State Broadband Expansion Grant Program
Frequently Asked Questions
Fiscal Year (FY) 2022
Updated March 7, 2022

This FAQ provides answers to common questions regarding the state Broadband Expansion Grant Program for FY 2022. They are organized by the following topics:

- Introduction (pages 1-3)
- Grant Application Information and Requirements (pages 4-14)
- Additional Resources (14)

**Note:** The responses below to Frequently Asked Questions are intended to provide useful information to individuals considering whether to apply for the state Broadband Expansion Grant Program for FY 2022. The responses below do not and cannot limit the discretion of the Commission when it meets to decide which Broadband Grant applications should receive funds. To the extent that the responses below suggest policy choices different from the course of action the Commission ultimately adopts, the Commission’s grant decision is controlling in all circumstances. In particular, one goal of the Commission at the beginning stages of this grant round is to encourage as many applications from as many different types of applicants as possible. Later, the Commission could well decide to prioritize certain types of applications over others in order to best distribute the available funds among the eligible grant applicants.

**Introduction**

1. **What is the purpose of the Broadband Expansion Grant Program?**

The purpose of the Broadband Expansion Grant Program is to encourage the deployment of advanced telecommunications capability in underserved areas of the state.

In the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) 2021 report on deployment of broadband service, the FCC found that broadband deployment in Wisconsin continued to be slightly below the national average:

- 6.8% of the population in Wisconsin (or 394,000 people) lack access to at least one fixed broadband service with a speed of 25/3 Mbps or better, compared to the national average of 4.4%; and
- 21.8% of Wisconsin residents living in rural census blocks (or 385,000 people) lack access to at least fixed one broadband service with a speed of 25/3 Mbps or better, compared to the national average of 17.2% for residents living in rural areas.

The state is devoting grant funds to programs intended to bring broadband service to unserved and underserved residents in Wisconsin. This disparity in access to high speed internet is mitigated to a small degree by the availability of a 4G mobile service. However, the FCC has found that a fixed broadband service with a speed of 25/3 Mbps and a 4G mobile wireless are not functional substitutes for each other. The higher price, lower speeds and significant data caps that
are common with mobile services limit the utility of those options when compared to a fixed alternative.

In many areas of the state, the incumbent local exchange carrier and other telecommunications providers have determined that it is not possible to build an upgraded broadband service financed through monthly rates for service. Providers want a timely return on their investments in infrastructure that sparse and high cost areas are unable to provide. To address this issue, the state offers Broadband Expansion Grants to providers, local communities and organizations to subsidize construction of broadband facilities in underserved areas. These grants are intended to subsidize the construction of broadband infrastructure in underserved areas but are not to subsidize the ongoing cost of providing communication service.

2. How much funding is available in this grant round and what is the source?

Up to $100 million dollars will be made available in this FY 2022 state Broadband Expansion Grant round. The funding comes from the 2021-2023 state biennial budget and will come from bond proceeds authorized by the Wisconsin Building Commission. It is important to take note of the funding source for this grant round, particularly as it relates to draft grant agreement terms.

A document regarding information about FY 2022 Grant Agreements is available on the broadband grants webpage here: https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandGrants.aspx. Additionally, a DRAFT Grant Agreement for FY 2022 is available. The draft grant agreement contains updated language and additional provisions related to general obligations bonds as the source of funds in FY 2022. Please review the grant agreement when developing an application.

3. What are the common Broadband Service Technologies in use?

Broadband communications services are offered to subscribers using several alternative technologies. The more popular methods to connect to the internet include:

- Digital Subscriber Line (DSL)
  DSL transmits digital IP-formatted messages over standard telephone lines. The DSL service can be used simultaneously with the voice telephone service over the same telephone access line. This is possible because DSL uses higher frequency bands – the voice band range of the telephone line is 0 to 4 kHz, while DSL transmits signals in the range of 25 kHz to 1.5 MHz. A DSL modem is required to access the DSL signal. DSL provides continuous access to an internet service provider.

