

**FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY NAME:** United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Rural Utilities Service (RUS).

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITY TITLE:** Community Connect Grant Program.

**ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE:** Funding Opportunity Announcement.

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER:** RDRUS-CC-2019.

**CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NUMBER:** 10.863.

The Rural Utilities Service (RUS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), hereinafter referred to as RUS or the Agency, announces its Community Connect Grant Program application window for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019.

This announcement is being issued prior to the passage of a final appropriations act to allow potential applicants time to submit proposals and give the Agency time to process applications within the current fiscal year. The Agency will publish the amount of funding received in any continuing resolution or the final appropriations act on its website at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/newsroom/notices-solicitation-applications-nosa>. Expenses incurred in developing applications will be at the applicant's own risk.

A nationally competitive program, the Community Connect Grant Program attracts hundreds of submissions during the 60-day application window. If program funding is available for the fiscal year, the Agency is often only able to finance a small fraction of the applications. To increase the range of applicants that will be successful in FY 2019, only ONE application per applicant is eligible for approval. If an applicant submits more than one proposal, then the Agency will only consider the application with the highest score.

**APPLICATION DUE DATE:** April 15, 2019.

**SUBMISSIONS:** Submit completed applications for grants according to the following deadlines:

- *Paper submissions:* Paper submissions must be postmarked and mailed, shipped, or sent overnight *no later* than April 15, 2019 to be eligible for funding under this grant opportunity. Late or incomplete applications will not be eligible for funding under this grant opportunity.
- *Electronic submissions:* Electronic submissions must be received *no later* than April 15, 2019 to be eligible for funding under this grant opportunity. Late or incomplete applications will not be eligible for funding under this grant opportunity.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Questions about this announcement can be directed to Shawn Arner, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Loan Origination and Approval, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, telephone: (202) 720-0800, email: [community.connect@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:community.connect@wdc.usda.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**A. Program Description**

The Community Connect Grant Program provides financial assistance to eligible applicants that will provide service at or above the Broadband Grant Speed to all premises in rural, economically-challenged communities where broadband service does not exist. The Broadband Grant Speed for FY 2019 is defined in Section C. The deployment of broadband services on a “community-oriented connectivity” basis stimulates economic development and provides enhanced educational and health care opportunities in rural areas. RUS will give priority to rural areas that demonstrate the greatest need for broadband services, based on the criteria contained herein.

The regulation for the Community Connect Grant Program can be found at 7 CFR part 1739. The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, Pub. L. 115-334, has modified the name of the defined term *Critical Community Facilities* to *Essential Community Facilities*. There are no substantive changes to the definition.

All applicants should carefully review and prepare their applications according to instructions in the FY 2019 Community Connect Grant Program Application Guide (Application Guide) and program resources. This Application Guide can be found at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-connect-grants>. Expenses incurred in developing applications will be at the applicant’s own risk.

The Agency encourages applications that will help improve life in rural America. See information on the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity found at [www.usda.gov/ruralprosperity](http://www.usda.gov/ruralprosperity). Applicants are encouraged to consider projects that provide measurable results in helping rural communities build robust and sustainable economies through strategic investments in infrastructure, partnerships and innovation. Key strategies include:

- Achieving e-Connectivity for Rural America
- Developing the Rural Economy
- Harnessing Technological Innovation
- Supporting a Rural Workforce
- Improving Quality of Life

## **B. Federal Award Information**

Pursuant to 7 CFR part 1739.2, the Administrator has established that the minimum grant amount of \$100,000 and the maximum grant amount of \$3,000,000 will be applied to this grant opportunity.

The Agency will make awards, and the awardees will be required to execute the required grant documents before funding will be advanced. Award documents specify the term of each award. The standard grant agreement is available at [https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/CCGrantAgreement\\_052316.pdf](https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/CCGrantAgreement_052316.pdf).

While prior Community Connect grants cannot be renewed, existing Community Connect awardees can submit applications for new projects. The Agency will evaluate project proposals from existing awardees as new applications. Only one grant application per applicant is eligible for approval under this grant opportunity.

