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USDA'S RURAL ECONNECTIVITY PROGRAM (RECONNECT)

Prepared for the New Mexico Department of Information Technology

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AGENDA

- ✓ USDA: Rural eConnectivity Program (ReConnect)
 - General Overview and Timeline
 - Funding Options/Products
 - Application Inputs
 - Scoring Overview
- ✓ Q & A

OVERVIEW

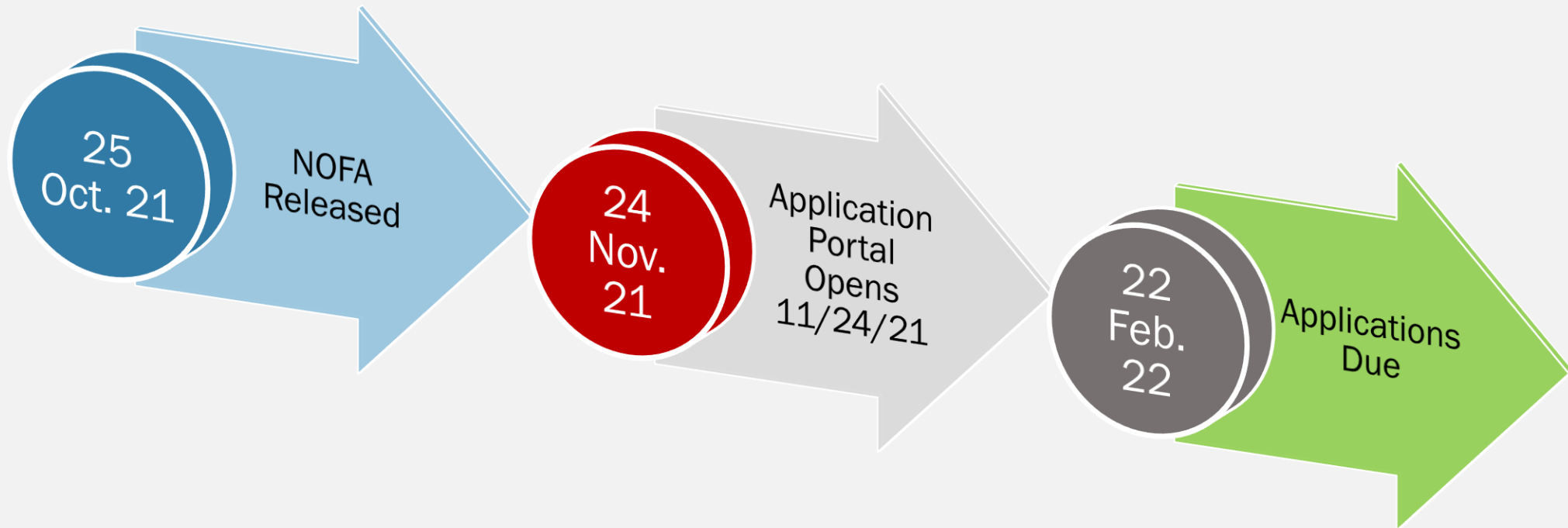
Rural eConnectivity Program (ReConnect)

What: \$1.15 Billion in loans and grants to expand the availability of broadband in rural areas.

- Provide 100 Mbps symmetrical broadband service to all locations
- ReConnect funds may be used for construction, reconstruction, and acquisition of broadband facilities and not for services
 - Can only use up to 40% of total requested funding for acquiring existing facilities
 - Applicant must own the facilities and cannot use funds to lease dark fiber for network
 - Up to 5% of requested funds may be used for application costs
- 5 year build out requirement
- Project must be technically feasible
- All project costs must be able to be fully funded or accounted for
- Facilities funded with ReConnect funds will provide the broadband service proposed in the application for the composite economic life of the facilities

Application Deadline: November 24, 2021-February 22, 2022

TIMELINE MATTERS





HIGHLIGHTS:

Rural eConnectivity Program (ReConnect)

Redefining Broadband:

- Expands eligibility to any area with less than 100/20 Mbps/ 'sufficient access to broadband'
 - W/ preference for rural areas w/less than 25/3 Mbps
- **Previously funded areas and RDOF areas are eligible**
 - Buildout timeline will matter to reviewers
 - Must explain need for additional capital support
- **477 data not 'dispositive' of what speeds currently exist**
 - Your data on availability will matter more
 - Use the mapping tool!
 - Downloadable datasets are available:
<https://go.usa.gov/x3GH>

MORE HIGHLIGHTS:

