

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Rebecca Cameron Valcq, Chairperson
Mike Huebsch, Commissioner
Ellen Nowak, Commissioner

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

May 2, 2019

Senate Chief Clerk Jeff Renk
State Senate Journal and Records
B20 Southeast, State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

Assembly Chief Clerk Patrick Fuller
State Assembly Records
17 West Main Street
Room 401
Madison, WI 53703

Re: Administration of the Universal Service Fund

5-UF-2019

Dear Messrs. Renk and Fuller,

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) is pleased to present the Universal Service Fund (USF) Report to the Legislature. Established in 1993, Wisconsin's USF operates in four separate state agencies, administering a wide range of programs focused on promoting access to essential and advanced telecommunications services.

At the Commission, this includes:

- The Lifeline program that discounts telephone service for low-income customers;
- The Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP) that provides financial assistance to purchase specialized equipment for people with disabilities to access telecommunications; and
- The Telemedicine and Nonprofit Access grant programs, promoting access to telecommunications as a way to level the playing field for patients in rural areas who need access to specialized medical professionals, and urban community centers promoting jobs through access to computers and accessibility for low income populations and people with disabilities.

At the Department of Administration, the Department of Public Instruction, and the University of Wisconsin, the USF supports:

- Access to materials for people who are blind;
- Digital communications at Wisconsin's schools, libraries and UW campuses;
- Grant programs supporting teacher training on technology, and funding infrastructure supporting the use of technology for instruction; and so much more.

Senate Chief Clerk Renk
Assembly Chief Clerk Fuller
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Through promotion of access to telecommunications, the USF seeks to make our society's use of telecommunications technology—to connect, educate and learn—available to all Wisconsinites.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca Valcq", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rebecca Cameron Valcq
Chairperson
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

DL:01681092

Report to the Legislature

Universal Service Fund

July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2018



Public Service Commission
4822 Madison Yards Way
Madison, Wisconsin 53705

Foreword

The telecommunications industry in the state of Wisconsin continues to undergo significant change. As previous reports have documented, customer calling habits and choice of telecommunications devices and features continue to shift at a rapid pace. As recently as 2005, residential and business subscribers were adding additional telephone access lines to their accounts to support dial-up access to the internet. By 2010, customers were shifting to dedicated broadband facilities on which voice service was just another application. Today, the challenge is to extend broadband communications services throughout the state so that residents may use software applications—voice, video, data, and services—enabled by a high-speed internet connection.

Telecommunications services are offered to subscribers using several technologies:

- **Landline switched-access service.** Telecommunications services are still offered over the traditional analog landline facilities. This technology provides a low-speed data rate that is increasingly disfavored for internet communications.
- **Voice over internet protocol (VoIP) service.** VoIP service is a newer computer-based technology. Voice and data messages are formatted using the internet protocol and transmitted by subscribers over a telephone network with Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) capability or over a cable television network equipped with a cable modem.
- **Fiber to the home (FTTH).** An alternative means to provide communications service by connecting a business or residence to the switch entirely by fiber, avoiding altogether the limitations of copper media. There are many FTTH projects in operation in the state, and these projects may prove to be the better alternative for high-speed broadband service in the future.
- **Fixed- and mobile-wireless services.** There are many wireless providers in Wisconsin offering both pre-paid and subscription services featuring a variety of alternative voice and data plans.
- **Satellite internet service.** Satellite-based communications services offer an alternative for individuals that are located in remote areas with few to no other alternative sources of broadband. This technology is affected more than the others by adverse weather and network congestion.

Nationally, during the period from December 2013 to December 2016, interconnected VoIP subscriptions increased at an annual rate of 10 percent and mobile wireless telephone subscriptions increased by 3 percent annually. Over the same time period, retail switched access lines declined at a rate of 12 percent per year.¹ This change in subscribership signals two important trends relevant to the subject of this report:

- Telecommunications customers continue to shift toward services with high-speed internet access and toward feature-rich devices such as smartphones and tablet computers.
- Telecommunications customers continue to shift away from devices that are limited to voice telephone service and from telecommunications service plans that include toll rates for long distance calls. Customers are replacing those services with voice over broadband.

This report focuses specifically on the state of the Universal Service Fund (USF) in Wisconsin. The information below includes financial summaries through the end of the 2016-2017 biennium, which closed on June 30, 2017 and, where available, adds information for state fiscal year 2018, which closed on June 30, 2018. This report discusses how the changes affecting the telecommunications industry impact USF programs in the state, and provides an update on federal universal service programs and policies, as appropriate. This report also responds to the statutory request for a biennial report on universal service found in Wis. Stat. § 196.218(5r).

¹ Voice Telephone Services: Status as of December 31, 2016, p. 2; Federal Communications Commission (February 2018) (*2018 Local Competition Report*); available at: <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-349075A1.pdf>.

Universal Service Fund

Background and History: The Wisconsin Universal Service Fund (USF) was established by 1993 Wisconsin Act 496.² The purpose of the fund is to promote access to essential and advanced telecommunications services through discounted rates for service and targeted grant programs.³ Essential telecommunications services⁴ are provided by both landline and wireless carriers. A wireless or wireline carrier that has been designated as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC)⁵ by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) may receive federal and state USF funds to offset a portion of the cost of providing service, as well as discounted services (Lifeline) for eligible low-income customers in Wisconsin. Prepaid wireless subscriptions have become the preferred technology for USF-supported Lifeline services.

The USF also provides support to assist customers in areas of the state that have relatively high costs of telecommunications services. Additional USF programs are designed to assist low-income customers to obtain affordable wireline telecommunications service throughout the state. For customers with disabilities, the USF provides assistance with obtaining affordable access to a basic set of essential telecommunications services. In addition to the programs managed by the Commission, the USF also provides funding for programs managed by the Department of Administration (DOA), the Department of Public Instruction and the University of Wisconsin system.

The Broadband Expansion Grant program was authorized by 2013 Wisconsin Act 20, and is codified at Wis. Stat. § 196.504. 2015 Wisconsin Act 55 transferred the program to the USF. Prior to the transfer, the legislature funded the broadband grant program for FY 2014 and 2015 with a transfer of funds from DOA's Information Technology and Communications Services account. In Fiscal Years (FY) 2016 and 2017, the grant program was funded by a transfer from the USF fund balance. In FY 2018, the grant program was funded by a transfer from the USF fund balance and a transfer from DOA's Federal E-Rate Aid appropriation. This program differs from the other USF programs in that it does not currently receive funds directly through the USF assessment.

Contributions to the Fund: All telecommunications providers, including VoIP and wireless service providers, are assessed a proportionate share of the cost of the USF program. Assessments are based on the gross intrastate retail voice telecommunications revenue reported annually to the Commission. The Commission currently exempts telecommunications providers with USF assessable annual revenues of less than \$200,000 from the USF assessment.

² See Wis. Stats. § 196.218.

³ Under 2011 Wisconsin Act 22, "advanced telecommunications," formerly a USF targeted offering, was removed from the definition of essential telecommunications service.

⁴ Wis. Stats. § 196.218(1)(a), "Essential telecommunications services means the services or functionalities listed in 47 CFR 54.101(a)."

⁵ Wis. Stats. § 196.218(4)(a), "...eligible telecommunications carrier pursuant to 47 USC 214."

In general, the Commission calculates the USF assessment rates using the appropriated amounts approved in the state budget for each USF-funded program. In recent years, the Commission has considered the existing USF fund balance, projected expenditures, and funding from other sources when setting the USF assessment rates. The assessment is a monthly rate, adjusted annually. Providers paying a USF assessment pass along their payment obligations to customers through a service fee on the customer's bill.⁶ State general purpose revenue does not contribute to the USF.

The changing nature of telecommunications services has affected the assessable revenues reported for purposes of the USF in Wisconsin. The first section of the table below shows the change in USF assessable revenue for the five-year period from 2014 to 2018. The second section shows the change in assessable revenue for the Telecommunications Trade Practices (TTP) assessment over the same time period. The aggregate declines over the five-year period were 25.7 percent for USF assessable revenue versus 10.6 percent for TTP assessable revenue.

