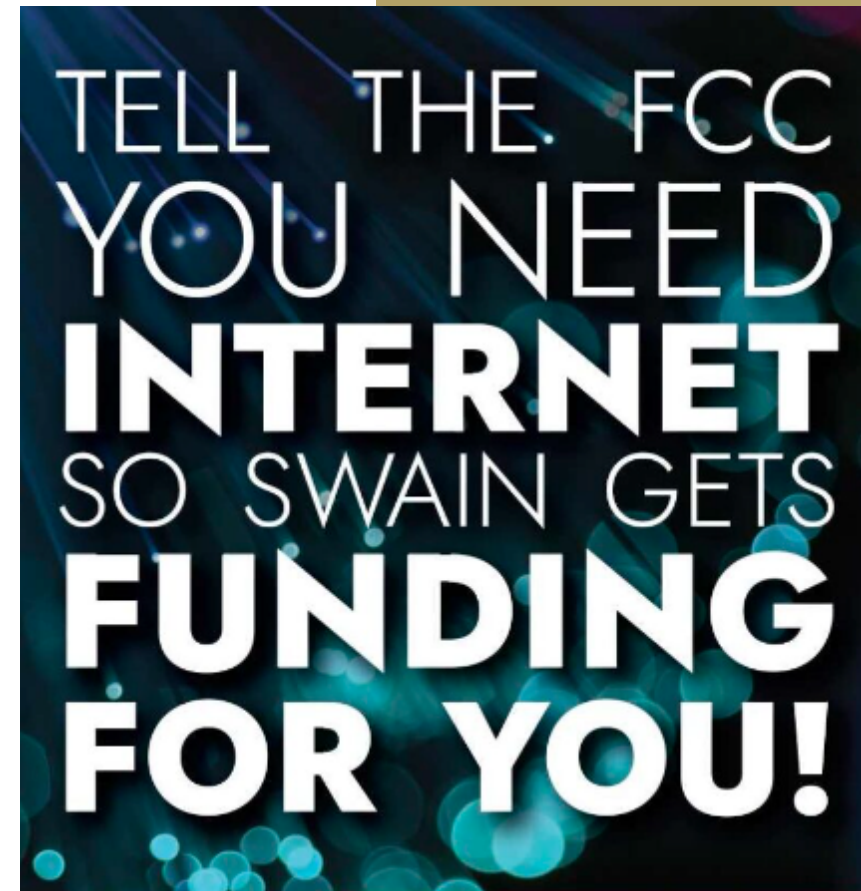
STATUS OF NEW BROADBAND DEPLOYMENTS:

- Three Great Grants won during 2019, 2021, and 2022 - total is now over \$6.3 million.
- 2019-2021 - Skywave for fixed wireless (now Balsam West).
- 2022- 2023 Zito Media and Cherokee Cablevision for fiber to the home (FTTH).



2022 FCC Mapping Community Alert

- We created a direct postcard mailing and online instructions for county residents to check and update their FCC map location and broadband availability information.
- The FCC map determines the amount of federal broadband funding available to each county, in 2023. Wrong data means less funding for Swain.
- Broadband committees in neighboring counties used our website to help inform their residents to update their FCC map locations.
- 9,695 postcards were sent out.
- Printing and postage approved and paid for by Swain County.



**Get Help,
Be Counted!**
<https://bit.ly/swainFCC>

Does your Swain County home or business still need affordable, high speed broadband internet?
RESPOND BEFORE JANUARY 13, 2023

Go to: broadbandmap.fcc.gov

Check for your location:

✓ Verify It Or ✗ Correct It.

Check the internet availability listed for your location:

✓ Verify It Or ✗ Correct It.

You must challenge the data if it's missing or incorrect.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

If you do not add or update incorrect LOCATION and INTERNET AVAILABILITY data, your location will NOT be included on the the final FCC broadband eligibility coverage map!

Only locations with currently LIMITED broadband coverage, be eligible for Federal Funding through the \$42.5 Billion BEA Program to get high speed internet deployed in Swain County. We get our full share without your input.

