

State of Michigan,  
Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity,  
Michigan High-Speed Internet Office

## **Performance Report**

## **Capital Projects Fund 2025 Report**

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## Executive Summary

The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO), home to the Michigan High-Speed Internet Office (MIHI), is directed under state law to operate a broadband grant program consistent with the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund. The Realizing Opportunity with Broadband Infrastructure Networks (ROBIN) Program is designed to support the deployment of broadband infrastructure to locations currently without 100/20 megabits per second (Mbps) service. Grant agreements for the Batch 1 grants were completed and signed by grantees in late October 2023. A total of 15 grants totaling over \$160 Million in funds were finalized and nearly 60,000 locations were identified to be connected. The second batch of ROBIN grants totaled over \$70 Million and will connect an additional 20,000 locations.

Today, the MIHI office is comprised of thirteen full-time staff. While developing the ROBIN program, MIHI staff engaged with a broad range of community and regional stakeholders to seek their guidance on the development of the ROBIN program criteria and scoring rubric. This engagement provided stakeholders with an opportunity to: 1) define the critical needs in their communities for additional broadband investment, allowing LEO to help potential applicants identify geographies that are interested in partnerships or have greater need; 2) provide input on program design for ROBIN; and 3) establish communications channels for ongoing engagement during the implementation of the program.

To date, the ROBIN program has expended over \$51 Million in grant reimbursements to ROBIN grantees. By June 30, 2025, over 30,000 locations have gained high-speed internet access thanks to ROBIN-funded infrastructure buildout. This equates to 37% of total project locations being completed. One challenge faced by ROBIN grantees is the relatively short construction season in Michigan because of our northern climate and long winters. This requires grantees to complete as much groundwork as possible within the short April-November construction season. Thanks to a relatively warm and dry summer, MIHI anticipates a significant increase in the total number of locations built to by the end of 2025.

## Uses of Funds

To date, MIHI has allocated its funds toward the development and implementation of the ROBIN program, as well as reimbursements to ROBIN grantees for eligible program-related costs. Administrative expenditures have supported staff salaries and payroll, contractual and professional services, and information technology needs. The ROBIN program has 32 projects and 13 subgrantees. Once all projects are completed, ROBIN grantees will have built fiber to over 81,000 locations. As of June 30, 2025, 37% of all ROBIN-funded locations have been built to, many of which are in rural, lower-income counties. <https://www.michigan.gov/leo/bureaus-agencies/mihi/funding-opportunities/robin-grant>

MIHI continues to finalize subgrantee selection for its Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. MIHI has strategically developed its BEAD program to complement the ROBIN program. Information gathered during the development of both programs has been shared interchangeably to maximize the use of all federal funds. Many applicants who were not successful in moving forward as ROBIN grantees applied for BEAD funds, and

several ROBIN awardees applied for BEAD subgrants to extend or expand the network that the ROBIN program is funding. As of June 30, 2025, MIHI was in the application phase of the BEAD Benefit of the Bargain Round. <https://www.michigan.gov/leo/bureaus-agencies/mihi/funding-opportunities/bead>

Michigan's ROBIN program has been fortunate in facing manageable challenges during this reporting period. MIHI hired four full-time staff members, bringing the office close to full staffing capacity. This included two newly established Compliance Analyst positions, both of whom have successfully completed CFR 200 training. Additionally, MIHI collaborated with Guidehouse to develop Risk Classification Assessment Matrix (RCAM) content to support the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity's audit team. As previously discussed, creating, implementing, and managing multiple federally funded grants concurrently is challenging for a relatively small office. However, the addition of new staff has tremendously balanced workloads and accelerated progress on critical timelines.

A key challenge faced by ROBIN grantees is Michigan's relatively short construction season. In the Upper Peninsula and the northernmost regions of the Lower Peninsula, harsh winter weather can significantly impact project schedules. This past winter, in particular, ended with a catastrophic ice storm in these areas, causing additional delays to ROBIN projects. However, projects continue to make progress and ROBIN grantees continue to work diligently to expedite built outs.

MIHI is committed to fostering strong relationships with its subgrantees and the people of Michigan. To better understand and support ROBIN subgrantees, MIHI has conducted direct meetings to gather feedback, provide guidance, and address challenges. Webinars have also been held to assist with reporting requirements and other program-related issues. With increased staffing, MIHI developed a reimbursement template to simplify the expenditure reporting process for subgrantees.