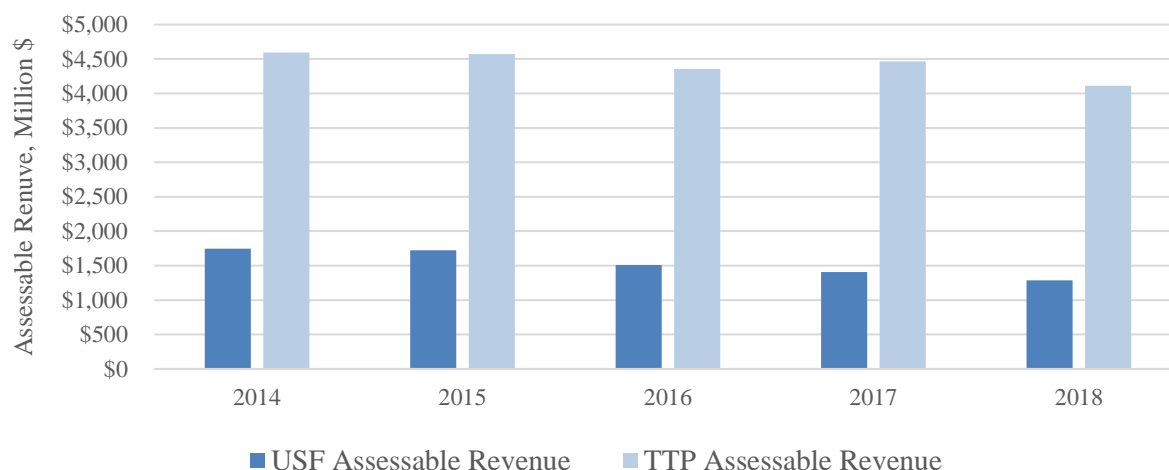
Table 1⁷

USF Assessable Revenue		
<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Amount reported</u> (million dollars)	<u>Percent change</u>
2014	\$1,747	--
2015	\$1,724	-1.3%
2016	\$1,511	-12.4%
2017	\$1,406	-7.5%
2018	\$1,287	-8.5%
TTP Assessable Revenue		
2014	\$4,596	--
2015	\$4,571	-0.5%
2016	\$4,360	-4.6%
2017	\$4,467	+2.5%
2018	\$4,110	-8.0%

⁶ Wis. Stats. § 196.218(3)(e) and (f).

⁷ Source: Commission staff calculations.

Graph 1



The TTP assessment is based upon the sum of all telecommunications-related operating revenue in Wisconsin reported by telecommunications providers for the year prior to the report. The aggregate TTP assessable revenue provides a better picture of the status of the telecommunications industry in the state as a whole. From Table 1, it appears that over the last five years the telecommunications industry had a period of slightly negative growth. Some of this change may be due to revenues accounted for differently due to federal regulatory changes, and some due to changes in the industry.

By contrast, the aggregate USF assessable revenue may provide a better picture of the current state of traditional landline telephone services. Although wireless and VoIP carriers report USF assessable revenue and pay an assessment for USF, the overall sharp decline in assessable revenue may indicate that people continue to substitute text messaging and other non-assessable communications formats for traditional telephone services. It may also indicate that business and residential subscribers continue to look for opportunities to avoid high-cost toll service. A consequence of the decline in assessable revenue is that the rate of assessment for the USF has increased over the last three-year period.

Table 2⁸

Recent USF Assessment Rates		
Period	Monthly rate (%)	Monthly bill per \$100K of assessable revenue
Oct 2017 – Sep 2018	.23787	\$237.87
Oct 2016 – Sep 2017	.24487	\$244.87
Oct 2015 – Sep 2016	.20172	\$201.72

⁸ Source: PSC staff calculations.

Statutory Report on Universal Service

Pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 196.218(5r), the Commission provides the following information on essential telecommunications services in the state.

The affordability of and accessibility to a basic set of essential telecommunications services throughout this state. With 2011 Wisconsin Act 22, the state made a choice to rely on competition and market forces to obtain affordable telecommunications services for residents in the state. The FCC Voice Telephone Services Report⁹ documents an increasing level of competition in the state, as well as in the country as a whole. In particular, the FCC report shows clear evidence that subscribers continue to substitute wireless and VoIP telecommunications services for traditional landline telephone services. The FCC data on telecommunications services in Wisconsin is as follows:

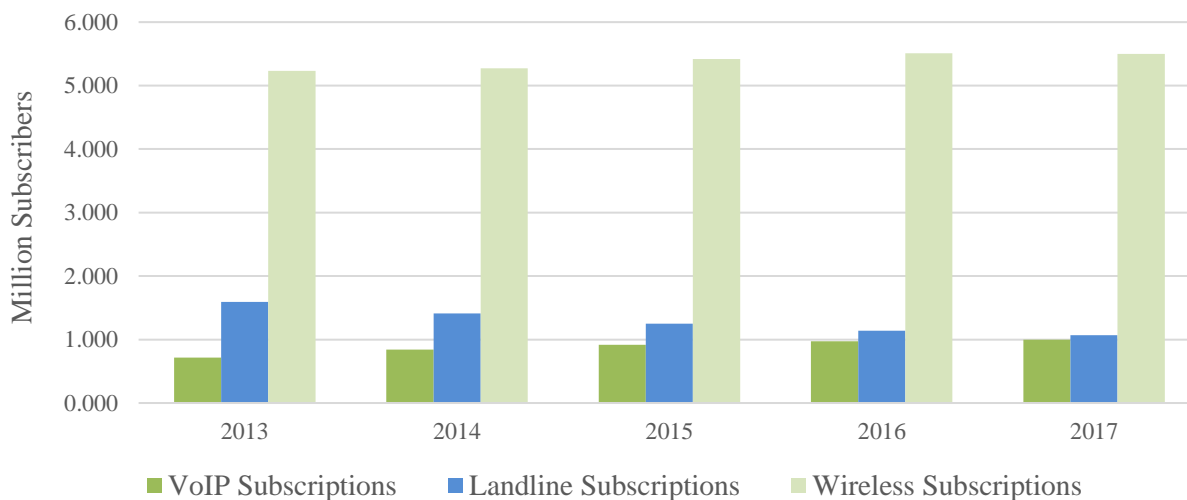
Table 3¹⁰

Year	Landline Subscriptions	VoIP Subscriptions	Wireless Subscriptions
As of 12/31/2013	1.59 million	714,000	5.23 million
As of 12/01/2014	1.41 million	840,000	5.27 million
As of 12/01/2015	1.25 million	917,000	5.42 million
As of 12/01/2016	1.14 million	973,000	5.51 million
As of 06/01/2017	1.07 million	998,000	5.50 million

⁹ FCC Voice Telephone Services: Status as of June 30, 2017, issued November 2018, <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-355165A1.pdf>.

¹⁰ Source: 2013 and 2014 data from the FCC Local Telephone Competition Reports, Tables 9 and 18, <https://www.fcc.gov/general/local-telephone-competition-reports>; 2015 to present from the FCC Voice Telephone Services Report, State Level Subscriptions and State-Level Provider Counts, <https://www.fcc.gov/voice-telephone-services-report>.

Graph 2



FCC data suggests that competition between types of telecommunications service is significant throughout the state. On average, landline subscriptions have fallen 8.7 percent annually from 2014 to 2017 while VoIP subscriptions increased by an average of 6.0 percent during that same time. Wireless subscriptions have remained relatively stable, with an average variation of less than 2.0 percent.

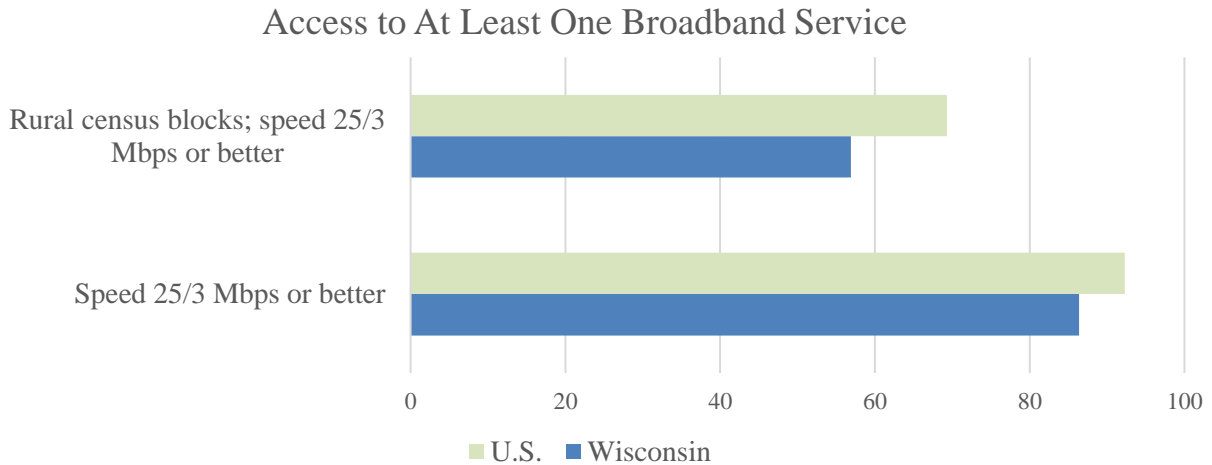
Whether this competition has reduced the percentage of the population that is without any telephone service is difficult to measure. Overall subscribership has slightly increased (0.2 percent) on average, from 2014 to 2017, but in recent years, some of that increase may be due to families adding multiple wireless telephones, laptop and tablet computers to a family account. There is at least anecdotal evidence to suggest that interest in and reliance upon a smartphone or similar wireless device continues to grow and is an increasingly essential personal tool for a variety of activities regardless of income level.

