

**2021 ConnectHomeUSA Virtual Summit**

**Federal Funding for Broadband**

**Tuesday, October 5, 2021**

Jason Amirhadji: Great. Thank you so much, and thanks to everyone for joining us. I see folks are still hopping on, but we have a packed presentation today. So, we'll go ahead and get started.

This is a very special session on federal funding opportunities, and it's particularly important that we're having this conversation now with new opportunities that may be on the way with some bills that are going through Congress at the moment. So, I'm very happy that we're starting off with a presentation from the NTIA about better understanding all of the federal funding opportunities that are available beyond even the ones that we're presenting today.

We're going to hand it over to the FCC to talk about the Emergency Broadband Benefit, which has been a big part of the coronavirus response, and it's been available to folks for a few months now. And then we'll have Treasury present on some capital project opportunities before handing it over to USDA to talk about some of their funding programs.

So, not everything in this presentation may be applicable to you and your circumstances, the community, but we hope that this at least gives you a start as you're thinking about leveraging federal funding opportunities.

And, of course, we encourage you to ask questions, if there's anything you need clarification on, using the Q&A. We'll try and respond to those via chat and then also have a few moments at the end of the presentation to engage with the speakers.

But we do encourage you to come back, if you're joining us at 4:00 o'clock today, for the facilitated idea exchange with some of the presenters from this session, which is going to be much more of a discussion -- participant-led discussion from you all about ideas and challenges and opportunities that you might be experiencing in your community. So, if we don't get to your question, please bring those with you this afternoon.

So, again, we have a packed agenda. Without further ado, I'm going to hand it over to the team from NTIA to talk about BroadbandUSA and then some of the tools they have available for anybody to get federal funding opportunities.

Emy Tseng: Hello, my name is Emy Tseng, and thank you so much for this opportunity to speak with the you all. Next slide.

As mentioned, I'm with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, which is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. More specifically, I work on the BroadbandUSA program. Next slide, please.

So, NTIA advises the federal government on telecom policy issues, and we also implement programs focused on expanding broadband access and adoption, federal spectrum, and issues such as privacy and internet governance. Next Slide.

So, we are fully committed to making sure that every American has access to broadband, to affordable, reliable broadband, and that they have the digital skills and opportunities to participate fully in the digital economy and society.

We do this by supporting programs that deploy broadband infrastructure, that support broadband access devices and digital skills. We collaborate a lot at the local and state level as well as federal agencies. So, not only with state, tribal governments, local governments, industry, nonprofits, housing agencies, and also, we use broadband data to inform policies and investments. Next slide, please.

So, I'm just going to give a very quick overview on a couple of current -- or actually, on our current grant program, specifically one program that's currently open. Next slide, please.

So, with the Consolidated Appropriations Act, we were allocated funding for three new grant programs, one of which only -- however, two, the broadband infrastructure deployment grants and tribal broadband connectivity grants, the application period is already closed. So, I encourage you, if you have partners that have applied, to look more into it. But I do want to focus on the actual open funding opportunity, which is the connecting minority communities pilot program. Next slide, please.

Okay. So, with this grant program, we're really excited to have an opportunity to address digital inequities and promote inclusive innovation in some of the most historically marginalized communities by partnering with higher education institutions that specifically focus on minority populations. Next slide, please.

So, this is language from the legislation, and you can see that the focus of this program is on broadband access, particularly on -- in the -- for the institutions themselves, equipment, and digital IT skills and an IT workforce. Next slide, please.

So, just to go into a little bit more detail on the project purposes, so, basically, we are accepting applications, and applicants may request funding for projects that have at least one of the following purposes. One is to build the broadband and IT capacity of the eligible institutions themselves. We've realized that many of the historically black colleges and universities, tribal colleges, and other minority-serving institutions have not necessarily have the access to capital funding and had the funding available to really bolster their IT capacity.

Sorry. We also focus, again, a lot on -- or we're hoping that applicants will submit applications that focus on digital skills and IT workforce capacity, as well as more general broadband adoption and digital inclusion programs because we realize that these institutions are really anchor institutions in their communities. So, they not only assist their students and serve their students, but also, often times, they're a key pillar of the community themselves.

Another aspect is we support broadband and digital inclusion planning activities that are led by these institutions. Next slide.

So, overall, the program goals are, one, and maybe primarily, it's to expand educational and remote learning opportunities. We really felt the importance of this during the pandemic, and a lot of these institutions had to pivot quickly to provide remote learning.

Again, the whole development of a diverse and inclusive IT workforce, and the overall goal, of course, is to spur economic development, workforce development, and entrepreneurship, particularly in minority communities. So, next slide, please.