In the next reporting period, MIHI plans to begin field work to validate the deployment of infrastructure at various ROBIN project locations. Additionally, MIHI will continue to work with grantees to validate expenditures and to issue reimbursements upon successful validation. MIHI will continue to conduct routine check-in meetings with ROBIN grantees during the next reporting period, as well as to monitor and review quarterly reporting submitted by ROBIN grantees.

### Addressing Critical Needs

At the conclusion of Michigan's BEAD State Challenge Process in 2024, 248,523 households were designated as unserved (locations without 25/3 Mbps service available) or underserved (locations without 100/20 Mbps service available) by high-speed internet infrastructure with no construction planned via either a federal or state grant or expected private investment. Another 730,000 households face barriers related to affordability, adoption, device access, digital skills, or a combination thereof.

This means that approximately 30% of Michigan households struggle with some form of the digital divide. The burden of disconnection falls disproportionately on certain populations in our state including low-income households, where nearly 35% of households earning less than \$20,000 annually do not have a broadband connection, aging individuals, where more than 22% of residents aged 65 and older

do not have broadband at home, and racial or ethnic minorities who are slightly less than half as likely to have a home broadband connection as non-minority households.

MIHI provides multiple channels for public engagement and information sharing. For example, the public-facing MIHI website includes links for individuals to submit questions or comments directly to MIHI staff, ensuring an accessible and responsive platform. For the purpose of ensuring that inquiries from Michiganders about ROBIN projects can be promptly and appropriately responded to, MIHI has gathered a designated point of contact from each subgrantee which can be shared with constituents who reach out to MIHI. MIHI also distributes a biweekly newsletter, which includes updates on ROBIN and other broadband related programs. In addition, MIHI maintains strong, ongoing communication with subgrantees through quarterly check-ins to better understand their needs and concerns. These combined efforts help ensure that information about CPF-funded services is readily available and accessible to a broad audience, including households, businesses, and other organizations.

Michigan is a predominantly rural state, with 61 of its 83 counties classified as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau. This rurality brings unique challenges related to broadband access and affordability. To support residents in navigating these issues and accessing relevant resources, MIHI has created a webpage with a variety of digital resources. This can be explored at:

<https://www.michigan.gov/leo/bureaus-agencies/mihi/michigan-digital-inclusion-resources>

The Michigan Legislature directed that ROBIN awards be made to build infrastructure to, and therefore MIHI for the purposes of the ROBIN program considers areas of critical need to be, locations that lack internet service of at least 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload from at least one provider, based on data from the FCC's Broadband Data Collection program or state-level mapping conducted by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. These critical need areas are primarily located in rural and low-income communities, where challenges such as limited infrastructure, high service costs, and lack of access to internet-connected devices persist. Many low- and lower-middle income households continue to face difficulties affording reliable home internet service, further exacerbating the digital divide. [LEO - Gov. Whitmer, MIHI celebrate 10,000 Michigan homes and businesses receiving critical high-speed internet connectivity through ROBIN grants](#)

To address these challenges, the ROBIN program has made meaningful progress across several areas. Infrastructure investments funded through the program have expanded high-speed broadband to unserved and underserved locations. Affordability initiatives have helped low-income households maintain internet service, and efforts to increase access to connected devices are reducing key barriers to digital participation. The ROBIN program also uses a range of methods to evaluate outcomes and measure impact, interviews, GIS mapping, and partnerships with subgrantees. These tools help track progress and ensure that efforts are effectively reaching Michigan's most underserved communities, bringing the state closer to achieving universal connectivity.

Examples of progress during this reporting period include MIHI expanded broadband access and created new opportunities for high-need communities across Michigan. Staff participated in community events in Dearborn and Detroit focused on digital literacy and workforce readiness, helping residents build essential digital skills to support employment and daily life.

Furthermore, a subgrantee, supported by the ROBIN grant, connected 6,500 customers to reliable broadband, a life-changing improvement for rural communities, including the Upper Peninsula. One family shared that this access is especially transformative because it will improve healthcare opportunities for a Deaf family member, demonstrating the critical role connectivity plays in quality of life. Expanded access has also opened doors to job opportunities and other vital online resources.

