



News Release

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USDA Opens Application Portal for New ReConnect Rural Broadband Infrastructure Program

WASHINGTON, April 23, 2019 – Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is now accepting online applications for funding through the new ReConnect Rural Broadband Pilot Program. These funds will enable the federal government to partner with the private sector and rural communities to build modern broadband infrastructure in areas with insufficient internet service. Insufficient service is defined as connection speeds of less than 10 megabits per second download and 1 megabit per second upload. Beginning today, ReConnect funding applications can be submitted at <https://reconnect.usda.gov>.

“Reliable, high-speed broadband internet e-Connectivity is critical for economic prosperity and quality of life in the 21st century, from education to health care to agriculture to manufacturing and beyond,” Secretary Perdue said. “We at USDA are very excited to begin accepting applications for funds from this new and innovative program, which will bring critical infrastructure investments to homes, farms, ranches, schools and health care sites in rural America.”

Congress first appropriated funds for the new Rural e-Connectivity Pilot Program, known as ReConnect, in 2018. The program will be a proof-of-concept, enabling USDA to create and implement innovative options for rural connectivity by providing various financial packages to our customers.

In this first round of funding, USDA is making available at least \$600 million in rural broadband projects, through \$200 million in grants, \$200 million in loan and grant combinations, and \$200 million in low-interest loans. The application deadlines for each of these funding packages are as follows:

- May 31, 2019, for projects seeking federal funds from the grants-only package;
- June 21, 2019, for projects seeking a combination of federal loans and grants; and
- July 12, 2019, for projects seeking low-interest federal loans.

This \$600 million appropriation from Congress more than doubles federal funding available through USDA’s longstanding broadband programs. Future rounds of funding for ReConnect will be announced later this year.

For additional information about the ReConnect program, see page 5981 of the February 25, 2019, [Federal Register](#) and page 64315 of the Dec. 14, 2018, [Federal Register](#).

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, including rural broadband infrastructure, is a cornerstone 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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