So, who can apply? Again, as I mentioned, the eligible recipients are institutions of higher learning, which includes HBCUs, TCUs, as well as other minority-serving institutions as designated by the Department of Education. So, this includes Hispanic serving institutions, native serving institutions, Asian American and Native American, Pacific Islander and predominantly black institutions.

I just wanted to say that many of these institutions, particularly the different minority-serving institutions, are often community colleges and two-year institutions are locally focused institutions.

So, I know that in my past experience with ConnectHome and public housing agencies that many of you do partnerships with local community colleges and local, again, community-oriented institutions. So, I would really encourage you to, one, inform your partners who fit this description about this opportunity and see if there are ways to leverage.

Another aspect of this, again, is to not only serve the student body but also to serve the surrounding low-income communities. So, an eligible applicant could be actually a consortia, a group of institutions led by an institution with minority business enterprises and non-profits. So, minority business enterprises and nonprofits can receive funding as sub-recipients under this grant program. Next slide.

I'm going to skip through this, but if you are interested in applying, the next two slides has much more detail on the types of eligible expenses that there are. Again, equipment.

Actually, I want to highlight that staff and personnel is supported on this program because we at NTIA really believe that there needs to be a more holistic wraparound approach to digital inclusion, which includes funding people as well as equipment. Next slide, please.

Again, you can see more. We're also focused a lot on program evaluation. This is a pilot program, and so we do -- this is not only to serve the communities during this actual iteration of the grant but to actually carry best practices going forward. Next slide.

The actual close -- the grant application period closes December 1st. So, I really encourage you all to talk to your higher education partners, see if they fit the description of a minority-serving institution, an HBCU, or tribal college. We're really hoping for a partnership. So, also, applications from the institutions themselves focused just on their students are just as welcome. So -- but in terms of partnerships with housing agencies, this is something that we can support.

And I also encourage you to come to our webinar. I forget the exact dates, but I'll post the link to the registration. I think it's October 21st or so, and we have a whole series of webinars, and we have recordings on them. So, if you are interested in applying, please, I'll post the link to the website. Next slide, please.

A couple more program requirements. This is a two-year period with a one-year possible extension. There's no match requirement, which people -- which we love to be able to say. About 40 percent of the funds are designated for HBCUs, and 20 percent of the funds are designated specifically for subsidizing supporting broadband access and devices to the students. And also, the priority of this program are low-income students in need. So, again, that's much of the focus of the program, and there's the money set aside for their needs. Next slide, please.

We have a tool to help identify eligible institutions. We have information about this on our website. So, I won't go through it now. And next slide, please.

A couple -- I'll just touch on two more tools that might be of use. Next slide.

One is our indicators of broadband need maps, which allows communities and states to analyze broadband and digital inclusion data from all sorts of sources, which can be really helpful for you as you apply for grants to basically back up your statements of need with actual data. Next slide, please.

And since so much of the funding is actually coming through the states, whether it's from a federal agency like Department of Ed or many of the states have begun funding programs around broadband and digital inclusion, particularly after the pandemic, I really encourage you to reach out to your state broadband office. We have a directory here. We also have a directory of local government programs, but I feel that a lot of you are already connected with your local governments but not necessarily with your state governments. And next, I'll hand it off to my colleague, Caitlin. Thank you.

Caitlin Sullivan: Thanks, Emy. Hi, everyone. My name is Caitlin Sullivan, and I'm a broadband program specialist with NTIA. Today, I'm just going to share a little bit about our federal funding website where you can search for funding opportunities and some of the associated resources. Next slide, please.

So, our federal funding website is a one stop for information on all broadband funding across all federal agencies through a searchable database. So, on our website, you'll be able to search by eligible recipient, program area, or sponsoring agency or department. And I'm actually going to go ahead and share my screen and provide you all with a little demo of our website and some of our associated resources.

So, hopefully, you all can see my screen, and this is our federal funding website. So, we actually recently added this how to use this site blurb to share information about what the website is for and how to use the tools associated with it.

The federal funding website contains information on over 90 programs compiled from 12 federal agencies and the FCC, and we conduct a major annual push to update the website where we reach out to the federal agencies and the FCC, asking that they update the information for their programs that are annual or to provide information on any new programs that will be released in the fiscal year.

And I actually just want to acknowledge Dina, who was integral in providing that information for HUD to us. So, thank you, Dina.

So, we continue to update, though, with new programs. Even though we do that annual push, we can update with new programs as they are released. So, for example, EDA's new programs that were released in August through the American Rescue Plan, we made sure to update those.

