## STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT

## USDA Receives Applications for \$258 Million in Loans in the First Round of the ReConnect Pilot Program

WASHINGTON, July 16, 2019 – Acting Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Joel Baxley today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture received 15 applications requesting \$258 million in loans in the first round of the <a href="ReConnect Pilot Program">ReConnect Pilot Program</a>.

The 15 loan applications represent proposals to provide e-Connectivity for more than 165,000 homes and businesses in rural areas across 22 states.

USDA made \$200 million available for grants (the application deadline was May 31), \$200 million for loan-grant combination projects (the application deadline was June 21), and \$200 million for loans (the application deadline was July 12) in the first round of funding.

USDA's ReConnect Program provides funding for financially sustainable business models that will bring high-speed broadband to rural areas that currently have insufficient broadband service. Projects will connect rural homes, businesses, farms, ranches and community facilities, such as first responders, health care sites and schools.

State and local governments, Native American tribes, for- and non-profit entities, limited liability companies, and cooperative or mutual organizations are eligible for funding. Applicants can request technical assistance from USDA by filling out the contact form at <a href="https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us">https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us</a>.

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue announced the rules of the program on Dec. 13, 2018. USDA began accepting applications on March 29, 2019.

For additional information, see page 64315 of the Dec. 14, 2018, <u>Federal Register</u>, page 5981 of the Feb. 25, 2019, <u>Federal Register</u> or visit <u>reconnect.usda.gov</u>.

Information for future rounds of funding will also be published in the Federal Register. Congress has provided an additional \$550 million for the ReConnect Program.