Rural eConnectivity Program (ReConnect) (continued)

Application preparation considerations:

- Grants, Loans, and Grant/Loan combinations
- 5-year timeline to expend funds

Important scoring considerations:

- Rurality and areas with less than 25/3 Mbps score higher
- Affordability, wholesale services, net neutrality requirements, strong labor standards

Award funds can be used to:

- Fund the construction or improvement of broadband facilities
- Acquire an existing system (*up to 40 percent of total requested*)
- Pay for pre-application expenses (*up to 5 percent of total requested*)

TYPES OF FUNDING



100 Percent Loan

- \$200 million allocated
- Loans available up to \$50 million per application

50 Percent Loan – 50 Percent Grant Combination

- \$250 million allocated
- Maximum request: \$25 million loan/\$25 million grant
 - Loan and grant amounts will always be equal

100 Percent Grant*

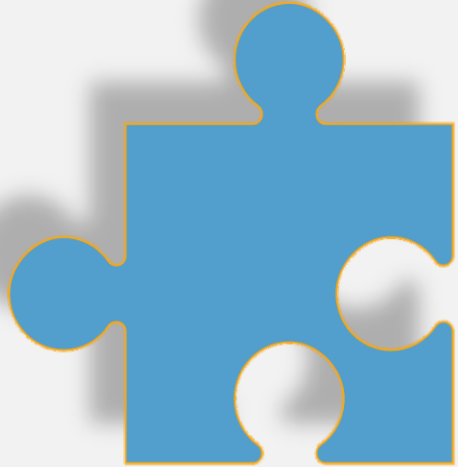
- \$350 million allocated
- Maximum request: \$25 million/application

100 Percent Grant for Tribal Governments and Socially-Vulnerable Communities*

- \$350 million allocated
- Maximum request: \$25 million/application

* Applicants with projects comprised of 100% USDA Economic Research Service designated Frontier and Remote Area (FAR) Level 4 areas can ask for up to \$35M.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE:



Broad Eligibility For Non-profit and For-profit Entities

- States/local governments/political subdivisions
 - *Additional points awarded*
- Corporations, LLCs, and LLPs
- Cooperatives/Mutual Organizations
 - *Additional points awarded*
- U.S. Territories
- Indian Tribes

Co-applications Are Not Allowed

- Public-private partnerships (or any type of partnerships) must have a “lead” applicant that will submit the application and be primarily responsible for program compliance

WHAT IS ELIGIBLE:

➤ Define your service area



➤ Proposed Funded Service Areas (PFSAs) must be

- ✓ Rural
- ✓ 90% Lack 'Sufficient Access' to broadband services

"...any rural area in which households have fixed, terrestrial broadband service delivering at least 100 Mbps downstream, 20 Mbps upstream."

RDOF/CAF II/Other previously funded areas are eligible

WHAT IS ELIGIBLE:

➤ Determine scope



- Funds can be used for broadband projects that include:
 - ✓ Construction
 - ✓ Reconstruction
 - ✓ Acquisition (40% max of request)
- Proposed Projects must be:
 - ✓ Technically feasible
 - ✓ Complete within 5 years
 - ✓ FTTP to all premises in the PFSA

100/100 Mbps Symmetrical Broadband Service to ALL Locations in PFSA

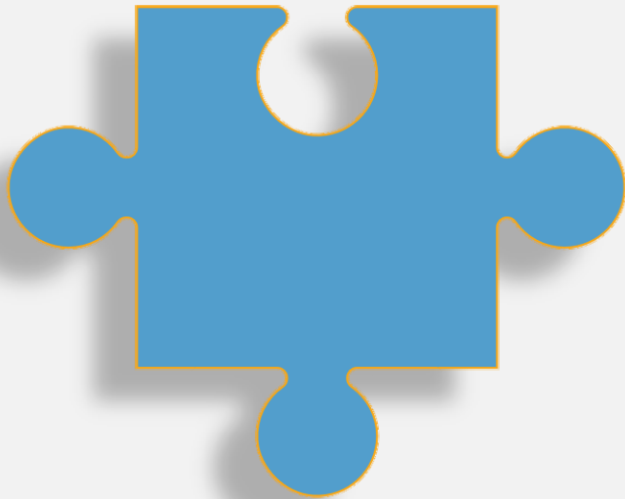
APPLICATION INPUTS

Be prepared!