The affordability of and accessibility to high-quality education, library and health care information services. A challenge when assessing access and affordability is defining what that means in light of the continuous growth in online information services. One method to measure accessibility to information services is to consider the percentage of residents in the state with access to broadband services meeting the current FCC definition for advanced telecommunications capability, which requires access to actual download speeds of at least 25 mbps and actual upload speeds of at least 3 mbps.¹¹

¹¹ See 2018 Broadband Deployment Report, February 2, 2018, <https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/2018-broadband-deployment-report>.

In the recent 2018 report¹² on deployment of broadband service, the FCC found that broadband deployment in Wisconsin was below the national average. Nationally, an average of 92.3 percent of the population has access to at least one broadband service with a speed of 25/3 Mbps or better. For Wisconsin, this average is 86.4 percent. Similarly, 56.9 percent of Wisconsin residents living in rural census blocks have access to at least one broadband service with a speed of 25/3 Mbps¹³ or better, compared to the national average of 69.3 percent.

Graph 3



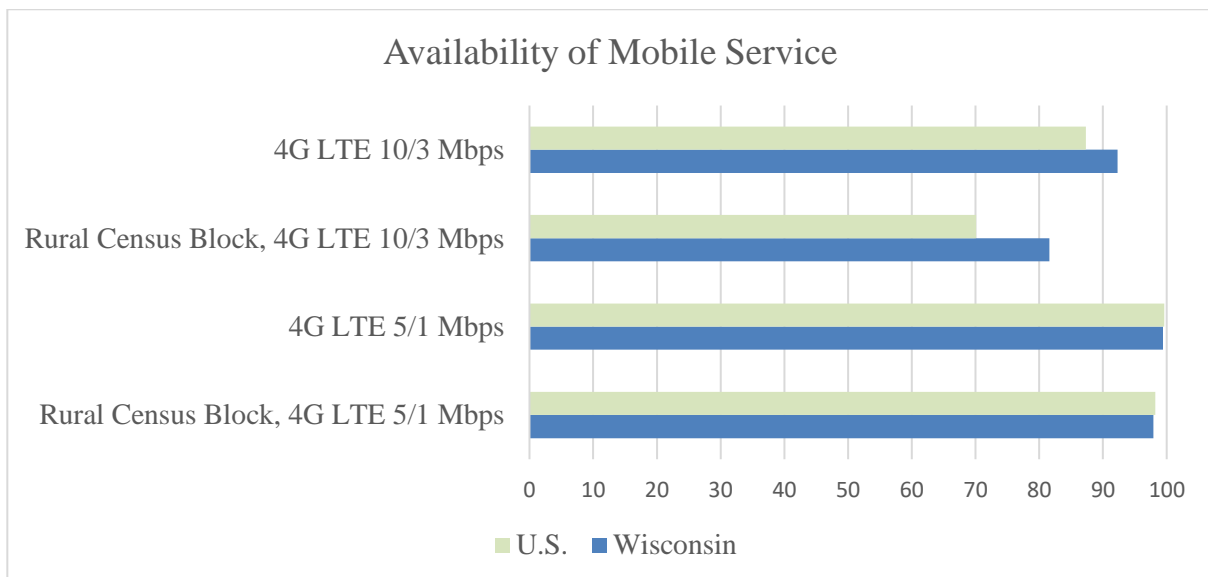
The FCC looked at the availability of a mobile service by state as well, providing coverage data for two mobile service standards.

- **4G LTE 5/1 Mbps:** 99.4 percent of the population in Wisconsin had access to at least one LTE broadband service with a speed of 5/1 Mbps or better, compared to the national average of 99.6 percent; and 97.9 percent of Wisconsin residents living in rural census blocks had access to at least one LTE broadband service with a speed of 5/1 Mbps or better, compared to the national average for rural areas of 98.2 percent.
- **4G LTE 10/3 Mbps:** 92.3 percent of the population in Wisconsin had access to at least one LTE broadband service with a speed of 10/3 Mbps or better, compared to the national average of 87.3 percent; and 81.6 percent of Wisconsin residents living in rural census blocks had access to at least one LTE broadband service with a speed of 10/3 Mbps or better, compared to the national average for rural areas of 70.1 percent.

¹² See 2018 Broadband Deployment Report, February 2, 2018, <https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/2018-broadband-deployment-report>.

¹³ The notation of all speed references will be: downstream/upstream.

Graph 4



There is disparity between the quality of broadband service available in urban areas and that available in many rural areas of the state. This is mitigated to some 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 wireline alternative.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the DOA receive funding through the USF targeting affordability and accessibility to high-quality education and library information services. The Commission will collaborate with DPI and DOA in upcoming fiscal years to dovetail with programs administered by the Commission to address these services.

The Commission-administered Telemedicine Grants addresses access to, and availability of, health care information services through collaboration with the Wisconsin Broadband Program. Through this program, the Commission awarded grants to medical clinics to purchase home health monitoring units and the Commission also awarded Broadband Expansion Grants to two projects that proposed to improve wireless broadband access for residents who would use a home health monitoring system.

A home health monitoring unit is essentially a tablet computer adapted to support a specific medical application. The monitoring unit typically requires a wireless broadband service connection to operate, and is usually equipped with an oximeter to measure blood pressure, heart rate and blood oxygenation. Additional attachments can be added to measure other health indicators, such as blood sugar or patient weight. These monitoring devices do not replace the need for an examination at a clinic or by a visiting nurse service. Rather, these monitoring units are

quickly becoming an important tool that permits a clinic or visiting nurse service to track the health status of patients with chronic medical issues that might otherwise escape notice due to difficulties associated with travel.

An assessment of how assistance provided by the universal service fund and other alternative incentive regulations of telecommunications utilities designed to promote competition have advanced the public interest goals identified under Wis. Stat. § 196.03(6), and recommendations for further advancing those goals. Most of the regulation of telecommunications services that once existed was eliminated by 2011 Wisconsin Act 22. The Commission therefore has a limited opportunity to affect the manner in which retail telecommunications services are offered to customers. Consumers generally have access to an array of telecommunications services. Competitive telecommunications services provides consumers with multiple choices and a variety of prices. With barriers to market entry removed, the number of competitive providers has increased, as evidenced by the shifting revenues and subscriber numbers noted above.

Some of the public interest factors identified in Wis. Stat. § 196.03(6) are difficult to assess. As indicated above, there is anecdotal evidence indicating that the interest and utility of telecommunications services has grown significantly in the last five years. This demand for improved telecommunications service encompasses all income levels. Some consumers report that telecommunications services are intrusive and reduce the level of privacy. Nonetheless, sales of telecommunications services and devices has continued without interruption, making it reasonable to conclude that the population is adjusting to a new reality that includes a diminished expectation of privacy in some instances.

Universal Service Programs and Activities

The programs in the USF, and the appropriations for each program, are as follows:

Table 4¹⁴

PROGRAM	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
PSC – Universal Service Programs	\$5,940,000	\$5,940,000	\$5,940,000
PSC – Broadband Expansion Grants ¹⁵	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$14,000,000
DPI – Badgerlink and Newsline for the Blind	\$2,841,800	\$2,902,200	\$2,919,100
DPI –Aid to Public Library Systems	\$15,013,100	\$15,013,100	\$15,513,100
DPI – Library Service Contracts	\$1,167,200	\$1,167,200	\$1,170,400
DPI – Digital Learning Collaborative	\$2,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
UW Telecommunications Services	\$1,054,800	\$1,054,800	\$1,054,800
DOA – TEACH ¹⁶	\$14,984,200	\$15,984,200	\$21,984,200 ¹⁷
TOTAL APPROPRIATED AMOUNT	\$44,501,100	\$44,561,500	\$63,581,600
LESS: OTHER FUNDING SOURCES	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$20,000,000
AMOUNT FUNDED BY USF ASSESSMENTS	\$43,001,100	\$43,061,500	\$43,581,600

Each of these programs is described in detail below. It is worth noting that from FY 2016 to FY 2018, the TEACH and DPI –Aid to Public Library Systems represent more than half of the annual appropriated amount for the USF.

