

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 71–87k.

Alan R. Christian,
Acting Administrator, Grain Inspection,
Packers, and Stockyards Administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Announcement of Grant Application Deadlines and Funding Levels

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of funds availability and solicitation of applications.

SUMMARY: The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Utilities Service (RUS) announces its Community Connect Grant Program application window for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009. In addition, RUS announces the minimum and maximum amounts for Community Connect grants applicable for the fiscal year. The Community Connect Grant Program regulations can be found at 7 CFR 1739, subpart A.

DATES: You may submit completed applications for grants on paper or electronically according to the following deadlines:

- Paper copies must carry proof of shipping *no later than* June 19, 2009 to be eligible for FY 2009 grant funding. Late applications are not eligible for FY 2009 grant funding.
- Electronic copies must be received by June 19, 2009 to be eligible for FY 2009 grant funding. Late applications are not eligible for FY 2009 grant funding.

ADDRESSES: You may obtain application guides and materials for the Community Connect Grant Program via the Internet at the following Web site: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/commconnect.htm>. You may also request application guides and materials from RUS by contacting the appropriate individual listed in section VII of the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section of this notice.

Submit completed paper applications for grants to the Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Room 2870, STOP 1599, Washington, DC 20250–1599. Applications should be marked “Attention: Director, Broadband Division, Rural Utilities Service.”

Submit electronic grant applications at <http://www.grants.gov> (Grants.gov), following the instructions you find on that Web site.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kenneth Kuchno, Director, Broadband

Division, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, telephone: (202) 690–4673, fax: (202) 690–4389.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Overview

Federal Agency: Rural Utilities Service (RUS).

Funding Opportunity Title: Community Connect Grant Program.

Announcement Type: Initial announcement.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.863.

Dates: You may submit completed applications for grants on paper or electronically according to the following deadlines:

- Paper copies must carry proof of shipping *no later than* June 19, 2009, to be eligible for FY 2009 grant funding. Late applications are not eligible for FY 2009 grant funding.
- Electronic copies must be received by June 19, 2009, to be eligible for FY 2009 grant funding. Late applications are not eligible for FY 2009 grant funding.

Items in Supplementary Information

I. *Funding Opportunity:* Brief introduction to the Community Connect Grant Program.

II. *Award Information:* Available funds and minimum and maximum amounts.

III. *Eligibility Information:* Who is eligible, what kinds of projects are eligible, what criteria determine basic eligibility.

IV. *Application and Submission Information:* Where to get application materials, what constitutes a completed application, how and where to submit applications, deadlines, items that are eligible.

V. *Application Review Information:* Considerations and preferences, scoring criteria, review standards, selection information.

VI. *Award Administration Information:* Award notice information, award recipient reporting requirements.

VII. *Agency Contacts:* Web, phone, fax, e-mail, contact name.

I. Funding Opportunity

The provision of broadband transmission service is vital to the economic development, education, health, and safety of rural Americans. The purpose of the Community Connect Grant Program is to provide financial assistance in the form of grants to eligible applicants that will provide currently unserved areas, on a “community-oriented connectivity” basis, with broadband transmission service that fosters economic growth and delivers enhanced educational, health care, and public safety services. Rural Utilities Service will give priority to rural areas that it believes have the greatest need for broadband

transmission services, based on the criteria contained herein.

Grant authority will be used for the deployment of broadband transmission service to extremely rural, lower-income communities on a “community-oriented connectivity” basis.

The “community-oriented connectivity” concept will stimulate practical, everyday uses and applications of broadband facilities by cultivating the deployment of new broadband transmission services that improve economic development and provide enhanced educational and health care opportunities in rural areas. Such an approach will also give rural communities the opportunity to benefit from the advanced technologies that are necessary to achieve these goals. Please see 7 CFR 1739, subpart A for specifics.

This notice has been formatted to conform to a policy directive issued by the Office of Federal Financial Management (OFFM) of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), published in the **Federal Register** on June 23, 2003. This Notice does not change the Community Connect Grant Program regulation (7 CFR 1739, subpart A).

II. Award Information

A. Available Funds

1. *General.* The Administrator has determined that the following amounts are available for grants in FY 2009 under 7 CFR 1739.2(a).

