

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin



**Universal Service Fund
Nonprofit Access Grant Program**

**2020 Grant Application Instructions
Docket 5-NF-2020**

**Application Deadline
May 26, 2020**

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) is soliciting applications for its Nonprofit Access Grant Program¹. The Commission will award up to \$500,000 in funding to nonprofit organizations.

This is an accelerated solicitation. Awards for this grant are expected to be announced by the end of June. Funded proposals are anticipated to have a project period starting in June or July 2020.

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, Commission staff encourages applicants to identify any ways in which their proposed projects would address public needs related to assistance with telecommunications access during this unprecedented time, or help residents maintain reliable access during any future period of social distancing.

The purpose of the Nonprofit Access Grant Program is to assist customers located in areas of the state with relatively high costs of telecommunications service, low-income customers, and customers with disabilities to obtain affordable access to a basic set of telecommunications service.

These grants may be a particularly appropriate source of funding to address COVID-19 related barriers to telecommunications access. Grants could, for example, be used to address the telecommunications needs of people with disabilities, low-income populations, or other groups who have barriers accessing typical or mainstream telecommunications offerings; this could include geographic areas with limited or no reliable or affordable internet providers.

Background

The Wisconsin Universal Service Fund (USF) was created to promote and assist with the availability and affordability of telecommunications services in Wisconsin. Companies providing telecommunications services in Wisconsin are required to contribute to the USF. The Commission administers several programs funded by the USF, including the Nonprofit Access Grant Program which provides funding to nonprofit groups to facilitate affordable access to telecommunications services.²

Under the requirements of the Nonprofit Access Grant Program, any nonprofit group (defined as an IRS § 501(c)(3) organization³) may apply for funding from the USF to cover up to 75% of project or program costs to assist in providing access to telecommunications services for low-income customers and/or customers with a disability. There is no specified dollar limit for any particular project as long as USF requested funding does not exceed 75% of total project costs.

¹ Commission Docket 5-NF-2020

² Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 160.125(2).

³ Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 160.125(2)(c)1.

Eligible Applicants

Any nonprofit group as defined as an IRS § 501(c)(3) organization may apply for funding under the Nonprofit Access Grant Program.⁴

Anticipated Funds Available

In accordance with Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 160.125(2)(f), \$500,000 will be made available in 2020 for the Nonprofit Access Grant Program.

Matching Funds Requirement

Applicants are required to provide at least **25% matching funds toward the total project cost** (a three-dollar-for-one-dollar match). For example, if the total project budget is \$20,000, no more than \$15,000 can be funded from this grant program. Matching funds may be provided as cash or in-kind contributions. Matching funds may not include items purchased with USF grant dollars from prior years, nor may the in-kind match items be used to meet the grant match requirement for more than one USF grant cycle. Matching funds may not be used to meet the grant match requirement for other non-USF grant applications.

Any non-USF funding sources, including federal, state, and private foundations, may be used to meet the matching requirement. In-kind contributions may be professional services that are donated or discounted by the donor. Matching funds, both cash and in-kind contributions, must relate to the proposed project and must be itemized on the *Budget Summary Form*, found at the end of this application packet.

The application must identify the source and amount of matching funds. If the source of the match is not the applicant, documentation that matching funds are committed must be provided with the application or prior to release of any funding. If the source is the applicant, a statement of commitment of matching funds or documentation of in-kind funds must be provided with the application or prior to release of any funding.

Application Submission and Deadline

All applicants are required to submit the following:

- a signed Cover Sheet,
- a signed Affidavit attesting to the applicant's 501(c)3 status,
- a Budget Summary Form, and
- a Project Narrative.

⁴ Wis. Admin. Codes §§ PSC 160.125(2)(c)1.; PSC 160.02(23).

The cover sheet, affidavit form and budget summary form are located at the end of this application packet. Electronic copies are also available from the Commission website at: <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/NonProfitGrants.aspx>. Incomplete applications may not be considered for funding.

Applications must be submitted to the Commission via the Electronic Records Filing (ERF) System. Information about creating an account and filing online can be found on the Commission website at E-Services/Electronic Records Filing System/Help/Quick Reference Sheet (<http://apps.psc.wi.gov/vs2015/ERF/documents/CheatSheet.pdf>).

To file an application or other documents on ERF, use the docket number and caption:

Docket Number: 5-NF-2020

Docket Caption: Universal Service Fund Grant Program for Telecommunications
Access Programs or Projects by Nonprofit Groups

Please remember to log in to the ERF system before attempting to upload the application.

Applications are due and must be uploaded to ERF no later than 4:00 p.m. CT, Tuesday, May 26, 2020.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the Commission receives all documents in a readable format prior to the deadline.

No late applications will be considered for funding.