BadgerLink and Newsline for the Blind: BadgerLink funding is for contracts to online materials that support lifelong learning. The BadgerLink sources include materials originally published in newspapers serving Wisconsin communities and cities nationwide; job skill building and test preparation workbooks; business news and company and market data; reference works on history, mathematics, humanities, science, literature, computing and information technology, arts, education, and medicine and health; encyclopedias; auto repair resources; general interest and academic magazines; multimedia collections about children’s literature; and local history and genealogy sources. BadgerLink databases can be accessed from any computer, tablet, or smartphone connected to the Internet, making them available in public, K-12 and college and tech college libraries, homes, and workplaces. BadgerLink also connects users to WISCAT, the online catalog of materials owned by Wisconsin public and school libraries.

Newsline funds a contract with the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) to provide Wisconsin residents access to the Newsline service. NFB-NEWSLINE is a free audio news service for

¹⁴ Source: 2015 Wisconsin Act 55 and 2017 Wisconsin Act 59

¹⁵ Broadband Expansion Grants are not funded by USF assessments. Rather, the program is funded by transfers from the USF fund balance and the DOA Federal E-Rate appropriation.

¹⁶ Education Telecommunications Access Program.

¹⁷ The FY 2018 appropriated amount for DOA-TEACH is \$21,984,200. However, only \$15,984,200 is funded by USF assessments. The other \$6,000,000 is funded by the DOA Federal E-Rate Aid appropriation.

anyone who is blind, low-vision, or otherwise print-disabled that offers access to more than 500 publications, emergency weather alerts, job listings, and more. The Newsline appropriation also funds a contract with the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library to act as the mandatory Newsline state service hub.

DPI –Aid to Public Library Systems: These funds go directly to public library systems annually and are intended to promote development and improvement of public libraries through library systems and to provide opportunities for cooperation among all types of libraries. Required services include sharing of books and other resources among libraries through technology and delivery, reference referral, continuing education, services to users with special needs, resource library services, collection development, and consulting services. State aids are distributed according to a statutory formula.

DPI – Library Service Contracts: These funds are used for annual contracts that allow Wisconsin residents to use materials from the UW-Madison and Milwaukee Public Library through interlibrary loan; and they support the programs and services of the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) and the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL).

The CCBC is a non-circulating examination, study, and research library for Wisconsin school and public librarians, teachers, early childhood care providers, university students, and others interested in children's and young adult literature, and administers the statewide Read On Wisconsin literacy program. The CCBC is part of the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education.

The WTBBL collaborates with the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) to provide Wisconsin residents who cannot see regular print materials, access to audio books and brailled materials. WTBBL currently serves nearly 7,000 registered patrons and more than 580 institutions (e.g. libraries, schools, nursing homes, veteran’s centers).

DPI – Wisconsin Digital Learning Collaborative (WDLC): The funds support the Wisconsin Digital Learning Collaborative, who provide access to digital content, a learning management system, professional learning, and district planning support to school districts. As the provider of the statutory web-based academy, WDLC provides services to public school districts, private schools and charter schools.

UW Telecommunications Services: The funds help to offset the costs associated with access to BadgerNet for University of Wisconsin campuses.

DOA – TEACH: These funds subsidize equipment purchases, installation, and a portion of the monthly service costs for access to BadgerNet for more than 900 K-12 schools, technical colleges, public libraries, Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs), and other public and private institutions statewide. BadgerNet is a broadband voice and data network operated by a consortium of telecommunications providers under a contract with DOA. Beginning in FY 2016, the funds were also used for two grant programs: the Educational Technology Teacher Training Grants

program, funding training for teachers on the use of educational technology; and the Information Technology Block Grants program, funding technology infrastructure for school districts to better use technology for instruction.

PSC – Universal Service Program: These funds are administered through the Commission, and include a variety of programs to enable or subsidize access to telecommunications services for certain populations in Wisconsin. The specific programs that are managed by the Commission are described below.

Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP): TEPP assists persons with disabilities to purchase certain telecommunications equipment needed to use the telephone system. Examples of equipment that can be purchased with the vouchers include amplified phones, TTYs,¹⁸ speech amplified phones, and signaling systems (such as flashing lights which replace audible rings). Vouchers are given to the qualifying individuals, and these vouchers are used to pay approved vendors for a portion of the cost of the necessary telecommunications equipment.

Voucher values vary for different types of disabilities because the typical equipment needs of persons in different disability categories vary in price. In most cases, the purchaser must make a \$100 co-payment when purchasing the equipment. If the co-payment and voucher are not sufficient to cover the equipment price, the purchaser pays the remainder amount. Low-income eligible individuals may qualify for funding to pay the \$100 co-payment.¹⁹ From FY 2016 to FY 2018, approximately \$4 million in vouchers were used by 12,500 individuals with disabilities to assist them in accessing basic telecommunications services.

Two-line Voice or Speech Carryover: Two-line voice or speech carryover is a service that some persons with hearing or speech disabilities use to communicate over the telephone. With carryover service, two lines are used – on one line, a TTY or captioned telephone²⁰ is used to receive *or* send text, while on the second line the user may listen or speak for themselves. This program reimburses providers with customers that use two-line voice or speech carryover.

USF rules allow a customer to get a second line without a service connection charge and without a monthly charge for most of the costs of that second line. Captioned telephone users have traditionally used the two-line feature. Total costs for this program remain small relative to other USF programs. From FY 2016 to FY 2018, a total of \$20,163 was utilized to reduce the cost of the second line.

¹⁸ TTYs are electronic typewriter devices that people with speech or hearing disabilities use to send or receive typed messages.

¹⁹ The Telecommunications Assistance Program (TAP) may be able to pay the \$100. TAP is a program of the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Department of Health Services). TAP is only for persons in low-income households who are deaf or severely hard of hearing.

²⁰ A captioned telephone combines the functions of a traditional phone and TTY. Users can both hear the conversation and see the streaming text transcript of the call.

Demand for captioned telephone service provided over two traditional landlines is leveling off, while demand for captioned telephone service provided over one landline for voice, and broadband for the text channel, is growing rapidly. Changes in administrative rules in Docket 1-AC-236²¹ provided support for the broadband channel equal to the support currently provided for a second telephone line.

High Rate Assistance Credits: The high rate assistance credit (HRAC) program provides USF payments to local exchange service providers to reimburse them for credits given to customers to keep local rates at affordable levels. Monthly service rates are compared to median household incomes for each county. If the rate that a telecommunications company charges exceeds the threshold established in the rules, the customers pay the threshold price and the USF pays the balance. Adjustments in funding levels for this program are dependent on changes in income levels for the county and changes in local service rates.

The expenditures for this program have declined dramatically over the past 17 years. The annual peak of expenditures during that period was \$1.3 million and expenditures are now less than \$1,000 annually.

The implementation of major reforms of inter-carrier compensation rates (the rates paid between telecommunications companies that exchange traffic) mandated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) were predicted to result in significant offsetting local rate increases, which would have increased expenditures from the HRAC. However, the proliferation of alternatives to the traditional landline service such as wireless and VoIP options have created enough competitive pressure to prevent the landline provider from making the offsetting price increases. Since the predicted local rate increases never materialized, the budgets for high-rate assistance credits have declined to \$1,000 in FY 2018. A 2016 adjustment to the calculation of the HRAC in the USF rules²² was expected to eliminate HRAC program use for the foreseeable future.

Lifeline and Link-Up: The Lifeline program makes telephone service more accessible for low-income Wisconsin residents. Lifeline provides a lower monthly rate for telephone service for low-income consumers or the alternative for a low-usage wireless service option at no charge. The Lifeline program is provided jointly by the FCC and the state of Wisconsin. Providers are reimbursed from the state and federal USF for rate credits or minutes given to Lifeline customers.

Historically, Link-Up required telecommunications providers to waive service connection charges up to \$60 when low-income consumers established or moved their telephone service. Reimbursement for the waived charges applicable to Link-Up customers was provided jointly by the federal and state USF. In April 2012, the FCC effectively eliminated the federal Link-Up program, and the Commission suspended the state program to evaluate whether a separate

²¹ See Docket 1-AC-236, Order, [PSC REF#: 279312](#).

²² See Docket 1-AC-236, Order, [PSC REF#: 279312](#).

state program should exist in the absence of a federal program. The elimination of the suspended Wisconsin Link-Up program was completed in the changes to the Wisconsin Administrative Code in Docket 1-AC-236 effective February 1, 2016.

