Bipartisan Infrastructure Law:
USDA Broadband Investment in the Territories

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Broadband Funding across Federal Government

FCC

- Regulator
- Universal Service Fund programs support affordability of service; internet access in areas that are high-cost to serve; internet access in schools and libraries; and internet access for rural health care providers

USDA

- Dedicated to supporting broadband service in rural communities
- Long-standing programs since 1940s, funded by congress every year

NTIA

- Focused on tracking connectivity across the United States
- One-time funds for connectivity projects for states, Tribes, territories; middle mile projects; digital inclusion projects

$65 Billion in IIJA Broadband Investment

FCC – Regulator, funds universal service programs

- $14.2 B – Affordable Connectivity Program

USDA – Focused on rural communities, lender

- $2 B – ReConnect and Rural Broadband Loans

NTIA – Focused on U.S. connectivity

- $42 B – BEAD (funding to states, territories for their own programs)
- $2 B – Tribal Broadband Connectivity
- $1 B – Middle Mile
- $2 B – Digital Equity

IIJA Broadband Investment at USDA

➢ **$2 Billion to USDA** for existing programs at the Rural Utilities Service that fund broadband infrastructure in rural communities:

- $74 Million for the Rural Broadband Loan Program

- $1.926 Billion for the ReConnect Program

RUS is uniquely dedicated to funding broadband infrastructure in rural areas

IIJA at USDA: ReConnect Program

➤ **$1.926 Billion for the ReConnect Program**

- **50% of the Proposed Funding Service Area** must be unserved.

- **10% set-aside ($192.6 Million)** for areas where at least 90% of households do not have sufficient broadband access.

- **Waiver of Grant Matching Requirement** for Alaska Native Corporations, Tribal Governments, projects serving colonias, and projects serving persistent poverty counties.

- **$5 Million** in Technical Assistance for the establishment and growth of cooperatives to offer broadband.

USDA ReConnect Program

- **Purpose:** Fund rural broadband infrastructure – construction, maintenance, improvement, and expansion of broadband service.

- **Funding Type:** Loans, grants, and loan/grant combinations. Typically, a 25% matching requirement for grants.

- **Eligibility:**

  - Rural communities of 20,000 or less

  - 90% Proposed Service Area must be unserved

  - Territories are eligible

ReConnect Round 3

➢ **Closed March 9 – $1.15 Billion**

- Loans, Loan/Grant Combos, Grants with 25% Match.

- **$350 Million Grant Set-Aside with No Match for Tribes and Socially Vulnerable Communities –** This category includes Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

- Areas without 100/20 Mbps are eligible for funding. 90% of Proposed Service Area must be unserved.

- Priority points for projects that serve Socially Vulnerable Communities, including Territories.

Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grants

- **Purpose:** Equipment to deliver telemedicine service and distance learning curriculums in rural communities with a population of 20,000 people or less.

- **Funding Type:** Grants with 15% Matching Fund Requirement.

  - Up to 20% of a grant can be used for broadband facilities that support distance learning or telemedicine.

- **Eligible entities:** Federally recognized Tribes, nonprofits, for-profit businesses, consortia.

Community Connect Grant Program

- **Purpose:** Construction and expansion of broadband service in rural communities with a population of 20,000 people or less, where broadband service <u>does not</u> currently exist.
  - Must focus on a single community.
  - Must have a community center. Cover the cost of providing broadband service free of charge in critical community facilities for 2 years.
  - Less than 10% of the grant amount or up to $150,000 may be used for the improvement, expansion, construction or acquisition of the community center.
- **Funding Type:** Grants with 15% Matching Fund Requirement.
- **Eligible entities:** Federally recognized Tribes, nonprofits, businesses, coops, etc.

Success Story in Territories

- Island Eye Center receives $742,547 in DLT grant funds to provide tele $ophthalmology$ in Guam

Images of the retina are taken to diagnose and prevent diabetic retinopathy

- American Samoa Medical Center Authority receives $677,675 in DLT grant funds to offer telemedicine services to remote patients

Hardware is utilized to create a real-time interaction between doctors and patients, so they may receive proper medical attention

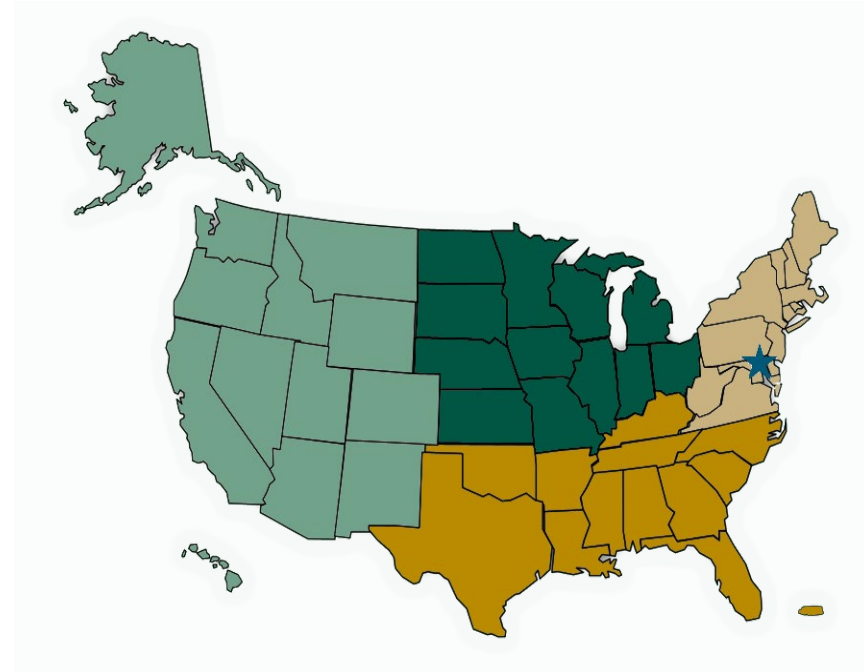# Contact Rural Utilities Service

More information: https://www.usda.gov/reconnect

https://www.usda.gov/broadband

Upcoming Webinars:
https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/events

Contact your General Field Representative (GFR):
https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/telecom-gfr

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