Produced by: SWAIN COUNTY BROADBAND COMMITTEE

What's Happening Now

Next Broadband Funding Initiatives and Projects in Progress

2022 GREAT Grant: Zito Media



WINNER #1

Awarded: \$3,979,001

Zito Match: \$702,177

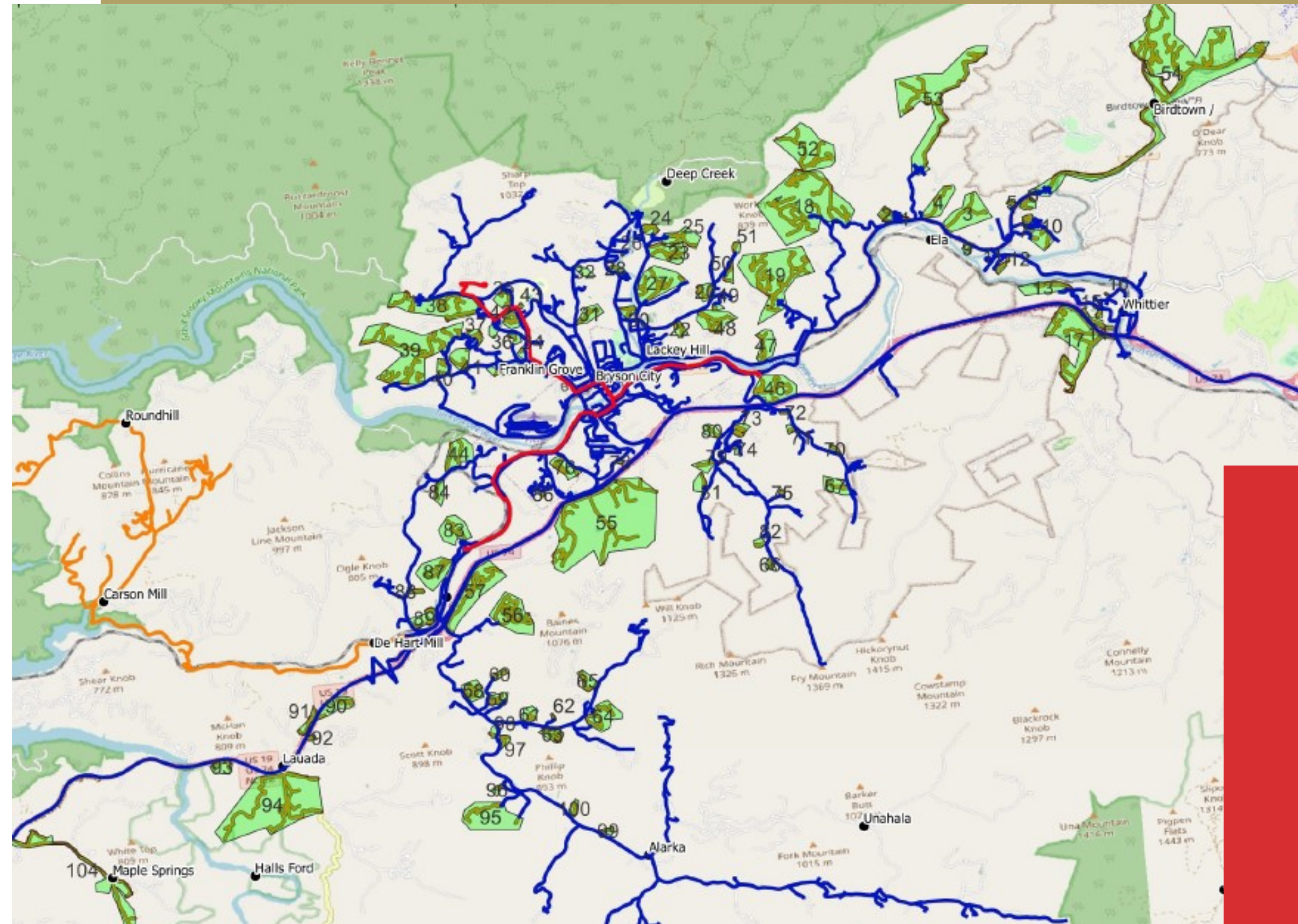
Swain Co. Match: \$15,000

Locations: 1,619

**Includes: Households- 1,573 and
Businesses- 51**

Contract Signed: April 2023

Two Year Schedule: Ends April 2025



Deployment Locations in Zito GREAT Grant Application



- Maple Springs
- Lauada
- Redo Alarka
- Fill in Jackson Line
- Jenkins Br
- Hughes Br
- Breedlove Rd
- Laurel Br
- Fill in Buckners Br
- Parcels Kirkland's Ck
- Shepherd Ck
- Franklin Grove to Lower Lands Ck
- Along 19 from Ela to Birdtown/Birdtown north
- Sections East Deep Ck
- Bett's Br
- Whittier
- Cooper's Ck
- Upper Galbraith Ck
- Cline Rd
- Johnson Br Rd

