

STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT

USDA Seeks Applications for 17th Year of Rural Broadband Loan Program

Loans Will Focus on Bringing e-Connectivity to Rural Communities

WASHINGTON, April 17, 2018 – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced that USDA is accepting applications for loans under its long-standing Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program to extend broadband infrastructure in eligible rural communities. USDA has supported broadband infrastructure projects through this program since it was created in the 2002 Farm Bill and reauthorized under the 2014 Farm Bill.

The Agency has also announced that it is revising the process in which applications will be accepted under the program. Since the passage of the 2014 Farm Bill, the Agency has only accepted applications according to discrete application windows. However, USDA has determined that the use of application windows has not effectively supported its mission to finance improved broadband service in rural areas. As a result, USDA will now accept applications on a rolling basis throughout FY 2018. This will give the Agency the ability to request additional information and modifications to submitted applications whenever necessary.

USDA plans to make more than \$100 million available through [The Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program](#). Loan applications ranging from \$100,000 to \$25 million will be processed on a first come, first served basis. USDA will review and rank applications every 90 days through Sept. 30, 2018. Funding priority will be given to applicants that propose to serve the highest percentage of unserved households.

Funds must be used to provide broadband service at a minimum rate-of-data transmission of 25 megabits downstream and 3 megabits upstream. These are the benchmark speeds the Federal Communications Commission has adopted for broadband connectivity.

Applications must be submitted online at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rd-apply>. For details, see page 13225 of the March 28 [Federal Register](#).

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