

More Than \$5 Million in CARES Act Funding To Go for Broadband Expansion

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin
Friday, 25 September 2020 10:02 -



The broadband expansion grants will encourage the deployment of broadband in unserved and underserved areas of the state.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers announced Wednesday that more than \$5 million of funding from the federal CARES Act will be awarded for the expansion of high-speed, broadband internet. Funding will be awarded by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) to applicants from the 2020 broadband expansion grants that did not receive funding and are able to connect customers by December 30, 2020, and satisfy the requirements of the federal CARES Act.

The PSC houses the state Broadband Office, which administers the state's Broadband Expansion Grant Program that provides grant funding to organizations, internet service providers, and local governments to expand in areas of the state that are underserved and unserved.



“This pandemic further illustrates the need for additional funding to expand broadband. These

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dollars, along with our investments from the budget that I signed last year, will ensure that we are maximizing our expansion efforts to get folks connected,” said Gov. Evers.

“I want to thank the governor for this funding and his continued commitment to getting our state connected with broadband internet,” said PSC Chairperson, Rebecca Cameron Valcq. “I commit that we at the PSC will get this funding out quickly so projects can start construction as soon as possible.”

The CARES funding comes as the PSC is also accepting applications for a second round of \$24 million in grants that was appropriated in the 2019-2021 state biennial budget. That application period closes December 1, and is expected to be awarded in spring of 2021.

The 2019-2021 biennial budget, which was signed by the Governor Evers last year, provided \$48 million over the biennium for broadband expansion grants. For the 2020 round of funding, \$24 million was made available. The PSC received 143 applications requesting \$50.3 million for large and small projects. In March of this year, the PSC awarded 72 grants to extend high-speed internet access to as many as 3,182 businesses and 46,537 homes, including 39,778 locations that are currently unserved.

The broadband expansion grants aim to encourage the deployment of broadband in unserved and underserved areas of the state. Since 2014, 210 grants have been awarded, and have connected or are in the process of connecting over 7,000 businesses and 117,000 homes to high-speed broadband internet service.

The CARES Act funding is expected to be awarded to projects at an open meeting of the PSC in October. A list of project applicants will be made available on the [PSC website](#) in advance of that meeting.