And when I was developing our Interactive Federal Funding Guide, which I'm going to speak more about in a little bit, we also did another push out to agencies asking that they make any updates to their programs or provide us with any information on new programs.

So, as I said before, you are able to filter on this website to specify what type of programs you need. So, again, you can filter by agency department. You can filter by eligible recipients. So, we have libraries, K-12 schools, higher ed, various types of government entities, for-profit organizations, nonprofit organizations, as well as program purpose.

And what's really great about these filters is that they are stackable. So, you can choose an eligible recipient and a program purpose at the same time and, specifically, with the eligible recipients and program purpose, you can choose more than one filter from these categories at the same time. But for today's demo, I'm actually just going to filter by HUD programs and show you one of our HUD pages.

So, I'm going to click on Choice Neighborhoods, and it will open up the program page for the Choice Neighborhoods. So, you can see on these pages we have information about the agency department, the federal agency or bureau where this program came from, the program name, program overview, the CFDA number, if one is applicable, the program website, the type of funding, link to any application sites, NOFOs or grants.gov, if applicable, the NOFO type, any important dates, if applicable, the appropriations amount and, if applicable, we also have specific broadband amount for the programs included here as well.

And then, again, these program purpose and eligible recipients. So, these are linked back to those filters.

Publicly available programmatic data, the contact information for who operates this program and any additional information that is included. And so, again, these -- this information comes directly to the -- from the agencies to us, and they deliver that information to us by filling out a template, which I'm going to show here.

So, these are what our templates look like, and, as you can see here, it has all of the same categories. This is just a PDF version of the template, but this is exactly -- it looks exactly like what the agencies receive. They fill this out and send it back to us, and then we take this information to update the program pages on the website.

So, I'm just going to jump back to our main page here. So, any time, even if you have a filter on, you'll still see our how to use the site blurb will always show up at the top. And I just want to highlight some of our other resources that are available on the site as well.

So, first, we have a PDF guide. So, that link is right here, and our PDF guide is just a compilation of all of these templates into one PDF form. So -- and they're filtered out by agency, so you can, again, click down, but you can download that.

And we also have a spreadsheet. So, this spreadsheet was actually developed at the request of stakeholders to allow stakeholders to filter based on their needs and have all of the information in one space.

And then our newest is our Interactive Federal Funding Guide. And I'm actually going to also show a demo of that.

So, this is our Interactive Federal Funding Guide, and I've already downloaded it here. And the interactive guide provides a step-by-step approach to searching for federal funding opportunities. What's also really great about this guide is that it can be downloaded and used offline or on multiple platforms.

It works, actually, really well on mobile devices. So, it's really accessible for users who may not have access or not have -- or don't have great access to internet resources or only have mobile access. And, again, this interactive guide was actually built and developed out in response to some of those needs of stakeholders.

So, I'm going to go get here and click begin. And so, we have developed this based off of the website, but we did kind of take a higher-level look with these categories. So, we have three categories here. So, the community anchor institutions, governments, and industry businesses and co-ops. Today I'm going to click all eligible entities. And as you can see, we have all of the same eligible entities that were also on the website.

So, for today, I'm going to click out local government, which is going to bring us to our next page where we can see the program purposes. Again, they're the same things that were on the website, but you can go ahead and click. I'm going to go with broadband infrastructure, and it's going to bring me to all the programs that are applicable to local governments for broadband infrastructure deployment.

So, I'm going to go to click to the next page, and we see we have some HUD. And I'm going to go again with Choice Neighborhoods, and we can see here this is a condensed version of what was on that website. So, this is just really key high-level information that agencies would want to be able to make a determination if this is a program they want to view more.

So, it's the same information just condensed a little bit. So, just department, program overview, important dates, contact information, the program website, and then we also link it back to the federal funding site, if somebody -- if a user wants to look at the additional information on that website.

And then if somebody wants to look back, they can hit the main menu, and they start the process over again. And so, this is our newest resource. We've gotten a lot of great feedback on it, but we're always open to more feedback from anybody. Any recommendations as well as for our federal funding site. And so, with that, I'm actually going to stop sharing and turn it over to our next presenter, Ryan Palmer with the FCC.

Ryan Palmer: Great. Can you hear me out there? Great. Okay. Well, hello. My name is Ryan Palmer and I am chief of the Telecommunications Access Policy Division and I really want to thank everyone for inviting me here today. It's great to be here. And I -- you can go to the next slide, please.

Yes. That's -- so, like I said, I'm the chief of the Telecommunications Access Policy Division in the Wireline Competition Bureau at the FCC, and our primary mission is to advance the goals of universal service that all Americans have access to robust, affordable broadband and voice services.