2. Grants:

a. \$13,406,000 is available for grants. Under 7 CFR 1739.2, the Administrator has established a minimum grant amount of \$50,000 and a maximum grant amount of \$1,000,000 for FY 2009.

b. Assistance instrument: Rural Development will execute grant documents appropriate to the project prior to any advance of funds with successful applicants.

B. Community Connect grants cannot be renewed. Award documents specify the term of each award. Applications to extend existing projects are welcomed (grant applications must be submitted during the application window) and will be evaluated as new applications.

III. Eligibility Information

A. *Who is eligible for grants?* (See 7 CFR 1739.10.)

1. Only entities legally organized as one of the following are eligible for Community Connect Grant Program financial assistance:

- An incorporated organization,
- An Indian tribe or tribal organization, as defined in 25 U.S.C. 450b(b) and (c),

c. A State or local unit of government,
d. A cooperative, private corporation
or limited liability company organized
on a for-profit or not-for-profit basis.

2. Individuals are not eligible for
Community Connect Grant Program
financial assistance directly.

3. Applicants must have the legal
capacity and authority to own and
operate the broadband facilities as
proposed in its application, to enter into
contracts and to otherwise comply with
applicable federal statutes and
regulations.

**B. What are the basic eligibility
requirements for a project?**

1. Required matching contributions.
Please see 7 CFR 1739.14 for the
requirement. Grant applicants must
demonstrate a matching contribution, in
cash or in kind (new, non-depreciated
items), of at least fifteen (15) percent of
the total amount of financial assistance
requested. Matching contributions must
be used for eligible purposes of
Community Connect grant assistance
(see 7 CFR 1739.12).

2. To be eligible for a grant, the
Project must (see 7 CFR 1739.11):

a. Serve a Rural Area where
Broadband Transmission Service does
not currently exist, to be verified by
Rural Development prior to the award of
the grant;

b. Serve one Community recognized
in the latest U.S. Census or the latest
version of the Rand McNally Atlas;

c. Deploy Basic Broadband
Transmission Service, free of all charges
for at least 2 years, to all Critical
Community Facilities located within the
proposed Service Area;

d. Offer Basic Broadband
Transmission Service to residential and
business customers within the proposed
Service Area; and

e. Provide a Community Center with
at least ten (10) Computer Access Points
within the proposed Service Area, and
make Broadband Transmission Service
available therein, free of all charges to
users for at least 2 years.

C. What is a completed application?

See paragraph IV.B of this notice for
a discussion of the items that make up
a completed application. You may also
refer to 7 CFR 1739.15 for completed
grant application items.

**IV. Application and Submission
Information**

**A. Clarifications to Requirements for FY
2009**

1. Rural Development clarifies that
the definition of "Critical Community
Facilities" includes the mandatory
Community Center.

2. For all funding commitments,
including all matching fund
commitments and commitments made
by the applicant, that are required to
complete the Project in addition to the
Rural Development grant, evidence
must be submitted demonstrating that
funding arrangements have been
obtained. If the appropriate funding
commitments are not included in the
application, the application will be
deemed ineligible for consideration.
This evidence must:

- a. Clearly state the name of the entity
that is making the commitment;
- b. The amount of the commitment;
and
- c. The purpose of commitment.

3. Rural Development clarifies that in
order to qualify as eligible costs for
grant coverage or matching fund
contributions, operating expenses
incurred in providing Broadband
Transmission Service to Critical
Community Facilities for the first 2
years of operation and in providing
training and instruction must be for the
following purposes subject to the
specified maximum amounts:

- a. Salary for operations manager, not
to exceed \$30,000 per year.
- b. Salary for technical support staff,
not to exceed \$30,000 per year.
- c. Salary for community center staff,
not to exceed \$25,000 per year.
- d. Bandwidth expenses, not to exceed
\$25,000 per year.

e. Training courses on the use of the
Internet, not to exceed \$15,000 per year.
The operating costs to be funded by
the grant or used as matching
contributions cannot exceed in the
aggregate \$250,000. No other operating
expenses are eligible for grant funding
or to be considered as matching funds.

