

Swain Broadband Committee: Commissioners Report

2024 Interim Update on Committee
Activity, Grant Awards, and Funding Needs

May 7, 2024



Committee Members

Service Length: 2017-2024

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

***Committee Member since 2017**



Swain County Government Invitees

Lottie Barker - Interim County Manager

Roger Parsons - Commissioner

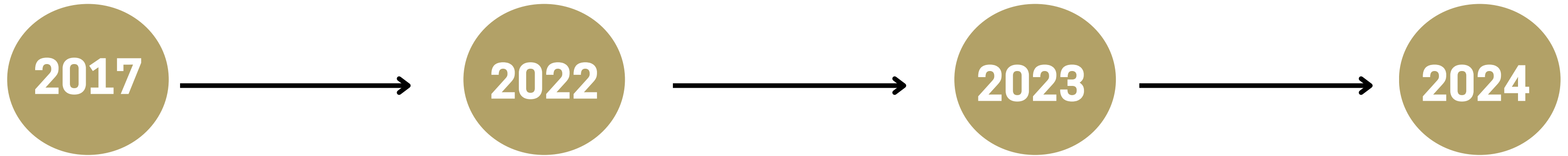
Our Broadband Committee Partners



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.

BROADBAND GRANTS WON and NEW 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).
- Fall 2023 - Spring 2024 - Zito fiber deployment underway
- CAB RFP out for \$4M grant funding, \$200k

Recently Completed Broadband Projects

Since Fall 2023 Commissioner Report

Swain County Digital Inclusion Plan (DIP) Updates



- Swain County applied for and won a \$75,000 Digital Inclusion Plan grant. The grant will fund:
 - Marianna Black Library to hire and pay Digital Navigators to assist the public with their technology needs. This will include one-on-one assistance in the library and in the community (for example, the Swain Senior Center) and classes/workshops in the library and community.
 - The equipment, peripherals, and accessories needed to accomplish the goals of the library and the Digital Navigators.
- Smoky Mountain TechWorks called out as Swain County's "Information Clearinghouse" for all Digital Inclusion Information. Plan .

[SEE DETAILS ABOUT SWAIN'S DIP GRANT HERE](#)

2024 FCC Mapping Community Alert: 2nd Round

- We updated the 2023 FCC direct postcard 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, and is updated on a rolling basis with residents, counties, and ISP feedback.
- Inaccurate data undercounting eligible locations means less funding for Swain.
- **10,487 postcards were sent out,** paid for by Swain County.
- Smoky Mountain Times covered the FCC postcard news in the April 18, 2024 issue.
- Swain HS also sent out a mass call.email/text for students to get parents to review their FCC locations.

GET YOUR HOME INCLUDED FOR INTERNET FUNDING!

Get Help TODAY!
Learn More
<https://bit.ly/swainFCC>

ACT TODAY: Update YOUR FCC Map Location BEFORE MAY 1, 2024!

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 your location's data if it's missing or incorrect!

OR; Go to **MARIANNA BLACK LIBRARY** and staff will help you do this in person.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

