



Public Service Commission

Wisconsin Broadband Office

**Dane County Task Force
Sept. 2, 2021**

Wisconsin Broadband Office

Vision and Mission

Vision

- All Wisconsinites have the information technology capacity needed to fully participate in society

Mission

- Make high performance broadband more accessible, reliable, competitive and affordable in Wisconsin

Why is the state focused on Broadband?

Broadband is necessary for access to essential services and full participation in our democracy and economy.

Broadband Access

- Increases access to health care
- Increases community prosperity, economic development and tourism
- Increases property value
- Supports agriculture and manufacturing
- Decreases the learning gap
- Increases participation in government and society
- Provides access to economic and educational opportunity

FY 2022 Broadband Expansion Grants – State Program

Up to \$129 Million available over the biennium FY22 – FY23

PSC will likely begin accepting applications for FY22 broadband expansion grants in late fall or early winter of 2021:

The goal of the grant program is to encourage the deployment of advanced telecommunications capability in underserved areas of the state – funds are largely for infrastructure and ancillary costs

The instructions, application material are not available yet – but you can start planning NOW.

Who may Apply for a Broadband Grant?

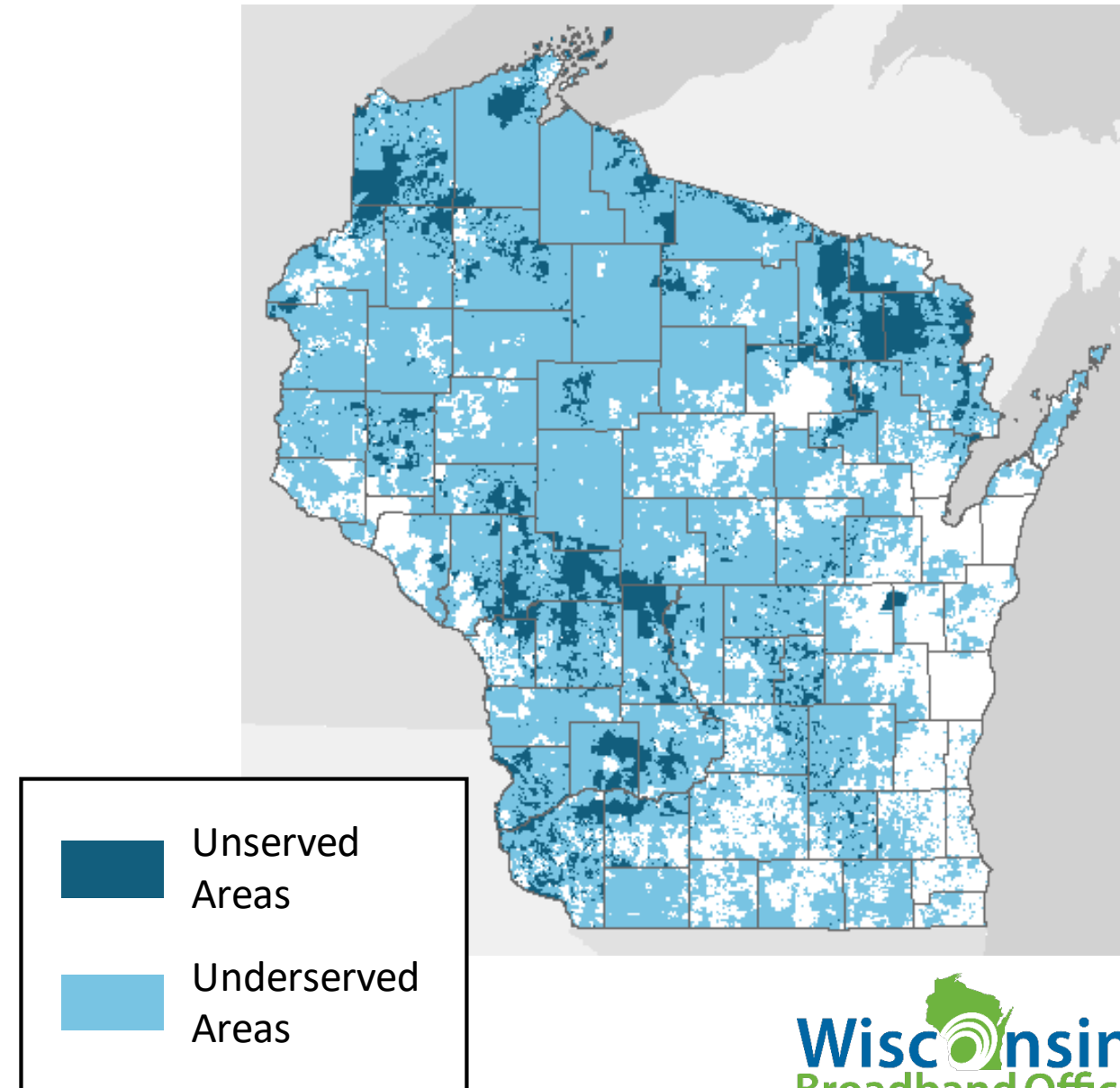
Applicants must fall within one of the following three applicant categories:

