

nrtc **FUNDING ALERT!**

Professional Assistance for Today's Unprecedented Funding Opportunities



Vermont

Program Name

Act 71 Broadband Construction Grant Program

Funding Amount

- \$100 million for unserved or underserved roads miles in the district or town(s)
- \$16 million to match town contributions of ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Funds may be added to this program as subsequent appropriations

Key Dates

\$116 million

1/18/22 - Rolling Acceptance of Responses begins

Application must be submitted at least 10 business days before a Vermont Community Broadband Board Meeting

Eligible Applicants

- Communications Union District (CUD)
- Small communications carrier, regulated under subsection 227d(a)
- Internet Service Provider (ISP) that operates in not more than five counties
- ISP working in conjunction with a CUD

- Additionally:
 - Applicant has produced and shared a Universal Service
 - Applicant must agree to provisions contained in Act 71
- RFP two-step eligibility process:
 - 1. Eligibility Screening Pre-Proposal** - Staff will review submissions and invite proposals from each applicant with a proposed USP deemed eligible. If deemed eligible by staff, the Applicant need not submit additional prescreening materials for subsequent projects within the same USP
 - 2. Full Proposals by Invitation Only** - Full proposals will be accepted by invitation only. The Applicant will have the option to decide between two paths:
 - **Conventional** - payment made upon completion of the project
 - **Phased Approach** - more collaborative approach with additional oversight in exchange for performance payments

Eligible Areas

- **Unserved Location** - a location that only has access to a reliable, wireline broadband connection capable of speeds of less than 4/1 Mbps
- **Underserved Location** - a location that has access to a wireline broadband connection capable of speeds of 4/1 Mbps or greater but less than 25/3 Mbps
 - Locations without a reliable, wireline connection of 25/3 Mbps or greater are considered underserved and eligible for the program
- Specific funding breakdowns are given by Towns and CUDs at this [link](#)
- Eligible location data is available at this [link](#)

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Eligible Projects

- **Universal Service Plan (USP)** - plan for providing access to broadband service capable of speeds of at least 100/100 Mbps to each on-grid unserved and underserved location in a CUD or municipality that was not part of a CUD prior to June 1, 2021
- Broadband projects of Eligible Providers that are part of a USP
 - Proposed project does not conflict with or undermine the USP of an existing CUD
- Service providers must build to speeds of at least 100/100 Mbps symmetrical at all on-grid underserved and unserved locations in USP
- Incidental Overbuild allowed only for addresses currently served by a physical connection of at least 25/3

Buildout Requirements

- Applicants are required to complete construction and offer service within 24 months of approval of the application or other timeframe specifically enumerated in the RFP
- Must offer 100/100 Mbps service for a period of at least 5 years

Mapping Issues

- Applicant is required to provide a map, including:
 - Link to the GIS shapefile
 - Project addresses in spreadsheet format
 - E-911 Site ID Number
 - Current level of service
 - Expected date that service will be available
- Vermont Broadband Mapping
 - [Construction Grant Statewide Eligible Wired Locations \(arcgis.com\)](#)
 - [2022 Act 71 Construction Grant Program - Eligible Locations \(updated 1- 28 22\) | Department of Public Service \(vermont.gov\)](#)

Application Contents

- Part 1 – Transmittal Letter and Proposal Overview
- Part 2 – Applicant Certification and General Information (Business Plan)
- Part 3 – Proposed Universal Service Area
- Part 4 – Project Description
- Part 5 – Act 71 Considerations
- Part 6 - Attachments

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Scoring

Project Prioritization

- (A) Leverage existing/other resources and assets
- (B) Demonstrate project readiness and community support
- (C) Support low-income or disadvantaged communities
- (D) Promote geographic diversity of fund allocations
- (E) Provide consumers with affordable service options and/or commit to participate in a program that supports low-income consumers
- (F) Include public broadband assets that can be shared by multiple service providers and that can support a variety of public purposes
- (G) Provide a network design that is scalable, addresses redundancy and will result in high reliability and resiliency

Budget Categories

Act 71 Compliant Business Plan shall include:

- High-level engineering and design plans
- Market analysis
- Take-rate assumptions
- Cash flow positive date
- Loan payoff date
- Financing models
- Pro forma financial projections
- Estimated construction costs
- Ideal operational models
- An evaluation of risks including labor needs and availability
- Supply-chain contingencies for equipment and materials
- Make-ready work
- Any other relevant capital and operational expenses
- Requirement applies to all eligible applicants.
- Wireless
- Long-term Leases

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Links & Emails

- [Act 71 Broadband Construction Grant Program](#)
- [Act 71 Construction Program RFP - Issued Jan 18 2022.docx](#)
- [Act 71 Broadband Construction Program FAQs](#)
- [Funding Breakdown by Towns & Communications Union Districts \(Updated 2/11/22\)](#)
- [2022 Act 71 Construction Grant Program - Eligible Locations \(Updated 1/28/22\)](#)
- [Outside Plant Design \(OSP\) Requirements](#)
- Please submit questions to robert.fish@vermont.gov

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funding@nrtc.coop

Contact us for Funding Assistance. NRTC's Funding Practice offers key benefits including:

- Opportunity Evaluation
- Effective Grant Writing
- Track Record of Success

Electric Cooperatives: Contact Brad Kusant at 908-507-7941 or bradley.kusant@nrtc.coop

Telecom Companies: Contact Byron Tuley at 319-298-4754 or btuley@nrtc.coop