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## Broadband Grants on Commission Agenda 3/18

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On Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 10:30 a.m. the Public Service Commission is scheduled to discuss the fiscal year 2021 Broadband Expansion Grants at their open meeting. The meeting link and e-agenda will be posted to the Commission website on the [calendar page](#). The public, grant applicants and any interested parties are invited to listen to the [live broadcast](#) on the Commission website.

## Emergency Broadband Benefit Update

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. Providers may apply to participate starting March 8. More information [here](#).



The program is expected to start around April 26 for customers. The program ends six months after the public health emergency or when the money is depleted.

The Public Service Commission hosted a webinar on March 16th, a recording of the webinar is at the link below and on the Commission's [Emergency Internet Resource page](#). Note the webinar starts 6 minutes into the recording.

[EBB Webinar Recording](#)

## Providers Seeking Devices

### E-Stewards Digital Equity Program

Internet Service Providers interested in learning more about how they can procure and provide devices for customers receiving the Emergency Broadband Benefit' may be interested in partnering with local refurbishers. [E-Stewards](#) has a digital equity program to help provide computers and internet access to low-income communities. If you would like more information about e-Stewards and purchasing refurbished devices please e-mail Prema George [prema@e-stewards.org](mailto:prema@e-stewards.org).



## Lifeline Outreach Grant Program

The Lifeline Outreach Grant program, a new Universal Service Fund (USF) grant is currently accepting applications. The purpose of the Lifeline Outreach Grant Program is to assist low-income customers to obtain affordable access to essential telecommunications through the Lifeline program which provides a discount on essential telecommunication service. The program is organized around two broad goal areas. The first—Outreach and Education aims to increase the knowledge of, and participation in, the Lifeline program. The second goal area, Research and Resource, focuses on using research to better identify barriers to access. The application materials may be found [here](#). Applications are due by 4 p.m. CT, April 5, 2021. Up to \$250,000 may be awarded. Please contact Holly O’Higgins, USF Director, at [holly.ohiggins@wisconsin.gov](mailto:holly.ohiggins@wisconsin.gov) with any questions.

## Nonprofit Access Grant Program

The Non-Profit Access Grant program solicitation provides partial funding for programs and projects that facilitate affordable access to telecommunications for low-income customers, customers with disabilities, and those customers in areas of the state that have a relatively high cost of telecommunication services. Non-profits that are 501(c)3 organizations are eligible to apply. A 25 percent match is required for this program. The application materials may be found [here](#) and all applications are due by 4 p.m. CT, April 5, 2021. A total of up to \$500,000 may be awarded. Please contact Billy Mauldin, TEPP Director at [PSCUSFNonProfitGrants@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCUSFNonProfitGrants@wisconsin.gov) with any questions.

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## Rapid Run-Down of Future Federal Funding

### Consolidated Appropriation Act, 2021

*Emergency Broadband Benefit*, Federal Communications Commission, \$3.2 billion to help low-income households and those financially impacted by COVID connect to the internet during the pandemic.

*Tribal Broadband Connectivity Grants*, National Telecommunication and Information Administration, \$1 billion for tribal governments and organizations to expand broadband adoption and deployment on tribal lands, as well as to support distance learning, remote work, and telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Grants*, National Telecommunication and Information Administration, \$300 million for state-and-provider partnerships to support broadband infrastructure deployment to areas lacking broadband, especially rural areas.

*Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program*, National Telecommunication and Information Administration. \$285 million for Historically Black College and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Minority Serving Institutions to help students and communities get connected to the internet through affordable broadband service.

### American Rescue Plan Act

*Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund*, Department of the Treasury, \$10 billion for “capital projects directly enabling work, education, and health monitoring, including remote options, in response to the public health emergency”; in addition to capital projects, eligible efforts include ancillary services, such as broadband mapping to increase efficiencies of capital projects.

*Emergency Connectivity Fund*. Federal Communication Commission, \$7.2 billion for E-Rate support to reimburse schools and libraries for provision of eligible equipment and advanced telecommunications and information services during the pandemic, including for locations other than schools and libraries.

*Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*, \$219.8 billion for states, \$45.6 billion for rural community development block grants, \$19.5 for rural areas and \$65.2 billion for counties, allowable use including for investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

# Governor's Task Force to Host Digital Equity Expert Angela Siefer at March Meeting

The March meeting of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access is scheduled for Wednesday March 31, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. - noon. The guest speaker at the March meeting will be [Angela Siefer](#), the Executive Director of the [National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#), an expert in digital equity and inclusion.

Since 2015 Ms. Siefer has led the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. NDIA is a unified voice for home broadband access, public broadband access, personal devices and local technology training and support programs. NDIA works collaboratively to craft, identify and disseminate financial and operational resources for digital inclusion programs while serving as a bridge to policymakers and the general public. Ms. Siefer has been the author or co-author of many important publications including [Structural Racism of the Digital Divide](#), [Digital Inclusion StartUp Manual](#), [Discount Internet Guidebook](#), [Digital Inclusion Coalition Guidebook](#), Digital Inclusion Policies and Programs of Local Government and many more.

The meeting will be posted on the [PSC calendar](#) and the agenda will include information for the public to listen. The meeting is available in Spanish, Hmong and American Sign Language.

## Update on Continuing Broadband Speed Testing

Launched by the Department of Public Instruction this winter, we are continuing to ask Wisconsin residents to help collect information on Wisconsin's internet connection speeds. To date, Wisconsin residents have taken over **240,000 speed tests during the campaign**, with an average of 3,383 tests per day.



### How to Participate

Help make sure your community is included in this collection by spreading the word and encouraging residents in your community to test their home internet speeds using [M-Lab's speed test](#).

## Current Grant Awardee Reminders

Whenever you have questions about grant reimbursements or need to send in a reimbursement request, email the [PSCBroadbandGrantReimbursements@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCBroadbandGrantReimbursements@Wisconsin.gov) account. This email box is monitored by our Grants Specialists, Jason and Cath. Be sure to include the grant round and location or name of the project in your subject line.

Please do not send multiple reimbursement requests for the same grant within a short period. Instead, combine them into one submission.

And remember, for fiscal years 19 and prior, you must submit an up-to-date progress status report with each reimbursement request. For FY20, you just need to be up-to-date on the filing of reports per the grant agreement.

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### WBO E-Newsletter



The Wisconsin Broadband Office will send out regular communication to internet service providers, grant applicants and broadband stakeholders. We aim to be relevant and share timely information from our office.

Please reach out if anyone from the

