

Public Service Commission: Awards first Telecommuter Forward! certifications

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Bayfield County is the first community to be certified as a Telecommuter Forward! Community

Madison – This week, the Public Service Commission (PSC) of Wisconsin awarded the first Telecommuter Forward! certification to Bayfield County. The Commission also certified the Town of Cloverland in Douglas County and Iron County as Telecommuter Forward! communities. These are the first such certifications in the country.

2017 Act 342, authored by Representative Romaine Quinn (R – Rice Lake) and Senator Howard Marklein (R – Spring Green), creates a process for communities to become certified by the PSC as a Telecommuter Forward! Community. In order to become certified, Wisconsin cities, villages, towns or counties must adopt a resolution that includes a statement of support and commitment to promote telecommuting. The resolution must also designate a single point of contact for coordinating telecommuting opportunities. The resolution will contain the responsibilities of the single point of contact, including coordinating and partnering with telecommuting stakeholders, and collaborating with broadband providers and employers.

“Thanks to private and public investment in broadband infrastructure, Telecommuter Forward! certification will serve as another economic development

tool to promote the vitality of Wisconsin's rural communities," said State Broadband Director Angie Dickison. "Wisconsin is the first state in the country with a certification program to promote telecommuting."

In 2014, the PSC began awarding Broadband Expansion Grants to underserved areas of the state. In 2016 it began certifying communities that have taken steps to remove barriers to broadband infrastructure investment through the Broadband Forward! program. Telecommuter Forward! is the next chapter in Wisconsin's broadband expansion story.

"The Telecommuter Forward! Community Certification builds upon our efforts to retain and attract families and businesses in rural Wisconsin by allowing communities to market themselves in a way that showcases broadband access and telecommuting options," said PSC Chairman Lon Roberts. "The Commission congratulates Bayfield County, Iron County, and the Town of Cloverland for their dedication in providing serviceable broadband access. We look forward to furthering our goal of providing broadband access to all Wisconsinites with programs like this, Broadband Expansion Grants, and the Broadband Forward! certification program."

Since 2014, Wisconsin has awarded \$13.1 million in grants to fund 101 projects across Wisconsin, with the goal of bringing broadband access to every corner of our state. Later this year, the Commission will be awarding another \$7 million in broadband expansion grants.

For municipalities interested in Telecommuter Forward! Community certification, or those who would like information on services offered by the State Broadband Office, please visit: <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/WBO.aspx>.