



Industry Overview

The [2020 Broadband Deployment Report](#) found that as of 2018, over 18 million Americans lacked fixed terrestrial broadband that met the advanced telecommunications capability Congress defined for “high-quality” which allows users to “originate and receive high-quality voice, data, graphics, and video” services.

In 2018 77.4% of Americans in rural areas have access to both fixed terrestrial and mobile Long-Term Evolution (LTE) services, as opposed to 98.5% of Americans in urban areas. On Tribal Lands, 72.1% of Americans have coverage from both services. While 99% of American school districts meet the FCC’s short-term connectivity goal of 100 Mbps per 1,000 users, only 38% meet the long-term connectivity goal of 1 Gbps per 1,000 users.



Sector Impact Media Coverage

[Coronavirus Proves US Broadband Infrastructure is Essential](#)

Lockdown measures have highlighted the necessity of internet connectivity and deficiencies in existing broadband infrastructure, underscoring the importance of expanded and improved access. Broadband will remain essential after the peak of the crisis as people continue to work and attend classes remotely.

Estimates regarding the number of people without high-speed internet access range from 18 million, according to the Federal Communication Commission (FCC), to 163 million, according to Microsoft. Uneven broadband access has social and economic implications, leading to greater disparities between those that have access and those that do not. (2020, May 05) *Fitch Ratings* | *FITCH WIRE*

FEMA’s Role

FEMA Region I established the COVID-19 Long-Term Recovery Task Force under the [National Disaster Recovery Framework](#) (NDRF), which promotes effective recovery from large-scale incidents and enables coordinated, orchestrated support to impacted states, tribes and local jurisdictions.

The NDRF focuses on how best to restore, redevelop and revitalize the health, social, economic, natural and environmental fabric of the community as well as build a more resilient nation.

This COVID-19 Long-Term Recovery Task Force works in tandem, but separately from other FEMA Short-Term Recovery Support programs such as Public Assistance and Individual Assistance. The Long-Term Recovery Task Force coordinates access to funding from federal agencies but does not provide direct funding.

About this Resource Guide:

This Resource Guide was developed to provide information to those seeking to expand broadband infrastructure in their community, state, tribe or region.

The Guide presents a summary of federal agency partners, how they may be able to assist with expansion, and the resources available (funding and technical assistance) to support a more resilient recovery. It also includes links to examples of best practices deployed around the nation.

Intended Audience:

This Resource Guide is meant to provide useful information and resources for the following targeted audiences.

Sub-Sector Overview (list is representative, not comprehensive)

State and Tribal Agencies:

- State Broadband Offices/Task Forces
- State Utility Commissions
- Dept. of Economic and Community Development
- Special Temporary Authorities (STAs)

Industry Associations

- [New England Cable and Telecommunications Association \(NECTA\)](#)
- [Wireless Infrastructure Association \(WIA\)](#)
- [The Rural Broadband Associations \(NTCA\)](#)

Businesses

- Internet service providers
- Nonprofits helping municipalities expand access.
- Owners/operators
- Rural Cooperatives

Federal Agency Partner Overview

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA-RD)

USDA provides leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition and related issues. One of the agency's strategic goals is to facilitate rural prosperity and economic development. USDA's rural utilities programs further this goal through loans and grants for rural telecommunications companies and broadband providers to build and expand broadband networks and deliver service to rural households and businesses.

Types of support:

- [ReConnect Loan and Grant Program](#) loans and grants to for the cost of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide broadband service in eligible rural areas.

Related links:

[ReConnect Eligible Service Areas](#)

[ReConnect Funding Categories](#)

Contact information: [Laurel Leverrier](#), Assistant Administrator, Telecom Program, at (202)720-9556

- [Telecommunications Infrastructure Loans & Loan Guarantees](#) funds may be used to finance telecommunications services in rural areas for new construction, improvements, expansions, and refinancing.

