ReConnect Evaluation Criteria

USDA RUS ReConnect Program

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Rural Development

Agenda

- Evaluation Criteria

- Available Resources

- Q&A

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria Summary

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Evaluation Criteria	Input Values	Score
Does the applicant propose to build in areas that are not receiving service of at least 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream?	Not Specified	0 / 25
Does the applicant intend to offer competitive and affordable broadband prices to its target market?	Not Specified	0 / 20
Is the applicant a local government, non-profit, or a cooperative entity?	Not Specified	0 / 15
Does the applicant commit to strong labor standards, consistent with Tribal Laws when the project proposes to build infrastructure on Tribal Lands?	Not Specified	0 / 20
Will the applicant commit to following the Federal Communications Commissions rules regarding net neutrality?	Not Specified	0 / 10
Will the applicant commit to offering wholesale broadband services at rates and terms that are reasonable and Nondiscriminatory?	Not Specified	0 / 10
Rurality of Proposed Funded Service Area	0.00	0 / 25
Tribal Lands	0.00	0 / 15
Economic Need of Community	0.00	0 / 20
Socially Vulnerable Communities	0.00	0 / 15

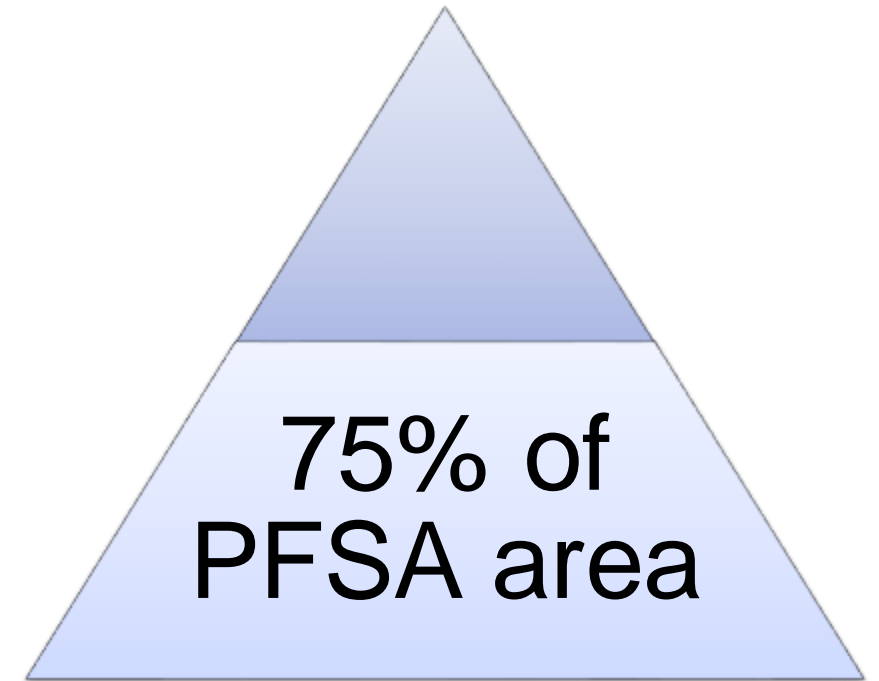Preliminary Total Score
1 Service Areas
Considered

0 / 175

How points will be awarded:
- There are two possible ways an applicant can gain points for rurality:
  - Population densities of 6 or less as measured by the population of the PFSA(s) per square mile; **OR**
  - If each PFSA is located at least 100 miles away from a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants

- ➢ If multiple service areas are proposed, the density calculation will be made on the combined areas as if they were a single area and not the average densities

- ➢ Points for this criterion will be automatically calculated by the RUS mapping tool.

Economic Need of the Community (20 Points)

How points are calculated:

- 75 percent of the PFSA(s) are proposing to serve communities with a SAIPE score of 20 percent or higher.

- If no SAIPE data exists for the PFSA(s), the PFSA(s) will be determined to have an average SAIPE poverty percentage of 30 percent.

- Determined by using the United States Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program.

- **Points for this criterion will be automatically calculated by the RUS mapping tool.**

75% of
PFSA area

Tribal Lands (15 or 10 Points)

Based on 50% Project overlap with Tribal Lands and Entity type:

- **Tribal Governments and Tribal entities**
  - For applicants that are Tribal Governments and tribal entities and, at a minimum, 50 percent of the geographical area of the PFSA(s) is to provide service on tribal lands, 15 points shall be awarded.
- **Non-Tribal Entities**
  - For non-tribal entities where at least 50 percent of the geographic area of the PFSA(s) is to provide service on tribal lands, 10 points shall be awarded.

