

## STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT

### **USDA Begins Accepting Applications Today for ReConnect Program**

#### *Fifth Round Makes \$700 Million Available to Bring Affordable High-Speed Internet to Rural and Tribal Communities*

**WASHINGTON, March 22, 2024** – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Under Secretary Dr. Basil Gooden announced USDA is accepting applications until May 21, 2024, for funding under the [ReConnect Program](#).

This is the fifth round of funding under the program, which provides loans and grants to bring high-speed internet to the most remote and difficult-to-serve rural and Tribal communities in America.

A total of \$700 million is available under four funding categories:

- Up to \$200 million is available for loans.
- Up to \$200 million is available for loan/grant combinations.
- Up to \$150 million is available for grants.
- Up to \$150 million is available for grants serving Alaska Native corporations, Tribal governments, colonias, persistent poverty areas and socially vulnerable communities.

USDA is making several program improvements for this round of funding. For instance:

- USDA will award [priority points](#) to applications proposing to serve areas in states with the highest concentrations of Unserved Broadband Serviceable Locations (UBSLs).
- Organizations, including Tribes, that can meet robust financial tests will have increased ability to streamline the required elements in a ReConnect application.
- At least 90% of households within a proposed service area must lack sufficient access to high-speed internet, which is now defined as fixed, terrestrial high-speed internet speeds of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 3 Mbps upload.

In part, these improvements continue to ensure that the Biden Harris Administration reaches its *Internet for All* goals. In addition, these changes increase the availability of funding in the hardest-to-reach rural areas where residents and businesses lack access to affordable, high-speed internet.

USDA is particularly interested in applications that will advance Biden-Harris Administration priorities to:

- Reduce climate pollution and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change through economic support to rural communities.
- Ensure all rural residents have equitable access to Rural Development (RD) programs and benefits from RD-funded projects.

- Help rural communities recover economically through more and better market opportunities and through improved infrastructure.

Applications must be submitted electronically through the application system at [usda.gov/reconnect](https://usda.gov/reconnect) by 11:59 a.m. ET on May 21, 2024.

More information is available in the [Federal Register](#) and on [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov). Please note the [deadline extension](#) to May 21, 2024.

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