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PSC Awards Over \$5.3 Million in CARES Act Funding for Broadband Expansion Grants

Projects to provide access to over 11,000 homes and businesses by the end of the year

MADISON - On Thursday, the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) voted 2-1 to approve over \$5.3 million in funding to 12 projects to expand broadband service across the state. Federal CARES Act funding was made available by Governor Tony Evers in September and will provide access to high-speed broadband internet to 10,262 homes and 782 businesses by December 30, 2020.

"I'm thrilled that we are able to get these dollars into the hands of providers who otherwise would not be able to get these projects done and people connected by the end of the year. These projects will make a real impact for students who are attending school virtually, people who are working from home, businesses who need to connect with customers, and patients who need to schedule telehealth visits with their doctors during the pandemic," said Rebecca Cameron Valcq, Chairperson of the PSC.

"Ensuring every Wisconsinite has access to high-speed, affordable broadband is critical, perhaps now more than ever as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge the way we live, learn, and work," said Gov. Evers. "We were able to make the largest state investment in broadband in our last budget, but these additional funds will go the extra mile to get folks connected."

A list of the grant recipients can be found [here](#). The CARES Act dollars are funding projects that will increase broadband capacity in underserved areas of the state to a significant extent while the need for distance learning and telework exists during the public health emergency.

The CARES Act funding comes as the PSC is also accepting applications for a second round of \$24 million in the state's broadband expansion grant program. 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 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. 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 state's broadband expansion grant program aims 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.

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