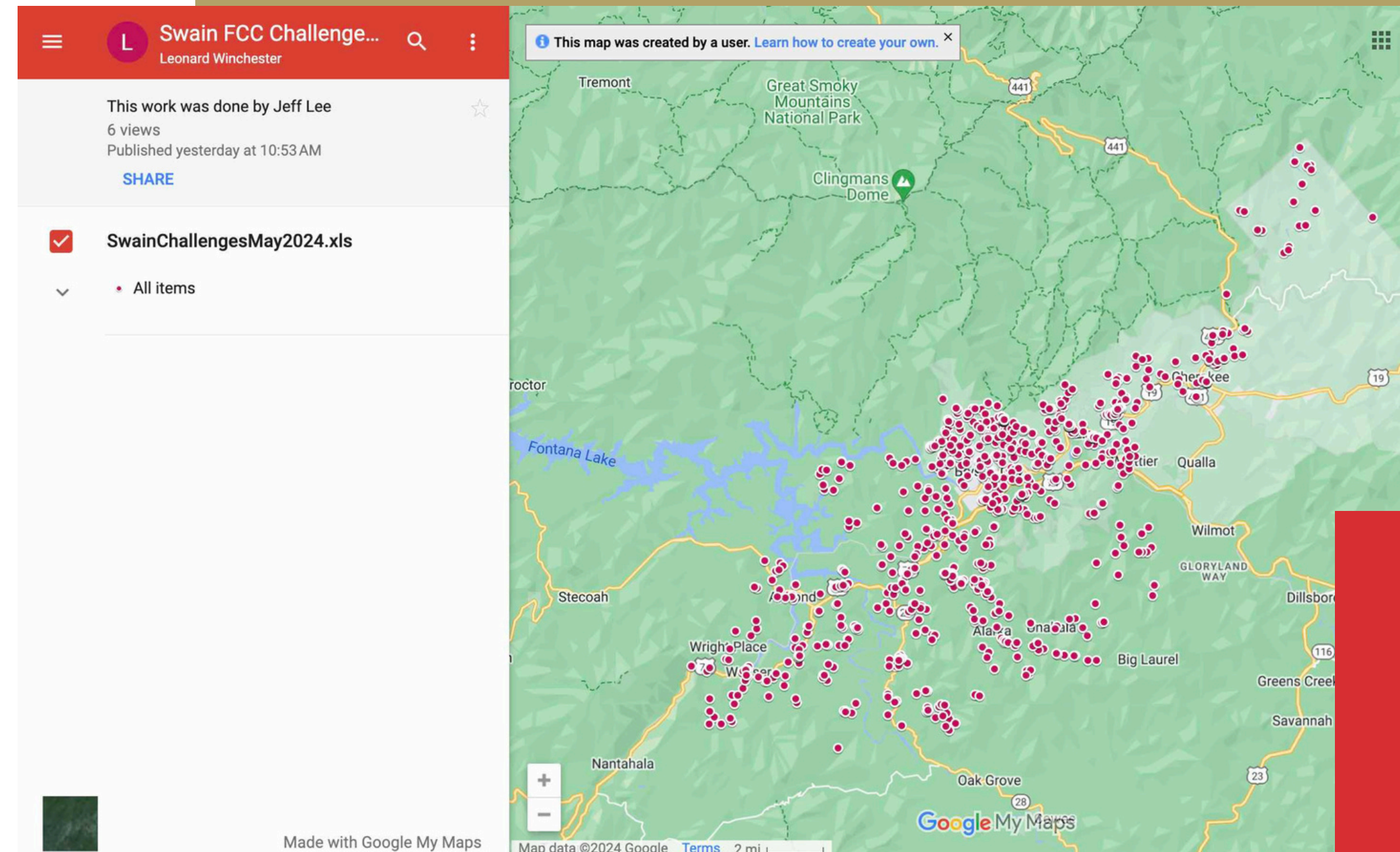
If your location or internet availability data is wrong, and you do not update it, your location won't be eligible for the next round of Federal Broadband Funding in Swain County. Only YOU can verify your location. **Swain County can't get your location corrected without your input!**



Produced by: SWAIN COUNTY BROADBAND COMMITTEE

2024 FCC Mapping Group Challenges: 890 Locations

- Swain County approved hiring Jeff Lee of Little T Broadband Services in Macon County, to do ArcGIS mapping to submit a group challenge for Swain County.
- **Total submitted included 890 locations.**
- Total hours were 8 (\$640) for CAB and 45 (\$3600) for the Fabric challenges.
- 53 hours (\$4240) total - at a heavily discounted (47% hrly rate) to Swain County
- **This challenge is limited to category 1 missing residential and business locations, with the goal to identify valid locations that exist within Swain County but are not currently listed as active locations within the latest released version of BSL Fabric.**