Traditionally, we use our high-cost, e-rate, Lifeline, and rural health care programs to pursue our mission. But today, I'm here to talk about a new program appropriated by Congress, which is the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. Next slide. Thank you so much.

The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, it was established by the Commission on May 12th of 2021, and that's when we launched the \$3.2 billion program pursuant to the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program provides a temporary discount on monthly broadband bills for qualifying low-income households. And we'll go through how you qualify for the program here in a minute.

And when you're in the program, those eligible households can receive up to \$50 a month as a discount for their broadband service and associated equipment rentals and up to \$75 a month for households on tribal lands. And you're also eligible to receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, desktop, or tablet purchased through a participating provider.

So, as of this week, we have over 6.17 -- 6,177,000 households enrolled in the program, and we continue to grow at a steady rate of over -- a little over 200,000 households joining the program per week. We have over 120,000 tribal households enrolled in the program and about 1,000 -- around 1,000 broadband providers across the country participating in the program. So, we're very excited about the progress that we've made, and we continue to gain momentum. Next slide, please.

So, how do you qualify for the program? There's a couple main tracks. If -- pursuant to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, it included a number of ways for people to be eligible for the program, in addition to being eligible through our Lifeline program, which we'll get to on the next slide.

But here, if you look at on this slide we have, you're eligible for this program if you received a Pell Grant in the current award year, if you were approved to receive benefits under the free and

reduced school lunch program or school breakfast program in the years listed there, you experienced is substantial loss of income due to a job loss or furlough starting -- or starting on February 29th of 2020, as long as your household total income are below those levels listed there, and -- or if you meet the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's already existing low-income or COVID-19 program. So, those are all pathways into the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program for a household. Next slide, please.

But as I mentioned, you can also qualify if any members of your household qualify for the Lifeline program, which is our historical universal service fund low-income program. And the couple -- the ways you can qualify for that are whether you have a household income less than 135 percent of the federal poverty guidelines or if a member of the household participates in one of the programs listed there like SNAP, SSI, Federal Public Housing Assistance, veterans pension and survivor benefits. There's certain travel programs and Medicaid as well.

So, those are the pathways through our Lifeline program, which will also qualify you for the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, in addition to the other ways we discussed on the previous slide. Next slide, please.

So, there are three main ways to enroll in the program. One is a consumer can contact a participating provider directly to learn about their application process, and you can go on our administrator USAC, the Universal Service Administrative Company's website, to find links to those providers in your area.

You can go to [emergencybroadband.org](https://emergencybroadband.org) to apply online and also find participating providers through the companies near me tool. And Option three is you can send a mail-in application, for those who would prefer that, along with proof of eligibility to the Emergency Broadband Support Center.

So, we've tried to ensure different pathways to the program that work for different consumers out there. Next slide, please.

Just some resources here that we'll take that you can -- we'll distribute this information. We have a lot of great info out there about our programs. We have toolkits like fliers and PSAs for getting people involved, if people want to get out and promote the program and get eligible households in their communities to enroll.

There's trackers on where the program is going and how much -- how many people are enrolling, what those trends are. So, there's a lot of -- and FAQs, which are really helpful and which we're updating as we go. So, as we get new questions, receive new issues, we update that with our administrator USAC to make sure that there's answers out there for people who have questions about the program.

So, I encourage anybody who is interested in the program to look at those resources because we really think there's a lot of good stuff out there.

And one thing that it's not on a slide, but I did want to address, I know we're all interested in, is how the Infrastructure Bill might impact the FCC and specifically the EBB program.

So, what I do want to say is 100 percent of what I'm saying is based off publicly available versions of the bill. And so, like everything else on the Hill, things change and they may already have changed. But this is based on the -- what I think is the most recent public information of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Bill.

So, in that it includes language which, if enacted, would extend the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program with some modifications. The successor program, which in the legislation that I saw is called the Affordable Connectivity Program, would retain most of the eligibility criteria from the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program.

A couple differences that we have seen are there would be additional eligibility criteria. So, households with an income at or below 200 percent of the poverty -- federal poverty guidelines would be able to participate in the program. As I just mentioned, for Lifeline and also EBB, the threshold is currently 135 percent. So, that's a change. Also, households who receive assistance through WIC, the Women, Infants, and Children program, would be eligible for the affordable connectivity program.

Some changes in the other direction different from EBB that -- some eliminated eligibility criteria are the substantial loss of income due to a job loss or furlough since February 29th of 2020 and, also, if you're meeting the requirements of an approved providers COVID-19 related broadband program.