Application Procedure

A complete application includes the following items, and should be uploaded to ERF as a single document, assembled in the following order:

1. Universal Service Program Grant Application Form (Cover Sheet)

Form instructions:

- Leave the State Application Number (above Section I) blank.
- Fill out Sections I and II.
- Signature of the certifying representative of the organization is required in Section II of the form.
- Leave Section III blank.

2. Affidavit of Eligibility

The affidavit form includes a statement certifying that the applicant is a 501(c)3 organization, and that Universal Service Fund support will be used for the purpose granted. **The form must be signed by an authorized representative of the organization.**

3. Budget Summary

Fill in the Excel spreadsheet to indicate requested grant funding and proposed match funding, indicating the source of the funding, and if the match is in-kind or cash.

4. Project Narrative

The narrative must address the *Review Criteria* described in the following section.

Review Criteria

The Project Narrative, should address the following criteria in the order listed below. Use the headings provided.

Each criterion should be addressed separately and completely, allowing responses to be independently reviewed without reference to outside sources. Failure to address any criterion may negatively affect the application score by the reviewers.

The application must meet the following requirements to be considered for funding:

- The application must be submitted on ERF by the deadline, **May 26, 2020, 4:00 p.m. CT**
- The page size should be a standard 8-1/2" x 11" with a legible font no smaller than 11 point.
- A minimum of one-inch margins should be used throughout the application.
- The entire Project Narrative section may not exceed six (6) single-sided, and single-spaced, numbered pages. Pages exceeding the limit will not be reviewed.

Once filed, all applications become the property of the Commission, and are subject to Wisconsin's open records laws.

1. Applicant Overview

- Briefly describe the applicant organization(s) including area(s) and clientele served.

2. Project Need and Purpose

- Provide a summary paragraph of what the project will do.
- Describe a public need that is not being met at present, which will be targeted by the project. Describe how this need was identified and defined.

Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Commission staff encourages applicants to include in their description of public need to be met by their project, any details describing whether and how their proposed project might actively address public needs that have arisen due to social distancing measures and health care needs relating to the virus, including but not limited to, for example, the need to establish individual and/or

household connections to telecommunications service at speeds and quality suitable for remote participation in activities such as: online school, remote work, health management, and participation in community activities.

Commission staff encourages applicants to describe any ways in which a project might, for example, prioritize the following:

- At-home access to telecommunications services that are affordable and sustainable,
 - Drive-up, no- and low-cost wireless options for areas of the state in which at-home connections are not available,
 - Technical expertise to work with individuals and companies to establish and troubleshoot telecommunications service(s) in the home,
 - Payments for telecommunications service for those individuals or households unable to afford service,
 - Refurbished or new computers or other telecommunications devices available at no- or low-cost to households,
 - Technical assistance to customers on applying for discount programs, including Lifeline.
- Describe how the project meets at least one of the following purposes of the Universal Service Fund:
 - a. To assist customers located in areas of the state that have relatively high costs of telecommunication services in obtaining affordable access to a basic set of essential telecommunication services.
 - b. To assist low-income customers and customers with disabilities to obtain affordable access to a basic set of essential telecommunication services.
 - For applicants that received funding in previous cycles of the Nonprofit Access Grant Program, reference previous successes and provide statistics describing the previous award and how this application builds on that success.

3. Project Goals and Outcomes

- Identify realistic, measurable goals and outcomes expected to result from the implementation of the project. Anticipated outcomes should relate to the Project Need and Purpose statement described under heading 2, above. These outcomes will be used to evaluate the success of the project.
- All descriptions of how the proposed project will meet an applicant's identified public need should address:
 - how the applicant will accomplish identified project objectives quickly, and
 - if applicable, how the proposed project will be sustainable after the end of the program funding period.

4. Project Implementation

- Provide a project timeline.
- Describe the activities to be performed throughout the timeframe of the project, including priorities, sequence and necessary materials, equipment or contracts.
- Identify providers for each portion of the services or equipment needed for the project.
- Explain the approach to the problem, plan of work and why this approach was selected.
- State how the progress of the project will be monitored to ensure that it will be carried out within the specified time.
- Describe any partnerships, community support or other collaborations with individuals or organizations that will be involved in the project.

5. Budget Detail

- Provide justification for the budget, in narrative form, for each category listed on the Budget Summary Form.
- Describe how the project meets the described public need in a least-cost manner. This may include showing requests for proposals have been issued or by obtaining several bids for equipment or services and reporting the results of the cost review process. If the project will be done by in-house staff, explain why that approach was chosen.
- Identify the providers of the telecommunications services or equipment, and provide a specific description of the components of the project.
- Administrative costs should only include costs directly attributable to the project. If a percentage of the organization's overhead is used to determine administrative costs, the amount and what is included in that percentage must be described. Rent for general administrative purposes may not be included as a separate reimbursable project expense; however, it can be included as an in-kind cost for matching purposes.