What's Happening Now

Projects in Progress and Next
Broadband Funding Initiatives

2022 GREAT Grant: Zito Media DEPLOYMENT UNDER WAY



WINNER #1

Awarded: \$3,979,001

Zito Match: \$702,177

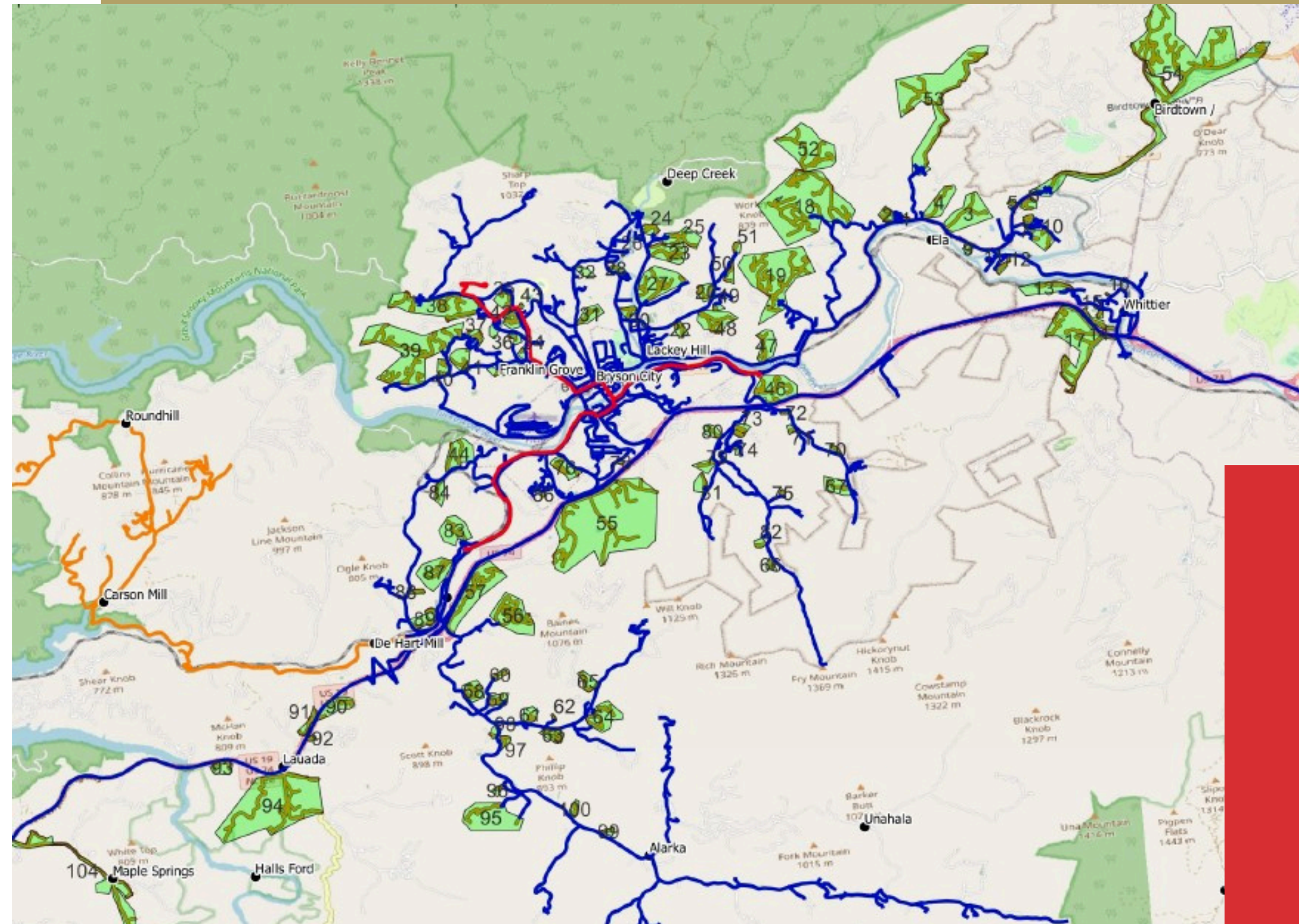
Swain Co. Match: \$15,000

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: Current Project Status



Project Deployment Update:

- All design and engineering is done.
- All materials are ordered, most have arrived. No supply issues encountered.
- All Pole permit applications have been submitted to Duke Energy.
- The contracted crew has started hanging fiber on poles.
- Time to complete deployment - approx one year.
- April 2025 anticipate project completion to all 1600+ households and businesses

Other:

Zito reports being on time for their 2 year deployment. A deployment schedule by area has been requested but has not been made available.

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

See the latest [Zito Project Update](#) 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

