

**Community-Oriented Connectivity Broadband Grant Program**  
**Fiscal Year 2014 FAQs**

**GENERAL QUESTIONS**

**Can I submit multiple applications, each seeking \$3 million in grant funding?**

Yes. Applicants may submit multiple applications for funding consideration during a fiscal year and each application may request up to \$3 million in Community Connect grant funding. However, please note that each of the applications must include evidence demonstrating sufficient equity funding to cover all of the submitted projects combined.

**Can a subsidiary use its parent company's Dun & Bradstreet (DUNS) number when applying for funding under the Community Connect Grant Program?**

No. As required by the Office of Management and Budget, all applicants applying for a grant must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. There is no cost associated with obtaining a DUNS number and can be obtained by calling Dun and Bradstreet at 1-866-705-5711. Also for more information, visit their website at:  
[http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/duns\\_num\\_guide.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/duns_num_guide.pdf)

**How do I access the Community Connect Grant Program Application Guide and all attachments in [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)?**

To access the entire Application Guide and Attachments in [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), click on “Find Grant Opportunities” from the left navigation menu. Select the “Basic Search” option and input CFDA number 10.863. Locate the “Community Connect” hyperlink under “Opportunity Title” and select “Full Announcement” which is located at the top of the page. That should take you to a screen where the program NOFA, SF424, Application Guide and Schedule H Attachment templates are available.

**Is RUS staff available to discuss my application before submission?**

RUS staff cannot pre-screen or offer consultations on specifics of an application due to the competitive nature of the Community Connect Grant Program. However, RUS staff can address general program related questions. Such inquiries should be directed to the Community Connect Helpdesk at [community.connect@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:community.connect@wdc.usda.gov)

**Can I email RUS staff an electronic copy of my application?**

No. RUS staff cannot accept emailed grant applications. All electronic applications must be submitted through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

**If my organization's proposed funded service area overlaps with another application, how will RUS determine which application to fund?**

The Community Connect Grant Program will not fund multiple applications to provide service at the Broadband Grant Speed to the same geographic area during the same fiscal year. Applications will be scored on the three scoring criteria, with the potential to receive additional points if the project is located within a special consideration area. Only the highest scoring application will receive funding to serve the area.

**When will we be notified as to whether our grant application has been selected for an award?**

RUS intends to announce all Community Connect Grant Program awards by September 30, 2014.

**How soon after the grant is awarded does construction on the project have to start?**

Construction on the project must commence within 180 days of the date of the Grant Agreement between RUS and the awardee.

**ELIGIBLE PROJECT QUESTIONS**

**Do the towers which will be used for the broadband network need to reside on property owned by the grantee?**

Buildings constructed with grant funds must reside on property owned by the awardee; however, towers can be constructed on leased property as long as there is an agreement in place giving the Awardee the right to utilize the land in order to construct a new tower.

**Does the spectrum utilized in my project have to be licensed spectrum and do I have to own it or is leasing adequate?**

There is no requirement that licensed spectrum be used in the broadband system. The spectrum can be owned by the applicant or leased as long as the lease agreement covers the minimum service obligation period (2) years required by the program.

**Can the Community Center utilized for my project be located outside of the proposed funded service area?**

No. The Community Center to be utilized for your project must be located within the proposed funded service area (PFSA) identified in the application.

**We are a company providing satellite service at levels above the 5 Mbps requirement. Are we eligible to apply for funding under the Community Connect Grant Program?**

Satellite companies may apply for funding under the program as long as they can show that they can provide service at the Broadband Grant Speed (5 Mbps upload and download combined) to all residents and businesses in their proposed funded service area. The project must also meet all other eligibility requirements of the program.

**We are a local government that is interested in applying for funding under the Community Connect Grant Program but we do not want to own and operate the broadband network and we intend to contract out the provision of service. Is this eligible?**

No. Per section 1739.10(b) of the Community Connect Grant Program Regulation, the applicant must have the legal capacity and authority to own and operate the broadband facilities as proposed in the application. In this case the applicant will not own or operate the system so it is ineligible.

