

e-Connectivity for Rural America

Partnering to bring modern opportunities to rural communities

Reliable and affordable broadband e-Connectivity, or electronic connectivity, is vital for economic development and quality of life in the 21st Century. USDA has a website to assist leaders with resources, program information, and best practices for bringing broadband infrastructure to rural communities. Visit www.usda.gov/broadband for more information.



USDA Extends Deadlines for ReConnect Rural Broadband Program

WASHINGTON, February 6, 2019 – Acting Administrator for USDA’s Rural Utilities Service Bette Brand announced today USDA would extend application deadlines for the Rural eConnectivity Pilot Program (ReConnect Program).

To give potential applicants adequate time to access technical assistance from USDA staff and its partners, the first application deadline will be pushed back to May 31, 2019 or later. Previously, application deadlines began in April. New specific deadlines for ReConnect Program grants, loans, and grant-loan combination applications will be posted in the Federal Register in late February.

“We’ve seen such strong interest in ReConnect from rural telecommunications providers and utility cooperatives, that we want to be sure there’s enough time for them to put solid applications together for these innovative funding opportunities,” said Bette Brand. “The USDA team stands ready to assist with engineering and business plans, to be sure these new Federal funds are as impactful as possible.”

As one part of that technical assistance, USDA is hosting a webinar with general information about the ReConnect program and guidance from experts for potential applicants. This webinar is open to the public and interested parties, and will be offered at 2:00 pm Eastern Time on both [Thursday, February 7](#) and [Wednesday, February 13](#), 2019.

In March 2018, Congress provided \$600 million to USDA to expand broadband infrastructure and services in rural America. On December 13, Agriculture Secretary Perdue announced the rules of the program, called “ReConnect”, including how the loans and grants will be awarded to help build broadband infrastructure in rural America.

Telecommunications companies, rural electric cooperatives and utilities, internet service providers and municipalities may apply for funding through USDA’s new ReConnect Program to connect rural areas that currently have insufficient broadband service. Through the ReConnect Program, USDA is making available approximately \$200 million for grants, as well as \$200 million for loan and grant combinations, and \$200 million for low-interest loans. Funds will be awarded to projects that have a financially-sustainable business models that will bring high-speed broadband to rural homes, businesses, farms, ranches, and community facilities such as first responders, healthcare sites, and schools.

More information about the ReConnect program may be found at <http://reconnect.usda.gov>.

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