- Cable Internet
  Cable internet service uses the hybrid fiber and co-axial cable frequently deployed by cable television companies providing television service. Cable provides continuous access to an internet service provider. Cable requires the provider to replace or bypass the existing copper telephone facility with a second wireline network. A cable modem is required with this technology choice as well.
• Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP)

FTTP is a means to provide communications service by connecting a business or residence to the switch entirely by an optical fiber from an optical network interface at the point of entry at a residence or business. The optical fiber replaces the existing copper telephone line to a residence. As with cable internet, FTTP requires the provider to replace or bypass the existing copper telephone facility. Currently, FTTP service provides much faster connection speeds than DSL or cable internet service.

• Fixed wireless

Fixed wireless connects a subscriber’s home or business to a serving antenna by radio link. In the past, fixed wireless has been popular in rural areas because it can be installed without incurring the cost of a wireline network. The frequencies for fixed wireless may be limited to line of sight. The coverage area can also be limited depending upon whether the broadcast spectrum in use is licensed or not (unlicensed fixed wireless must operate at lower power levels than licensed spectrum). Transmission speed for fixed (and mobile) wireless also depends upon the transmission technology. Third generation (3G) WiMAX provides an IP-formatted signal with a download speed of up to 6 Mbps while Fourth generation (4G) LTE provides a similar IP-formatted signal with a download speed of up to 300 Mbps. The introduction of wireless 5G service began in 2017. The Commission has approved projects that use TV White Space and Citizens Radio Broadband Service.

• Mobile wireless

A variety of mobile wireless carriers offer internet access using the 3G, 4G and 5G LTE transmission technologies. In rural areas, antennas are located to facilitate communication while travelling along roads. Some locations away from major roads in the northern portion of the state lack access to a mobile wireless signal. Mobile wireless internet service can have significant monthly data limits.

• Satellite Internet service

Satellite-based communications services offer a telecommunications alternative for individuals that are located in remote areas. Subscriptions to satellite services are generally driven by the demand for television service in rural areas that lack a cable television service provider. This technology is affected more than the others by adverse weather and network congestion. Traditional satellite internet access can have significant monthly data limits, and also suffers from high latency (the time it takes for a transmission signal to make a round trip between originating and terminating ends of the calls). High latency diminishes the utility of Voice over IP communications, interactive on-line gaming and remote control device applications. A number of low-orbit satellite services are offered in limited areas in Wisconsin and have higher speeds and lower latency than previous satellite technology.
Grant Applications Information and Requirements

4. Who is eligible to apply for a Broadband Expansion Grant?

State statute 196.504 contains two eligibility requirements that each application must satisfy.

- First, an applicant must be either an organization operated for profit or not for profit, a telecommunications utility, or a public entity that has entered into a partnership with an eligible organization or telecommunications utility.
- Second, the statute authorizes the Commission to make grants to eligible applicants to construct broadband infrastructure in underserved areas. This would eliminate applications proposing to build in areas regarded as served.

With respect to the first eligibility requirement, the Commission has interpreted the requirement that public entities obtain or include a private party in the application to mean more than simply submitting a letter of support at the time of the application. The Commission has accepted a range of approaches, including a formal joint venture agreement or equivalent, a partnership agreement specifically tailored to the Broadband Expansion Grant Program, co-applicants on the grant application filing, and a statement from the parties indicating the level of participation each partner will contribute.

A telecommunications utility is eligible to apply for a grant, even if that telecommunications utility is municipally-owned. A municipally-owned telecommunications utility pays the Commission’s remainder assessment, telecommunication relay service assessment, telecommunications trade practices assessment and universal service assessment in the same proportion as other telecommunications utilities. The Commission affords a municipally-owned telecommunications utility the same benefits and privileges that come with that status as well.

There is no distinction made in state law between the traditional carriers that in the past provided telephone service as a regulated entity, and the newer carriers that have entered the local exchange market after the state and federal government decided to eliminate exclusive telephone franchise boundaries. The distinction between incumbent local exchange carrier (ILEC) and competitive local exchange carrier (CLEC) that is found in federal law does not exist in state law. Thus a variety of ILECs and CLECs are eligible to apply for a broadband grant as telecommunications utilities. Certification under state law does not depend upon geography or exchange boundaries. The state certifies a company based upon the telecommunications service the company offers for sale to customers.

