

## NEW FEDERAL FUNDING TO PROMOTE THE EXPANSION OF HIGH-SPEED INTERNET IN RURAL AREAS



*April 18, 2023*

By: Regulated Products Section Chair [Richard Blau](#)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the availability of **\$20 million** to deliver broadband technical assistance resources for rural communities and to support the development and expansion of broadband cooperatives. The funding is available under the new [Broadband Technical Assistance Program](#), which supports conducting feasibility studies, completing network designs, and developing broadband financial assistance applications for rural communities seeking to boost their connectivity.

This funding is part of the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#), which provides \$65 billion to expand access and lower costs of high-speed internet and is designed to work in conjunction with other high-speed internet programs to meet the federal government's goal of connecting every community in America with affordable, reliable high-speed internet.

Funding opportunities include federal grants directed to "Technical Assistance Recipients." To qualify, applicants must be recipients of the broadband technical assistance. Up to \$7.5 million is available; the minimum award is \$50,000, while the maximum grant available under the program is \$250,000.

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Additionally, grants are available for "Projects Supporting Cooperatives." To qualify in this category, applicants must propose projects that support the establishment or growth of broadband cooperatives that will benefit several rural communities. Up to \$5 million is available, with the minimum award being \$50,000 and the maximum grant topping out at \$1 million.

Broadband connectivity is important for agriculture, as well as for rural communities generally. Some of the most productive farming and ranching operations use internet-connected, sensor-laden equipment for remote crop, orchard, facility, and livestock monitoring. Access to high-speed internet can power systems that help agriculture managers, farmers, and ranchers immediately know if something is wrong from real-time data alerts on their mobile devices. Plus, with valuable insights from trending data, they can reduce costs, optimize maintenance, boost efficiency, bump up crop yields, keep livestock healthy, and much more.

Federal funding opportunities such as this do not come around very often. Given the pace of technology and the growing competition from foreign agricultural producers, this \$20 million funding opportunity could not come at a more critical time.

For more information, visit the USDA Website at [www.rd.usda.gov](http://www.rd.usda.gov), or contact the GrayRobinson national [Food Law Team](#) at 866.382.5132 or [foodlaw@gray-robinson.com](mailto:foodlaw@gray-robinson.com).

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