4. Community means any
incorporated or unincorporated town,
village, or borough recognized in the
latest decennial census as published by
the Bureau of the Census or in the most
recent edition of a Rand McNally Atlas
that is located in a Rural Area.

5. Rural Development clarifies that
the economic need of the applicant's
service territory will be based on the
median household income (MHI) for the
Community serviced and the state in
which the Community is located, as
determined by the U.S. Bureau of the
Census at <http://factfinder.census.gov>. If
the community was qualified using the
Rand McNally Atlas, the applicant must
use the MHI, contained in the latest
decennial census, of the county in
which the Community resides as the
Community MHI. The economic need
will no longer be based on the Per
Capita Personal Income of the
community.

B. Where to Get Application Information

The application guide, copies of
necessary forms and samples, and the
Community Connect Grant Program
regulation are available from these
sources:

1. The Internet: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/commconnect.htm>, or
<http://www.grants.gov>.

2. The Rural Utilities Service
Broadband Division, for paper copies of
these materials: (202) 690-4673.

**C. What constitutes a completed
application?**

1. Detailed information on each item
required can be found in the
Community Connect Grant Program
regulation and the Community Connect
Grant Program application guide.
Applicants are strongly encouraged to
read and apply both the regulation and
the application guide. This Notice does
not change the requirements for a
completed application for any form of
Community Connect Grant Program
financial assistance specified in the
Community Connect Grant Program
regulation. The Community Connect
Grant Program regulation and the
application guide provide specific
guidance on each of the items listed and
the Community Connect Grant Program
application guide provides all necessary
forms and sample worksheets.

2. Applications should be prepared in
conformance with the provisions in 7
CFR 1739, subpart A, and applicable
USDA regulations including 7 CFR parts
3015, 3016, and 3019. Applicants must
use the Rural Utilities Service
Application Guide for this program
containing instructions and all
necessary forms, as well as other
important information, in preparing
their application. Completed
applications must include the following:

a. *An Application for Federal
Assistance.* A completed Standard Form
(SF) 424.

b. *An executive summary of the
Project.* The applicant must provide
Rural Development with a general
project overview.

c. *Scoring criteria documentation.*
Each grant applicant must address and
provide documentation on how it meets
each of the scoring criteria detailed 7
CFR 1739.17.

d. *System design.* The applicant must
submit a system design, including,
narrative specifics of the proposal,
associated costs, maps, engineering
design studies, technical specifications
and system capabilities, etc.

e. *Scope of work.* The scope of work
must include specific activities and
services to be performed under the

proposal, who will carry out the activities and services, specific time-frames for completion, and a budget for all capital and administrative expenditures reflecting the line item costs for all grant purposes, the matching contribution, and other sources of funds necessary to complete the project.

f. *Community-Oriented Connectivity Plan.* The applicant must provide a detailed Community-Oriented Connectivity Plan.

g. *Financial information and sustainability.* The applicant must provide financial statements and information and a narrative description demonstrating the sustainability of the Project.

h. *A statement of experience.* The applicant must provide a written narrative describing its demonstrated capability and experience, if any, in operating a broadband telecommunications system.

i. *Evidence of legal authority and existence.* The applicant must provide evidence of its legal existence and authority to enter into a grant agreement with RUS and to perform the activities proposed under the grant application.

j. *Funding commitment from other sources.* If the Project requires additional funding from other sources in addition to the Rural Utilities Service grant, the applicant must provide evidence that funding agreements have been obtained to ensure completion of the Project.

k. *Compliance with other federal statutes.* The applicant must provide evidence of compliance with other federal statutes and regulations, including, but not limited to the following:

(i) 7 CFR part 15, subpart A—Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs of the Department of Agriculture—Effectuation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

(ii) 7 CFR part 3015—Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations.

(iii) 7 CFR part 3017—Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement).

(iv) 7 CFR part 3018—New Restrictions on Lobbying.

(v) 7 CFR part 3021—Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance).

(vi) Certification regarding Architectural Barriers.

(vii) Certification regarding Flood Hazard Precautions.

(viii) An environmental report, in accordance with 7 CFR 1794.