And the subsidy would drop from \$50 to \$30 dollars but remain up to \$75 or up -- from up to \$50 to up to \$30 and then up to \$75 it would remain on tribal lands. And the bill did dedicate \$14.2 billion in funding for the -- for what we're -- for the Affordable Connectivity Program, which would make this more of a longer-term program than EBB, which, once again, was \$3.2 billion.

So, that's what we think we know, based on public information out there, about what we're planning, thinking about with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Bill. And I think that's my last slide. So, thank you very much.

Jeffrey Sural: Great. Thank you. And this is Jeff Sural. I'm with U.S. Treasury's Capital Funds Project team, and I'm going to give you a brief overview and summary of the Capital Projects Fund. So, next slide, please.

And next slide. This is standard disclaimer. You don't have to read all of it.

So, the Capital Projects Fund is a \$10 billion fund appropriated under the American Rescue Plan to provide funding for governments to build critical capital projects to aid their response to the pandemic. Now, a key priority of the program is to make funding available for reliable, affordable broadband infrastructure and other digital connectivity technology projects.

This pandemic has shown us that broadband infrastructure is indispensable for access to critical services and participation in many aspects of daily life, including remote work, telehealth, and distance learning.

There are three main goals of the fund. First, recovery. The fund provides eligible governments with a substantial infusion of resources to meet their capital investment needs as part of the COVID-19 recovery, complementing the larger \$350 billion state and local funds that you may be familiar with.

Second, equity. As Secretary Yellen has said, long before COVID infected a single individual, we were living in an economy where certain segments of the population were falling further and further behind. This fund aims to address those inequities by improving access to critical services in communities with a critical need.

And third, lasting infrastructure. This fund aims to contribute to the administration's goal to provide modern infrastructure necessary to access critical services, including broadband access. Next slide, please.

So, the allocations are listed here. Out of the \$10 billion, states are allocated \$9.8 billion, and then territories for the associated states, \$100 million and tribal governments \$100 million, with each tribal government allocated approximately \$167,000. If you want more specifics about the allocations, you can find them here at our website at [treasury.gov/CPF](https://treasury.gov/CPF). Next slide, please.

So, how can these funds be used? And I should mention that the funds are accessed through an application process. States, territories, and tribes -- so, states, territory, and tribes are eligible applicants. They will receive the money, and then they can distribute to sub-recipients for projects that meet the following criteria.

First, must be an investment in a capital asset directly and jointly to enable work, education, and health monitoring. All three activities must be present. Then second, the project must be designed to address a critical need that resulted from the public health crisis. Third, the project must be designed to address a critical need in the community to be served by it.

To simplify the process for governments, Treasury identified several use categories that are presumptively eligible, so long as they align with the terms and standards that I just outlined. However, the program is flexible enough to allow governments that may wish to pursue other projects that meet the statutory requirements, and I'll talk about those in a minute. Next slide, please.

For the presumptively eligible uses, you can see here that we have broadband infrastructure projects, digital connectivity technology projects, multi-purpose community facilities, and then the case-by-case reviews I'll talk about, and I'll just mention some ineligible uses in a minute. Next slide, please.

So, broadband infrastructure is a presumptively eligible use of the funds. Treasury has simplified the application process to make sure that the money to pursue these types of projects have already met the certain standards that we've outlined in the guidance.

There are some encouragements or requirements in the guidance that I would encourage you to go and review. A couple of these here. First, while Treasury encourages recipients to invest in areas without access to reliable wireline speeds of 100 megabits per second download, 20 megabits per second upload, there is some flexibility to determine other community's need that could benefit from a buildout of the wireline service.

Second, projects must be designed to reliably deliver speeds of 100 megabits per second upload and download symmetrical. So, just want to make sure that folks are aware of that requirement. If it's impracticable to do a 100/100 symmetrical, you can do 120, but it must be scalable to 100/100 over time.

The other requirement or encouragement is that recipients -- I'm sorry -- the requirement that recipients ensure that completed service offerings funded by the Capital Projects Fund allow subscribers in the service area to utilize the FCC's EBB program, which you just heard about. So, if you are a broadband provider that's receiving these funds to build out, then you will need to make sure that you are accepting EBB funds for your subscribers.

So, some examples would be, for example, high-speed fiber network in a rural area of a state where providers have historically been hesitant to go because of cost. It could be an urban area where the service is currently unaffordable. It could be a fiber-based Wi-Fi buildout to an affordable housing unit. Next slide, please.

The other presumptively eligible category is what we call digital connectivity technology projects. This would be funds to purchase or install devices like equipment. It could be laptops. It could be Wi-Fi routers, something that facilitates robust broadband access that enables work, education, and health monitoring to community members.

