

## Community Connect Program Correction Notice Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions

On December 19, 2023, the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) published a correction notice in the [Federal Register](#). The correction notice makes important changes to the *Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Community Connect Program for Fiscal Year 2023*, published on March 20, 2023, and extends the Community Connect Program application window until February 20, 2024.

The correction notice revises the definition of an eligible Proposed Funded Service Area (PFSA) under the Community Connect Program to ensure the program is administered in compliance with the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill). Under the revised definition, a PFSA must lack access to broadband service of 10 Megabits per second (Mbps) downstream plus 1 Mbps upstream to be eligible for consideration for Community Connect Program funding. Additionally, any areas that have received other federal funding to construct terrestrial broadband facilities providing at least 10/1 Mbps service in the project's PFSA will be deemed ineligible.

Any applicant that applied for the Community Connect Program under the March 20, 2023, NOFO must resubmit their application in order to be considered for funding. RUS recognizes that this requirement may result in delays and additional work for FY 2023 applicants. In an effort to minimize the amount of time required to resubmit an application from the FY 2023 funding window, applicants with previously submitted applications will have access to the submitted application data and will have the opportunity to make any edits before resubmitting the application. It is strongly encouraged that applicants review the new eligibility information to ensure that the previously submitted application is still eligible. The extended application window will also be open to new applicants that meet Community Connect Program eligibility requirements.

### Community Connect Program Mapping Updates

#### Non-Rural Areas

Under the Community Connect Program, a **rural area** is defined as any area, as confirmed by the most recent decennial Census of the United States (decennial Census), which is not located within (1) A city, town, or incorporated area that has a population of greater than 20,000 inhabitants; or (2) An **urbanized area** contiguous and adjacent to a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants, and which excludes certain populations pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13)(H) and (I).

For purposes of the definition of rural area, an **urbanized area** means a densely populated territory as defined in the most recent decennial Census.

Due to the removal of the term "urbanized area," USDA will recognize any Census- designated "urban" area with a population per the 2020 Decennial Census as an "urbanized area." Additionally, non-contiguous parts of any "urban" area will be considered eligible for funding consideration.

### **Tribal Lands – Certification**

In accordance with Community Connect Program NOFO, a certification from the appropriate Tribal official is required if service is being proposed over or on Tribal Lands. The appropriate Tribal official is the Tribal Council of the Tribal Government with jurisdiction over the Tribal Lands at issue. Any applicant that fails to provide a certification to provide service on the Tribal Lands identified in the PFSA will not be considered for funding.

**Tribal Land** means any area identified by the United States Department of Interior as tribal land over which a Tribal Government exercises jurisdiction. Tribal Lands will be identified on the GIS layers included in the Community Connect mapping tool located at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/community-connect>.

If you have any questions about the program or the correction notice, please submit them using the [Community Connect Contact Form](#). Stay up to date on upcoming events and webinars by reviewing the [Community Connect Events Page](#).

## Community Connect Program Correction Notice FAQs

**Q: How long will the Community Connect Program application window be open?**

A: The Community Connect Program application window will be open for 60 days. The application window will open on December 19, 2023, and close on February 20, 2024 at 11:59 AM Eastern Time.

**Q: I previously submitted a Community Connect Program application. Do I need to re-submit my application?**

A: Yes. Community Connect Program applicants must re-submit any previously submitted applications to remain under consideration for funding.

**Q: I previously submitted a Community Connect Program application. Will I have access to my previously submitted application information?**

A: Yes. Applicants with previously submitted applications will have access to their submitted application information.

**Q: I previously submitted a Community Connect Program application. May I make edits to my application before re-submitting it?**

A: Yes. Community Connect Program applicants may make edits to their previously submitted application. In fact, some edits may be required to ensure the project is still eligible based on the corrections made to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

**Q: Can I submit a new Community Connect Program application?**

A: Yes. New applications can be submitted during the 60-day application period.

**Q: Is the Community Connect Program application window open to all eligible entities?**

A: Yes. Any eligible entity may apply during the 60-day application period. Eligible entities are outlined in the program regulation at [7 CFR 1739.10](#).

**Q: Is the Community Connect Program using 2010 or 2020 Census Data to determine project eligibility?**

A: USDA will use 2020 Decennial Census data to evaluate all Community Connect applications.

**Q: Will the Community Connect Program application window include additional funding from Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriations?**

A: USDA can, at its discretion, increase the total level of funding available from any available source provided the awards meet the requirements of the statute which made the funding available to the agency.

**Q: Will the Community Connect Program Public Notice Requirement apply to applications submitted under this application window?**

A: Yes. The Public Notice Requirement applies to all submitted applications.