(ix) Certification that grant funds will not be used to duplicate lines, facilities,

or systems providing Broadband Transmission Service.

(x) Federal Obligation Certification on Delinquent Debt.

3. **DUNS Number.** As required by the OMB, all applicants for grants must now supply a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number when applying. The SF-424 contains a field for you to use when supplying your DUNS number. Obtaining a DUNS number costs nothing and requires a short telephone call to Dun and Bradstreet. Please see the Community Connect Web site or Grants.gov for more information on how to obtain a DUNS number or how to verify your organization's number.

C. How Many Copies of an Application Are Required?

1. Applications submitted on paper: Submit the original application and two (2) copies to Rural Development.

2. Electronically submitted applications: The additional paper copies are not necessary if you submit the application electronically through Grants.gov.

D. How and Where to Submit an Application

Grant applications may be submitted on paper or electronically.

1. Submitting applications on paper.
a. Address paper applications for grants to the Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Room 2868, STOP 1599, Washington, DC 20250-1599. Applications should be marked "Attention: Director, Broadband Division, Rural Utilities Service."

b. Paper applications must show proof of mailing or shipping consisting of one of the following:

(i) A legibly dated U.S. Postal Service (USPS) postmark;

(ii) A legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the USPS; or
(iii) A dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier.

c. Due to screening procedures at the Department of Agriculture, packages arriving via the USPS are irradiated, which can damage the contents. Rural Development encourages applicants to consider the impact of this procedure in selecting their application delivery method.

2. Electronically submitted applications.

a. Applications will not be accepted via facsimile machine transmission or electronic mail.

b. Electronic applications for grants will be accepted if submitted through the Federal government's Grants.gov initiative at <http://www.grants.gov>.

c. How to use Grants.gov:

(i) Navigate your Web browser to <http://www.grants.gov>.

(ii) Follow the instructions on that Web site to find grant information.

(iii) Download a copy of the application package.

(iv) Complete the package off-line.

(v) Upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov Web site.

d. Grants.gov contains full instructions on all required passwords, credentialing and software.

e. RUS encourages applicants who wish to apply through Grants.gov to submit their applications in advance of the deadline.

f. If a system problem occurs or you have technical difficulties with an electronic application, please use the customer support resources available at the Grants.gov Web site.

E. Deadlines

1. Paper applications must be postmarked and mailed, shipped, or sent overnight no later than June 19, 2009 to be eligible for FY 2009 grant funding. Late applications are not eligible for FY 2009 grant funding.

2. Electronic grant applications must be received by June 19, 2009 to be eligible for FY 2009 funding. Late applications are not eligible for FY 2009 grant funding.

F. Funding Restrictions

1. Eligible Grant Purposes

Grant funds may be used to finance:

a. The construction, acquisition, or leasing of facilities, including spectrum, to deploy Broadband Transmission Service to all participating Critical Community Facilities and all required facilities needed to offer such service to residential and business customers located within the proposed Service Area;

b. The improvement, expansion, construction, or acquisition of a Community Center that furnishes free access to broadband Internet service, provided that the Community Center is open and accessible to area residents before, during, and after normal working hours and on Saturday or Sunday. Grant funds provided for such costs shall not exceed the greater of five percent (5%) of the grant amount requested or \$100,000;

c. End-User Equipment needed to carry out the Project;

d. Operating expenses incurred in providing Broadband Transmission Service to Critical Community Facilities for the first 2 years of operation and in providing training and instruction; and

e. The purchase of land, buildings, or building construction needed to carry out the Project.

2. Ineligible Grant Purposes

a. Grant funds may not be used to finance the duplication of any existing Broadband Transmission Service provided by another entity.

b. Facilities financed with grant funds cannot be utilized, in any way, to provide local exchange telecommunications service to any person or entity already receiving such service.

3. Please see 7 CFR 1739.3 for definitions, 7 CFR 1739.12 for eligible grant purposes, and 7 CFR 1739.13 for ineligible grant purposes

V. Application Review Information

A. Criteria

1. Grant applications are scored competitively and subject to the criteria listed below.

2. Grant application scoring criteria (total possible points: 100) See 7 CFR 1739.17 for the items that will be reviewed during scoring and for scoring criteria.

a. The rurality of the Project (up to 40 points);

b. The economic need of the Project's Service Area (up to 30 points); and

c. The "community-oriented connectivity" benefits derived from the proposed service (up to 30 points).