Zito Media GREAT Grant: Swain County Project Status



Project Deployment Timeline:

- Engineering - completed Aug
- Assessment of engineering to be sure nothing is missed - 2-3 weeks - Sept
- Order supplies - end of Sept - takes ~2 months to arrive (Oct-Nov)
- Construction begins on fiber to the home deployment - late November.
- Time to complete deployment - approx one year.
- April 2025 anticipate project completion to all 1600+ households and businesses

Other:

Deployment schedule by area will be shared when available.

Current Zito coaxial customers will also be transitioned over to fiber, at no extra cost to them, outside of grant.

See detailed [Zito deployment location maps](#) on Smoky Mountain TechWorks.

2023 2nd Round GREAT Grants: Cherokee Cablevision



WINNER #2

Awarded: \$1,681,930.95 on 7/6/23

CC Match: \$296,811.34

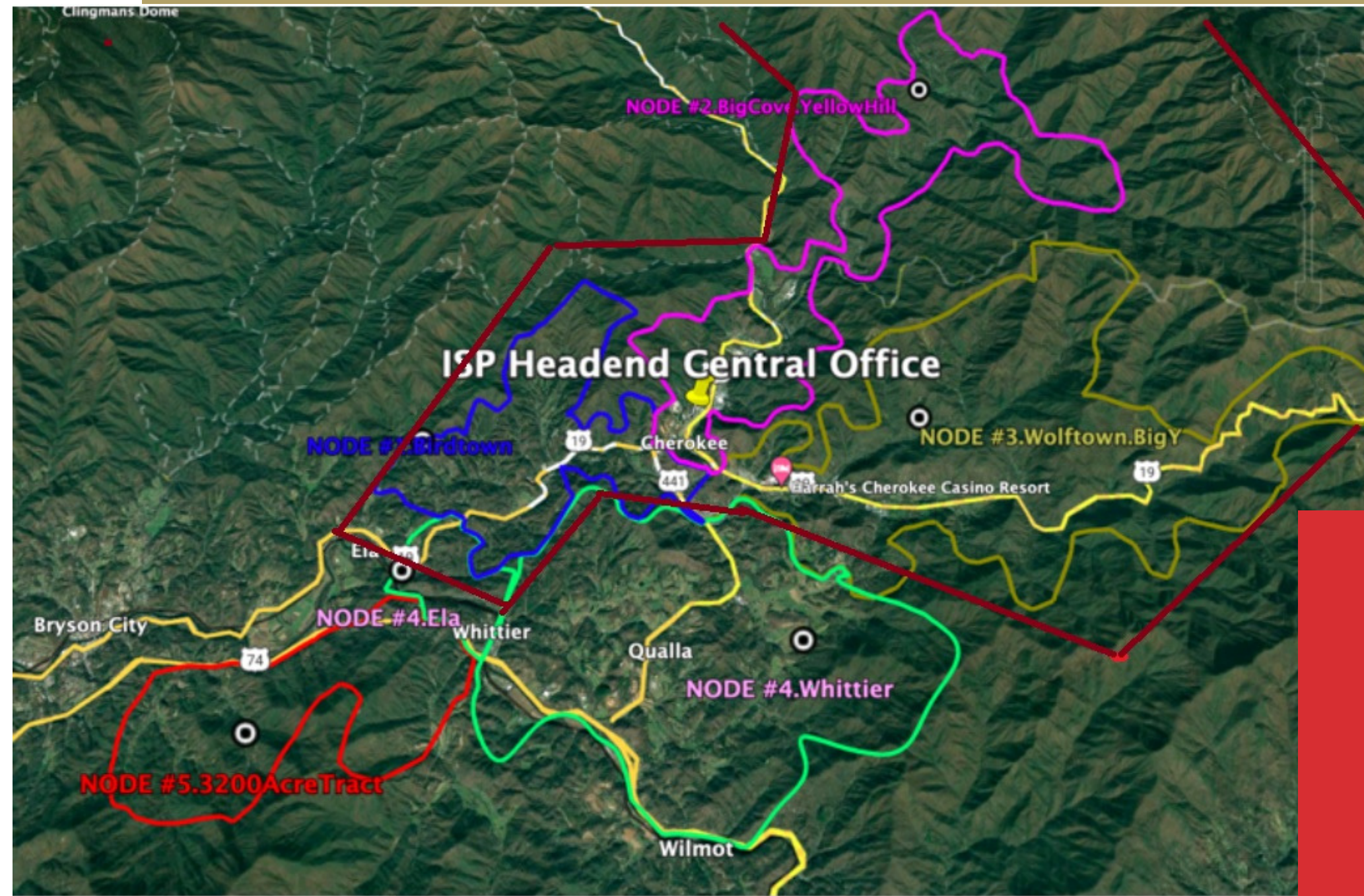
Swain Co. Match: \$5,000

Locations: 548

Includes: Households & Businesses

Contract not yet signed.

We hope to provide regular project updates when this project starts.