- An organization operated for profit or not-for-profit, including a cooperative.
- A telecommunications utility.
- A city, village, town, or county that has entered into a partnership with an eligible organization or telecommunications utility.
- Indigenous Nations or Tribes

Where may Broadband Grants be awarded?

For an area to be considered eligible for a grant, it must be considered “underserved.”

- “Underserved” =
Area served by fewer than 2 providers offering “Broadband Service”
- “Broadband Service” =
25 Mbps Download / 3 Mbps Upload
- “Unserved” area priority factor described in Application Contents & Scoring section



What Specific Items of Information Must be Discussed in the Grant Application?

The statute that authorizes the Broadband Grant Program requires that the Commission give priority to applications that include any of seven factors listed in the statute:

- Matching funds
- Existing broadband services
- Scalability
- Will not delay broadband service in adjacent areas
- Public/private partnerships
- Project impact
- Economic impact

To date, the Broadband Grant program has been quite competitive. The Commission has received many more applications than it can fund. The discussion of priority factors has been the key element of the application that the Commission has used to decide which applications to fund.

How Does the Commission Evaluate Grant Applications?

The record that the Commission considers to make its grant award decision consists of the following 4 items:

- Grant applications
- Comments of interested persons in support as part of the application
- Opposition to one or more specific applications
- Ranking of the grant applications prepared by a preliminary evaluation committee
- Discussion memo prepared by Commission staff

The Commission meets in an open session to discuss the record and to decide which applications should be awarded grants.

State Broadband Expansion Grants with locations Dane County

Applicant	Project Name	Award
Town of Dunn	This project will build a fixed wireless service in the Town of Dunn in Dane County. This service will target 1894 homes and businesses that are south of McFarland and west of Lake Kegonsa	\$31,146
Town of Dunn	This project will build a Charter Communications cable facility to 103 homes in the vicinity of Hawkinson Road in the Town of Dunn in Dane County.	\$106,395
Mt. Vernon Telephone Company	This project will build a DSL service to 28 service nodes in the vicinity of New Glarus, in Green and Dane Counties.	\$351,857
Black Earth Telephone Company	This project will build a DSL service to 307 locations in the Town of Vermont south of the Village of Black Earth in Dane County.	\$285,917
CenturyTel of the Midwest-Kendall, LL	This project will build a 1,500 foot fiber route to a DSL service node located at the intersection of Hwys 14 and 19 east of Mazomanie in Dane County to serve 38 locations.	\$10,500
Black Earth Telephone Company, LLC	This project will build a DSL service in rural Dane County, northeast of the Village of Black Earth. TDS would provide DSL service to 166 households in the Town of Berry.	\$156,500
CenturyTel of the Midwest-Kendall, LL	This project will install a 0.4-mile fiber route to a serving device on the south side of the Village of Mazomanie, near Howards Trail. The project will upgrade the DSL service for 5 businesses and 51 residences.	\$15,258
Town of Sun Prairie	This project will build a fixed wireless service to a neighborhood in the Town of Sun Prairie, south of the City of Sun Prairie. There are 7 businesses and 74 homes within the footprint of the antenna. The provider is UpNetWI.	\$25,004
UpnetWI	This project will build a Fiber-To-The-Premises (FTTP) service past 11 business and 210 residences along County Highway V in the Town of Bristol in Dane County, and north along County Road N in the Town of Hampden in Columbia County.	\$182,656
UpnetWI	This project will build a Fiber-To-The-Premises (FTTP) service past 5 business and 81 residential locations near the intersection of Buckeye Road and Femrite Drive, in the Town of Cottage Grove in the Town of Bristol in Dane County.	\$86,609
Mount Horeb Telephone Company	This project will build a Fiber to the Premises service past 30 residential and 2 business locations along County Highway S in the Town of Springdale in Dane County.	\$363,640
Bug Tussel Wireless	This project will build and equip a tower to provide a fixed wireless service in the vicinity of the Town of Brooklyn in Dane County and the Town of Union in Rock County.	\$102,982

