

# News Briefs

## RBDG Grant Program

USDA is currently accepting applications to apply for the Rural Business Development Grant Program, which is a competitive grant designed to support targeted technical assistance, training and other activities leading to the development or expansion of small and emerging private businesses in rural areas.

The RBDG and the RBDG Native American Set Aside application window will close March 29, 2019. Applications must be received by State Offices no later than March 29, 2019, to be considered for any anticipated funding.

For more information, contact Carlotta Donisi by calling her at (360) 704-7724, or email her at [Carlotta.donisi@usda.gov](mailto:Carlotta.donisi@usda.gov).

## REAP Funding Available

USDA Rural Development is seeking applications for loan guarantees and grants for renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvement projects. The deadlines to apply for grants is April 1, 2019. Applications for loan guarantees are accepted year-round.

For more information, Contact Randy Baird, Washington State Energy Coordinator, by calling (509) 367-8562 or email him at [randy.baird@usda.gov](mailto:randy.baird@usda.gov).



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Washington State

# USDA



# Rural Developments

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## Rural Development Announces Leadership Change

**D**irector of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)

Jim Carroll announced Anne Hazlett as the office's Senior Adviser for Rural Affairs. Hazlett has served as the Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) since June 2017.

In her new role, Hazlett will help shape policy aimed at improving the quality of life in rural America, coordinate interagency efforts on drug control activity impacting rural communities, and build coalitions and grassroots strategies in these areas centered on prevention, treatment and recovery.

"During her time at USDA, Anne has been a tireless and proven leader in addressing the needs of rural communities struggling with substance misuse," U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said. "With her love of people and passion for



Anne Hazlett & Joel Baxley

bringing hope to small towns impacted by this epidemic, Anne is perfectly suited for this important role. We are proud to see her take on this new opportunity where she can focus on building healthy and prosperous communities."

Because of Hazlett's departure, Secretary Perdue named Joel Baxley, USDA's Administrator of the Rural Housing Service (RHS), as Acting Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development. Perdue will soon name an Acting Administrator for RHS. In the meantime, Perdue is working with the White House to identify a candidate to nominate for USDA Under Secretary for Rural Development, a position created by the 2018 Farm Bill.

Following Senate confirmation of a new Under Secretary for Rural Development, the Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development position would be eliminated.

## Technical Assistance Webinars Available for Reconnect Program

**T**he ReConnect Program offers loans and grants to facilitate broadband deployment in areas of rural America without sufficient access to broadband.

- The awards made under this program will bring high-speed broadband to rural areas that lack sufficient access to broadband.
- The delivery of broadband connection and high-quality service will enable technologies critical to rural communities, such as precision agriculture.

USDA Rural Development will host a series of informational webinars and workshops to provide more information on the ReConnect Program. Please visit <https://reconnect.usda.gov> for up-to-date information on these events.

This webinar series will provide a high-level overview of the funding opportunity available under the

ReConnect Program. USDA Rural Development staff will discuss engineering requirements, financial requirements, types of funding available, eligibility provisions, notice of proposed service area, and evaluation factors. If you are unable to join live, all webinars will be recorded and made available online for later viewing.

Webinars will be held on:

- Tuesday, March 12 @ 2:00 pm ET – Engineering Requirements of ReConnect [Preregister for this webinar](#)
- Thursday, March 14 @ 2:00 pm ET – Financial Requirements of ReConnect [Preregister for this webinar](#)
- Wednesday, March 21 @ 2:00 pm ET – Overview of ReConnect Application [Preregister for this webinar](#).

## SBA Rural Tour

USDA in partnership with Small Business Administration (SBA) Pacific NW Regional Office, City of Sequim and other local partners are hosting a Rural Strong Washington Initiative session with an Access to Capital focus on March 27-29 in Sequim.

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Regional Communications  
Director  
Pacific Northwest Region  
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(206) 604-2957

## ReConnect Rural Broadband Program

USDA has extended application deadlines for the Rural eConnectivity Pilot Program (ReConnect Program). USDA is pushing back the first application deadline to May 31, 2019, to give potential applicants adequate time to access technical assistance from USDA staff and its partners.

The new application deadlines are:

- May 31 for grants;
- June 21 for 50/50 loan/grant combinations;
- July 12 for low-interest loans.

