**196.504  Broadband expansion grant program; Broadband Forward! community certification.**

**(1)**In this section:

**(ab)** “Economic development” has the meaning given in s. [196.796 (1) (c)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/196.796%281%29%28c%29).

**(ac)** “Eligible applicant" means any of the following:

**1.** An organization operated for profit or not for profit, including a cooperative.

**2.** A telecommunications utility.

**3.** A political subdivision that submits an application in partnership with an eligible applicant under subd. [1.](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/196.504%281%29%28ac%291.) or [2.](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/196.504%281%29%28ac%292.)

**(ad)** “Fixed wireless service” has the meaning given in s. [77.51 (3rn)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/77.51%283rn%29), except that it does not include mobile wireless service, as defined in s. [77.51 (7k)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/77.51%287k%29), or telecommunications services, as defined in s. [77.51 (21n)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/77.51%2821n%29), transmitted through the use of satellite.

**(ae)** “Political subdivision" means a city, village, town, or county.

**(am)** “Scalable" means, with respect to a project for a broadband network, that the broadband network has the ability to maintain the quality of its service while increasing parameters relating to the size of the network, such as the number of users, the number of network nodes, the number of services provided, or the network's geographic spread.

**(b)** “Underserved" means served by fewer than 2 broadband service providers.

**(c)** “Unserved area” means an area of this state that is not served by an Internet service provider offering Internet service that is all of the following:

**1.** Fixed wireless service or wired service.

**2.** Provided at actual speeds of at least 20 percent of the upload and download speeds for advanced telecommunications capability as designated by the federal communications commission in its inquiries regarding advanced telecommunications capability under [47 USC 1302](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/usc/47%20USC%201302) (b).

**(2)**The commission shall administer the broadband expansion program and shall have the following powers:

**(a)** To make broadband expansion grants to eligible applicants for the purpose of constructing broadband infrastructure in underserved areas designated under par. [(d)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/196.504%282%29%28d%29). Grants awarded under this section shall be paid from the appropriations under ss. [20.155 (3) (r)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/20.155%283%29%28r%29) and [(rm)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/20.155%283%29%28rm%29) and [20.866 (2) (z)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/20.866%282%29%28z%29), in the amount allocated under s. [20.866 (2) (z) 5.](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/20.866%282%29%28z%295.)

**(b)** To prescribe the form, nature, and extent of the information that shall be contained in an application for a grant under this section. 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.

**(c)** To establish criteria for evaluating applications and awarding grants under this section. 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)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/182.017%281g%29%28cq%29), 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, 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.

**(d)** To designate areas of the state that are underserved as underserved areas.

**(e)** To designate areas of the state as unserved areas.

**(3)**The commission shall encourage the development of broadband infrastructure in underserved areas of the state and do all of the following:

**(a)** Provide comprehensive information concerning permits required for broadband network projects and related business activities in the state and make this information available to any person.

**(b)** Work with other state and local government offices, departments, and administrative entities to encourage timely and efficient issuance of permits and resolution of related issues.

**(c)** Encourage local and federal government agencies to coordinate activities related to approving applications and issuing permits related to broadband network projects.