State USF expenditures for the Lifeline program declined from a high of \$2,751,480 in FY 2011 to less than half that, \$1,122,909, in FY 2015. Since that time the expenditures have stabilized at between \$1.0 million and \$1.2 million. The changes can also be seen in the enrollment numbers. Lifeline provided lower-priced telephone service to approximately 200,000 low-income customers in Wisconsin in FY 2011, including customers supported by both state and federal USF dollars. By the end of FY 2015, that number had declined to about 165,000. The earlier decline in Lifeline expenditures and enrollments was caused by two initiatives ordered by the FCC:

- The FCC authorized a \$0.42 per line increase in the federal USF contribution to the Lifeline credit in Wisconsin. Since the overall Lifeline credit remained constant at \$10.00 per line, the state contribution went down.
- The FCC implemented a national database to eliminate benefit duplication by individuals and effectively limit benefits to one per household. The FCC also implemented an annual re-certification process different from the prior re-verification procedures used in Wisconsin. This transition to the revised procedure for verifying eligibility resulted in the termination of Lifeline service to a large number of customers in Wisconsin.

The issue of accurate verification of program eligibility continues to be an issue nationally. In Wisconsin, the impact of this initiative was less than in other states because Wisconsin Lifeline enrollments are done through online queries of state databases. The FCC has now clarified that database query processes for income qualification for enrollment and annual re-verification of eligibility in Lifeline are the preferred methods for these processes.

While Lifeline has experienced significant reduction in participation levels, a trend toward higher overall participation levels is possible. In 2017, there were 159,003 Lifeline subscribers in Wisconsin²³ out of 664,835 believed eligible²⁴. The current 24 percent participation level presents an opportunity to increase participation through outreach.

Participation by landline customers has declined significantly as customers drop their landline service, however, there have been significantly higher increases in subscribership to wireless Lifeline services. This is due in part to the attractiveness of certain wireless Lifeline services that offer customers free handsets and a set number of minutes with no up-front costs. As explained above, there have been a number of changes to the methods used to verify customer eligibility for these low-income programs. Wisconsin has been a leader in taking efforts to stop waste, fraud, and abuse in the Lifeline program, including streamlining and

²³ Source: Universal Service Administrative Corporation (USAC).

²⁴ Based on US Census American Community Survey.

improving systems for verification of customer eligibility. Working with the Department of Health Services and Department of Revenue, the Commission continues to refine these systems to make verification more efficient and effective.

At the end of 2015, the Commission completed an upgrade to the Lifeline verification database, housed at the Department of Health Services, which added many more hours of availability for providers to execute eligibility queries, automated queries of eligibility through income verification by the Department of Revenue, and a batch process for annual reverifications of Lifeline eligibility.

Nonprofit Grant – Access Programs or Projects: The purpose of these grants is to develop or support programs or projects that facilitate affordable access to telecommunications and information services. Applicants must be nonprofit organizations and must provide at least a 25 percent match for the total project cost. The projects must assist in providing voice, broadband, or internet telecommunications to low-income, customers with disabilities, or those living in areas with high costs for such services.

Nonprofit organizations were awarded grants for 15 projects in 2015 totaling \$498,985; 16 projects in 2016 totaling \$500,000; 12 projects in 2017 totaling \$455,118; and 18 projects for 2018 totaling \$499,619. The slightly lower amount awarded in 2017 was due to a shift in funding for support provided by Independent Living Centers (ILCs), for the TEPP-related services. The shift was from annual Nonprofit Grants to annual funding via a USF budget line item distributed under a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Health Services—Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources (DHS-BADR) The Appendix to this Report provides specific information about the grants awarded under this program.

In FY 2012, grant awards no longer covered grants for advanced services or broadband-based programs since they were no longer “telecommunications” services under the law. In 2016, grants for broadband and internet-based services were covered once again due to a change in the definition of essential telecommunications services for USF programs in federal law combined with an FCC decision to include broadband access in its definition of essential telecommunications services.²⁵

Examples of projects that have received funding include: internet access and training to low-income youth, seniors and unemployed adults; equipment and internet access for low-income families with students in a school districts transitioning to an all-electronic curriculum; and outreach and assistance to individuals with disabilities to obtain and install telecommunications equipment and training to use tablets and smartphones.

²⁵ While 2011 Wisconsin Act 22 removed “advanced telecommunications services,” 47 CFR § 54.101(a) (revised on May 24, 2016) states that voice telephony services and broadband service shall be supported by federal universal service support mechanisms. Wis. Stat. § 196.218(1)(a) defines “essential telecommunications services” as the “services or functionalities listed in 47 CFR 54.101(a).”

Appendix B to this report provides specific information about the grants awarded under this program.

Medical Telecommunications Equipment Program: Nonprofit medical clinics and public health agencies can receive grants from the USF to purchase telecommunications equipment. Purchase of medical telecommunications equipment under this grant program must promote technologically advanced medical services, enhance access to medical care in rural areas of the state, or enhance access to medical care to underserved populations or to persons with disabilities in the state. Applicants for this program must be a nonprofit clinic serving federally designated health professional shortage areas, medically underserved areas, medically underserved populations, or a public health agency.

Access to healthcare is the point of emphasis for the telemedicine grant program. The initial purpose of the program was to build interest in the use of telecommunications to augment medical practices. For example, early in the program funds were used to purchase video conference equipment, allowing for remote consultations with specialists for rural patients.

More recently, grant funds are used for:

- telemedicine carts are mobile units used at the patient's bedside to provide a video conference with physicians and other consultants at distant locations. A high definition camera on the unit can be used to remotely examine a wound, and other attachments to the cart can record the patient's health status, and transmit the data and images to the specialist while the video conference is underway.
- home health monitoring units are used in conjunction with a visiting nurse service to connect a patient at home with a supervising nurse. Attachments on the unit measure a variety of patient biometric data allowing patients with a chronic condition an option for regular check-ins with medical professionals, reducing travel required for patients with conditions that make travel difficult.

This program is complemented by the Broadband Expansion Grant Program, discussed later in this report.

For combined FY 2016 and 2017, 25 applications were filed with a total funding request of \$1,441,688; 21 grants totaling \$999,100 were awarded. For combined FY 2018 and 2019, out of the 20 applications with a total funding request of \$1,051,471, 17 grants were awarded totaling \$934,727.

The Appendix to this report provides specific information about the grants awarded under this program.

PSC – Broadband Expansion Grants: These funds are administered through the Commission and are funded by transfers from the USF fund balance and the DOA Federal E-Rate appropriation. This program is discussed on the Commission’s website at psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/WBO.aspx.

USF Rules: The first universal service fund rules (Wis. Admin. Code ch. PSC 160) were approved in 1996. The rules were subsequently revised in 2000. The next rulemaking proceeding in Docket 1-AC-198 began in 2001, but experienced significant resistance and delays and timed out. A subsequent rulemaking was initiated in 2011 in Docket 1-AC-236 to pursue less controversial updates to the language of the USF rule to keep it current with changes in the industry and in federal universal service programs. That proceeding completed the rulemaking process and new rules became effective February 1, 2016. A new revision to the rules is currently being considered in Docket 1-AC-251.

Administration: While the Commission develops the overall policy and procedures for the USF and manages and operates several of the programs, it is required by statute to contract with a private firm to administer the fund. Responsibilities under that contract include issuing USF assessment bills to providers, sending reimbursements to participants in the USF programs, and administering some of the USF programs under Commission oversight. In 2016, the Commission issued a Request for Proposals for the administration of the USF. Solix, Inc., was selected as the USF administrator to succeed the former USF administrator, Wipfli, LLP effective July 1, 2016. The current contract covers administrative services from July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2018, with three optional, one-year extensions.²⁶ For FY 19, the Commission exercised one of the three possible one-year extensions with Solix.

The USF Council advises the Commission on the administration of the USF and on proposed rule changes. Currently, the Council is comprised of 15 members, with seven representing the telecommunications industry and eight representing consumer groups. By statute, the majority of the Council members must be representatives from consumer groups. The Council meets two or more times each year to discuss budget issues, program direction, and draft rule changes.

Budget: The Commission’s USF appropriation for FY 2016²⁷, FY 2017²⁸ and FY 2018²⁹ was \$5.94 million for each year. However, several programmatic and demand changes at the state and federal level resulted in reduced expenditure amounts. As a result, the Commission-approved USF budget was reduced to \$4.69 million in FY 2015³⁰. Since then, USF budgets have remained lower than the appropriated amount. This is expected to continue until the FCC’s Lifeline verification systems provide further stability and support growth in Lifeline subscriptions.

