

Gov. Evers, PSC Chair Valcq: Success expanding reliable, affordable broadband in 2021 “Year of Broadband Access”

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Having reliable, high-speed broadband has become an essential part of nearly every aspect of our daily lives. From running a small business to learning inside and outside of the classroom to accessing medical appointments and healthcare services to supporting industry and manufacturing, high-performance broadband is essential for our economic success and has expanded opportunities for the everyday needs that have become synonymous with participating in modern society.

Broadband is no longer a luxury—it’s a necessity. Unfortunately, over the course of the last decade, politicians forced Wisconsin to lose out on tens of millions of dollars that could’ve helped boost broadband to hundreds of communities across our state. For those who are without broadband, unable to afford it, or need support learning how to effectively and safely use it, there is a risk of worsening an existing digital divide.

That’s why, on the heel of Gov. Evers creating a [Task Force on Broadband Access](#) in 2020, we kicked off the new year in 2021 with the governor declaring it the “[Year of Broadband Access](#),” setting out to prioritize making strategic investments to continue our work expanding broadband to every household in every corner of our state by 2025.

Gov. Evers’ 2021-23 biennial budget made the largest investment in broadband in state history—\$129 million over the next two years—more than doubling our record-

setting \$48 million investment in our last budget, which funded 130 grants statewide. This year, Gov. Evers also [directed \\$100 million](#) in federal funds to broadband to fund projects in 42 counties and three tribal communities—the largest single round of broadband investment in state history. Coupled with another [\\$5 million investment](#) Gov. Evers announced last year, these investments are projected to give new or improved broadband access to more than 110,000 residents in nearly 50,000 homes as well as more than 2,200 businesses across Wisconsin. Altogether, our state broadband expansion grants since 2019 and our federally funded broadband grants are providing more than 300,000 homes and businesses with high-quality broadband.

Declaring 2021 the Year of Broadband Access presented an opportunity to build on the progress we've made by investing in our infrastructure and access to high-quality broadband, and we're proud of the tremendous work we've done over the past year. Our efforts to expand access to reliable, affordable broadband have had a real, meaningful impact on the lives of working families and small businesses in every part of our state.

And, with a new round of state expansion grants that will award \$100 million to bring broadband to the most remote parts of our state, we're not slowing down in 2022. We're going to keep working to expand broadband access and improve affordability and quality to help ensure the success of families, farmers, small businesses, and communities across our state. After a year with so much success, we can't wait to get to work in the new year.