

\$23 Million in Broadband Access Grants Go To Rural Wisconsin

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin
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Plan connects more than 3,600 locations with new fiber broadband service.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers this week highlighted six projects across the state of Wisconsin that are receiving a total of \$23,483,769 in grants to expand fiber broadband internet to more than 3,400 residential and 200 business locations that are currently unserved or underserved primarily in Crawford, Sauk, Iowa, Richland, and Ashland counties. The projects are a part of the governor's larger investment of \$100 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, which is providing grants to 83 projects across the state, as [announced in October](#).



“We know the digital divide is holding our state back and that access to reliable internet connectivity is not a luxury, but a necessity,” said Gov. Evers. “That’s why I declared 2021 the Year of Broadband Access here in Wisconsin, and we’ve worked hard to make exciting investments in broadband infrastructure across our state. And it’s why, in 2022, expanding reliable, high-speed internet access remains a top priority for my administration. We will continue to work quickly to get funding out the door so construction on these projects can begin as soon as possible to ensure every Wisconsinite has access to reliable, affordable high-speed

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internet.”

Last year, Gov. Evers allocated \$100 million in ARPA funds for broadband expansion and authorized the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) to administer the funds. Grant applications were due on [July 27, 2021](#). Internet service providers, telecommunications utilities, cooperatives, local governments, and for-profit and non-profit organizations were eligible to apply. The Commission evaluated broadband projects based on applicant capacity, capability, performance, project budget, proposed matching funds, and the proposed service area's existing broadband service needs. In total, more than 40 counties and three Tribal communities will receive fiber broadband internet through this investment.

“The PSC continues to receive an abundance of broadband expansion grant applications whether it be for federal or state funding,” said PSC Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq. “We are very strategic in making sure we reach as many unserved and underserved communities with sound, viable projects to reach our goal of universal connectivity. I am grateful Governor Evers continues to provide the resources needed to keep us moving forward.”

The governor visited Westby and Reedsburg on Tues., Jan. 25, 2022, where he highlighted five grants awarded through the program that will help expand fiber broadband internet primarily in Crawford, Sauk, Iowa, and Richland counties:

- Vernon Communications Cooperative, Crawford County – Awarded \$5,697,500
- Reedsburg Utility Commission DBA LightSpeed, Happy Hill – Awarded \$2,362,500
- Reedsburg Utility Commission DBA LightSpeed, Iowa County – Awarded \$2,025,000
- Reedsburg Utility Commission DBA LightSpeed, White Mound – Awarded \$3,757,500
- Reedsburg Utility Commission DBA LightSpeed, Witwen – Awarded \$3,600,000

Additionally, these five grant awardees and partners will provide matching funds of \$15,432,500. Photos of the governor's visit in Westby are available [here](#) and [here](#). Photos of the governor's visit to Reedsburg are available

[here](#)
and
[here](#)
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Continuing his tour to highlight these projects, on Wed., Jan. 26, 2022, Gov. Evers visited the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians. The Bad River Tribe was awarded a grant of \$6,041,269 for Superior Connections to expand fiber broadband internet to 260 homes and 10 businesses. When complete, the tribal offices and businesses, and a majority of homes within the Tribe's reservation will have a fiber to the premises service. This project will also provide service to a small number of locations adjacent to the Tribe's land in rural areas of Ashland County. Photos of the governor's visit with the Bad River Tribe are available [here](#) and [here](#).

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Altogether, through state broadband expansion grants since 2019 and federally funded broadband grants, the Evers Administration is providing more than 300,000 homes and businesses with high-quality broadband.

Applicants who were not selected for ARPA funding are encouraged to apply for the State's Broadband Expansion Grant Program. The PSC is currently accepting grant applications for this funding until March 17, 2022, and will announce the grant awards in the summer of 2022. More information can be found [here](#).

A list with brief descriptions of all 83 ARPA Broadband Access Grant awardee is available [here](#).

A map of ARPA Broadband Access Grant Awardees is available [here](#).