For purposes of eligibility for a Broadband Expansion Grant, an Indigenous Nation or Tribe located within the state will be treated as an organization.

5. Which geographic areas of the state may receive a broadband grant?

The second eligibility requirement concerns the geographic area to which the Commission may award a grant. The purpose of the Broadband Expansion Grant Program is to encourage the
deployment of advanced telecommunications services in underserved areas of the state. For this reason, state grant funds are limited to construction projects proposing to build broadband facilities in unserved and underserved areas of the state.

The Broadband Expansion Grant Program defines the following two terms:

- **Underserved area** means an area of this state that is served by fewer than 2 broadband service providers providing a broadband service with a speed of 25 Megabits per second (Mbps) for download transmission and 3 Mbps for upload transmission. For purposes of eligibility, this definition does not include a commercial mobile radio service or a broadband service in which a stand-alone satellite provider connects directly to the end user with a satellite connection. An eligible underserved area can also include an area where an applicant has shown it to be underserved notwithstanding the fact that the proposed service area lies within a census block that has been designated as served in the Broadband Coverage Map.

- **Unserved area** means an area of the state that is not served by an internet service provider offering an internet service that is all of the following:

  1. Fixed wireless service or wired service.
  2. Provided at actual speeds of at least 5 Mbps for download transmission and 600 Kbps for upload transmission.

6. The state broadband map is not accurate with respect to my address / neighborhood / community. How much weight will the state broadband map be given in the grant application process?

The Commission uses data provided from internet service providers and the FCC’s Form 477. Some providers have selected to provide more granular data that is reflected on the map. The FCC collects data, including coverage speeds, technology types, and other connectivity information, from providers of broadband service using its Form 477. There is an important convention underlying the data reported by Form 477. Most of the coverage data from the Form 477 is provided by census block. A provider indicates coverage over a census block when at least one customer is served within that area. Thus, while coverage data, maps and related tools attempt to highlight areas of the state that have internet access, there exists a degree of inaccuracy due to this reporting convention. The maps produced by the Commission may overstate the extent of broadband availability and the speed that individuals may access in some areas as a result.

Where the broadband map indicates that a proposed grant project area is underserved, the Commission will accept the map as sufficient evidence of the actual broadband service in place;

But where the map indicates an area is served by two broadband services providing 25/3 service, the applicant is permitted to provide additional information to show that the broadband map is not accurate with respect to the proposed project area.
7. **What evidence is needed to challenge an area that maps current shows as "served" but is not?**

Evidence may include but is not limited to: speed tests, customer testimonials/surveys, evidence that a customer tried to order service and was unable to, etc. There is not a suggested or recommended application/tool to collect speed test data.

8. **How do you determine what broadband services and broadband service providers are in place in an area?**

The [Wisconsin Broadband Map](https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandGrants.aspx) is a good resource to answer this question as well. The data the FCC collects from Form 477 identifies the providers of broadband service in each census block. Commission staff has access to the FCC data and prepares the Wisconsin Broadband Map from that data. The map displays for each census block the name and service details for each provider that has indicated that it provides service in a given census block.

On occasion, the Commission staff will survey customers and providers to determine or verify information regarding broadband service status in a given area of interest.

9. **When is the next broadband grant cycle? How will the Commission inform interested persons that it is accepting grant applications?**

The Commission will post on its website, [https://psc.wi.gov](https://psc.wi.gov), information on upcoming broadband grant opportunities as details become available. Commission staff will also send out an announcement via e-mail newsletter when the next grant cycle officially kicks off.