- ✓ Organizational Documents
- ✓ Audited Financial Statements (Unqualified)
- ✓ Legal Opinion
- ✓ Environmental Questionnaires/Section 106
- ✓ Network Design Certification (P.E. required)
- ✓ Letters of Support (NOT REQUIRED)
- ✓ High-Level Conceptual Engineering
- ✓ Cost Estimates and explanation/basis
- ✓ .shp files of PFSA(s), assets, routes

SCORING CONSIDERATIONS



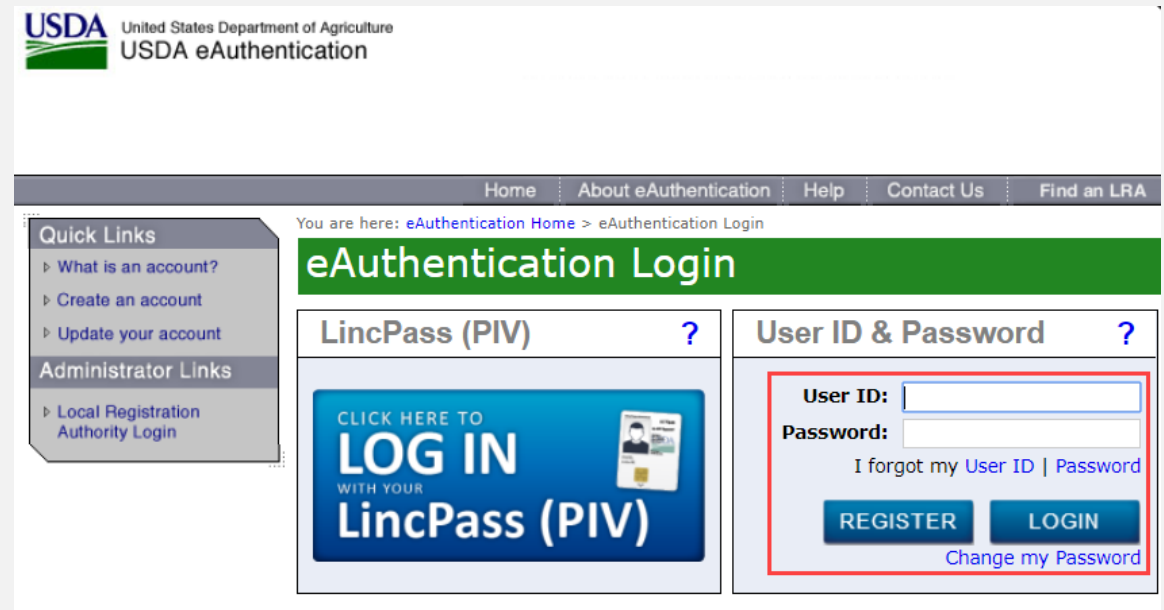
- ✓ **Population density (Rurality)** – 25 points
- ✓ **Level of existing service** – 25 points
- ✓ **Economic need of the community** – 20 points
- ✓ **Affordability** – 20 points
- ✓ **Labor standards** – 20 points
- ✓ **Local governments, non-profits, cooperatives** – 15 points
- ✓ **Tribal governments/lands** – 15 points
- ✓ **Socially Vulnerable Communities** – 15 points
- ✓ **Net neutrality** – 10 points
- ✓ **Wholesale broadband services** – 10 points

Total Possible Points: 175

HOW TO APPLY

Practical Considerations

- ✓ Register on Sam.gov and Grants.gov
- ✓ Level II e-Authentication with USDA
- ✓ Designate Rep-Sign-Cert
- ✓ Authorized Representative Request (ARR)
- ✓ USDA Account Creation
- ✓ Assign User Accounts



The screenshot shows the USDA eAuthentication Login page. At the top, the USDA logo and "United States Department of Agriculture" are displayed, followed by "USDA eAuthentication". A navigation bar includes links for Home, About eAuthentication, Help, Contact Us, and Find an LRA. Below this, a breadcrumb trail reads "You are here: eAuthentication Home > eAuthentication Login". The main heading is "eAuthentication Login". On the left, a "Quick Links" sidebar lists: "What is an account?", "Create an account", "Update your account", "Administrator Links", and "Local Registration Authority Login". The main content area has two columns. The left column, titled "LincPass (PIV)", features a blue box with the text "CLICK HERE TO LOG IN WITH YOUR LincPass (PIV)" and an image of a PIV card. The right column, titled "User ID & Password", contains a red-bordered box with input fields for "User ID:" and "Password:", a link "I forgot my User ID | Password", and buttons for "REGISTER" and "LOGIN". Below the "LOGIN" button is a link "Change my Password".

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Questions?

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