

BROADBAND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES



One of the biggest hurdles in broadband deployment is finding the funding to undertake the varying projects necessary for ubiquitous connectivity in a community. There are a myriad of federal funding programs available to help communities improve broadband connectivity. This document will highlight some of the existing federal funding programs, what they fund, where to apply, and important dates.

This explainer is not an exhaustive list of available funding opportunities. For a more comprehensive list of federal funding options, the National Telecommunications Information Administration ("NTIA") has created a Federal Funding Guide that outlines broadband funding programs from a variety of federal agencies. Review NTIA's 2021 guide [here](#). States may also make funding available for community projects. Click [here](#) for contacts and resources for state broadband programs.

U.S. Department of Agriculture ("USDA"): Rural eConnectivity Program ("ReConnect")

The USDA ReConnect Program is an annually appropriated grant and loan program administered by the Rural Utilities Service ("RUS"). The program provides funding for the construction, improvement, and facilities acquisition to provide Internet services to rural residences and businesses.

This program is open to corporations, cooperatives, and state, local, and Tribal governments. However, individuals and co-applicants are not eligible for funding. An area is eligible for ReConnect funding if it:

- is a rural area not located within a city or town with more than 20,000 residents.
- is not an urbanized area contiguous or adjacent to a city or town with a population greater than 50,000 residents.
- meets the first criteria and also does not have access to broadband as defined by the latest Funding Opportunity Announcement ("FOA").
 - Mobile/cellular and satellite services are not considered when determining if an area has sufficient access to broadband.

Finally, an area seeking to be covered by the ReConnect program is ineligible if it has been previously funded by other RUS telecommunications programs.

When applying for ReConnect funding an applicant must submit unqualified, comparative, and audited financial statements for the previous year. If an applicant does not have a completed audited financial statement, they can submit the two previously completed unqualified audits. All applicants are required to complete an Environmental Questionnaire and other required environmental documentation.

More information about the ReConnect program can be found [here](#). An FAQ for eligibility and the application process can be found [here](#).