The schedule for the FY 2022 Broadband Grant cycle has been announced:

To submit a grant application, a prospective grant applicant should first download the grant application instructions posted on the website, [https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandGrants.aspx](https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandGrants.aspx) and create an application that conforms to those instructions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 1, 2021</td>
<td>Date of issue of the application instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15, 2022, 4PM CT</td>
<td>Last day for submitting questions and requests for clarification regarding application materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 16, 2022, 4PM CT</td>
<td>Last day to request uploading assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 17, 2022, 4PM CT</td>
<td><strong>Applications due</strong> from applicants and deadline for uploading to the Commission’s Electronic Records Filing (ERF) system. Applications are available to the public via ERF on March 18 under docket 5-BF-2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 14, 2022, 4PM CT</td>
<td>Last day for submitting an objection to a grant application</td>
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April 21, 2022, 4PM CT

**Last day for submitting a response to an objection**

**Note:** The February 15, 2022 deadline for submitting questions and requests for clarification is specific to the application materials including the application instructions. Questions regarding grant agreements will be accepted beyond February 15, 2022.

10. **What resources are available to assist an individual preparing a grant application?**

Staff at the Commission are available and willing to provide assistance to any individual preparing to submit an application for a broadband grant. Staff will **NOT** help write the application nor discuss with individuals how proposed application content might be treated by an evaluation committee or the Commission in a subsequent review. The grant application instructions provide a specific process for obtaining a clarification regarding the required application content.

Inquiries submitted to the Commission often ask for the links to the following three items:

- **Wisconsin Broadband Map**

  The coverage map discussed above is available at the following link: [https://maps.psc.wi.gov/apps/WisconsinBroadbandMap/](https://maps.psc.wi.gov/apps/WisconsinBroadbandMap/). When the page loads, a user may select the map layers of interest by toggling the various layers on or off using the check boxes to the left of the map.

- **Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) maps**

  A map displaying the results of the FCC’s RDOF program is available here: [https://maps.psc.wi.gov/apps/Rdof/](https://maps.psc.wi.gov/apps/Rdof/). For the most up-to-date information regarding RDOF, please refer to the FCC’s site here: [https://www.fcc.gov/auction/904](https://www.fcc.gov/auction/904).

- **Complex mapping application showing previous ARPA grant applications and awardees:**
  [https://maps.psc.wi.gov/apps/ARPAApplicants/index.html](https://maps.psc.wi.gov/apps/ARPAApplicants/index.html)

- **Grant applications from prior grant cycles**

  In preparing a grant application, a grant writer might find it useful to review the applications submitted in prior grant cycles. The grant applications and other documents and correspondence related to the Broadband Expansion Grant Program are available through the Commission’s ERF system:

  To search for applications from prior grant cycles, go to the homepage of the Commission’s website, [https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Home.aspx](https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Home.aspx), and select ‘Docket Search.’

  In the three boxes to the left under the caption ‘Search,’ type in the docket number for the prior grant cycle, and click on ‘Search.’ When the docket name comes up, select the tab
for ‘Documents.’ Then click “all documents” and this should bring up a list of documents on file for that docket number. The grant applications are usually among the documents filed earliest, and will be found toward the bottom of the list of documents. The docket numbers for the prior grant cycles are:

- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): 5-BF-2022
- FY 2021: 5-BF-2021
- FY 2020: 5-BF-2020
- FY 2019: 5-BF-2019
- FY 2018 (Rounds 1 and 2): 5-BF-2018

11. What has changed about the FY 2022 state Grant Application requirements?

As referenced in Question 2 above, funds for this grant round come from bond proceeds authorized by the Wisconsin Building Commission.

Middle mile projects have always been eligible for a state Broadband Expansion Grant. The Commission has funded several middle mile projects in the past. The FY 2022 Application has new questions for middle mile project to specifically address in the application. The Commission would like additional information related to future last mile connections, use of the fiber resources and capacity. Middle mile projects that have the purpose and effect of creating improved, cost-efficient access to unserved areas are of interest to the Commission in this grant round.

Geospatial files are required by due date and time. A static map and description of the area of the state that will be affected by the project must be on page 5 of the application filed on ERF.

A geospatial file depicting the area affected by the proposed project must be submitted in addition to the static map by the grant due date. These files must be emailed to PSCBroadbandData@wisconsin.gov by the application due date. Emails can deliver geospatial files using one of the following methods:

- Email attachment
- URL reference to a spatial file download.

A map of the geospatial files of the proposed projects will be available for review on our website before the end of the opposition period.

12. The FCC will periodically release updates to its broadband coverage data. How will the Commission treat this updated data if it is released in the middle of a broadband grant cycle?