## **C. Eligibility Information**

### *1. Eligible Applicants (See 7 CFR part 1739.10)*

a. Only entities legally organized as one of the following are eligible for Community Connect Grant Program financial assistance:

- i. An incorporated organization;
- ii. An Indian tribe or tribal organization, as defined in 25 U.S.C. 5304;
- iii. A State;
- iv. A unit of local government;
- v. Any other legal entity, including a cooperative, private corporation, or limited liability company organized on a for-profit or not-for-profit basis.

b. Applicants must have the legal capacity and authority to enter into contracts, to comply with applicable federal statutes and regulations, and to own and operate the broadband facilities as proposed in their application.

c. Applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and an active registration, with current information, in the System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov>. Further information regarding DUNS number acquisition and SAM registration can be found in Sections D (3) and D (4) of this document.

d. Corporations that have been convicted of a Federal felony within the past 24 months are not eligible. Any corporation that has been assessed to have any unpaid federal tax liability, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed and is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, is not eligible for financial assistance.

## *2. Cost Sharing or Matching*

The Community Connect Grant Program requires matching contributions for grants. See 7 CFR part 1739.14 and the Application Guide for information on required matching contributions.

a. Grant applicants must demonstrate matching contributions in cash of at least 15 percent of the requested grant amount. Matching contributions must be used solely for the project and must not include any financial assistance from federal sources unless there is a federal statutory exception specifically authorizing the federal financial assistance to be considered as such.

b. Applications that do not provide sufficient documentation of the required 15 percent match will be deemed ineligible.

## *3. Funding Restrictions*

a. Eligible grant purposes. See 7 CFR part 1739.12.

Grant funds may be used to finance the following:

i. The construction, acquisition, or leasing of facilities, including spectrum, land or buildings used to deploy service at the Broadband Grant Speed to all residential and business customers located within the Proposed Funded Service Area and all participating Essential Community Facilities, as defined in 7 C.F.R. 3570.53;

ii. The improvement, expansion, construction, or acquisition of a Community Center that furnishes free internet access at the Broadband Grant Speed and provides Computer Access Points. Grant funds for the Community Center must not exceed the lesser of 10 percent of the requested grant amount or \$150,000; and

iii. The cost of bandwidth necessary to provide service free of charge at the Broadband Grant Speed to each Essential Community Facility for the first two years of operation.

b. Ineligible grant purposes. See 7 CFR part 1739.13.

Grant funds may not be used to finance:

i. The duplication of lines, facilities, or systems providing Broadband Service.

ii. Operating expenses not specifically permitted in 7 CFR part 1739.12.

## *4. Other*

Eligible projects must propose to fulfill the following requirements (see 7 CFR parts 1739.3 and 1739.11 for more information):

a. Proposed Funded Service Area (PFSA). The applicant must define a contiguous geographic area within one or more eligible Rural Areas, in which Broadband Service does not exist and where the applicant proposes to offer service at the Broadband Grant Speed to all residential and business customers.

i. A Rural Area refers to any area, as confirmed by the most recent decennial Census of the United States, which is not located within a city, town, or incorporated area that has a population of greater than 20,000 inhabitants; or an urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants. For purposes of the definition of Rural Area, an urbanized area means a densely populated territory as defined in the most recent decennial Census.

ii. Broadband Service exists if the rate-of-data transmission in an area is at least 10 megabits per second (Mbps) downstream and 1 Mbps upstream for fixed or mobile broadband service. RUS will validate that Broadband Service does not exist in areas that applicants describe as having no broadband access or access that is less than 10 Mbps downstream plus 1 Mbps upstream.

iii. The Broadband Grant Speed, which is the minimum bandwidth that an applicant must provide to every customer in the PFSA, is 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream for fixed and mobile service.

iv. A PFSA must not overlap with service areas of current RUS borrowers and grantees.

b. Essential Community Facilities. The applicant must propose to offer free service at the Broadband Grant Speed to all participating Essential Community Facilities located within the PFSA for at least two years.

c. Community Center. The applicant must provide a Community Center within the PFSA. Grant funds must be used to provide a minimum of 2, and up to 10, Computer Access Points at the Community Center. The Community Center must also provide wireless access at the Broadband Grant Speed, free of all charges, to all users for at least two years.

#### **D. Application and Submission Information**

The Application Guide provides specific, detailed instructions for each item in a complete application. The Agency emphasizes the importance of including every item and strongly encourages applicants to follow the instructions carefully, using the examples and illustrations in the Application Guide. Prior to official submission of applications, applicants may request technical assistance or other application guidance

from the Agency, as long as such requests are made prior to March 29, 2019. Agency contact information can be found in Section G of this document.

The Agency will not solicit or consider new scoring or eligibility information that is submitted after the application deadline. The Agency reserves the right to contact applicants to seek clarification on materials contained in the submitted application. See the Application Guide for a full discussion of each item. For requirements of completed grant applications, refer to 7 CFR part 1739.15.

