

Stakeholder Announcement
Federal Planning Assistance for
Broadband and Sustainable Community Development
Cool & Connected

USDA Rural Utilities Service Administrator Brandon McBride encouraged communities interested in using broadband service to help revitalize small-town main streets and promote economic development apply for Cool & Connected, a pilot program sponsored by USDA Rural Utilities Service and the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Sustainable Communities](#).

Through Cool & Connected, a team of experts will help community members develop strategies and an action plan for using planned or existing broadband service to promote smart, sustainable community development.

Quality broadband access can provide new opportunities for people and businesses. A growing number of communities have combined broadband service with other local assets such as cultural and recreational amenities to attract and retain investment and people, including young people. This can help diversify local economies. Such efforts typically require planning among community leaders, businesses, and internet service providers. The Cool & Connected program will provide assistance to this end, helping communities take advantage of new or existing broadband service to create walkable, connected, economically vibrant main streets and small-town neighborhoods.

Eligibility

- Any community representative is welcome to submit a letter of interest to participate in Cool & Connected.
- Special consideration will be given to small towns and rural communities that face economic challenges.
- Special consideration will be given to communities in places where USDA has provided loans or grants in support of broadband or other internet-related services.

Deadline and where to send letters of interest

Submit your letter of interest to Ed Fendley at Fendley.Ed@epa.gov by Wednesday, February 24, 2016. Kindly include “Cool & Connected” and the name of your community in your e-mail subject line.

What to include in your letter of interest

Your letter of interest can be in the text of an email or an attachment. It should be no longer than two printed pages. If you want, you can provide additional letters of support from partners, but this is not necessary.

Community representatives are encouraged to describe community needs and challenges related to downtown revitalization or other place-based development, and how a planning process might help. You should indicate any areas of interest related to internet service and place-based development, such as:

- Using new or existing broadband service to attract new types of businesses to main streets or existing rural communities
- Combining internet service with other local amenities to attract new investors, visitors, and residents
- Developing or marketing downtown Wi-Fi zones
- Extending broadband service beyond anchor institutions in ways that promote main street development
- Selecting centrally located anchor institutions or community facilities that will receive broadband service

Community representatives submitting letters of interest are also encouraged to indicate partners that can be expected to participate in a planning process, such as local internet service providers, local officials, business associations, or local schools or colleges.