Technical Assistance Overview: Broadband Infrastructure

NTIA's BroadbandUSA team provides expert assistance and support to stakeholders that are interested in broadband infrastructure and digital inclusion programs that advance economic development, education and public safety initiatives.

What is the Technical Assistance process?

Intake: After a stakeholder contacts BroadbandUSA, our staff will send an Intake form to request information about any broadband challenges or goals.

Assess: Next, our staff will review the Intake Form, perform initial research and schedule an introductory call or meeting.

Engage: BroadbandUSA staff will tailor their approach to meet the needs of each stakeholder based on their unique challenges. BroadbandUSA can serve as a sounding board or provide an in-depth evaluation of a broadband plan.

[Click here for more information.](#)

- [Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant Program](#) provides funding for rural projects through local utility organizations to promote economic development and job creation projects
- [Business & Industry Guaranteed Loan Guarantees](#) to help rural businesses meet working capital needs. The way funds may be used includes the purchase and development of land, easements, rights-of-way, buildings or facilities.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

The FCC regulates interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable. The agency's strategic goals include developing a regulatory environment to encourage the private sector to build, maintain, and upgrade next-generation networks and where the business case for investment doesn't exist, facilitating deployment and access to affordable broadband in all areas of the country.

The federal high-cost universal service program, part of the FCC's Universal Service Fund, is designed to ensure that consumers in rural, insular, and high-cost areas have access to modern communications networks capable of providing voice and broadband service, both fixed and mobile, at rates that are reasonably comparable to those in urban areas.

Types of support:

- [Rural Digital Opportunity Fund](#) to bring high-speed, fixed broadband and voice service to rural homes and small businesses that lack access. Applications were due by July 15, 2020, to participate in Phase I of the auction, which will target over six million homes and businesses in census blocks that are entirely unserved by voice and broadband with download speeds of at least 25/3 Mbps. Phase II will cover locations in census blocks that are partially served, as well as locations not funded in Phase I.

Related links:

[FCC Launches \\$20 Billion Rural Digital Opportunity Fund](#)

[The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I Auction \(FCC Auction 904\)](#)

Contact information: RDOF auction related questions should be directed to auction904@fcc.gov.

- [High-Cost Program \(including the Connect America Fund\)](#): Facilities-based providers of voice and broadband service designated as "eligible telecommunications carriers" receive support from other FCC high-cost programs to provide voice and broadband in rural areas.

Related links:

[Universal Service Administrative Company \(USAC\) High-Cost Program](#)

U. S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)

EDA is focused exclusively on economic development. The agency facilitates regional economic development efforts by helping communities and regions build the capacity for economic development based on local business conditions and needs.

Types of support:

- [FY2020 Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs](#) provide economically distressed communities and regions with comprehensive and flexible resources to address a wide variety of economic needs including broadband infrastructure.

Related links:

[PWEAA2020 Grants Notice](#)

Contact Information: Philadelphia Regional Office | Phone (215) 597-4603

U.S. Dept. of the Interior/Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

BIA's mission is to enhance the quality of life, to promote economic opportunity, and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of American Indians, Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives.

Types of Support:

- [National Tribal Broadband Summit](#) September 21 – 25, 2020 Virtual Summit. DOI, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, will showcase creative solutions to some of the biggest barriers to tribal broadband development. As part of the larger effort to close the digital divide in Indian Country, the second annual National Tribal Broadband Summit will connect community leaders with information and resources to identify opportunities for public and private sector solutions to close the connectivity gap in schools and libraries on tribal lands.
- [Emergency Tribal Broadband Resources, Facilitating Rural Broadband in Indian Country](#). Connecting Indian Country to broadband and energy transmission throughout reservations, pueblos, villages, and communities, is a priority of Indian Affairs.
- More information on obtaining [Rights-of-Way \(ROW\)](#) for broadband or other utilities can be provided by [Real Estate Services](#).
- [The Indian Loan Guarantee Program](#) in the [Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development](#) can help Tribes and individuals access capital for the development of Indian-owned businesses, which may include broadband efforts.

