

PSC, Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Encourage Wisconsin broadband providers to apply for the USDA ReConnect Program

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Madison, WI — The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC or Commission) and the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) encourage Wisconsin broadband providers to apply for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [Broadband ReConnect Loan and Grant Program](#). The USDA will provide up to \$1.15 billion in funding to support the construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide broadband service in eligible rural areas. Applications will be available starting November 24, 2021.

“The funds allocated to broadband by Governor Evers will connect up to 300,000 locations. We have made significant progress and need to continue working to connect all of Wisconsin,” said PSC Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq. “It will take both state and federal resources to make this happen. I urge our partners to take advantage of every funding opportunity available.”

“We continue to hear that infrastructure, such as quality roads and broadband access, are important for rural economies,” said Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Secretary Randy Romanski. “I appreciate the work of Governor Evers and the PSC to increase access to broadband through state efforts such as the state budget and by promoting federal programs like this. These efforts will be complemented by the federal bipartisan infrastructure deal recently passed by Congress.”

To be eligible for USDA ReConnect Program funding, an applicant must:

- Serve an area without broadband service at speeds of 100 megabits per

- second (Mbps) (download) and 20 Mbps (upload);
- Commit to building facilities capable of providing broadband service at speeds of 100 Mbps (download and upload) to every location in its proposed service area.

In making funding decisions, USDA will prioritize projects that serve low-density rural areas with locations lacking internet access services at speeds of at least 25 Mbps (download) and 3 Mbps (upload). The USDA will also consider the:

- Economic needs of the community to be served;
- Extent which a provider will offer affordable service options;
- Project's commitment to strong labor standards;
- Area the proposed project will serve, including tribal lands

There are many similarities between the USDA Broadband ReConnect Loan and Grant Programs and the PSC's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Broadband Access Grants. Earlier this year, the Commission received 242 grant applications requesting more than \$440 million for projects, and funded nearly [\\$100 million](#) of projects with ARPA funds. With many promising projects still to be pursued, the PSC encourages applicants who were not selected for ARPA Broadband Grants to apply for the USDA ReConnect grants and other upcoming state and federal funding opportunities.

The PSC and its Wisconsin Broadband Office will give support to providers' applications for the USDA ReConnect Loan and Grant Program. For more information about the USDA program including application process and guidelines, visit [here](#).