An example of a presumptively eligible program is a short-term or long-term program for libraries to loan out laptops to low-income families. Just wanted to note that iPhones and televisions are not presumptively eligible because these devices don't permit users to fully participate in the three criteria that I outlined, but it may be eligible under the case-by-case. Next slide, please.

And then, finally, the last presumptively eligible category is multi-purpose community facility projects. These are buildings designed to jointly enable work, education, health monitoring, and to address a critical need in the community. These projects and facilities must directly and jointly enable all three of those activities that I just mentioned.

Some examples might be a full-service community school that provides academic, workforce training, and health monitoring programming. It may be a library that provides public internet access for work, school, and health monitoring among additional resources like digital skills training.

It could be a community health center that, in addition to providing health monitoring, offers a broad range of services, including the educational and career opportunities so that workforce requirement could be met. So, those are the presumptively eligible categories. Now, next slide, we'll move on to case-by-case.

And this is the part of the application where states, territories, or tribes may propose a project that would meet the three criteria that I've outlined that also are designed to address a critical need that resulted from the COVID-19 public health emergency and are designed to address a critical need in the community to be served by it. So, if they meet those three criteria, then the project would be eligible or allowable, but it will go -- undergo a little bit more scrutiny than the publicly or presumptively eligible projects.

And then just a quick slide. Next slide, please. Ineligible uses. Highways, bridges, transit systems, ports are ineligible because they don't meet the three criteria outlined in the American Rescue Plan. So, I won't spend too much time there in the interest of time, but please review our guidance that's found at our website. Next slide, please.

And finally, I just want to leave you with the application deadlines. So, all applications must be completed no later than December 27th, 2021. That's for states and territories. So, if you're a state and territory, you submit the application, and then the second part of the application -- what we would call an application process or most people would, we called it the grant plan. So, the grant plan is where you, the state or territory, would give us more details about the program that you're using the funds for. And you have up to a year to submit the grant plan and have it approved by Treasury.

Tribal governments, it's a little bit different. The application and the grant plan are contained in one document, and tribes have until June 1st, 2022 to submit that application and tell us what they'll be using the funds for. And just another note that funds are not released to the tribes or the states and territories until the grant plans are submitted and approved. Next slide, please.

I believe that's all I have here. So, happy to answer any questions. We have a email address here for you and you're welcome to email us with your questions and we will try to respond to you in a timely fashion. That's it for me. So, I will turn it over to Robert, I believe.

Robert Tse: Oh, okay. I think you can hear me. Next slide.

Well, I'm Robert Tse, senior policy advisor at USDA Rural Development. Next slide.

I'm going to go through Rural Development as part of USDA that focuses on improving the rural economy and quality of life in rural America, and we have a whole series of programs. I won't read through those. I'm just going to focus on our broadband programs. But what's bolded gives you any idea of the range of things that rural development covers. Next slide.

So, I thought, actually, it's a little bit important to explain why rural development is in broadband, and the Rural Utilities Service, where I am, is a direct descendant of the Rural

Electrification Agency, which was created in the 1930s to bring electricity to rural areas. And at that time, electricity had come to all the big cities but was not coming to rural areas, and that program was set up. It was a new deal program.

In the late '40s and early '50s, Rural Utilities Service went into financing rural telephone service, and then in the '90s we expanded into broadband. And so, there's this whole gradual expansion of what we do. Next slide.

So, that gives you an idea we're broken out into three different components, and I'm at the Rural Utility Service. Next slide.

These are the four basic programs we have, the Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program, Community Connect Grant, the ReConnect Program, and the Distance Learning Telemedicine Program. Next slide.

I'll just give you a snapshot of each one of those. The Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program is a linear descendant of the Rural Telephone Program. So, it actually goes back in those roots. It's intended to focus on communities with less than 5,000 in population. This program is open year-round. The principal applicants have been rural telephone companies that are shifting into broadband. Next slide.

The Community Connect Grant Program, this program is intended for cities or towns or areas with 20,000 or less in population. Funding threshold is \$100,000 to \$3 million. It does have a 15 percent match requirement. We have a definition of broadband service here, which is much lower than what you just heard about from Treasury, but that's a much older -- that actually reflects the time period when those definitions were created of 10/1 as defining as unserved and then the requirement that you build to 25/3 in terms of service. Next slide. Next slide.

The ReConnect Program is the newest program. It was created by Congress about three years ago with about originally \$550 million in funding. It ranges around, I think, now around \$600 million, \$650 million in total funding. This is a grant -- loan grant and loan program. Again, this program is focused on communities of 20,000 or less in population, and there is a match, if you apply for a grant, of 25 percent. Again, you see here the standard of 10/1 and 25/3. We define 10/1 as the definition of unserved of -- and then 25/3 as what you have to fund to or more.