The Broadband Expansion Grant Program’s appropriation for FY 2016 and FY 2017 was \$1.5 million each year. The FY 2018 appropriation was \$14.0 million. As noted above, the

²⁶ See docket 5-UF-2016, Order, [PSC REF#: 287168](#).

²⁷ See docket 5-GF-104, Order, [PSC REF#: 275583](#).

²⁸ See docket 5-UF-2016, Order, [PSC REF#: 292922](#).

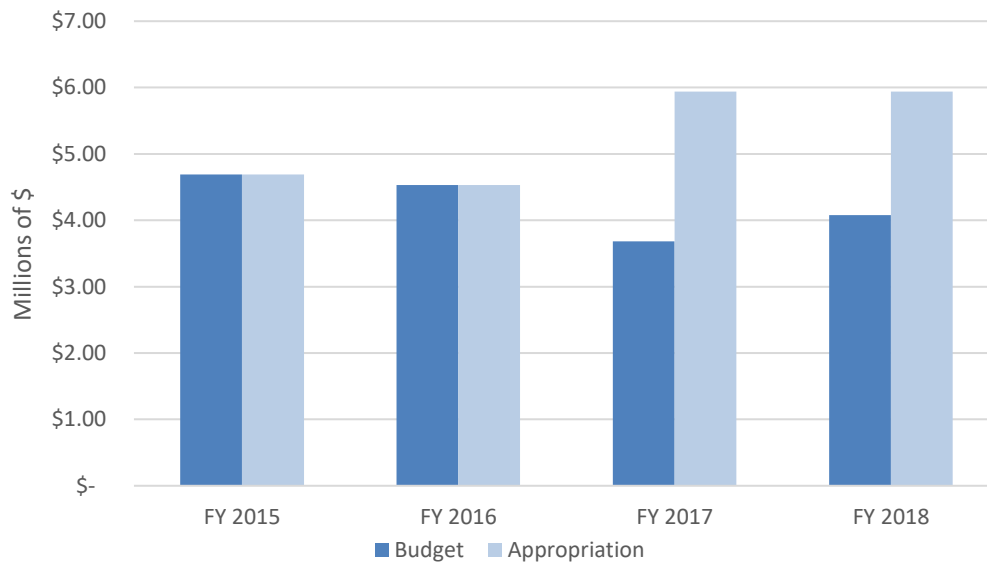
²⁹ See docket 5-UF-2017, Order, [PSC REF#: 332044](#).

³⁰ See docket 5-GF-104, Order, [PSC REF#: 213935](#).

Broadband Expansion Grant Program appropriation is not funded by USF assessments at this time. Rather, it is funded by the USF fund balance as well as a one-time transfer from the DOA Federal E-Rate appropriation in FY 2018.

Beginning in FY2019, there was a \$2.0 million annual funding requirement established for the Broadband Expansion Grant Program³¹. This annual requirement has been funded by the underspending in other USF appropriations. If the underspending is not sufficient to meet the annual requirement, the Commission, under that language, has the authority to increase the USF assessments to meet funding requirement³².

Graph 5



31 Wis. Stats. § 196.218(3)(a)(2s)

32 Wis. Stats. § 196.218(3)(a)(3am).

Federal USF Programs

The discussion above is specific to Wisconsin’s universal service program, funded solely through assessments on intrastate retail telecommunications revenues. The federal government also has a universal service program funded through national assessments on telecommunications revenues and administered by the Universal Service Administration Corporation (USAC). Some of the federal programs complement state USF programs (e.g., for low-income customers), while others address issues the state USF does not such as high cost support.

The following is a description of the federal universal service support programs and the funding from them provided to Wisconsin telecommunications companies in 2015 and 2016.³³ State-specific data for 2017 is not yet available.

Federal Universal Service Programs	<i>Thousand Dollars</i>	
	2015	2016
Low Income -- This support is commonly known as Lifeline and Link-Up. It provides discounts that make basic local telephone service affordable for low-income customers. Low income support is administered by the state in a partnership with the federal government. The dollars shown here are the federal contributions to this program.	\$ 19,172	\$ 20,205
Rural Health Care -- This support provides reduced rates to rural health care providers for telecommunications and internet services so they pay no more than their urban counterparts for the same or similar telecommunications services	\$ 10,205	\$ 10,999
Schools and Libraries -- This support, referred to as E-rate support, provides affordable telecommunications and internet access services to connect schools and libraries to the internet. This support goes to service providers that provide discounts on eligible services to eligible schools, school districts, libraries, and consortia of these entities.	\$ 41,847	\$ 31,178
High Cost Loop -- This support provides financial assistance to rural telephone companies for providing the “last mile of connection” when the cost of this service exceeds 115 percent of the national average cost per loop.	\$ 23,764	\$ 23,333
Connect America Fund -- This support provides funds to expand access to advanced telecommunications services.	\$129,725	\$131,952
Interstate Common Line Support -- This support helps rate-of-return telephone companies recover some of their fixed interstate access charges.	\$ 39,950	\$ 40,669
Total Federal USF Support to Wisconsin	\$264,663	\$258,336

³³Source: Universal Service Administrative Company Annual Reports: 2015, https://www.usac.org/_res/documents/about/pdf/annual-reports/usac-annual-report-2015.pdf; 2016, https://www.usac.org/_res/documents/about/pdf/annual-reports/usac-annual-report-interactive-2016.pdf.

Appendix A

SUMMARIES OF USF GRANTEES

Nonprofit Access Projects for Program Year 2016³⁴			
Organization	City	Amount Awarded	Project Summary
ABC for Health, Inc.	Madison	\$ 28,900	Provide outreach and educational webcasts and live trainings to at least 350 partners and 650 families about reduced cost telecommunication services and equipment for low-income families and those with children with disabilities.
Access to Independence, Inc.	Madison	\$ 54,000	Educate and connect people with disabilities, including those relocating from nursing facilities to the community, with telecommunication equipment and services to improve independence.
Beyond Vision	Milwaukee	\$ 45,405	Expansion of the Communications Center to provide people who are blind or severely visually impaired with access to training on adaptive telecommunications equipment resulting in community outreach, job skills training, and sustainable employment.
Center for Independent Living for Western Wisconsin	Menomonie	\$ 35,000	Provide individuals with disabilities the opportunity to learn about adaptive telephone equipment through general outreach activities, demonstration and trial of devices, and assistance with TEPP applications, product selections, and training.
Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc.	Madison	\$ 15,000	CAC Telecommunications Assistance Program will provide 170 low-income households with financial assistance, budget counseling and mediation with telecommunications service providers in order for them to obtain and maintain landline telephone and cellphone services.
Community Advocates, Inc.	Milwaukee	\$ 37,500	Milwaukee Telephone Access Advocacy Program (MTAAP) assists low-income residents in establishing or maintaining access to basic telecommunications services for their health, security, and basic needs.

³⁴ See Docket 5-NF-2016, Order, [PSC REF#: 285614](#) .

Nonprofit Access Projects for Program Year 2016³⁴

Organization	City	Amount Awarded	Project Summary
HEAR Wisconsin Store	West Allis	\$ 9,175	Provide outreach, co-payment assistance and in-home visits to ensure equal access to the TEPP program and provide training and follow-up support to clients who require captioned telephone service.
Independence First	Milwaukee	\$ 6,366	Purchase 11 SAVI Wireless Headset Systems for distribution to 10 low-income individuals with disabilities and retain one for demonstration in the Assistive Technology Center.
Independent Living Resources, Inc.	La Crosse	\$ 52,400	Provide outreach, education, and direct services including skill training and follow-up for the telecommunications services to people with disabilities of any age throughout a 13-county service area.
Midstate Independent Living Consultants, Inc.	Stevens Point	\$ 25,000	Targeted outreach regarding USF programs to individuals that are 60 and older, low-income individuals in an 11-county area and to tribal members in four tribal areas.
New Concept Self Development Center	Milwaukee	\$ 14,440	Provide continuous access to telecommunications services to low-income community residents during evenings and weekends.
North Country Independent Living	Superior	\$ 51,866	Provide outreach, information and assistance on various communications devices and funding sources in eight counties and to four tribes in northwestern Wisconsin.
Options for Independent Living	Green Bay	\$ 26,250	Provide individuals with hearing loss an opportunity to try out different telecommunications devices to determine what will give them maximum hearing capability. Provide community outreach to increase awareness of the USF programs.
Society's Assets, Inc.	Racine	\$ 55,700	Outreach to individuals with disabilities, assessment of telecommunications needs, assistance with TEPP application, TEPP co-payment assistance for people with disabilities, training, and expanded outreach to the community.

