



State of Wisconsin
2021 - 2022 LEGISLATURE

LRB-1894/P3
KP:skw&kjf

DOA:.....Sherwin, BB0204, BB0205, BB0280, BB0576 - Broadband line extension grants, broadband connector program, and state broadband office appropriations

FOR 2021-2023 BUDGET -- NOT READY FOR INTRODUCTION

AN ACT ...; relating to: the budget.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

STATE GOVERNMENT

PUBLIC UTILITY REGULATION

Broadband line extension grants

The bill requires the PSC to make grants to residents of properties that are not served by a broadband service provider to assist in paying the customer costs associated with line extension necessary to connect broadband service to the properties. The maximum size of a broadband line extension grant is \$4,000. The bill also requires the PSC to give priority to primary residences and to establish other criteria for awarding the grants.

Broadband planning grants

The bill requires the PSC to make grants to cities, villages, towns, counties, school districts, tribal governments, regional planning commissions, nonprofit organizations, and local economic development councils for the following: 1) broadband planning; 2) feasibility engineering related to broadband infrastructure construction; 3) broadband adoption planning; and 4) digital inclusion activities. The maximum size of a broadband planning grant is \$50,000. The bill also requires

the PSC to provide training, technical assistance, and information on broadband infrastructure construction, broadband adoption, and digital inclusion.

Creating an appropriation for the state broadband office

The bill creates an appropriation to fund the operations of the state broadband office within the PSC. Currently, the state broadband office enhances the availability, adoption, and use of broadband across the state.

For further information see the state and local fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 20.155 (1) (c) of the statutes is created to read:

20.155 (1) (c) *State broadband office and planning and line extension grants; general purpose revenue.* The amounts in the schedule for the operations of the state broadband office within the public service commission, for broadband planning grants under s. 196.504 (2g), and for financial assistance grants for broadband line extension under s. 196.504 (2r).

***NOTE: This SECTION involves a change in an appropriation that must be reflected in the revised schedule in s. 20.005, stats.

SECTION 2. 20.155 (3) (r) of the statutes is amended to read:

20.155 (3) (r) *Broadband expansion grants; transfers.* From the universal service fund, all moneys transferred under s. 196.218 (3) (a) 2s. a., [2015 Wisconsin Act 55](#), section [9236 \(1v\)](#), [2017 Wisconsin Act 59](#), section [9237 \(1\)](#) and (2) (a), and [2019 Wisconsin Act 9](#), section [9201 \(1\)](#), for broadband expansion grants under s. 196.504 (2).

SECTION 3. 20.155 (3) (rm) of the statutes is amended to read:

20.155 (3) (rm) *Broadband grants; other funding.* From the universal service fund, as a continuing appropriation, all moneys transferred under s. 196.218 (3) (a) 2s. b., for broadband expansion grants under s. 196.504 (2).

SECTION 4. 196.218 (5) (a) 10. of the statutes is amended to read:

196.218 (5) (a) 10. To make broadband expansion grants and administer the program under s. 196.504 (2).

SECTION 5. 196.504 (2) (b) of the statutes is amended to read:

196.504 (2) (b) To prescribe the form, nature, and extent of the information that shall be contained in an application for a grant under this section subsection. The application shall require the applicant to identify the area of the state that will be affected by the proposed project and explain how the proposed project will increase broadband access.

SECTION 6. 196.504 (2) (c) of the statutes is amended to read:

196.504 (2) (c) To establish criteria for evaluating applications and awarding grants under this section subsection. The criteria shall prohibit grants that have the effect of subsidizing the expenses of a provider of telecommunications service, as defined in s. 182.017 (1g) (cq), or the monthly bills of customers of those providers. The criteria shall give priority to projects that include matching funds, that involve public-private partnerships, that affect unserved areas, that are scalable, that promote economic development, that will not result in delaying the provision of broadband service to areas neighboring areas to be served by the proposed project, or that affect a large geographic area or a large number of underserved individuals or communities. When evaluating grant applications under this section subsection, the commission shall consider the degree to which the proposed projects would duplicate existing broadband infrastructure, information about the presence of which is provided to the commission by the applicant or another person within a time period designated by the commission; the impacts of the proposed projects on the ability of individuals to access health care services from home and the cost of those

services; and the impacts of the proposed projects on the ability of students to access educational opportunities from home.

SECTION 7. 196.504 (2g) of the statutes is created to read:

196.504 (2g) The commission shall administer the broadband connector program and shall have the following powers:

(a) To make broadband planning grants to political subdivisions, school districts, tribal governments, regional planning commissions, nonprofit organizations, and local economic development organizations for broadband planning, feasibility engineering related to broadband infrastructure construction, broadband adoption planning, and digital inclusion activities. The amount of a broadband planning grant under this subsection may not exceed \$50,000. Grants awarded under this subsection shall be paid from the appropriations under s. 20.155 (1) (c).

(b) To provide training, technical assistance, and information on broadband infrastructure construction, broadband adoption, and digital inclusion.

SECTION 8. 196.504 (2r) of the statutes is created to read:

196.504 (2r) The commission shall administer the line extension assistance program and shall have the following powers:

(a) To make financial assistance grants to residents of properties that are not served by a broadband service provider to assist in paying the customer costs associated with line extension necessary to connect broadband service to the properties. The amount of a financial assistance grant under this subsection may not exceed \$4,000. Grants awarded under this subsection shall be paid from the appropriations under s. 20.155 (1) (c).

(b) To establish criteria for evaluating applications and awarding financial assistance grants under this subsection. The criteria shall give priority to properties that serve as a primary residence.

(END)