Emergency Broadband Benefit Overview

- This benefit program is funded with \$3.2 billion through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.
- The program offers temporary discounts of up to \$50 per month (\$75 on Tribal Land) off of eligible household's internet access bills.
- Low-income households can also get discounts on a laptop, desktop, or tablet computer.
- The broadband provider will receive the money directly for providing service to an eligible household.
- State of Wisconsin 8/29 Enrollment: 98,886, 537XX enrollment 4,972

EBBP Eligible Consumers

- Households are eligible if ONE member of the household:
 - Qualifies for the FCC's Lifeline program;
 - Receives benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program or did so in the 2019-20 school year;
 - Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year;
 - Experienced a substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020; or
 - Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's low-income or COVID-19 program, or
 - If the household is on Tribal lands, at least one member of the household participates in certain Tribal-specific federal assistance programs
- Households enroll: [Getemergencybroadband.org](https://getemergencybroadband.org)

American Rescue Plan Act Funding

- **State and local fiscal recovery funds**

- *Invest in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure, ... and to expand access to broadband internet.*
- *In view of the wide disparities in broadband access, assistance to households to support internet access or digital literacy is an eligible use to respond to the public health and negative economics of the pandemic.*

- **Capital Project Fund**

- *The Capital Projects Fund thus allows for investment in high-quality broadband as well as other connectivity infrastructure, devices, and equipment. In addition to supporting broadband, it also provides flexibility for each state, territory, and Tribal government to make other investments in critical community hubs or other capital assets that provide access jointly to work, education, and health monitoring.*

***Tentative* Federal Infrastructure Bill**

- \$100 million to each state for infrastructure plus lots more based on formula grants based on unserved numbers,
- \$1 Billion across the country for middle mile
- \$2.75 billion creating the digital equity act and required creation of a state digital equity plan, include formula and competitive grants
- Emergency Broadband Benefit reduces to \$30 per month and become the permanent Affordability Connectivity Program
- Starts Consumer Broadband Labels
- Prevents digital discrimination

Consider Infrastructure and inclusion needs

- 1) **affordable**, robust open broadband internet service;
- 2) internet-enabled **devices** that meet the needs of the user;
- 3) access to **digital literacy** training;
- 4) **quality technical support**; and
- 5) applications and **online content** designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration with adequate consumer and privacy protections.

Digital Inclusion must evolve as technology advances. Digital Inclusion requires intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional and structural barriers to access and use technology.

How to Get Ready

- Create a strong vision and audacious goals for broadband access and digital equity – look to solutions that will solve the problem for a generation
- Work closely with multiple internet service providers to achieve your goals
- Use existing data sets and gather additional data as needed
- Focus planning on underserved locations BUT look for strategies and opportunities that meet all your goals
- Get some projects shovel ready: agreements and pre-engineering work
- Offer technical assistance and grant writing services to communities
- Play chess, not checkers