Nonprofit Access Projects for Program Year 2016³⁴			
Organization	City	Amount Awarded	Project Summary
Vision Forward Association, Inc.	Milwaukee	\$ 21,123	Provide training on cutting-edge telecommunications devices that can help individuals who are blind and visually impaired accomplish the tasks of everyday life and maintain their independence.
YWCA Southeast Wisconsin	Milwaukee	\$ 21,875	Provides reliable telephone access to 700 low-income individuals in immediate need combined with the staffing and resources to address many underlying reasons for telephone access deficits.
Total Amount Awarded		\$500,000	

Nonprofit Access Projects for Program Year 2017³⁵			
Organization	City	Amount Awarded	Project Summary
ABC for Health, Inc.	Madison [Statewide]	\$ 28,100	Provide outreach and educational webcasts and live trainings to at least 500 partners/650 families about reduced cost telecommunication services and equipment for low-income families and those with children with disabilities.
Americans for Better Hearing Foundation	Burr Ridge, IL [Statewide]	\$ 65,000	Use of advanced electronic media campaigns to educate residents and medical professionals about TEPP and to use a multi-layered electronic media program to engage medical professionals in referring to TEPP.
Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc.	Madison	\$ 36,000	CAC Telecommunications Assistance Program will provide 170 low-income households with financial assistance, budget counseling and mediation with telecommunications service providers in order for them to obtain and maintain telephone, internet and/or cell phone services.
DANenet	Madison	\$ 20,000	DANenet will help low-income households get affordable internet access, provide low-cost computers to low-income households, and provide digital literacy workshop and drop-in tech support to make the devices and connectivity useful.
HEAR Wisconsin	West Allis	\$ 10,675	Provide outreach, co-payment assistance and in-home visits to ensure equal access to the TEPP program and provide training and follow-up support to clients who require captioned telephone service.
Independent Living, Inc.	Madison	\$ 50,000	Install wiring to make a variety of telecommunications options available to residents of a new 135-unit affordable housing development. Includes: Cat6 and coax cabling, wireless routers and connectivity technology.

³⁵ See Docket 5-NF-2017, Order and Final Decision, [PSC REF#: 304414](#).

Nonprofit Access Projects for Program Year 2017³⁵			
Organization	City	Amount Awarded	Project Summary
New Concept Self Development Center	Milwaukee	\$ 22,200	Provide continuous access to telecommunications and computer internet services during evenings and weekends at New Concept's Employment Resource Center and McKinley Gardens Apartments Community Center.
Northwest Wisconsin CEP	Ashland	\$ 44,588	Assist low-income customers in obtaining and maintaining affordable access to a basic set of telecommunications services in ten counties in Northwestern Wisconsin. Provide education on, and work with, the Lifeline program.
Vision Forward Association, Inc.	Milwaukee	\$ 29,100	Provide access to and training on state of the art cell phones and smart phones to individuals who are blind or visually impaired to help them navigate in life and maintain their independence.
Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council	Independence	\$ 32,225	Equip low-income, entrepreneurial individuals in rural areas of six counties with laptops, mobile hotspots, and education so that they can access the internet, engage with the global market and achieve self-employment.
WiscNet	Green Bay	\$ 75,000	WiscNet and Green Bay Area Schools will investigate technologies to provide students in low-income, under-served families in Green Bay area affordable access to internet-based school content from home.
YWCA Southeast Wisconsin	Milwaukee	\$ 42,230	YWCA will provide telecommunications access and related resource assistance for a minimum of 750 unduplicated low-income individuals in Milwaukee and Racine Counties from July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2018.
Total Amount Awarded		\$455,118	

Nonprofit Access Projects for Program Year 2018³⁶

Organization	City	Amount Awarded	Project Summary
ABC for Health, Inc.	Madison Statewide	\$ 29,850	Provide outreach, educational webcasts, live trainings, and materials to at least 500 partners and 650 families about reduced cost telecommunication services and equipment for low-income families and those with children with disabilities.
Adult Learning Center	Milwaukee	\$ 18,523	Improve access to the Adult Learning Center's Online Learning Lab within a low-income Milwaukee neighborhood, and support instruction to help low-income adults learn how to access and use computers and the internet.
Benedict Center	Middleton Milwaukee	\$ 15,925	Provide women being released from incarceration in Milwaukee County with access to basic cellphones that can be used to support their successful recovery and re-entry into the community.
Beyond Vision	Milwaukee	\$ 55,934	Provide people who are blind or severely visually impaired with access to, training on, and employment utilizing telecommunications devices. Provide and train visually impaired persons on utilizing adaptive technologies needed to access telecommunications services.
Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee	Milwaukee	\$ 45,362	Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee's "MKE Connect" project will provide, at no cost to participants, home mobile hotspots for low-income households and free Wi-Fi access at Sherman Park in Milwaukee's central city.
Boys & Girls Clubs of the Greater Chippewa Valley	Eau Claire Black River Falls	\$ 29,250	Provide telecommunications access and related resources to low-income youth at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Greater Chippewa Valley, and strengthening the telecommunications capabilities throughout its Eau Claire and Black River Falls centers.
Center for Independent Living for Western Wisconsin	Menomonie	\$ 24,000	Provide outreach to low-income older adults at congregate meal sites and low-income housing, bringing commonly used durable low cost adaptive phones and hard-of-hearing equipment for demonstration.

³⁶ See Docket 5-NF-2017, Order, [PSC REF#: 343892](#).

Nonprofit Access Projects for Program Year 2018³⁶

Organization	City	Amount Awarded	Project Summary
Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc.	Madison	\$ 30,000	CAC's Telecommunications Assistance Program will provide at least 170 low-income households with financial assistance, budget counseling, case management and mediation with service providers in order for them to obtain and maintain basic telephone and broadband services.
DANEnet	Madison	\$ 30,000	DANEnet's project will increase digital inclusion for 600 households by helping low-income households get affordable internet access, low-cost computers, and digital literacy skills to make the devices and connectivity useful.
HEAR Wisconsin	West Allis	\$ 10,675	Provide outreach, co-payment assistance and in-home visits to ensure equal access to the TEPP program and provide training and follow-up support to clients who require captioned telephone service.
Independent Living, Inc.	Madison	\$ 30,000	Project replaces outdated telecommunications infrastructure in a 1974 building that impedes reliable and efficient communications for seniors experiencing sensory loss and mobility issues, as well as serve visiting members of the public with Wi-Fi access.
New Concept Self Development Center	Milwaukee	\$ 27,900	Low-income community residents will have continuous access to telecommunications and computer internet services during traditional and non-traditional hours (evenings and weekends) at New Concept's Employment Resource Center and McKinley Gardens Apartments computer lab.
Scenic Bluffs Community Health Centers	Cashton Norwalk	\$ 18,359	Purchase two Smart Boards and carts for use by area community members in Scenic Bluff's conference rooms in Cashton and Norwalk.
Society's Assets, Inc.	Racine	\$ 13,000	Provide demonstration and training of new complex technology to individuals with speech and/or mobility impairments so they can access telecommunications.

Nonprofit Access Projects for Program Year 2018³⁶

Organization	City	Amount Awarded	Project Summary
St. Charles Youth & Family Services	Milwaukee	\$ 11,118	Upgrade and cover costs for internet services for underserved youth and family's afterschool safe space. Also to replace old firewall/router and email server for non-profit overseeing said programs
Vision Forward Association, Inc.	Milwaukee	\$ 24,000	Provide individuals who are blind or visually impaired with access to and training on mobile phones and applications to help them accomplish everyday tasks and remain independent.
Workforce Resource, Inc.	Menomonie	\$ 41,224	Straight Talk smartphones and minutes will be given to 200 Workforce Resource, Inc. (WRI) "work-ready" low-income clients to navigate job/employment opportunities, fill out job applications online, and maintain contact with WRI case managers.
YWCA Southeast Wisconsin	Milwaukee Racine	\$ 44,500	YWCA Southeast Wisconsin proposes to increase telecommunications access for a minimum of 1,600 unduplicated low-income individuals in Milwaukee and Racine.
Total Amount Awarded		\$499,619	

**Medical Telecommunications Equipment Grant Awards for
State Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017³⁷**

Organization	City	Award Amount	Project Summary
Aspirus, Inc.	Wausau	\$ 10,399	This project proposes to purchase video conference equipment to originate video distance learning instruction related diabetes treatment. The project would furnish two classrooms in Wausau and Merrill with cameras, microphones and video display, and a telemedicine cart for its clinic in Rome.
Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation, Inc.	La Crosse	\$ 20,863	This project proposes to replace outdated telemedicine equipment with two new telemedicine carts at Tomah Memorial Hospital and Richland Medical Center in Richland Center.
HealthNet of Rock County, Inc.	Janesville	\$ 8,140	This project proposes to purchase one desktop computer, monitor, two laptop computers, three cameras, three speakers, and a license for CloudVisit software. This equipment would permit patient consultation by teleconference between patients located in Janesville and a psychiatrist located in Madison.
Home Health United	Madison	\$ 38,901	This project proposes to purchase twenty-three home health monitoring units. The units would be used in conjunction with HHU's visiting nurse service to check in with patients, and measure patient specific vital sign parameters decided by the patient's physician.
HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital	Oconto Falls	\$ 58,499	This project proposes to purchase one telemedicine cart with a specialized application for treating stroke patients. The cart would be located at the St. Clare Hospital Emergency Department in Oconto Falls.