The Commission will consider the eligibility of a grant application on the day of the open meeting when it meets to discuss and decide which grant applications should be funded. To determine whether a grant application is eligible, the Commission will use the best data available, including the latest updates of the FCC broadband coverage data.
13. How does the Commission evaluate the grant applications and decide which applications should be funded? Besides the priority factors, what other information does the Commission consider when awarding broadband grants?

Wis. Stat. § 196.504 gives the Commission authority to establish criteria for evaluating grant applications. The statute requires that the criteria adopted by the Commission give priority to applications that include any of seven priority factors listed in the statute. Priority factors are listed below.

- **Matching funds (up to 10 points)**. An application will receive higher priority based on the percentage of matching funds the applicant proposes to invest in its project and the variety of sources of matching funding provided by partners and others.
- **Public-private partnerships (up to 10 points)**. An application that includes a city, village, town, or county as a participating partner, in partnership with a telecommunication provider or other private organization and exhibits active community engagement shall receive priority.
- **Existing broadband service (up to 15 points)**. An application proposing to serve an unserved area shall receive priority. The priority will be based on the percent of the project that reaches unserved location. An application proposing a middle mile route will receive priority credit based upon the degree to which the proposal will reduce the cost of extending fiber to the premises broadband service to business and residential service locations in an unserved or underserved area, and the number of service locations affected. The application of a wireless broadband service provider proposing significant overlap with existing broadband service in addition to service to an unserved area is not entitled to priority under this subsection.
- **Project impact (up to 15 points)**. An application that proposes to serve a larger geographic area, a larger number of customers or communities in an area or provide a higher performance service shall receive higher priority than one that serves a comparatively smaller geographic area, fewer number of potential customers or communities in an area or slower service as compared with the cost of the project.
- **Scalability (up to 5 points)**. An application that demonstrates a commitment to increase the size or scope of its broadband network in the future shall receive priority. An application that discusses possible growth potential, but declines to make a specific commitment regarding future growth of the broadband network, shall receive a lesser priority.
- **Economic development (up to 10 points)**. An application that demonstrates the potential to promote job growth or retention, expand the property tax base or improve the overall economic vitality of the municipality or region shall receive priority.
- **Effect upon broadband service to adjacent areas (up to 5 points)**. An application that demonstrates that it will not impair the ability of a competing broadband service provider to extend broadband service to areas adjacent to the proposed project shall receive priority.

The Commission usually appoints a panel to review the grant applications and provide a summary report comparing the relative merit of each application. The reviewing panel will rank the grant application under review in order of merit. Prospective grant applicants should consult...
the grant application instructions to find definitions, point allocations and additional explanatory comments regarding the application scoring criteria.

The record before the Commission consists of the grant applications, comments in opposition to the grant proposals, responses to comments in opposition, the evaluation panel’s ranking of the grant applications, and a briefing memorandum from staff discussing the grant process, eligibility and other issues pertinent to the Commission’s decision. In its review and decision, the Commission is free to give more weight to one or two of the priority factors, or give weight to other information provided in the application. The Commission may review past performance on other grant funded projects.

The Commission has also taken into account the fact that some applicants are requesting more than one grant award in a grant cycle. On occasion, the Commission has elected to limit the number of multiple awards a single provider may receive in a given grant cycle.

14. Will the Commission schedule a comment period after the grant applications have been submitted? Do the Commissioners see these comments before deciding which grant applications should be funded?

The Commission will provide a four-week period after the grant applications have been filed in which interested persons may submit written comments in opposition to one or more applications under review. The comments must be posted on ERF under the docket number for the current grant cycle, and must be filed by the due date stated in the instructions. An objection must be filed publicly. An objection must identify and discuss an error of fact, or policy or statutory requirement that the grant application has contravened. Late filed comments objecting to an application will not be accepted nor given weight during the review process.

The Commission will provide a one-week period in which a grant applicant or interested parities may respond to any opposition comments that have been filed. Responsive comments must be posted on ERF under the docket number for the current grant cycle, and must be filed by the due date stated in the instructions. Late filed responses will not be accepted nor given weight during the review process.