For FY 2019, one proposal per applicant is eligible for approval. If an applicant submits more than one proposal, then the Agency will only consider the application with the highest score.

1. *Address to Request Application Package.* The Application Guide and copies of forms and resources are available as follows:

a. Electronic copies are available at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-connect-grants>.

b. Paper copies are available from the Rural Utilities Service, Office of Loan Origination and Approval, 202-720-0800.

2. *Content and Form of Application Submission.*

a. Carefully review the Application Guide and 7 CFR part 1739, which detail all relevant forms and worksheets. A table summarizing the components of a complete application can be found in this section.

b. *Submission of Application Items.* Given the high volume of program interest, applicants should submit the application items in the order indicated in the Application Guide. Applications that are not assembled and tabbed in the specified order prevent timely determination of eligibility. For applications with inconsistencies among submitted copies, the Agency will base its evaluation on the original signed application received.

c. *Table of Application Items.*

Application Item	Regulation	Comments
Application for Federal Assistance Form (SF-424 Standard Form)	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(a)</u>	Form provided in Application Guide
SAM Registration Information	<u>7 CFR parts 1739.10 and 1739.15(j)</u>	Worksheet provided in Application Guide
Executive Summary of the Project	<u>7 CFR parts 1739.15(b) and 1739.9</u>	Narrative, including a publicly releasable section that describes the population served

Scoring Criteria Documentation	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(c)</u>	Narrative & Documentation
System Design	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(d)</u>	Narrative & Documentation
Network Diagram	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(d)</u>	Documentation
Environmental Questionnaire	<u>7 CFR part 1970</u>	Narrative & Documentation
Service Area Map	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(e)</u>	Provided in RUS web-based Mapping Tool
Service Area Demographics	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(e)</u>	Documentation
Scope of Work	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(f)</u>	Narrative & Documentation
Construction Build-out and Project Milestones	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(f)</u>	Worksheet provided in Application Guide
Project Budget	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(f)</u>	Worksheet provided in Application Guide
Community-oriented Connectivity Plan	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(g)</u>	Narrative
Financial Information and Sustainability	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(h)</u>	Narrative & Documentation
Statement of Experience	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(i)</u>	Narrative
Additional Funding	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(k)</u>	Narrative & Documentation
Compliance with other Federal Statutes	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(l)</u>	Form provided in Application Guide
Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(l)(1)</u>	Form provided in Application Guide
Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970	<u>49 CFR Part 24 and 7 CFR part 21</u>	Form provided in Application Guide
Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(l)</u>	Form provided in Application Guide
Lobbying for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(l)</u>	Form provided in Application Guide
Drug-Free Workplace	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(l)</u>	Form provided in Application Guide
Architectural Barriers	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(l)</u>	Form provided in Application Guide
Flood Hazard Area Precautions	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(l)</u>	Form provided in Application Guide
Non-Duplication of Services	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(l)</u>	Form provided in Application Guide
Federal Collection Policies for Commercial Debt	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(l)</u>	Form provided in Application Guide

Assurance Regarding Felony Conviction or Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants	<u>7 CFR part 1739.15(l)</u>	Form provided in Application Guide (corporate applicants-only)
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d. Number of copies of submitted applications.

i. Paper submissions. Submit the original application and two paper copies to RUS, as well as one digital copy on a Flash Drive.

ii. Electronic submissions. Submit the electronic application once. Do not send a paper copy to RUS. Applicants should identify and number each page in the same manner as the paper application.

3. *Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number.* The applicant for a grant must supply a DUNS number as part of the application. The applicant can obtain the DUNS number free of charge by calling Dun and Bradstreet. Go to <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> for more information on DUNS number acquisition or confirmation.

4. *System for Award Management (SAM).* Prior to submitting a paper or an electronic application, the applicant must register in SAM at <https://www.sam.gov>. Throughout the RUS application review and the active Federal grant funding period, SAM registration must be active with current data at all times. To maintain active SAM registration, the applicant must review and update the information in the SAM database annually from the date of initial registration or from the date of the last update. The applicant must ensure that the information in the database is current, accurate, and complete.

