

Gov. Evers: Announces opening of the 2020 broadband expansion grant round

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SPOONER — On Wednesday, Governor Tony Evers, joined by Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes, Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection Secretary Brad Pfaff, and Public Service Commission of Wisconsin Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq announced the first round of broadband grants appropriated in the 2019-2021 state biennial budget.

This initial \$24 million grant round is the largest in state history and is greater than all seven previous grant rounds put together.

“Wisconsin lags behind the national average when it comes to getting our people access to broadband internet,” said Gov. Evers. “This investment demonstrates our strong commitment to connecting the underserved areas of our state.”

“This round of grants represents a huge step forward toward the goal of making sure we’re all connected,” said Lt. Gov. Barnes.

“High-speed internet is becoming increasingly crucial for our family farms to stay competitive in a global market. These grants work to make sure that some of the most difficult places to connect—our rural communities and farms—will have what they need to contribute in our economy,” said Secretary Pfaff.

“Access to broadband is no longer a luxury, but a necessity,” said Chairperson Valcq. “With students’ school work increasingly being done online, exciting advances in telemedicine, and telecommuting becoming more commonplace, these grants serve to connect people and provide opportunity to all parts of our state.”

The 2019-2021 biennial budget, which was signed by Gov. Evers earlier this year, provided \$48 million over the biennium for broadband expansion grants. This amounts to more than twice of what has been awarded in all previous years combined. Additional grant rounds for the remaining funds will be announced next year.

The broadband expansion grants aim to help private companies find a path to return on investment in areas of the state that are challenging to serve. Since 2014, 138 grants have been awarded, and have connected or are in the process of connecting over 4,000 businesses and 75,000 homes to high-speed broadband internet service.

Grant application materials are available now at <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/-Programs/BroadbandGrants.aspx> and are due no later than 4:00 PM on December 19, 2019.