

PSC: Accepting applications for state broadband expansion grants

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MADISON – The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC or Commission) is now accepting grant applications for the state’s Broadband Expansion Grant Program. Funding for the grants comes from the 2021-23 biennial budget signed by Governor Tony Evers in July, which provided \$129 million over the biennium for expanding high-speed broadband internet. The Commission is expected to award up to \$100 million in early summer 2022. Applications are due on March 17, 2022.

“Wisconsin has made substantial progress in our goal of connecting everyone in the state to high-speed broadband internet. The Broadband Expansion Grant Program is one of the most effective tools we have to close the digital divide,” said PSC Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq. “I want to thank Governor Evers for his continued state and federal investments for broadband expansion and encourage providers to take advantage of all funding opportunities available.”

Since the program’s inception in 2014, the Commission has awarded 268 broadband expansion grants that have connected or are in the process of connecting over 20,000 businesses and 296,000 homes. In 2019, through Gov. Evers’ first biennial budget, \$48 million was allocated for broadband expansion, which funded 130 grants. The Commission evaluates eligible broadband projects based on the effect on unserved areas, matching funds, promotion of economic development, public/private partnership, scalability, and project impact.

“I’m proud of the success we’ve had getting folks connected to high-speed broadband internet regardless of where you live or work in our state,” said Governor Tony Evers. “Broadband connectivity plays an essential role in ensuring our families, communities, and our state bounce back from this pandemic, which is why I continue to make historic investments expanding access to broadband in Wisconsin.”

In addition to the state’s Broadband Expansion Grant Program, Governor Evers allocated federal dollars to provide new or improved broadband services. In funding

provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) and through the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Governor Evers authorized the PSC to award over \$105.3 million for 94 projects in more than 42 counties and three tribal communities. Altogether, under Governor Evers' leadership, state broadband expansion grants and federal funds for broadband projects have provided or are going to offer access to new or improved broadband services to more than 300,000 homes and businesses.

With many promising projects still to be pursued, the PSC encourages applicants not selected for previous state or federal funding rounds to apply for this round of the state Broadband Expansion Grant Program. Visit the PSC's [Wisconsin Broadband Office website](#) for instructions on how to apply. Interested entities are encouraged to [register](#) for a webinar hosted by the PSC on December 8, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. for more information on the grant program.