5. *Submission Dates and Times.*

a. Paper applications must be postmarked and mailed, shipped, or sent overnight no later than April 15, 2019, to be eligible for funding under this grant opportunity. Late applications, applications which do not include proof of mailing or shipping, and incomplete applications are not eligible for funding under this grant opportunity.

i. Address paper applications to the Telecommunications Program, RUS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Room 2844, STOP 1597, Washington, DC 20250-1597. Applications should be marked, “Attention: Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Loan Origination and Approval.”

ii. Paper applications must show proof of mailing or shipping by the deadline consisting of one of the following:

- A. A legibly dated U.S. Postal Service (USPS) postmark;
- B. A legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the USPS; or
- C. A dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier.

iii. Due to screening procedures at the USDA, packages arriving via regular mail through the USPS are irradiated, which can damage the contents and delay delivery to RUS. RUS encourages applicants to consider the impact of this procedure when selecting their application delivery method.

b. Electronic grant applications must be received no later than April 15, 2019, to be eligible for funding under this grant opportunity. Late or incomplete applications will not be eligible for funding under this grant opportunity.

i. Applications will not be accepted via fax or electronic mail.

ii. Electronic applications for grants must be submitted through the Federal Government's Grants.gov initiative at <https://www.grants.gov>.

iii. Grants.gov requires some credentialing and online authentication procedures. These procedures may take several business days to complete. Therefore, the applicant should complete the registration, credentialing, and authorization procedures at Grants.gov before submitting an application. Instructions on all required passwords, credentialing, and software are available on Grants.gov.

iv. If system errors or technical difficulties occur, use the customer support resources available at the Grants.gov website.

c. If the submission deadline falls on Saturday, Sunday, or a Federal holiday, the application is due the next business day.

## **E. Application Review Information**

### **1. Criteria.**

Grant applications are evaluated for financial and technical feasibility, in accordance with 7 CFR 1739.16. An application that contains flaws that would prevent the successful implementation, operation, or sustainability of the project will not be approved for an award.

In addition, grant applications are scored competitively. The Agency will consider the following criteria based on a scale of 100 possible points. See 7 CFR part 1739.17 and the Application Guide for more information on the scoring criteria.

a. Needs Category (up to 50 points). The Agency analyzes the challenges related to the following criteria and the ways in which the project proposes to address these issues:

- i. Economic characteristics.
- ii. Educational challenges.
- iii. Health care needs.
- iv. Public safety issues.

b. Stakeholder Involvement Category (up to 40 points). The Agency analyzes the extent of the project planning, development, and support from local residents, institutions, and Essential Community Facilities. Documentation must include evidence of community-wide involvement, as exemplified by community meetings, public forums, and surveys. In addition, applicants should provide evidence of local residents' participation in the project planning and development.

c. Experience Category (up to 10 points). The Agency analyzes the management team's level of experience and past success of broadband systems operation.

d. In making a final selection among and between applications with comparable rankings and geographic distribution, the Administrator may take into consideration the characteristics of the PFSA. Applicants should therefore specifically address the criteria identified in 7 CFR part 1739.17(d).

## *2. Review and Selection Process.*

a. Grant applications are ranked by the final score. Grants are awarded in rank order, subject to the availability of funds and consistent with 7 CFR 1739.17. It should be noted that an application receiving fewer points can be selected over an application receiving more points in the event that there are insufficient funds available to cover the costs of the higher scoring application, as stated in 7 CFR 1739.16(f).

b. The Agency reserves the right to offer the applicant a lower amount than the amount proposed in the application, as stated in 7 CFR 1739.16(g).

c. If the Agency receives more than one proposal from the same applicant, then the Agency will only consider the application with the highest score.

## **F. Federal Award Administration Information**

### *1. Federal Award Notices.*

RUS notifies applicants whose projects are selected for awards by mailing or emailing a copy of an award letter. The receipt of an award letter does not authorize the applicant to commence performance under the award. After sending the award letter, the Agency will send an agreement that contains all the terms and conditions for the grant. An applicant must execute and return the grant agreement, accompanied by any additional items required by the agreement, within the number of days specified in the selection notice letter.

### *2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.*

The items listed in this announcement, the Community Connect Grant Program regulation, the Application Guide, and program resources implement the appropriate administrative and national policy requirements, which include but are not limited to:

