

An Opportunity to Reach the Fiber Future Faster

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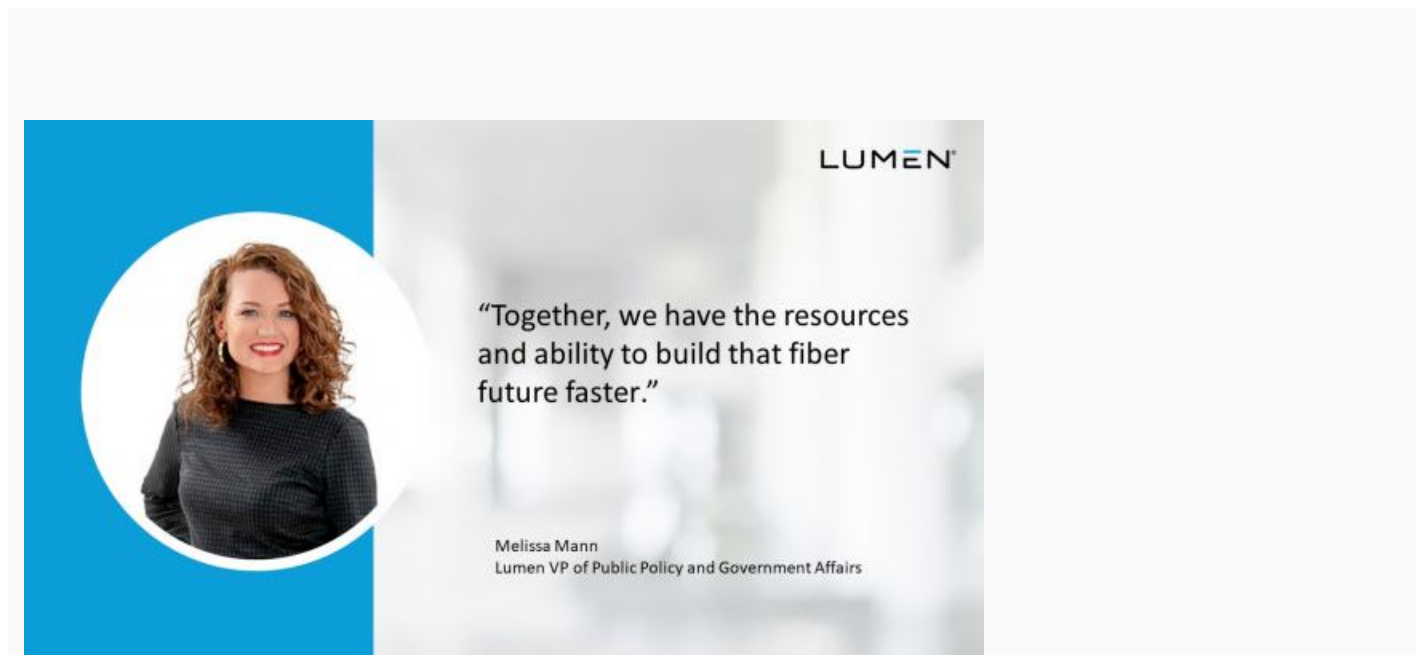


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By Melissa Mann, VP of Public Policy and Government Affairs

The story of today's broadband infrastructure is one that involves relentless investment. This investment is not optional. It's the only way to keep pace with ever growing bandwidth needs and improve the customer experience: Faster speeds, lower latency, greater performance – all of these are facilitated by the expansion of fiber networks.

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Bringing fiber networks to more communities is a challenge that requires funding from both public and private sources. Lumen embraces this challenge and is committed to doing our part to help close the digital divide.

The U.S. Department of Commerce recently announced \$46 billion in federal grant opportunities, administered by National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), with three goals as part of the Internet for All initiative:

1. spreading fiber-enabled broadband to every community in the U.S.,
2. closing gaps in middle mile infrastructure, and
3. addressing the digital equity barriers that prevent people from taking full advantage of connectivity.

These programs are the first fruits of the bipartisan *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* that Congress enacted in November 2021.

Lumen is focused on making progress and is already expanding our end-to-end fiber network to 10 million new locations in the coming years. We're also partnering with state and federal agencies to reach the unserved and underserved locations where market forces might not otherwise support the fastest networks.

Lumen's perspective and engagement with NTIA, state broadband directors, policymakers and other stakeholders focuses on expanding the country's broadband infrastructure and is guided by the following principles:

- **Be accurate.** Use accurate and reliable broadband maps to bring broadband to truly unserved and underserved areas and make sure to properly coordinate among multiple state and federal programs to maximize these efforts.
- **Don't leave areas behind.** Recognize that deployments should not be made in a vacuum and that a program that targets areas too narrowly might leave some Americans further behind.
- **Design for the future.** Think holistically about the future that is being created, and how legacy regulations need to evolve to support this new reality.
- **Encourage competition.** Foster robust competition for government funding by ensuring that all providers, both public and private, have an equal opportunity to participate, operate on a level playing field when it comes to permitting, and receive equal treatment regarding the building and provisioning of broadband; and
- **Keep promises.** Ensure providers that accept government funding are capable of delivering on their commitments.

Each of these principles are outlined in NTIA's recent Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs). But maintaining a strong commitment to these principles will require continuous vigilance, hard work and collaboration among state and federal policymakers, local communities, and network providers like Lumen.

Lumen is dedicated to bringing fiber to more communities in our service areas. And we are equally committed to working as a team of experts with our corporate and government peers

towards a common goal of a better digital future for all Americans. Together, we have the resources and ability to build that fiber future faster.

<https://news.lumen.com/an-opportunity-to-reach-the-fiber-future-faster>