³⁷ See Docket 5-TF-2016, Order, [PSC REF#: 286277](#).

**Medical Telecommunications Equipment Grant Awards for
State Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017³⁷**

Organization	City	Award Amount	Project Summary
Hudson Memorial Hospital	Amery, New Richmond, Hudson	\$ 88,500	This project proposes to purchase three digital pathology devices. The equipment would create digital images of tissue samples, permitting transmission of images to consulting pathologists at Regions Hospital in St Paul.
Kenosha Community Health Center, Inc.	Kenosha	\$ 23,110	This project proposes to purchase a mobile wireless telephone service, mobile and desk telephones, computers and connecting equipment and software. The telecommunications system would be installed on a vehicle, the Mobile Medical Clinic.
The Lakes Community Health Center	Iron River	\$ 63,716	This project proposes to purchase 3 wall-mounted teleconference units, 2 telemedicine carts and 15 Mitel desktop telephones for clinics in Ashland, Iron River, and Minong.
Medical College of Wisconsin Psychiatry Department	Milwaukee	\$ 37,838	This project proposes to purchase six telemedicine carts. One cart would be located at Ministry St Michael's Hospital in Stevens Point, a second would be located at Ministry St Mary's Hospital in Rhinelander, and four would be located in faculty offices at the Medical College campus in Milwaukee.
Memorial Medical Center Foundation	Neillsville	\$ 78,718	This project proposes to purchase three telemedicine units and associated equipment to facilitate consultations with specialists in other cities. MMC would build and furnish two rooms for private patient consultation by telemedicine. The third telemedicine unit will be on a cart, and can be moved to a specific patient location as needed.
Mercy Health Foundation (Thorp project)	Oshkosh	\$ 38,901	This project proposes to purchase a telemedicine cart for Ministry Health Care's clinic in Thorp, WI to provide patient consultation with specialists in other cities.

**Medical Telecommunications Equipment Grant Awards for
State Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017³⁷**

Organization	City	Award Amount	Project Summary
Mile Bluff Medical Center	Mauston	\$ 50,623	This project proposes to purchase five telemedicine carts and associated equipment for clinics in Mauston, Elroy, Delton, Necedah, and New Lisbon. Mile Bluff proposes to use these carts for the treatment of stroke patients. The clinics could consult with neurologists at Gundersen in La Crosse and UW Health in Madison.
Ministry Door County Medical Center	Sturgeon Bay	\$ 58,499	This project proposes to purchase one telemedicine cart for Ministry Door County Medical Center (MDCMC) Emergency Department to treat stroke patients. The cart would be located at the Door County Medical Center in Sturgeon Bay.
Richland Hospital, Inc.	Richland Center	\$ 126,563	This project proposes to purchase three sets of video conference equipment to be installed in three patient rooms in the intensive care section of Richland Hospital. Richland Hospital would use this equipment to communicate with UW Health intensivists in Madison regarding patient care.
Scenic Bluffs Community Health Center	Cashton	\$ 15,436	This project proposes to purchase eight tablet computers, and a language interpretation application for each computer. The computers will be located in Scenic Bluffs clinics in Viroqua, Sparta, Norwalk and Cashton.
St. Elizabeth Hospital Foundation (Chilton project)	Appleton	\$ 38,901	This project proposes to purchase a telemedicine cart for Ministry Health Care's Calumet Medical Center in Chilton, WI to provide patient consultation with specialists in other cities.

**Medical Telecommunications Equipment Grant Awards for
State Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017³⁷**

Organization	City	Award Amount	Project Summary
St. Elizabeth Hospital Foundation (Rhineland project)	Appleton	\$ 38,901	This project proposes to purchase a telemedicine cart for Ministry Health Care's Ministry Medical Group, Rhineland in Rhineland, WI to provide patient consultation with specialists in other cities.
St. Elizabeth Hospital Foundation (Stevens Point project)	Appleton	\$ 38,901	This project proposes to purchase a telemedicine cart for Ministry Health Care's Ministry St Michael's Hospital in Stevens Point, WI to provide patient consultation with specialists in other cities.
Trempealeau County Health Care Center	Whitehall	\$ 70,320	This project proposes to purchase 250 tablet computers to be used by patients to communicate with staff, and record information pertinent to a patient's specific treatment plan.
UnityPoint Health – Meriter Foundation	Madison	\$ 47,194	This project proposes to purchase 30 home health monitoring units for use by patients residing outside of Dane County. The units would measure patient specific vital signs. A nurse care coordinator will monitor the data and communicate with the patients as needed.
UW Health	Middleton	\$ 46,177	This project proposes to replace four telestroke carts at existing locations and add two new telestroke carts at two additional locations. The telestroke carts are Avizia telemedicine carts with high definition video for patient consultation with neurology specialists in Madison.
Total Amount Awarded		\$999,100	

**Medical Telecommunications Equipment Grant Awards for
State Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019³⁸**

Organization	City	Grant Award	Project Summary
Access Community Health Centers, Inc.	Madison	\$ 44,385	This project proposes to purchase 5 wall-mounted videoconference units.
Aspirus Riverview Hospital & Clinics, Inc.	Wisconsin Rapids	\$ 26,434	This project proposes to purchase 1 wall-mounted videoconference unit for its behavioral care clinic.
Edgerton Hospital Capital Foundation	Edgerton	\$ 100,000	This project proposes to purchase equipment to provide mammography screenings and produce 3-D imagery.
HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital	Durand	\$ 59,970	This project proposes to purchase a telemedicine cart for the hospital in Durand.
HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital	Oconto Falls	\$ 50,360	This project proposes to purchase a telemedicine cart for the hospital in Oconto Falls.
HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital	Cumberland	\$ 59,970	This project proposes to purchase a telemedicine cart for the hospital in Cumberland.
Hudson Hospital Foundation	Hudson	\$ 76,700	This project proposes to purchase 2 telemedicine carts for psychiatric telemedicine.
The Lakes Health Center	Iron River	\$ 98,790	This project proposes to purchase a digital x-ray system.
Libertas of Marinette	Marinette	\$ 46,870	This project proposes to purchase 10 telemedicine carts to provide behavioral health care.
Memorial Medical Center Foundation	Neillsville	\$ 118,906	This project proposes to purchase an MRI device for the hospital in Neillsville.
Mile Bluff Medical Center	Mauston	\$ 55,800	This project proposes to purchase 4 cameras, peripheral equipment for telemedicine carts.
Ministry Health Care, Inc. (Burn camera project)	Milwaukee	\$ 43,485	This project proposes to purchase 5 cameras, peripheral equipment for existing telemed carts.
Ministry Health Care, Inc. (Kiel Clinic project)	Milwaukee	\$ 39,803	This project proposes to purchase a telemedicine cart for the Ministry clinic in Kiel.
Ministry Health Care, Inc. (laptop project)	Milwaukee	\$ 32,980	This project proposes to purchase 20 laptop computers.

³⁸ See Docket 5-TF-2018, Order [PSC REF#: 343790](#).

**Medical Telecommunications Equipment Grant Awards for
State Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019³⁸**

Organization	City	Grant Award	Project Summary
Ministry Health Care, Inc. (New London Clinic project)	Milwaukee	\$ 39,803	This project proposes to purchase a telemedicine cart for the Ministry clinic in New London.
Scenic Bluffs Community Health Centers	Cashton	\$ 2,128	This project proposes to purchase two iPads to link to a language interpretation service.
Unitypoint Health – Meriter Foundation	Madison	\$ 38,343	This project proposes to purchase 40 home health monitoring units.
Total Amount Awarded		\$934,727	