nrtc FUNDING ALERT!

RUS ReConnect Round 5

Professional assistance for today's unprecedented funding opportunities

Funding Amount: **$700 million**

Program Details

Program Name: Rural eConnectivity (ReConnect) Program
Administrator: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utility Service (RUS)
Authorizing Legislation: Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018

Funding Details

- **100% Loan** – Up to $200M, 2% fixed interest rate, max. request $50M
- **50% Loan/50% Grant Combo** – Up to $100M for loans and $100M for grants, max. request $25M loan, $25M grant (loan and grant amounts always equal)
- **100% Grant** – Up to $150M, match of 25%, max. request $25M
- **100% Grant for Tribal Governments, Alaska Native Corporations, Colonias, Persistent Poverty Areas, and Socially-Vulnerable Communities** – Up to $150M, no match, max. request $25M

Key Dates

- **February 21, 2024** – Notice of Funding Opportunity Published
- **March 22, 2024** – Application Window Opens
- **May 21, 2024 – Application Window Closes at 11:59 a.m. EST**
- **End of 2024 –** Anticipated Award Date

Eligible Entities

- Corporations
- LLC's and LLP's
- Cooperatives or mutual organizations
- State and Local Governments
- A territory or possession of the United States
- Tribes, Tribal Organizations and Governments

Eligible Areas

- 90% of the PFSA must lack sufficient access to broadband service of at least 25/3 Mbps
- Areas with population densities of 6 or less per square mile or if the PFSA is located 100 miles from a city or town of greater than 50k population

Eligible Projects

- Proposed network must be capable of providing 100/100 Mbps to every premise in PFSA
- Project must be completed within 5 years from the date funds are available

Eligible Costs

- Construction or improvement to facilities to provide fixed broadband service
- Reasonable preapplication expenses in an amount not to exceed 5% of award
- Acquisition and upgrading of an existing system that does not currently provide sufficient access to broadband

Scoring Criteria

Scoring (maximum of 150 points):

- **Rurality of PFSA** – **25 points**
  - For population densities of 6 or less/sq mile, or if PFSA is at least 100 miles from a city or town of greater than 50k population, full points will be awarded
- **Economic Need of Community** – **20 points**
  - Economic need based on the county poverty percentage of the PFSA determined by utilizing the Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program
  - If 75% of a PFSA(s) covers communities with a SAIPE score of 20% or higher, full points will be awarded
  - Tribal applicants can request alternative scoring consideration by submitting more granular Tribal specific census data using the census.gov/tribal tool
- **Affordability** – **20 points**
  - Applications must include one low-cost option offered at speeds that are sufficient for a household with multiple users to simultaneously telework and engage in remote learning
- **Labor Standards** – **20 points**
  - Description of strong labor standards, such as prevailing wage, safety training, professional certifications, workforce development, etc
- **Tribal Areas** – **15 points**
  - Applicants that are Tribal entities with PFSAs that are at least 75% on tribal lands receive full points
  - Non-tribal entities with PFSAs serving at least 50% of tribal lands receive 10 points

Scoring Criteria Cont.

- **Local Governments, Non-Profits, and Cooperatives**– **15 points**
  - o Applications submitted by local governments, non-profits, or cooperatives (including for projects involving public-private partnerships where the local government, non-profit, or cooperative is the applicant)
- **Socially Vulnerable Communities** – **15 points**
  - o Applications where at least 75% of the PFSA(s) are proposing to serve Socially Vulnerable Communities
- **Net Neutrality** – **10 points**
  - o Applicants that commit via board resolution, or equivalent, to net neutrality principles (i.e., will not block or impair/degrade lawful traffic or engage in paid prioritization
- **Most Unserved Locations Per Square Mile** – **up to 10 points**
  - o Unserved locations contained in the FCC's Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric that lack access to a wired or licensed fixed wireless at speeds of at least 25/3 Mbps
    - ▪ Projects with at least 75% of PFSA(s) located in states ranked 1-5 receive full points: **Alaska, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico,** and **Wyoming**
    - ▪ Projects with at least 75% of PFSA(s) located in states ranked 6-10 receive 5 points: **Arkansas, Mississippi, Nevada, South Dakota**, and **West Virginia**
    - ▪ Projects with 75% of PFSA(s) located in more than one of these states will receive the points associated with the highest scoring state

Application Process

- Application System Link – eAuthentication (usda.gov)
- Prior to applying, the applicant must register in SAM.gov and obtain a unique entity identifier (UEI) as part of the registration process. Applicants can register and obtain the UEI at https://www.sam.gov/content/home

Links & Contacts

- ReConnect Main Page
- ReConnect Fact Sheet
- ReConnect Mapping Tool
- ReConnect Workshops and Webinars
- ReConnect FAQ
- ReConnect Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
- For questions contact: laurel.leverrier@usda.gov