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News Release

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USDA Invests \$97 Million in Rural Broadband Infrastructure to Improve Service for 22,000 Subscribers in 11 States

Projects Will Provide High-Speed Communications Technology to Support Economic and Educational Opportunities

WASHINGTON, Aug. 1, 2018 – Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing [\\$97 million in 12 projects](#) to provide or improve rural broadband service in 11 states.

“A person’s location should not determine whether he or she has access to modern communications infrastructure,” Secretary Perdue said. “That is why USDA is partnering with businesses and communities by investing in state-of-the-art broadband e-connectivity to remote and rural areas. These investments will expand access to educational, social and business opportunities for 22,000 subscribers to help grow their rural communities and America’s economy.”

In Maryland, [Declaration Networks Group, Inc.](#) will receive a \$2.37 million [Community Connect Grant](#) to construct a fixed wireless network in Garrett County. The network will operate in the 5 GHz and TV white space frequency bands, providing service offerings of up to 20 Mbps/10 Mbps to 1,319 households and 96 businesses within its proposed service area.

Because of this investment, Garrett County residents will also have access to computer terminals and Wi-Fi internet access free of charge for at least two years at a community center collocated in at a [Garrett County Community Action Committee](#) facility within the area.

“This is an example of infrastructure, partnerships, and innovation in action,” said USDA Rural Development Maryland/Delaware State Director Denise Lovelady. “Broadband infrastructure is a necessity in the 21st-century. It takes innovative approaches like the partnership between [Garrett County Community Action Committee](#) and [Declaration Networks Group, Inc.](#) to deliver rural broadband service. USDA is pleased to return these taxpayer dollars to the citizens of Garrett County. “

USDA is making the investments through the [Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program](#) and the [Community Connect Grant Program](#). Below are a few more examples of the investments USDA is making:

- Chibardun Telephone Cooperative, Inc. in Cameron, Wis., is receiving a \$21.4 million loan to improve outside plant facilities in four (Almena, Cameron, Dallas and Ridgeland) of its six exchanges. It will construct 675 miles of fiber-to-the-premises and install

associated electronics. It plans to build a fiber-to-the-home network capable of sustaining customer demands in broadband connectivity for the foreseeable future. Chibardun serves Barron and Dunn counties. Approximately 2,700 subscribers will receive improved service as a result of this loan.

- Osage Innovative Solutions, LLC in Tulsa, Okla., is receiving a \$2.7 million grant to construct a hybrid fiber-to-the-premises and fixed wireless system in an unserved and economically depressed portion of the Osage Nation in Osage County. The company will offer speeds up to 100 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 10 Mbps upload to 139 households and 22 businesses. This project will give customers access to high-quality telecommunications services to improve economic, education and health care opportunities. Osage will provide a community center where residents can access the internet free of charge.
- The Northeast Missouri Rural Telephone Company, in Green City, is receiving a \$13.7 million loan to convert six exchanges from copper plant to fiber-to-the-premises. It will construct nearly 500 route miles of fiber. Northeast Missouri expects to improve service to 1,063 subscribers.

The projects USDA is investing in today will help improve the quality of life in rural communities in Arizona, Iowa, Idaho, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

These investments underscore USDA's priority to promote rural economic development by centering around three principles: infrastructure, partnerships and innovation. Investing in telecommunications infrastructure connects people to each other: businesses to customers, farmers to markets, and students to a world of knowledge.

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Secretary Perdue presented the Task Force's findings to President Trump. As proven by the report, e-connectivity is more than just connecting rural America to rest of the world. It is a vital tool for productivity, education, and health care. These investments will be key catalysts for facilitating rural prosperity through economic development and workforce readiness, and for improving quality of life.

To view the report in its entirety, please view the [Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity](#) (PDF, 5.4 MB). In addition, to view the categories of the recommendations, please view the [Rural Prosperity infographic](#) (PDF, 190 KB).

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community services such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

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