[https://highlinefast.com/news/highline-announces-installation-their-6500th-customer-michigan?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://highlinefast.com/news/highline-announces-installation-their-6500th-customer-michigan?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

One case-in-point is the ROBIN award in Ottawa county, which is making significant progress in addressing Michigan’s broadband needs. The county and the ROBIN subgrantee are working to install 250 miles of ROBIN-funded fiber in key areas across the county. This project will expand internet access to nearly 6,000 residents, supported by approximately \$9 million in state funds, \$4 million in matching funds from the County, and \$1.9 million from the subgrantee. The new network will be open access and carrier-neutral, allowing multiple internet providers to offer service—giving residents and businesses the freedom to choose the provider that best meets their needs.[https://mitechnews.com/internet-of-things/ottawa-county-board-supports-123net-broadband-grant-application/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://mitechnews.com/internet-of-things/ottawa-county-board-supports-123net-broadband-grant-application/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

## Labor

MIHI is committed to ensuring that all ROBIN-funded projects adhere to fair labor standards. Grantees receiving ROBIN funds must comply with applicable federal labor laws, including:

- 29 C.F.R. Part 5 – Labor Standards Provisions
- Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act (40 U.S.C. §§ 3701–3708)
- Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. §§ 201–219)
- Copeland “Anti-Kickback” Act (18 U.S.C. § 874)

All ROBIN grant agreements issued by MIHI include provisions addressing labor compliance. For projects awarded \$5 million or more, grantees are asked to certify that all laborers and mechanics employed by contractors and subcontractors are paid wages at or above the prevailing rate, as determined by the U.S. Secretary of Labor (Davis-Bacon Act) or the relevant state agency under a comparable state law. If this certification is not provided, a project employment and local impact report must be submitted. Grantees may also certify that a project includes a project labor agreement in accordance with Section 8(f) of the National Labor Relations Act (29 U.S.C. § 158(f)). If not, a project workforce continuity plan is required.

It is crucial that investments using Coronavirus Capital Projects Funds are executed in ways that deliver high-quality infrastructure, prevent disruptive and costly delays, and enhance overall efficiency. Grantees are encouraged to ensure projects adopt strong labor standards, including project labor agreements and community benefits agreements that guarantee wages at or above the prevailing rate and incorporate local hiring provisions. This approach not only supports the efficient and effective

completion of high-quality infrastructure projects but also fosters economic recovery by creating solid employment opportunities for workers.

Additionally, consistent with requirements outlined in 2 C.F.R. 200, Appendix II, all contracts awarded by the MIHI Office exceeding \$100,000 that involve the employment of mechanics or laborers must include provisions ensuring compliance with specified sections of the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act (40 U.S.C. §§ 3702 and 3704), as further supplemented by Department of Labor regulations (29 C.F.R. Part 5).

## Community Engagement

During the reporting period, the Michigan High-Speed Internet Office (MIHI) actively engaged with communities across the state to support the implementation and operations of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) and Realizing Opportunity with Broadband Infrastructure Networks (ROBIN) programs. MIHI has continued to receive and respond to public inquiries and comments via its public-facing website. The site allows individuals to sign up for regular updates and to submit comments, questions, and concerns directly. All inquiries are assigned to MIHI staff based on topic area (e.g., BEAD or ROBIN) to ensure timely and accurate responses. To promote accessibility, all published materials on the MIHI website are ADA compliant.

During this reporting period, MIHI staff participated in multiple community events, including those in Dearborn and Detroit. These events were focused on digital literacy and workforce readiness, with MIHI engaging directly with residents to help build essential digital skills for employment and daily life. These efforts supported MIHI's broader mission to expand broadband access and create new opportunities for high-need communities across Michigan.

Other MIHI staff also attended the Workforce Event on May 1, held at the Operating Engineers 324 training site in Howell, Michigan. This event served as the official kickoff to the Michigan Infrastructure Plan and emphasized the importance of workforce development in infrastructure projects, including broadband expansion. MIHI's participation helped reinforce the connection between broadband access and broader infrastructure and workforce priorities across the state.

MIHI engaged with a range of community organizations, including community-based groups and local partners, to strengthen its outreach and ensure that community voices are integrated into broadband planning and implementation. These efforts align with the broader goals of the BEAD program, with ROBIN playing a complementary role in helping bring reliable, affordable, high-speed internet to every home, business, institution, and community in Michigan.

In March and again in May, MIHI Chief Connectivity Officer, Eric Frederick, was invited to testify before the Michigan House of Representatives' Communication and Technology Committee. He delivered an impactful and compelling address of the work MIHI is undertaking as well as provided key updates across all our programs, highlighting the importance of the ROBIN and BEAD projects.

Looking ahead, MIHI plans to sustain and expand its community engagement strategies. This includes increasing its participation in local events, enhancing multilingual outreach efforts, and continuing to build partnerships with local organizations, including libraries, training providers, and other community-based groups. These efforts will help ensure that community engagement remains central to MIHI's broadband expansion initiatives in the upcoming performance year.