



2024: A Year in Review at the Public Service Commission

By Public Service Commission Chairperson Summer Strand

2024 was an eventful and productive year at the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) that included leadership changes, the addition of new team members, robust stakeholder and public engagement, historic project approvals, and abundant grant funding awards in new and existing programs. Diligently working together, we achieved significant accomplishments that align with the PSC's mission to ensure the provision of safe, reliable, affordable, and environmentally responsible utility services and equitable access to telecommunications and broadband services.

In early 2024, I was honored to be appointed PSC Chairperson by Gov. Tony Evers. I am very grateful for the opportunity to lead the agency and work with my colleagues to reach our goals, deliver impactful results, and help move Wisconsin forward.

Gov. Evers also appointed two new commissioners to our three-member panel early last year. Commissioners Kristy Nieto and Marcus Hawkins both possess the requisite experience and sound judgement necessary for this important role. Their expertise and professionalism have helped foster constructive open meeting discussions and decisions, and the Commission and our state are fortunate for their commitment to public service.

In 2024, the Commission reviewed and issued decisions in the public interest on approximately 500 dockets that included construction projects, rate cases, the development of new programs, grant funding awards, and more. Throughout these proceedings, new and recurring stakeholders alike had a seat at the table, providing valuable input and feedback. Our process also benefited from testimony and written comments provided by members of the public. This robust stakeholder and public engagement helped guide and inform our decision-making and led to balanced and reasonable decisions in the cases before the Commission.

For example, in December 2024, the Commission approved the application for the Vista Sands Solar Project—the largest solar project ever approved in Wisconsin. Stakeholder and public engagement were essential to the development of the project's voluminous record which ultimately included over 1,100 public comments, and helped demonstrate the clear economic, environmental, and reliability benefits the project will provide the state.

In our rate case proceedings, we heard from customers about the importance of keeping the lights on, bolstering affordability, and meeting shared sustainability goals. In issuing decisions that reflect those priorities, the Commission took reasonable steps to control costs while ensuring utilities continue to strategically invest in safety, reliability, and environmental responsibility. The Commission's actions in the 2024 rate cases will save customers of the state's largest utilities approximately \$481 million over the next two years.

I am grateful for the extensive stakeholder engagement and public involvement that occurred last year and look forward to similarly high levels of participation in 2025.

Also in 2024, the Commission approved 37 water utility infrastructure construction projects, including wells, transmission mains, water treatment facilities, and water main extensions. The projects included several PFAS treatment facilities to ensure clean drinking water in Wisconsin.

The development and launch of new grant programs and the profusion of grant funding awards comprised some of the PSC's noteworthy accomplishments in 2024.

In August, I was honored to join Gov. Evers and U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm for the roll out of the Inflation Reduction Act's Home Efficiency Rebate (HOMES) Program. Wisconsin became the first state in the nation to launch the HOMES Program, which delivers rebates to households undertaking whole-home, energy-saving improvements. In December, the Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate (HEAR) Program, which provides instant discounts to eligible households installing energy-efficient appliances and equipment, also became available in Wisconsin. Both of these important new programs help reduce energy usage which in turn will lower energy bills for participating residents.

In addition, the Commission awarded grants across the state to help bolster clean energy, resiliency, and reliability. In March, the Commission awarded more than \$1 million under the Rural Energy Startup Program (RESP) to support rural local governments implementing comprehensive energy planning, renewable resource planning, and energy efficiency audits and projects. In April, [Gov. Evers and the PSC announced](#) the award of \$7.8 million from the Energy Innovation Grant Program to 28 projects that will expand access to clean energy and invest in the adoption of innovative technologies and processes. And in May, the Commission awarded \$8.5 million under the Grid Resilience Program to 19 projects to improve the resiliency and reliability of the electric grid, with an emphasis on projects that support small utilities and improve service in rural areas.

In 2024, the PSC continued to lead efforts to improve broadband access, affordability, and adoption. In March, [Gov. Evers and the PSC announced](#) the award of over \$43.2 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for 28 projects that will expand broadband internet access to 15,822 business and residential locations in 19 counties. This grant award contributed to the significant progress made under Gov. Evers' leadership since 2019 to help more than 410,000 homes and businesses access new or improved broadband services.

In September, [Gov. Evers and the PSC announced](#) the award of \$27.8 million in funding from the Capital Projects Fund Digital Connectivity and Navigators Program for 11 projects that will deliver digital devices and digital navigation services to 52,409 individuals, and Wi-Fi to 33,682 residents across the state.

Also, another major milestone was reached in Wisconsin's broadband expansion efforts as our Initial Proposal for the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program was approved by our federal partners in 2024. This approval allows us to proceed to the grant phase of the process in 2025. Eventually, more than \$1 billion in BEAD Program funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will be awarded to provide enhanced broadband service to unserved and underserved locations throughout Wisconsin. We are ready and excited to take these next steps in the BEAD Program process to help more Wisconsin residents access high-speed internet at their homes and businesses.

In 2024, the PSC successfully navigated change and worked tirelessly and collaboratively to achieve significant accomplishments. While we have a lot on the horizon this year, I am confident that the same drive and determination will lead us to continued success in 2025.

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