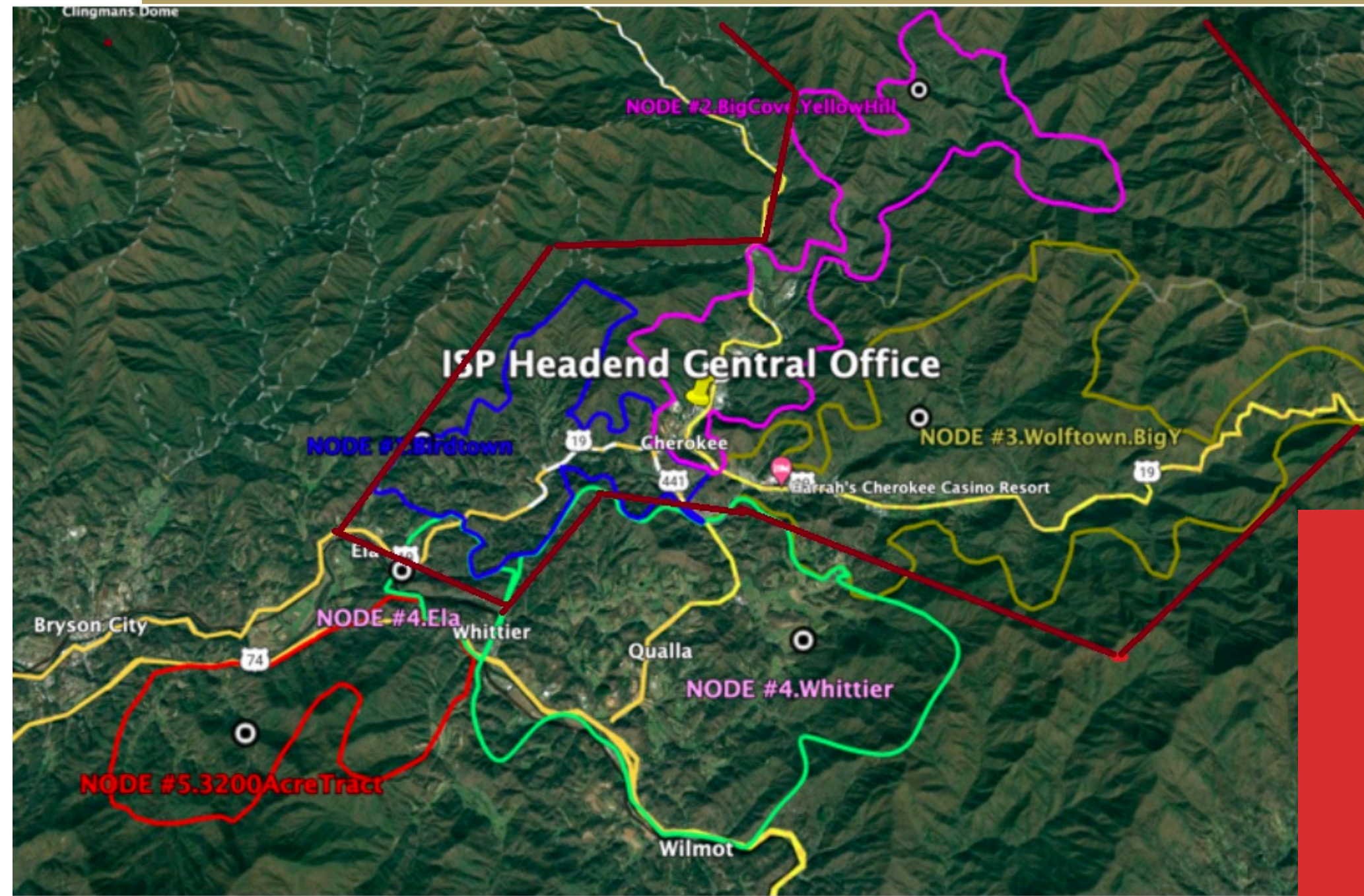
Locations: 548

Includes: Households & Businesses

Contract signed 1/4/2024.