**The definition of Broadband Service in the NOFA refers to data transmission service of 3 Megabits per second (download plus upload speeds). Does 1.5 Mbps download and 1.5 Mbps upload speeds qualify under that definition?**

Yes. The download and upload speeds are combined to reach the total 3 Mbps service level requirement.

**The area we are interested in applying for RUS grant funding to serve already has limited DSL service but that service does not reach all residents and businesses and there are pockets of areas which do not have access to the DSL service. May we apply to extend service into the unserved locations which do not have access to DSL service?**

Grant funding can only be used to provide service at the Broadband Grant Speed to rural areas which lack any existing Broadband Speed of at least 3 Mbps (download plus upload). However, the proposed service area may include donut holes removing areas that already have Broadband Service. Therefore if your proposed funded service area excluded all areas with existing Broadband Service and only proposed to serve the unserved areas, the area may be eligible for funding as long as it meets all other eligibility requirements of the program.

**What does contiguous mean with respect to the definition of a Proposed Funded Service Area (PFSA)?**

Contiguous means touching and connecting without a break.

**What is the definition of Service Area as it relates to the requirement that Community Connect grants not overlap with the service areas of current RUS borrowers and grantees.**

For the purposes of the definition of service area for overlap, service area shall mean any service area of a borrower or grantee that is financed by RUS.

**Can an existing RUS borrower or grantee apply to upgrade their existing service areas?**

An existing RUS borrower or grantee can apply to upgrade their service area if it meets the following requirements: 1) the proposed service area must have no access to Broadband Service at the rate of 3 Mbps (upload plus download), 2) the service area must be entirely rural, and 3) there must not be any existing financing from RUS to serve the proposed service area.

**Broadband satellite service is available in the service area for which we are interested in applying for RUS grant funding to serve. Since satellite service is available, is the area still eligible for Community Connect Grant funding?**

Yes. The definition of Broadband Service in the Community Connect Grant Program Regulation refers to terrestrial based technologies only and does not include satellite service.

**RUS MAPPING TOOL QUESTIONS**

**I am unable to see the drop-down menus in the RUS Mapping Tool. What should I do?**

It may be a compatibility issue with the browser you are using. Internet Explorer users are encouraged to click on the Compatibility Mode button (it resembles a piece of paper torn in half) located near the web address bar. After clicking on Compatibility Mode, users should exit completely out of the system and then log back in.

**I am confused about how to create my application and service area maps in the RUS Broadband Mapping Tool. What should I do?**

Applicants should refer to the detailed User Guide available in the RUS Mapping Tool, which walks users through each step and button in the tool. This guide is available online at: <http://broadbandsearch.sc.egov.usda.gov/MappingToolUserGuide.pdf>

**My company provides Broadband Service to a number of rural communities but we are only interested in applying for Community Connect grant funding to serve one rural area. Should we map the areas where we currently provide Broadband Service?**

No. Applicants should only draw a map using RUS' Mapping Tool of the area for which they are seeking RUS grant funding to serve. Applicants should not map their other existing service areas.

**My proposed service area has experienced recent population growth and the household and business data reflected in the RUS Mapping Tool does not reflect this recent growth. May I reflect the most up to date household and business data in Section E of my application?**

Yes you may. The RUS Mapping Tool will provide the population, household and business numbers for those Census Blocks that fall within the proposed funded service area map (PFSA) created in the mapping tool. Applicants can use this data to complete Section E of the application or list more up to date numbers, as long as support is provided in the application for the different numbers being used by the applicant.

**When using the RUS Mapping Tool to create my proposed funded service area map (PFSA), I noticed that the entire data for a Census Block is being included in the Population, Household and Business numbers reflected in the tool even though my PFSA does not cover the entire Census Block. What do I do and what information should I list in Section E of my application?**

The RUS Mapping Tool will show all Census data for those Census Blocks that fall within the applicant's PFSA. Since applicants under the Community Connect Program are not required to serve an entire Census Block, RUS will accept an explanation of the discrepancy between the population, household and business numbers reflected in the RUS Mapping Tool and the actual numbers listed as part of the application.