- The score for Tribal Lands will be automatically calculated by the application system using the RUS mapping tool. Visit https://www,usda.gov/reconnect to view the Tribal Lands GIS layer in the RUS mapping tool.

Socially Vulnerable Communities (15 Points)

Points are determined by:

- Applications where at least 75 percent of the PFSA(s) are proposing to serve Socially Vulnerable Communities (SVCs)
  - The points for SVCs will be automatically calculated in the application system.
  - A GIS layer identifying SVCs can be found at https://www.usda.gov/reconnect.

- An SVC is defined as: a community or area identified in the Center for Disease Control's Social Vulnerability Index with a score of 0.75 or higher.

- For purposes of this FOA, Puerto Rico, Guam, America Samoa, Northern Mariana Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and the Virgin Islands are considered to be Socially Vulnerable Communities.

Level of Existing Service (25 Points)

Applicant will select YES or NO indicating participation in this category:

- Applicant will be evaluated on projects proposing to build in areas not receiving service of at least 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream. Input number of households within project.

- Documentation Required for Upload:

  - Applicants should identify areas in their PFSAs receiving service below the 25/3 threshold and the total number of households in that area.

  - Supporting evidence that 25/3 service does not exist for those households

  - Identify all existing providers in the PFSA and indicate the level of service being provided.

Affordability (20 Points)

What applicants need to provide as upload:

- Documentation demonstrating broadband prices offered are affordable for their target markets

- Information for pricing and speed tiers to be offered

- Low-cost Option: Offering at a speed sufficient for multi-user households allowing simultaneous usage for telework and remote learning

- Commitment to applying to the Federal Communication Commission's Lifeline Program, Emergency Broadband Benefit Program and successors of those programs.

Resources and Conditions:

- Applicants should review the FCC's Urban Rate Survey Data which can be found at https://www.fcc.gov by searching for Urban Rate Survey Data & Resources

- To ensure implementation, a covenant will be added to the award documents for applicants electing to pursue points for affordability.

- RUS will evaluate pricing based on similar services near proposed project.

Labor Standards (20 Points)

Applicant will select YES or NO and provide following uploads:

- Commitment to strong labor standards that are consistent with Tribal Laws when the project proposes to build infrastructure on Tribal Lands

- Description of whether and, if so, how the project will incorporate strong labor standards, including whether workers (including contractors and subcontractors) will be paid wages at or above the prevailing rate

- Projects on Tribal Lands must follow Tribal Laws such as Tribal Employment Rights Ordinances to be in compliance with a ReConnect award, regardless of receiving points.

- To ensure implementation, a covenant will be added to the award documents for applicants electing to pursue points for labor standards

Local Governments, Non-Profits, and Cooperatives (15 Points)

Applicant selects entity type from Drop-Down – Following types eligible:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT   **NON-PROFIT**   **COOPERATIVE**

- This includes projects involving public-private partnerships where the local government, non-profit, or cooperative is the applicant
  - Applicants that are a subsidiary of a co-op but are a corporation or LLC are not eligible for these points.

Net Neutrality (10 Points)

Applicant chooses YES or NO and Uploads following support:

- A board resolution or its equivalent must be submitted in the application committing that the applicant's networks shall not:

  1) Block lawful content, applications, services, or non-harmful devices, subject to reasonable network management;

  2) Impair or degrade lawful Internet traffic on the basis of Internet content, application, or service, or use of a non-harmful device, subject to reasonable network management; and

  3) Engage in paid prioritization, meaning the management of a broadband provider's network to directly or indirectly favor some traffic over other traffic, including through use of techniques such as traffic shaping, prioritization, resource reservation, or other forms of preferential traffic management, either (a) in exchange for consideration (monetary or otherwise) from a third party, or (b) to benefit an affiliated entity.

Wholesale Broadband Service (10 Points)

Applicant chooses YES or NO

- For applicants that commit to offering wholesale broadband services at rates and terms that are reasonable and nondiscriminatory

- Wholesale broadband services are those purchased for resale to end user customers

- Applicants should submit evidence that they are actively marketing wholesale broadband services
    - Example: A statement that the applicant is offering wholesale prices to other service providers.

- Applicants can offer these services through an open access network.

Available Resources

Available Resources

- Register for upcoming events: https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/events

- **Resources**
  - ReConnect website: https://www.usda.gov/reconnect
  - Fact Sheets & Frequently Asked Questions

- **Help Desk:** https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us

- **FY 2022 Funding Opportunity Announcement:**
  https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/10/25/2021-23128/rural-econnectivity-program

- **Regulation**: https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-02-26/pdf/2021-03443.pdf

- **General Field Representative (GFR) & State Office**
  - https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/telecom-gfr/all
  - https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices

Q&A