- a. Executing a Community Connect Grant Agreement.
- b. Using Form SF 270, “Request for Advance or Reimbursement,” to request reimbursements (along with the submission of receipts for expenditures, timesheets, and any other documentation to support the request for reimbursement).
- c. Providing project performance activity reports by January 31<sup>st</sup> the year following the first advance of funds and continuing in subsequent years until the expiration or completion of the award.
- d. Ensuring that records are maintained to document all activities and expenditures utilizing Community Connect grant funds and matching funds (receipts for expenditures are to be included in this documentation).
- e. Providing a final project performance report.
- f. Complying with policies, guidance, and requirements as described in the following applicable Code of Federal Regulations, and any successor regulations:
  - i. 2 CFR parts 200 and 400 (Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards). The government must be provided an exclusive first lien on all grant assets during the service obligation of the grant, and thereafter any sale or disposition of grant assets must comply with the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, codified in 2 CFR part 200. Note that this part will apply to ALL grant funds of an Awardee, regardless of the entity status or type of organization.
  - ii. 2 CFR parts 417 and 180 (Government-wide Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension).
- g. Signing Form AD-3031, “Assurance Regarding Felony Conviction or Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants” (for corporate applicants only).
- h. Complying with Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency.” For information on limited English proficiency and agency-specific guidance, go to <https://www.LEP.gov>.
- i. Accountability and Compliance with Civil Rights Laws. The regulation found at 7 CFR part 1901 Subpart E contains policies and procedures for implementing the regulations of the Department of Agriculture issued pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Executive Order 13166, Executive Order 11246, and the

Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974, as they relate to the Rural Development. Nothing herein shall be interpreted to prohibit preference to American Indians on Indian Reservations.

The policies contained in this subpart apply to recipients. As recipients of federal financial assistance, awardees are required to comply with the applicable federal, state and local laws. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination by recipients of federal financial assistance. Recipients are required to adhere to specific outreach activities. These outreach activities include contacting community organizations and leaders that include minority leaders; advertising in local newspapers and other media throughout the entire service area; and including the nondiscrimination slogan, "This is an Equal Opportunity Program. Discrimination is prohibited by Federal Law," in methods that may include, but not be limited to, advertisements, public broadcasts, and printed materials, such as brochures and pamphlets. All recipients must submit and have on file a valid Form RD 400-1 (Equal Opportunity Agreement); and RD Form 400-4 (Assurance Agreement).

By signing Form 400-4, recipients affirm that they will operate the program free from discrimination. The recipient will maintain the race and ethnic data on the board members and beneficiaries of the program. The recipient will provide alternative forms of communication to persons with limited English proficiency. The Agency will conduct Civil Rights Compliance Reviews on recipients to identify the collection of racial and ethnic data on program beneficiaries. In addition, the Compliance Review will ensure that equal access to the program benefits and activities are provided for persons with disabilities and language barriers.

### *3. Reporting.*

a. Performance reporting. All recipients of Community Connect financial assistance must provide annual performance activity reports to RUS until the project is complete and the funds are expended. A final performance report is also required; the final report may serve as the last annual report. The final report must include an evaluation of the success of the project in meeting the Community Connect Grant Program objectives. See 7 CFR part 1739.19 for additional information on these reporting requirements.

b. Financial reporting. All recipients of Community Connect financial assistance must provide an annual audit, beginning with the first year in which a portion of the financial assistance is expended. Audits are governed by USDA audit regulations. See 7 CFR part 1739.20 and 2 CFR part 200, Subpart F for a description of the audit requirements.

c. Recipient and Sub-recipient Reporting. The applicant must have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the reporting requirements for first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 in the event the applicant receives funding, unless such

applicant is exempt from such reporting requirements pursuant to 2 CFR part 170.110(b). The reporting requirements under the Transparency Act pursuant to 2 CFR part 170 are as follows:

i. First Tier Sub-Awards of \$25,000 or more (unless they are exempt under 2 CFR part 170) must be reported by the recipient to <https://www.fsr.gov> no later than the end of the month following the month the obligation was made. Please note that currently underway is a consolidation of eight federal procurement systems, including the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS), into one system, the System for Award Management (SAM). As a result, the FSRS will soon be consolidated into and accessed through <https://www.sam.gov>.

ii. The total compensation of the recipient's executives (the five most highly compensated executives) must be reported by the recipient (if the recipient meets the criteria under 2 CFR part 170) to <https://www.sam.gov> by the end of the month following the month in which the award was made.

iii. The total compensation of the sub-recipient's executives (the five most highly compensated executives) must be reported by the sub-recipient (if the sub-recipient meets the criteria under 2 CFR part 170) to the recipient by the end of the month following the month in which the sub-award was made.

d. Record Keeping and Accounting. The agreement will contain provisions related to record keeping and accounting requirements.

## **G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts**

1. *Website:* <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-connect-grants>. The Community Connect website maintains up-to-date resources and contact information for the Community Connect Grant Program.

2. *Telephone:* 202-720-0800

3. *Email:* [community.connect@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:community.connect@wdc.usda.gov)

4. *Main point of contact:* Shawn Arner, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Loan Origination and Approval, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

## **H. Other Information**

### **1. USDA Non-Discrimination Statement**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status,

family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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