The Commission will also accept comments in support of a grant application. However, all supportive comments must be included as a supporting document within the application and therefore be submitted at the same time the application is filed. Comments in support of an application received by separate letter or e-mail message before or after the application is filed will be regarded as not responsive to the application instructions, and will not be accepted nor given weight during the review process. The Commission has made this change because of the substantial increase in the number of applications in recent grant cycles. This does not mean the Commission is discouraging supportive comments. This change is undertaken to reduce the amount of administrative process required to accept and file comments. The Commission remains interested in all points of view regarding grant proposals, and will include in the record any supportive comments that are submitted with the grant application in accordance with the application instructions.
15. How long does a successful grant applicant have to complete the construction of the broadband facilities?

The order awarding grants will provide a specific date on which the grant award will expire and the unused grant balance will be returned to the general grant account for disbursement to future projects. In prior grant cycles, the Commission has set that expiration date for the grant award at the end of the 24th month after the month in which the Commission awards the grant. The Commission can extend this two-year window for construction for good cause. An applicant would need to apply to the Commission for an extension before the expiration.

16. How does the Commission announce the grant winners?

The Commission will decide which applicants should receive a grant award at a regularly scheduled open meeting of the Commission. An open meeting decision is a tentative determination. The Commission will finalize the determination of grant recipients with a written Order awarding grants in the appropriate proceeding. The Order will require that each grant recipient enter into a grant Agreement with the Commission. The Order will also specify certain terms and conditions that the Commission finds appropriate and necessary for the administration of the approved grant projects. The project performance period begins on the date of the order and grant recipients are allowed to begin work on the order date.

The grant Agreement will confirm the grant award, including the amount of the grant award, the percent match, the scope of work and the terms and conditions ordered by the Commission. The grant award is not final until the applicant signs and returns the grant Agreement. A signed grant Agreement is due to the Commission no later than 60 days following the date of issuance of the grant agreement to the applicant. Failure to complete and return the grant Agreement by the due date may result in cancellation of the award.

A copy of a DRAFT Grant Agreement proposed for the for the FY 2022 Broadband Grant cycle is posted at: https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandGrants.aspx.

17. Is there a maximum or minimum amount a grant application can request in funds?

No, there is not a maximum or minimum amount a grant application can request in funds.

18. Who should the letters of support be addressed to at the Commission?

Letters of support should be address to Secretary to the Commission, Steffany Powell Coker.

Steffany Powell Coker
Secretary to the Commission
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
North Tower, 6th Floor
Hill Farms State Office Building
4822 Madison Yards Way
Madison, Wisconsin 53705
Having said that, so long as the correspondence has the correct docket on it, 5-BF-2022 in this case, it should get routed correctly.

19. There have been previous mentions of updated broadband coverage data, as well as updated eligibility/priority layers. Where are they?

Utilizing the most recent broadband coverage data available, updated INTERIM/FINAL eligibility and priority layers are available to view on the Wisconsin Broadband Map here: https://maps.psc.wi.gov/apps/WisconsinBroadbandMap/. GIS mapping files of these layers are available for download here: https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandGrants.aspx.

20. Is there a map of previous Commission grant awards?

Yes, ARPA Access Grant applicants, ARPA Access Grant Awardees, and FY 2021 state Broadband Expansion Grant awardees, are viewable here: https://maps.psc.wi.gov/apps/ARPAApplicants/index.html. GIS data files for ARPA Access Grant applicant polygons are available for download on our broadband data page here: https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandData.aspx.

A summary of all Commission awards is available on the Broadband Grants webpage under the “Previously Awarded Broadband Grants” header here: https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandGrants.aspx.

Previous grant applications and maps are available on ERF utilizing the method explained in Question 10 above.

21. Are the recent Commission awards (ARPA, CARES, state) reflected in the Wisconsin Broadband Map underserved and unserved layers?

Not necessarily. Underserved and unserved layers are derived from data from the FCC and provider submitted data which represent internet services available at the time of submission. No anticipated construction is reflected on the map. A proposed project area must be considered underserved to be eligible for funding. Applicants should review previously funded Commission grants when proposing a grant application.