RDOF: Charter/CCO Holdings - has locked up 1/3 of county



RDOF Auction: \$5,177,163

Date Awarded: December, 2020

Contract Signed: April 18, 2022

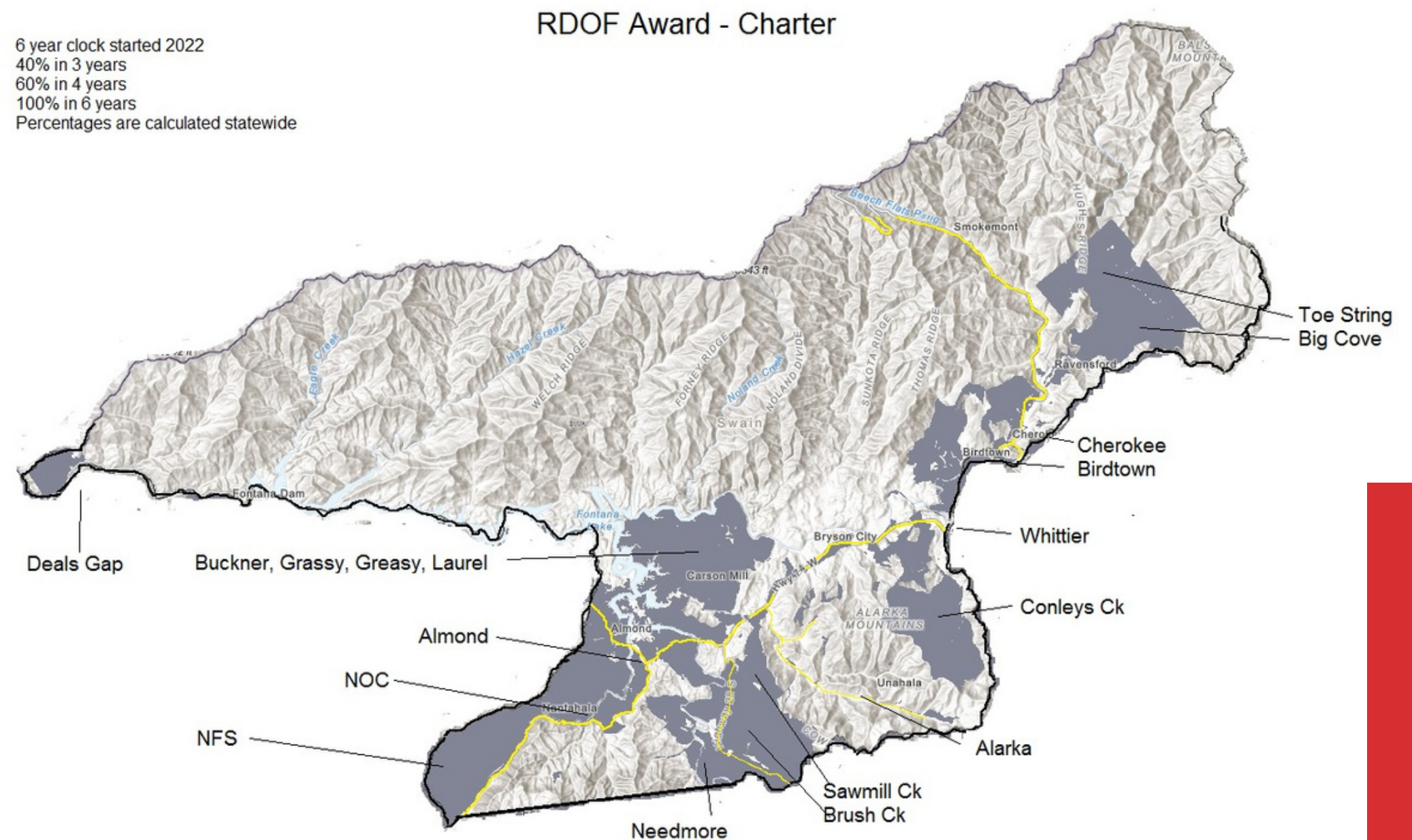
Locations: 3344

Cost/Location: \$12.90/month

County Partner Match: NA

RDOF Requirements:

6 years to do the work once start. Minimal penalties. No on-site work has started, no subsequent grants can cover RDOF areas. **No success at getting legislators to override RDOF exclusions for other grants.**



Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure

Funding to enable providers to build better backhaul middle mile capability

- \$980M total - each grant \$5M - \$100M; Matching minimum 30%
- Accepting rolling applications now to NTIA
- Awards: February 16, 2023
- Start Date: March 1, 2023
- 5-year performance: Buildout 40% Y2, 60% Y3, 80% Y4, 100% Y5
- Applicants: State, Subdivision, Tech Co, Telco, Nonprofit
- Application requirements are complicated and difficult; will limit the applicant pool
- **LIMITED INTEREST, NO TAKERS SO FAR**

CAB - Completing Access to Broadband

\$4M max per county with required matching: \$400k Provider & \$200k County

- Total award corresponds with match amounts
- Swain County has pre-allocated \$200,000 per the required match.
- County + NC-DIT develop RFP - the committee can help advise on most un/underserved areas to prioritize in RFP. Advisory role only, but will force ISPs to specific areas.
- RDOF exclusions apply
- County forwards its match to DIT; DIT oversees application, award, & implementation
- Unfunded GREAT applications are eligible
- CAB funding is ready to launch, since all GREAT Grants are finalized and awarded.

[See CAB Program Guidance Document; NC-DIT](#)

BEAD

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program

- State plan for BEAD has been approved by NTIA.
- Our extensive efforts to change federal and state rules have been unsuccessful.