We have -- let's see how many projects. We've got 181 projects from round one and round two in the last two years, the total of \$1.5 billion. 293,000 households are impacted by this in 35 states. 32 year -- 32 projects are under construction, and I think it's very noticeable because, when you talk infrastructure, it's often years or decades it takes to actually get them going. And we've done this in less than two years. We have these projects.

There will be around three sometime coming this fall or early next year, which will be announced. And that's all I can tell you for that. Next slide.

The Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program, it's actually very similar to what you just heard about these programs like that Treasury has. This is a program that there are grants of

\$50,000 to \$1 million. It's focused in rural areas but not entirely in rural areas. And this year we have about \$50 million with 106 awards. Next slide.

I won't go over because I think you've already heard about this whole aspect of distance learning and telemedicine. It is not a infrastructure program. It is a program that is set up to help connect to the internet. So, there's a telemedicine and distance learning aspect to that program. Things that we fund are the aspects of telemedicine, which are a little bit unique about it is the focus on opioid and substance use disorder and then distance learning. Next slide.

So, those are the four programs. Eligible entities, and these are, essentially, a telecommunications entity, but eligible entities for all these programs is pretty broad. It's for-profit corporations, limited -- or limited liability companies, non-profits, cooperatives, state and local government, federally-recognized tribes.

Now, just make a note on cooperatives that USDA created rural electric cooperatives in the 1930s quite successfully. Those were mostly in the Midwest, Plains, and South where that was created, but those same rural electric cooperatives are now going into broadband. They're some of our best applicants. Next slide.

And so, that's -- I'm going to end here. That's the snapshot showing the rural development and the whole range of programs there. And I guess I'm done.

Jason Amirhadji: All right. Thank you so much to all of our presenters. I know that was a lot of information, and we've had some great questions already coming through the chat, some of which have been answered but some outstanding questions actually for Ryan I know we'll be addressing at 4:00 o'clock this afternoon.

So, you mentioned that the EBB assistance is temporary and that there is a proposal in Congress right now that could change some of the parameters or extend it. But if that doesn't happen, what happens now? How long can people get the discount, and then what happens at the end when the funding runs out [inaudible] when the program terminates?

Ryan Palmer: Yeah. That's a great question. Thank you, Jason, and thank you for the question.

So, the order that we -- the commission implemented, that we're implementing, the commission issued setting up the program anticipated the end of the program as well. So, there's a process for our administrator to forecast based on enrollments and the payments that are going out so that we can know ahead of time and the providers and the consumers, importantly, in the program can also prepare for that process of winding down the program.

We're not there yet to where we've made any announcements or we know -- we're projecting which month that would be, but there's a process for going through that which we are doing now that we'll provide notice when we get there.

Jason Amirhadji: Great. And in terms of what happens to people who are participating in the program, so, let's say they had a really good deal before the program. They're getting this benefit

now up to \$50 a month, and then the program goes away. Can you just share what would happened to people? Is there a chance that their bills would go up, forced to switch to the plan? I think a lot of people are concerned about it.

Ryan Palmer: So, absolutely. And that's also something that we policymakers and the commissioners tried to address or did address from the outset. And there's a process for the providers to reach out to the consumers and see if they would be interested, and they would have to affirmatively consent to participating in a program once the -- one of their broadband programs or subscribed once our -- this fund runs out of money. So, there's a process for reaching out and seeing how that would go.

I should note that the one thing we talked about briefly at the end with the Affordable Connectivity Program in the infrastructure bill, if that comes along, the commission will have to figure out how these things -- how these two programs work and if there's a way to -- for a handoff there. There's a lot of things the commissioners would have to look at and, of course, we have to look at the final legislation. But it could be that there's a process for transitioning from one program to another for consumers as well. We'd have to wait and see.

Jason Amirhadji: So, more details to come.

Ryan Palmer: Absolutely.

Jason Amirhadji: So, I know that people have more follow-up on that, but I want to ask a few other questions that came in for you. So, if someone is receiving currently Lifeline, how does the EBB interact with that? Does it matter if they're getting Lifeline for the phone or for internet? Can they get both EBB and Lifeline?

Ryan Palmer: So, they're separate programs. You can get both. Good thing is, if you're eligible for Lifeline, you know you're eligible for EBB. So, that's a big help. So -- but they're separate programs. There's some providers and consumers who like to stack the benefits together where you get the \$925 from Lifeline and the benefit from BBB to -- on one benefit. There are some people that would -- consumers who prefer to keep their Lifeline benefits separate from EBB and maybe even with different providers. And that's perfectly fine as well. So, it's -- it can be worked in ways to sort of fit the situation.