Contact Information: Eastern Regional Office | (615) 564-6500 | eastern.inquiries@bia.gov; Stephanie Henning, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Management – Indian Affairs (DAS-M), stephanie.henning@bia.gov

Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

HUD's mission is to ensure all Americans have access to fair, affordable housing. The agency supports community development and homeownership, enforces the Fair Housing Act and offers housing assistance through the Community Development Block Grant and the Housing Choice Voucher program.

Types of support:

- [HUD/CPD – Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program](#) offers state, tribal, and local governments the ability to transform a small portion of their CDBG funds into federally guaranteed loans large enough to pursue physical and economic revitalization projects such as broadband infrastructure, adoption, and financing.

Related links:

[CDBG Broadband Infrastructure FAQs](#)

[CDBG Entitlement FAQs](#)

U.S. Dept. of Transportation (DOT)

DOT's mission is to ensure our Nation has the safest, most efficient and modern transportation system in the world, which improves the quality of life for all American people and communities, from rural to urban, and increases the productivity and competitiveness of American workers and businesses.

Types of support:

- [Executive Order on Accelerating Broadband Infrastructure Deployment](#) recognized that in some instances it is in the public interest for utility facilities to jointly use the right-of-way of public roads and streets. There is no direct funding specifically for broadband however, broadband may be eligible for reimbursement with federal-aid highway funds if it supports a transportation use.

Resource Guide | Broadband Infrastructure

Related links:

See [Sec 5. Deployment of Conduit for Broadband Facilities in Conjunction with Federal or Federally Assisted Highway Construction.](#)

[Successful practices to accommodate broadband infrastructure](#)

https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/sites/default/files/bbusa_federal_funding_dot_02.pdf.

Contact Information: [FHWA's Office of Infrastructure](#) and [FHWA's Office of Real Estate Services](#).

Additional Resources:

- [Wireless Infrastructure Association Publishes Best Practices Report to Deploy Fiber](#)
- [PEW: New Research Identifies Tactics for Connecting Unserved Communities](#)
- [State of the States 2020: Broadband is Critical Infrastructure](#)
- [Implementing a Broadband Network Vision: A Toolkit for Local and Tribal Governments](#)
- [Brookings: How a New Model Can Expand Broadband Access Across Communities](#)

Contact Information:

FEMA

Jim McPherson, Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator

james.mcpherson@fema.dhs.gov

Bob Fogel, Deputy Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator.

robert.fogel@fema.dhs.gov

Cassandra Thomas, Federal Disaster Recovery Officer

cassandra.a.thomas@fema.dhs.gov

Dr. Christopher Zevitas, FEMA Liaison for Connecticut.

chris.zevitas@dot.gov

Dr. Rachel Chiquoine, FEMA Liaison for Massachusetts.

rachel.chiquoine@dot.gov

USDA Rural Development State Offices:

Maine

Tim Hobbs, State Director

Voice: (207) 990-9160

Fax: (855) 589-1060

www.rd.usda.gov/me

Massachusetts | Rhode Island | Connecticut

George Krivda, State Director

Voice: 1 (800) 352-8015 or (413) 253-4300

Fax: (855) 596-7673

www.rd.usda.gov/ma

www.rd.usda.gov/ri

www.rd.usda.gov/ct

Alexandra (Alex) Oster, FEMA Liaison for New Hampshire and Tribes

alexandra.oster@dot.gov

Amy Plovnick, FEMA Liaison for Maine and Rhode Island.

amy.plovnick@dot.gov

FEMA Federal Agency Field Coordinators:

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

Please refer to the Regional Office Section for state contact information.

<https://eda.gov/contact/>

USDA

Jim Walfrand, Community Solutions Specialist.

james.walfrand@usda.gov

Vermont | New Hampshire

Anthony Linardos, State Director

(802) 828-6000

(802) 828-6018 Fax

www.rd.usda.gov/vt

www.rd.usda.gov/nh