6. Evaluation

- Explain how the project goals and outcomes identified above will be evaluated and by whom. Describe measurement tools, such as pre-testing and post-testing, surveys, inventories, and reports, which will be used to determine the extent to which the project meets each of its goals.

Review and Selection Process

1. Notice and Public Comment

The Commission will issue a Notice requesting public comments after the application deadline.

2. Initial Screening

Commission staff will conduct an initial screening of all applications. The applications will be screened for: addressing the Project Objectives, completeness, timeliness of filing, formatting

and length, eligibility of applicant as a nonprofit organization, and the commitment of at least 25 percent matching funds.

Applications not meeting the initial screening requirements may not be considered for funding.

3. Application Review

A panel of technical or program professionals will review applications passing the initial screening. Reviewers will use a rating checklist that scores each application based on the *Review Criteria* described above. Results of this analysis and review will be reported in a memorandum to the Commissioners.

4. Final Decision on Grant Awards

After the screening and review process is complete, the Commission will decide which grants to award. The Commission makes its decisions in Open Meetings of the Commission. The Commission will notify all grant applicants of its decision by adopting and serving on all applicants an Order awarding grants.

In making the final grant funding decisions, the Commission shall consider information including the following:

- The basis of the public need to be met.
- The degree to which the Program Objectives are met.
- The extent to which other programs or projects meet the identified public need.⁵
- The overall cost of the proposed project or program relative to the addressed public need.⁶

The Commission may consider other factors in its decision-making such as: analysis provided by staff, analysis of the review panel, public comments filed on the applications, geographic distribution of the proposed grants, diversity of needs addressed by the proposed grants, the number of previous USF grants awarded to the applicant, cost of the project relative to the number of individuals receiving benefits, and availability of funds.

Grant Agreement, Reporting and Payment Process

Grant projects may begin after a Grant Agreement between the Commission and the applicant is executed. No work should start prior the date of the Commission Order. The Commission will provide the appropriate forms for grantees to use to request reimbursement and submit reports.

⁵ Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 160.125

⁶ Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 160.125(2)(d).

False, Misleading, or Omitted Statements

False or misleading statements, or omissions that render the information provided on an application to be false or misleading, are grounds for rejection of an application, for denial, or for termination of funding. In addition, the Commission reserves the right to take any other action allowed by law.

For Further Information, Contact:

Holly O'Higgins, Universal Service Fund Director

Phone: 608-267-9486

Email: holly.ohiggins@wisconsin.gov

Web: <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/NonProfitGrants.aspx>

For questions concerning the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin's Electronic Regulatory Filing System (ERF), contact the Records Management Team at (608) 261-8524 or at pscrecs@psc.state.wi.us.

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
North Tower, 6th Floor
Hill Farms State Office Building
4822 Madison Yards Way
Madison, WI 53705



**Universal Service Fund
Nonprofit Access Grant Program
Docket 5-NF-2020**

AFFIDAVIT OF ELIGIBILITY

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION - UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND
2020 NONPROFIT ACCESS GRANT PROGRAM
5-NF-2020**

An authorized representative of the Grant Applicant must sign and date the certification statement below to be eligible for a Nonprofit Access Grant.

- 1. I am an authorized representative of the Grant Applicant and hereby certify that the Grant Applicant is a nonprofit organization as defined by IRS § 501(c)(3);**
- 2. I hereby certify that any grant dollars from the Universal Service Fund Nonprofit Access Grant Program will be used by the Grant Applicant for the purpose granted.**

I certify, under penalty of perjury that the information provided in items 1 and 2 above are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of applicant representative

Name of applicant organization

Date

Print name and title of representative



**Universal Service Fund
Non-Profit Access Grant Program
Docket 5-NF-2020**

Budget Summary

Project Expenses	USF Requested Funds	Match Cash	Match In-Kind
Telecommunications Equipment			
Non-Telecommunications Equipment			
Consultant/Professional Fees			
Internet/Telecommunications Services			
Technical Staffing Expenses			
Administrative Staffing Expenses			
Rent	DISALLOWED		
Misc. Administrative Expenses			
User/Client Training			
Other (specify)			
Total Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grand Total Project Expenses	\$ -		

Funding Sources	Committed In-Kind	Committed Cash	Pending In-Kind	Pending Cash
Grants, Contracts, Contributions				
USF Funds Requested in Application				
Government Agencies (list by name)				
Private Foundates (list by name)				
Corporations (list by name)				
Individuals (list total amount)				
Applicants				
Revenue from the Project				
Other (specify)				
Total Funding, by Category	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grand Total Project Funding	\$ -			

Organization Name:
Contact Name:
Contact Phone Number:
Contact Email Address: