



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Rebecca Cameron Valcq, Chairperson
Ellen Nowak, Commissioner
Tyler Huebner, Commissioner

4822 Madison Yards Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53707-7854

July 3, 2020

REPLY REQUIRED

To: All Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program Vendors

Re: Administration of the Universal Service Fund

5-UF-2020

Notice of Commission Order Requiring Acknowledgment of TEPP Vendor Protocols

The Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP)¹ is administered by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) under the Universal Service Fund Program (USF). This program, first implemented in 1996, has enabled thousands of Wisconsin residents with hearing, speech, mobility, or motion disabilities to access telecommunications service with specialized telecommunications equipment. I am writing to provide you notice of some important information relevant to TEPP vendors.

Commission Order Adopting TEPP Vendor Protocols

First, TEPP vendors are advised that the Commission, by Order dated July 3, 2020, a copy of which is enclosed (“Order”), approved the attached TEPP Vendor Protocols (“Protocols”) in Commission docket number 5-AFR-2700.

These Protocols replace the TEPP Vendor Guidelines that were last updated in 2016 and had been previously available on the Commission’s website. The Protocols are critical to the success and integrity of TEPP. Pursuant to the Order, each vendor must review, sign, and return the last page of the Protocols, as well as the referenced attachments, **by August 4, 2020** to continue as an authorized TEPP vendor. Vendors who decline to sign and return the Vendor Protocols will no longer be eligible to receive payments from TEPP.

If your company or organization no longer wants to participate in the TEPP program as an authorized TEPP vendor, please email me at billy.mauldin@wisconsin.gov to be removed from the TEPP vendor list.

¹ All TEPP documents can be found at <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/TEPP.aspx>

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Thank you for being a TEPP vendor and supporting our Wisconsin residents with disabilities who rely on TEPP to support their telecommunications needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Billy Mauldin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "B" and "M".

Billy Mauldin
TEPP Director

HWM:kle DL:01714093

Enclosure: TEPP Vendor Protocols
 Final Commission Order dated July 3, 2020

SERVICE DATE
Jul 03, 2020

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN

Administration of the Universal Service Fund

5-AFR-2700

ORDER

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) hereby orders that vendors in the Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP) seeking reimbursement from the Universal Service Fund (USF) shall abide by the attached TEPP Vendor Protocols (Protocols). Vendors are required to sign the Protocols and to complete and return the required attachments to continue as, or to become, authorized vendors in the TEPP program. Currently authorized vendors who do not sign and return the Protocols with the required attachments within 30 days of the date of this Order will no longer be eligible to receive payments from TEPP.

TEPP, funded by the USF, was established to enable thousands of Wisconsin residents with hearing, speech, mobility, or motion disabilities to access telecommunications with specialized equipment. The Commission must consider several factors, including the following, in establishing the services and equipment which may be assisted by the USF:

1. The impact of the assistance on all members of the public and the telecommunications industry.
2. Eligibility requirements for assistance recipients.
3. The costs of administering the assistance.
4. Telecommunications plans and requirements established by the federal rural electrification administration.

5. The extent to which the fund preserves and promotes an available basic set of essential telecommunications services throughout the state and promotes economic development.¹

The Commission has statutory authority to “promulgate rules to determine whether a telecommunications provider, the customers of a telecommunications provider or another person shall be assisted by the universal service fund” for uses which include “assist[ing] disabled customers in obtaining affordable access to a basic set of essential telecommunications services.” Wis. Stat. § 196.218(5) (a)-(b). The Commission exercised that promulgation authority and created administrative rules for the TEPP program in Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 160.071(1m). The rules state that vendors may redeem vouchers, submitted with an invoice from the USF administrator. The Commission may, for good cause shown, suspend a vendor’s eligibility to redeem vouchers under the program. Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 160.071(1m)(j). Suspended vendors may not receive reimbursement for vouchers submitted for purchases or customer orders made after the date of suspension. *Id.* The rules also permit Commission staff to impose reasonable limits on the types and quantities of devices that may be purchased with one voucher. Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 160.071(1m)(k).

The attached Protocols describe and require the information the Commission considers to be necessary, and will thus require, from each TEPP vendor. They supersede the TEPP Vendor Guidelines, last updated in 2016, which had been previously available on the Commission’s website. It is reasonable and necessary to require vendors to sign the Protocols, and to complete

¹ Wis. Stat. § 196.218(5)(c).

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and return the required attachments referenced within them, as a condition of continued reimbursement eligibility. Without such information, the Commission cannot determine whether there is good cause to suspend a vendor's eligibility, as is authorized by Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 160.071(1m)(j). This process will also aid the Commission in ensuring that USF funds are administered appropriately, and in preventing fraud and abuse.

The Commission has the authority to issue this Order under Wis. Stat. §§ 196.02(1) and 196.218(5)(a)1, Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 160.071, and a delegation of authority under Wis. Stat. § 15.02(4).

Commission staff shall make the Protocols available on the Commission's website at <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/TEPP.aspx>, and will distribute a copy of this Order to all currently authorized vendors. Commission staff shall also make available any subsequent updates or corrections to the Protocols by posting the update or correction on the Commission's Electronic Records Filing (ERF) system in docket 5-AFR-2700, and on the Commission's website.

Dated at Madison, Wisconsin, July 3, 2020.

For the Commission:



Kristy Nieto
Division Administrator
Division of Digital Access, Consumer and Environmental Affairs

KN:BM:kle DL:01715664

See attached Notice of Rights