B. Review Standards

1. All applications for grants must be delivered to Rural Development at the address and by the date specified in this notice (see also 7 CFR 1739.2) to be eligible for funding. Rural Development will review each application for conformance with the provisions of this part. Rural Development may contact the applicant for additional information or clarification.

2. Incomplete applications as of the deadline for submission will not be considered. If an application is determined to be incomplete, the applicant will be notified in writing and the application will be returned with no further action.

3. Applications conforming with this part will then be evaluated competitively by a panel of Rural Development employees selected by the Administrator of Rural Development Utilities Program, and will be awarded points as described in the scoring criteria in 7 CFR 1739.17. Applications will be ranked and grants awarded in rank order until all grant funds are expended.

4. Regardless of the score an application receives, if Rural

Development determines that the Project is technically or financially infeasible, Rural Development will notify the applicant, in writing, and the application will be returned with no further action.

C. Selection Process

Grant applications are ranked by final score. Rural Development selects applications based on those rankings, subject to the availability of funds.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Rural Development recognizes that each funded project is unique, and therefore may attach conditions to different projects' award documents. Rural Development generally notifies applicants whose projects are selected for awards by faxing an award letter. Rural Development follows the award letter with a grant agreement that contains all the terms and conditions for the grant. An applicant must execute and return the grant agreement, accompanied by any additional items required by the grant agreement.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The items listed in paragraph IV.B.2.k of this notice, and the Community Connect Grant Program regulation, application guide and accompanying materials implement the appropriate administrative and national policy requirements.

C. Reporting

1. *Performance reporting.* All recipients of Community Connect Grant Program financial assistance must provide annual performance activity reports to Rural Development until the project is complete and the funds are expended. A final performance report is also required; the final report may serve as the last annual report. The final report must include an evaluation of the success of the project. See 7 CFR 1739.19.

2. *Financial reporting.* All recipients of Community Connect Grant Program financial assistance must provide an annual audit, beginning with the first year a portion of the financial assistance is expended. Audits are governed by United States Department of Agriculture audit regulations. Please see 7 CFR 1739.20.

VII. Agency Contacts

A. *Web site:* <http://www.usda.gov/rus/commconnect.htm>. This Web site maintains up-to-date resources and contact information for the Community Connect Grant Program.

B. *Phone:* 202-690-4673.

C. *Fax:* 202-690-4389.

D. *Main point of contact:* Kenneth Kuchno, Director, Broadband Division, Rural Development Utilities Program, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Dated: April 2, 2009.

James R. Newby,

Acting Administrator, Rural Utilities Service.

[FR Doc. E9-9006 Filed 4-17-09; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Glenn/Colusa County Resource Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Glenn/Colusa County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) will meet in Willows, California. Agenda items covered include: (1) Introductions, (2) Approve Minutes, (3) Public Comment, (4) Project Presentations, (5) Project Voting by RAC Committee Members, (6) General Discussion, (7) Next Agenda.

DATES: The meeting will be held on April 27, 2009, from 1:30 p.m. and end at approximately 4:30 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Mendocino National Forest Supervisor's Office, 825 N. Humboldt Ave., Willows, CA 95988. Individuals who wish to speak or propose agenda items send their names and proposals to Eduardo Olmedo, DFO, 825 N. Humboldt Ave., Willows, CA 95988.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Matt Ellis, Committee Coordinator, USDA, Mendocino National Forest, Grindstone Ranger District, 825 N. Humboldt Ave., Willows, CA 95988. (530) 934-3316; e-mail matthewellis@fs.fed.us.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The meeting will be open to the public. Committee discussion is limited to Forest Service staff and Committee members. However, persons who wish to bring matters to the attention of the Committee will file written statements with the Committee staff before or after the meeting. Public input sessions are provided and individuals who made written requests by April 20, 2009 have the opportunity to address the committee at those sessions.

Dated: April 10, 2009.

Eduardo Olmedo,

Designated Federal Official.

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