Through the ReConnect Program, USDA is making available approximately \$200 million for grants, as well as \$200 million for loan and grant combinations, and \$200 million for low-interest loans. Funds will be awarded to projects that have financially sustainable business models that will bring high-speed broadband to rural homes, businesses, farms, ranches and community facilities such as first responders, health care sites and schools.

More information about the ReConnect program may be found at <https://reconnect.usda.gov>.

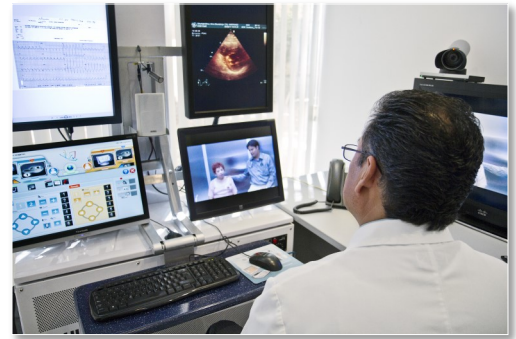
## USDA Prioritizes Investments in Telemedicine to Address Rural Opioid Crisis

USDA is giving funding priority in the Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant program to address opioid misuse in rural communities.

The DLT program helps rural communities use the unique capabilities of telecommunications to connect to each other and to the world, overcoming the effects of remoteness and low population density. For example, this program can link teachers and medical service providers in one area to students and patients in another.

USDA may award up to 30 special consideration points for DLT program applications for projects that provide opioid treatment services in 220 at-risk counties identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The deadline for these applications is April 15, 2019.

USDA may award 10 special consideration points for opioid-related DLT projects or for those that provide Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education as their primary purpose.



The application deadline for these projects is May 15, 2019.

All DLT applications can be submitted electronically at [grants.gov](https://grants.gov) or in hard copy to: USDA Rural Development Telecommunications Programs, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Room 2844, Mail Stop 1597, Washington, DC 20250-1597.

## USDA and HHS Partner to Create Recovery Housing in Rural Communities

USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will partner to create addiction recovery transitional housing in rural communities.

USDA and HHS formalized their partnership through an official Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Nonprofit organizations will be able to purchase homes from USDA and convert them to transitional housing for people recovering from opioid misuse.

USDA Rural Development and HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

will coordinate efforts to sell USDA's Real Estate Owned (REO) single-family housing properties at a discount to non-profit organizations that provide housing, treatment, job training and other key services for people in substance misuse treatment and recovery.

This will further enhance the two organizations' formal collaboration. It began in 2018 with SAMHSA's supplementing of USDA Cooperative Extension grants to expand technical assistance and training on opioid use disorder prevention and treatment.

## Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) initiative

USDA and four of its partners are accepting applications from rural communities and regions for technical assistance to implement economic development planning projects as part of the Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) Initiative.

USDA is partnering with the National Association of Counties, Rural Community Assistance Partnership, McClure Engineering Company, and Purdue University Extension/Community & Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky.

Successful applicants will receive free technical assistance to develop and implement rural economic development plans.

Rural communities with 50,000 or fewer people are eligible to apply. Applications will be scored, reviewed and selected on a competitive basis. Interested parties can learn more about this initiative during a webinar on Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2019, at 1:00 PM EST.

Contact [RD.Innovation@osec.usda.gov](mailto:RD.Innovation@osec.usda.gov) to request an application. The application deadline is April 5, 2019.

## USDA Rural Development to Host 2018 Farm Bill Listening Session

On Thursday, March 14, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. (EDT), USDA Rural Development will conduct a listening session webinar to listen to questions and comments from the partners, stakeholders and customers who will be affected by the implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill.

Topics will include new tools in the 2018 Farm Bill to increase access to rural broadband e-Connectivity, expanding credit to rural communities, and other key provisions relating to Rural Development programs.

Registration is required to participate. A registration link can be found at [www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/farmbill](http://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/farmbill).

The deadline for registration is 3 p.m. EDT Wednesday, March 13. Interested parties unable to participate in the listening session may submit comments on the 2018 Farm Bill to USDA Rural Development through March 30, 2019, via email to [RD.Innovation@osec.usda.gov](mailto:RD.Innovation@osec.usda.gov).

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