NO WORK STARTED YET

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



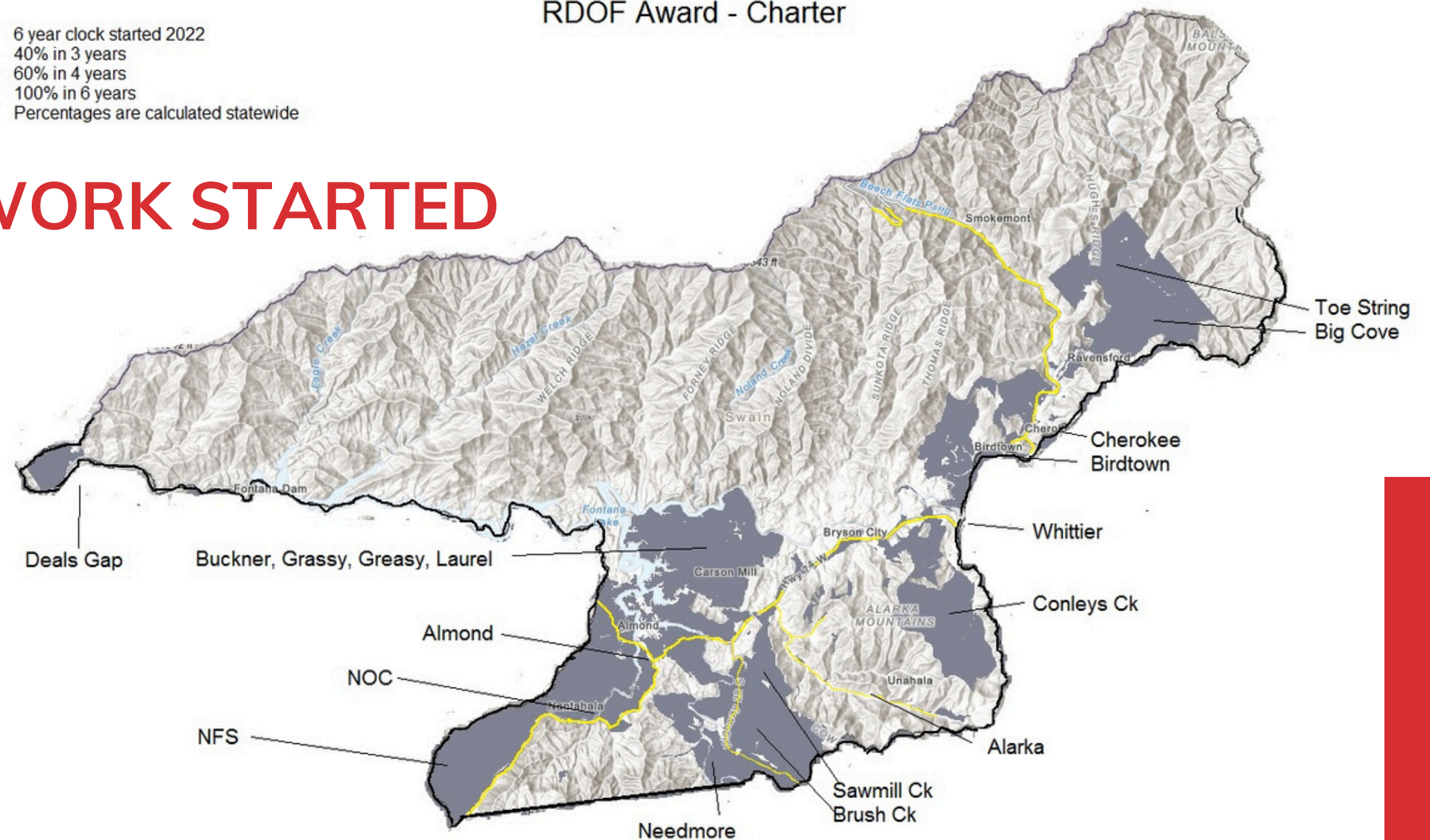
RDOF: Charter/CCO Holdings - has locked up 1/3 of county



6 year clock started 2022
40% in 3 years
60% in 4 years
100% in 6 years
Percentages are calculated statewide

NO WORK STARTED

RDOF Award - Charter



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.**

CAB - Completing Access to Broadband; **RFPS Out**

\$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.
- CAB program kicked off in January, and RFPs were finalized in April and sent to prequalified ISPs by NC-DIT.
- County + NC-DIT developed the RFP; Swain County's CAB committee includes Jason Gardner and Lottie Barker.
- **The Swain Broadband Committee determined these prioritized areas for Swain County based on committee data of the most un/underserved areas:**
 - Nantahala Gorge, Silvermine, Wesser, Needmore
- Note that RDOF exclusions apply
- County forwards its match to DIT; DIT oversees application, award, & implementation
- Unfunded GREAT applications are eligible

CAB timeline for submissions by internet vendors is:

- April 29 Protest Deadline
- May 31 Submissions due

BEAD - Swain will need to budget for Bead-Cab

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 by 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.

Smoky Mountain TechWorks Information Resource

Swain County

Smoky Mountain TechWorks serves as a central location for information on broadband for Swain County. Smoky Mountain Times has covered SMTW in all broadband articles.

Area counties also use it as a resource center about State & Federal broadband programs, and the FCC Mapping Project.

Recently updated info includes:

1. [Swain Digital Inclusion Plan](#)
2. [Zito Great Grant Project page](#)
3. [FCC Map Postcard page](#)
4. [Home page](#)
5. [All Commissioner Broadband Reports](#)



Swain County Broadband Committee

Contacts:

Chair: Julie Thorner

julie@liquidspark.com
(828) 736-1695

Vice-Chair: Leonard Winchester

leonardwinchester@gmail.com
(828) 341-5096