When reviewing applications and determining which applications to fund, the Commission will use all information available, including where previous Commission grants have been awarded.

22. How long is the term of the bond?

The State will issue public debt for the purpose of funding the Broadband Expansion Grant program and will repay this debt over a specific bond term. The bond term will not exceed five years. The bond term will be different from the grant performance period.
23. How many pages can the application be?

The application, including the cover sheet, summary of grant application, budget and narrative is limited to 30 pages and must be assembled as described in the application instructions section 3.0.

24. How many pages of additional information, comments, and letters of support may be included?

Additional information, surveys, letters of support and agreements are not limited but the review panel will use only the first ten pages of attachments in developing the merit list. The application and additional information must be submitted as a single file. Comments submitted outside of the application will be considered nonresponsive and will not be considered.

Added March 7, 2022

25. The grant agreement gives the State a security interest in projects financed with state-issued bonds. Is this interest limited to the new infrastructure financed with grant funds or would it extent to existing infrastructure interconnected to the new infrastructure?

The State’s security interest attaches to the assets financed with the grant. To the extent that such assets are integrated into existing infrastructure, the executed agreement between PSC and the grant awardee will describe the assets to which the security interest attaches, including specificity as to how to distinguish between assets to which the interest attaches and assets to which it does not in the case of assets integrated into existing infrastructure.

26. Where a project is funded by a mix of grant funds and non-grant funds, how does such a mix of funds impact the pledged collateral?

Although the State’s security interest would attach to the entirety of assets funded with a mix of grant funding and non-grant funding sources, its right to ownership upon foreclosure will be proportional to the total amount used to fund the assets. For example, if a grantee uses a mix of 40% grant funds and 60% of non-grant funds to construct improvements on real property the State’s ultimate ownership right would be a 40% tenant-in-common interest in such improvements in the event the grantee defaults on the grant agreement. The security interest would not attach to assets beyond what is incorporated into the project scope.

27. May a project or applicant with existing federal USDA or Rural Utilities Service (RUS) loans apply, even though this broadband grant round is funded by state bonding?

Yes. You can participate in this grant round, as long as any USDA or RUS loans with liens are made subordinate to the state lien, which will be secured on the broadband project as part of your grant agreement with the state.
28. How do I request to make my USDA or RUS loan subordinate so I can participate in this state grant round?

Interested applicants with an existing federal USDA or RUS loan containing a lien should review the information required by USDA to be considered for a lien subordination by viewing the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 7, Subtitle B, Chapter XVII, Part 1744, Subpart B - Lien Accommodation and Subordination Policy, §1744.55 - Application Procedures. A link to this section is provided here. Questions about the lien subordination application requirements as well as completed application requirements should be sent via email as early as possible to Joe Bradley, USDA Telecommunications Program, United States Department of Agriculture at joe.bradley@usda.gov.

29. When should an applicant with USDA or RUS loans make a lien subordination request with USDA?

Please complete the lien subordination application requirements as soon as possible. An applicant will not be able to accept a PSC broadband grant without USDA subordination approval. Give ample time for this process, as USDA may have follow up questions on your application. PSC expects to award this round of grants in late spring. Lien subordination approval will need to be in place at that time.

Additional Resources
- Broadband Grants Homepage
- Broadband Maps Homepage
- Broadband Data Homepage
- Letter to Persons Interested in the State Broadband Expansion Grant Program
- State Broadband Expansion Grant Instructions (PDF)
- State Broadband Expansion Grant Instructions (Word)
- State Broadband Expansion Grant Information about FY2022 Grant Agreements
- State Broadband Expansion DRAFT Grant Agreement FY2022 – Bonding
- Wisconsin Broadband Map (with eligibility and priority layers)
- State Broadband Eligibility Guide Mapping Files (direct data download)
- FY 2022 ARPA Applicants, Awardees, and FY21 State Awardees Map
- State Broadband Expansion Grants – Information & Overview Webinar Recording
- How to Map Your Broadband Grant Project Webinar Recording
- State Broadband Budget and Income Summary Form
- State Broadband Budget Categories Reference
- FCC RDOF (Auction 904) Homepage