



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ACT MEMO

2015 Wisconsin Act 278
[2015 Assembly Bill 820]

**Broadband Expansion and
Broadband Forward! Certification**

BACKGROUND

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is required to designate areas of the state as “underserved” if they are served by fewer than two broadband providers. Subject to certain conditions, the PSC must award grants under the Broadband Expansion Grant Program for the construction of broadband infrastructure in those areas.

2015 WISCONSIN ACT 278

Act 278 imposes additional duties on the PSC related to the expansion of broadband access in Wisconsin. The PSC must: (1) encourage the development of broadband infrastructure in underserved areas of the state; (2) make comprehensive information about permits for broadband network projects and related business activities available to any person; (3) work with other government offices, at the state and local levels, to encourage the timely and efficient issuance of permits and the resolution of related issues; and (4) encourage local and federal agencies to coordinate activities relating to the application, approval, and issuance of permits for broadband network projects.

Act 278 also creates a process by which the PSC may certify political subdivisions as Broadband Forward! communities. To become certified, a political subdivision must adopt an ordinance that establishes an efficient process, as described in the Act, for the application, approval, and issuance of broadband network-related permits. The Act prescribes the content of the required ordinance, prohibits Broadband Forward! communities from imposing certain conditions on broadband network project permit applicants, and grants the PSC the authority to resolve certain disputes between Broadband Forward! communities and broadband service providers.

Effective date: March 26, 2016

Prepared by: Rachel E. Snyder, Staff Attorney

March 28, 2016

RES:mcm;jal

This memo provides a brief description of the Act. For more detailed information, consult the text of the law and related legislative documents at the Legislature’s Web site at: <http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov>.