

PSC: Thousands more have broadband access thanks to CARES Act funding

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MADISON – The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) announced today that the Emergency Infrastructure Grants funded through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided access to new and improved service to more than 20,000 locations throughout the state, according to final and interim reports provided by grant awardees. Governor Tony Evers authorized the CARES Act funding for broadband expansion in September and the PSC awarded \$5.3 million to 12 projects who applied for the funding in October.

“I’m thrilled that we were able to work so quickly with our internet service providers and public partners to get thousands more homes and businesses connected by the end of 2020. These projects will make a real impact for students attending school virtually, those who are working from home, businesses who need to be connected with customers, and patients who need to schedule telehealth visits with their doctors during the pandemic.” said Rebecca Cameron Valcq, Chairperson of the PSC.

“The need for broadband internet will not go away after the pandemic, but this funding is connecting folks to this critical service when they need it most,” said Gov. Evers. “The pandemic has shown us that broadband is not a luxury, it’s a necessity. That’s is why I declared 2021 the Year of Broadband Access and call on the Legislature to support my historic, roughly \$200-million investment in broadband in our biennial budget.”

In October 2020, the PSC voted 2-1 to approve 12 projects expanding high-speed broadband internet to underserved locations in Barron, Lafayette, Polk, Door, Dodge, Fond du Lac, Green, Burnett, Dane, Jefferson, and Rock Counties. Grant recipients were required to submit to the PSC final reports of their projects by January 15, 2021, unless granted an extension. According to the reports from

awardees, these 12 broadband expansion projects exceeded the initial number of locations expected to be reached by the end of 2020, as they provided new or improved access to service for more than 20,000 homes, businesses, and farms across the state. A list of the grant recipients can be found [here](#), and final reports can be found [here](#).

Since 2019, the PSC received more than \$112 million in requests to fund broadband infrastructure through the state's broadband expansion grant program. The 2019-2021 biennial budget, which Governor Evers signed in 2019, allocated \$48 million over the biennium for broadband expansion grants. While the Governor's original budget proposal included over \$78 million for broadband, \$48 million remains a historic investment.

In 2020, the PSC's State Broadband Office awarded 72 grants totaling \$24 million to extend high-speed broadband internet access to as many as 3,182 businesses and 46,537 homes, including 39,778 locations currently unserved. The PSC is expected to award the remaining \$24 million of the 2019-2021 biennial budget by the spring of 2021.

For more information about the Broadband Expansion Grant Program click [here](#).