

Gov. Walker: Awards broadband grants in Viroqua, Eau Claire, and Oconto Falls

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\$7.69 million in grants to improve service in 33 Wisconsin counties, in latest round from PSC

VEROQUA – Governor Scott Walker today joined Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) Chairman Lon Roberts and State Broadband Director Angie Dickison to award broadband grants for new high-speed internet services offered by Packerland Broadband in Eau Claire County, Vernon Communications Cooperative in Vernon County, and Bertram Communications in Oconto County. Forty-six new broadband grants have been awarded as part of the largest round of Broadband Expansion Grants in state history to extend broadband access to as many as 1,600 business locations and 18,000 residential locations. A total of \$7.69 million in grant funding will leverage \$11.8 million in private and local government matching funds, according to the PSC.

“We want to continue expanding broadband service across Wisconsin, and we increased broadband investments by \$35.5 million in this budget to help us accomplish that goal,” said Governor Walker. “By providing another \$7.69 million in broadband grants we are helping connect more of our communities. No corner of our state can be left behind.”

Governor Walker created the Broadband Expansion Grant Program in the 2013-2015 budget. In the current budget, Governor Walker increased total broadband investments by an additional \$35.5 million and created a permanent Broadband Expansion Grant Program. Since taking office, Governor Walker has awarded 101

broadband grants totaling \$13.1 million, in addition to more than \$20 million in matching funds.

“The Broadband Expansion Grant Program has been highly successful since its creation in 2013, and the work to continue to provide broadband to all corners of the state will continue to be a goal of the Commission.” said PSC Chairman Lon Roberts. “I applaud Governor Walker’s commitment to connect all Wisconsinites to the internet. With the Governor’s direction, Wisconsin has funded 101 projects in 46 counties, and the Commission will continue to expand on these numbers with an additional \$7 million in Broadband Expansion Grants being awarded later this fall.”

Eau Claire County in partnership with Packerland Broadband is receiving a \$200,000 grant that will help provide service in unserved and underserved areas in eastern Eau Claire County through TV white space technology. Packerland Broadband also received a \$210,733 broadband grant to utilize TV white space technology for a project in Marinette County and a \$98,000 grant for a combination TV white space and fiber project in Forest County.

“We have seen a great deal of interest in the grant program, and this round’s awardees should be commended on their dedication to expanding broadband within their communities,” said State Broadband Director, Angie Dickison. “The Broadband Office is happy to help communities looking to improve broadband services. We are always looking to build upon the success of public-private partnerships that are found when expanding broadband in Wisconsin communities.”

Vernon Communications Cooperative is receiving a \$244,701 grant to extend their fiber network to 173 potential locations.

Bertram Communications is receiving the largest broadband grant this round totaling \$600,000. This grant has the potential to extend their services to 3,805 potential locations including homes and businesses.

A full list of grants is available at: <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/WBO.aspx>.