- \$1.6 billion statewide. Will be distributed within existing state programs
- 50% BEAD-GREAT [no local match required, match paid by vendor]
- 40% BEAD-CAB [local match required, presently from ARPA funds]*****
- 10% BEAD-Stop-Gap [no local match required, match paid ny vendor]
- Any unused funds to be used for digital inclusion

Swain County stands to get from \$5-\$15 million. We need about \$15M from BEAD to do the rest of the county. Our goal is to leverage state, federal and provider money to the max and minimize or eliminate local matching.

It's not too late to get the rules changed. Ask Rep. Clampitt and Sen. Corbin for legislation to eliminate the local match for CAB. Otherwise, \$200k or more will be required in the 2024-2025 budget to qualify for BEAD-CAB.

Digital Inclusion Planning



- DIP plan released in July 2023 by Southwest Commission.
- Smoky Mountain TechWorks called out as Swain County's "Information Clearinghouse" for all Digital Inclusion Information. Plan .

Plan calls for:

- Digital literacy training
- Digital technical support
- Impacts: healthcare, education, economic development, tourism, safety & community services.

READ [THE DIGITAL INCLUSION PLAN FOR SWAIN COUNTY.](#)

Smoky Mountain TechWorks Information Resource

Swain County

Smoky Mountain TechWorks serves as a central location for information on broadband for Swain County. It also supported area counties in the Dec 2022 & Jan 2023 FCC Mapping project.

Area counties also now use it as a resource center about State and Federal broadband programs.

This presentation is now on the SMTW website, along with our previous September 2022 Committee presentation.



Swain County Broadband Committee

Contacts:

Chair: Julie Thorner

julie@liquidspark.com
(828) 736-1695

Vice-Chair: Leonard Winchester

leonardwinchester@gmail.com
(828) 341-5096