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News Release

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USDA Partners with Communities to Bring High-Speed Broadband e-Connectivity Infrastructure to Rural Areas

More than 27,000 Businesses and Residents to Get Improved e-Connectivity

WASHINGTON, Nov. 13, 2018 – Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett today announced that [USDA is investing in infrastructure projects in a dozen states](#) to improve e-Connectivity in rural communities.

“In the modern economy, rural broadband is a lifeline to quality of life and economic opportunity,” Hazlett said. “With that impact, USDA is fiercely committed under the leadership of Agriculture Secretary Perdue on expanding access to e-Connectivity in rural America.”

According to a 2018 report by the Federal Communications Commission, 80 percent of the 24 million American households who lack reliable, affordable, high-speed internet are in rural areas. USDA’s investments in broadband infrastructure are helping transform rural America, providing innovation and technology to increase economic competitiveness and opportunities.

USDA is investing \$91 million through the [Telecommunications Programs](#). The 19 projects will benefit more than 27,000 businesses and households in Arkansas, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, North Carolina, North Dakota, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah and Virginia.

Here are examples of the projects in which USDA is investing:

- The Arkansas Rural Internet Company is receiving a \$19.9 million loan to deploy a fiber broadband system to more than 5,000 subscribers in Dallas, Calhoun and Ouchita counties in rural southern Arkansas. Approximately 25,000 people in the company’s service territory can benefit from broadband access.
- In New Mexico, the Tularosa Basin Telephone Company Inc. will use an \$11.8 million loan to improve telecommunications for nearly 10,000 customers in the Carrizozo, Cloudcroft and Tularosa exchanges. Tularosa will build 176 miles of fiber-optic facilities, construct new fiber-to-the-premises (FTTP) facilities, and upgrade digital subscriber line

(DSL) and FTTP electronics. The improvements will enhance the company's services and provide subscribers voice and higher broadband speeds.

- The Choctaw Nation is receiving a \$2.9 million grant to construct a hybrid fiber and fixed wireless system on unserved portions of Le Flore County, Oklahoma. This project will increase access to economic development, health care, educational and public safety opportunities for 300 households and 15 businesses. It will include a community center in the Hodgen School where the public can access computer terminals and WiFi service free of charge.

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. These findings included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Increasing investments in rural infrastructure is a key recommendation of the task force.

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 facilities 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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