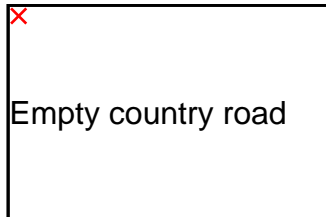




## USDA Offering Grants and Loans for Rural Broadband Connectivity

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In an effort to expand broadband infrastructure and services in rural America, the US Department of Agriculture is accepting applications for the Rural e-Connectivity Pilot Program (ReConnect Program) starting on April 29. You can learn more about the program and the application process through the ReConnect website at [reconnect.usda.gov](https://reconnect.usda.gov).

Although applications are targeted to telecommunications companies, rural electric cooperatives and utilities, internet service providers, and municipalities, this could be an opportunity for rural adult education consortia to partner with these local agencies and work toward connecting rural areas that currently have insufficient internet service. The funds are awarded to projects that have financially sustainable business models that will bring high-speed broadband to rural homes, businesses, farms, ranches, and community facilities such as first responders, health care sites, and schools.

Indeed, [the Elevate Rural CA initiative](#) has identified a "digital desert" in California where, in many rural areas, a basic technological lifeline that most Californians take for granted – accessible broadband service – is missing. Highspeed, ubiquitous broadband is critical infrastructure to compete in the modern economy. Rural areas cannot afford to be without such access. For this reason, Elevate Rural CA has identified broadband access as one of three key focus areas for targeted economic development activities.

The USDA is making available up to \$200 million in grants, \$200 million in loan and grant combinations, and \$200 million in low-interest loans. The application deadlines are:

- May 31, 2019, for grants;
- June 21, 2019, for loan/grant combinations; and
- July 12, 2019, for low-interest loans.

Applicants can request technical assistance from USDA by filling out the contact form at <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us>.

To learn more about the ReConnect Program, see page 5981 of the February 25, 2019 [Federal Register](#) and page 64315 of the December 14, 2018 [Federal Register](#).

Website: [ReConnect Loan and Grant Program](#)

Article: [Connections and advantages of the digital world elude rural California](#)

Article: [I Live 50 Miles from Silicon Valley and I Can't Get Broadband Access](#)