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Surf Internet Awarded \$8.5 Million from Next Level Connections Grant Program

Funding to help bridge the digital divide across rural Indiana counties

ELKHART, Ind. (October 4, 2024) – Surf Internet®, a leading internet service provider in the Great Lakes region, was awarded \$8.5 million in the final round of the Next Level Connections (NLC) Grant Program by the State of Indiana. The funding will be matched by a \$20.7 million investment from Surf Internet to support the expansion of affordable, high-speed, fiber-optic internet to underserved rural communities across Indiana.

This significant grant, among the largest ever received by Surf Internet, will expand the company's fiber-optic network in 14 Indiana counties, including Allen, Blackford, DeKalb, Grant, LaGrange, LaPorte, Madison, Marshall, Noble, Porter, St. Joseph, Starke, Steuben, and Wells.

"We are honored to once again be the recipient of funding from the NLC grant program. It's a big step in our mission to bridge the digital divide in Indiana," said Surf CEO Gene Crusie. "These dollars will help us bring high-speed fiber-optic internet to more communities, supporting local businesses, schools, and residents. We are proud to partner with the Office of Community & Rural Affairs to enhance connectivity and boost economic growth across the state."

DeKalb County is slated to be a significant beneficiary of Surf's expanded broadband network through this funding. "Access to reliable high-speed broadband service is critical for our rural residents and agriculture community," said Mike Watson, DeKalb County Commissioner and member of the county's Broadband Task Force. "The NLC grant dollars awarded to Surf Internet will be a big factor in deploying service to those areas."

NLC Round 4 grants, announced in June 2024, awarded over \$81 million to fund 50 broadband projects, expanding broadband access to more than 34,000 homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions. In total, the NLC Grant Program has awarded \$328 million for broadband infrastructure since 2019. Alongside more than \$426 million in private and local investment, the program has helped to bring fiber-optic internet to 88 counties and over 102,000 Hoosier homes and businesses.

The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs administers and oversees the program. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development, highlighted the broader impact of the initiative, stating, "Broadband expansion isn't just about connecting homes, it's about connecting Hoosiers to a brighter future. Reliable, high-speed internet unlocks opportunities for education, healthcare, and jobs, improving the quality of life for all Indiana residents."

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A list of grant recipients and a map of Next Level Connections round four awards can be found online at <https://www.in.gov/ocra/nlc/2024-round-4-awards/>. For updates on Surf's ongoing Indiana construction projects, visit <https://surfinternet.com/construction/indiana>.

About Surf Internet

Surf Internet is an innovative fiber-optic internet company that serves as the essential gateway to connectivity across the Great Lakes region of Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan. The company is building a bridge to the wide-open future by delivering high-speed, reliable internet to homes and businesses in underserved, rural communities. Surf's 250-plus-person team is local, giving them an edge when it comes to customer care and advocacy for the region. Headquartered in Elkhart, Ind., Surf also has offices in La Porte, Ind., Byron Center and Fowlerville, Mich., and Coal City, Naperville, and Rock Falls, Ill. Learn more at <https://surfinternet.com>.

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