Jason Amirhadji: Okay. Great. And a couple more questions for you, and then I'll have some for the panel. Understanding that the EBB is only available through ISPs that opt in, is there any -- what about folks whose ISP hasn't opted in? [inaudible], I guess, if they would [inaudible] what option for ISP provider?

Ryan Palmer: So, the legislation for EBB and our regulation or laws that we follow, we're not -- we don't force providers into the program. It's just not the way that Congress set it up or intended it.

But I will say we've had excellent participation levels, and lots of -- let's say, around 1,000 or more providers in the program of all different shapes and sizes, urban, rural, and all sorts of big

and small and medium. So, we've seen a lot of active participation with the current setup, but this is the way that Congress anticipated us to be doing it.

Jason Amirhadji: Okay. Great and question for you, and then I'll open this up to everybody. So, we talked a lot today about connectivity. That's just one of the three legs of the stool. I understand that there's also a device benefit for EBB. Can you talk a little bit about that? And then for other folks, if you can also talk about any opportunities for devices and [inaudible]?

Ryan Palmer: Yeah. I'd love to. So, this one thing that is different and exciting for us policy nerds about this program is that it does provide a benefit for a device, which, historically, Lifeline and our USF programs do not fund end user devices.

So, in this program, EBB, you can receive a device -- up to \$100 towards a device. You do have to contribute, I believe it's \$10 from the consumer side. So, there is a skin-in-the-game aspect that was -- that came from the legislation. But many providers are offering and many consumers are taking advantage of this now and using that \$100 towards acquiring a device that they'll be able to use long after this program has transitioned to something else.

Jason Amirhadji: Great. Thank you. Other folks on the panel want to add, and I'll also broaden it, if you can talk about opportunities for funding digital literacy training as well? All right. Folks are thinking about that, it looks like. So, while our panelists are thinking --

Emy Tseng: I guess --

Jason Amirhadji: Go ahead.

Emy Tseng: I'll address a question that I think that's related to that, what you just asked about digital literacy training. And there's a question about tutoring elderly on the use of broadband.

I just want to say for the CMC program, again, the focus, the applications are open for eligible institutions of higher learning, but that may include programs that, for example, have their students do -- become digital navigators and do apprenticeships or do community trainings. So, that would be an eligible use of funds. And that -- we've seen some success with, particularly, again, I mentioned community college students gaining credit.

Our program will also support stipends and apprenticeships and things and digital navigators, as long as it's organized through a college or university -- an eligible college or university.

Jason Amirhadji: Great. Thanks, Emy. Anyone else want to jump in? I have one last question about -- not the EBB, but the Emergency Connectivity Fund [inaudible] another FCC program.

Can you talk a little bit about that and then how PHAs might be able to connect with anchor institutions that are eligible for the Emergency Connectivity Fund, such as libraries and schools, to benefit residents? So, even though PHA aren't directly able to apply, how could they work with eligible applicants to make sure that, for example, students have access to devices [inaudible]?

Ryan Palmer: Yes. So, absolutely. That's in -- so, the Emergency Connectivity Fund is another exciting appropriated program that's come along recently. It's works sort of alongside our e-rate program. So, the same applicants for e-rate apply to this program, schools and libraries across the country.

Once again, this is funding devices, which is not something that we've done and other services that we haven't done in the past. So, schools and libraries apply when they identify their constituents, library patrons, or students, teachers who need to be connected that can't, and they apply to this program.

I believe it was \$7.2 billion appropriation, and in the first funding window, we received over \$5.1 billion dollars in funding -- approved funding requests and -- or we had funding commitments of around \$5.1 billion.

The second window is open now as we speak. And like you said, schools and libraries apply. So, I would encourage those who are interested in this program to work with your local school administrators and libraries to see if there's a way to make them aware of some of their constituents or students or library patrons who could use this program, so when they're applying, they're taking that into consideration.

Jason Amirhadji: Well, thank you so much, and thanks to all of our presenters. I know not everyone got to be highlighted in the Q&A, but that's because they'll be joining us again at 4:00 o'clock for the facilitated idea exchange. So, I hope you will join folks from the NTIA and agriculture at that time.

But I want to thank all of our speakers and, most importantly, all of you all for joining us today. As federal partners, this is one of our -- I think our greatest contributions to this space is helping to link folks to these kind of opportunities. So, we hope this was useful, and thank you for all of the great questions and engagement and for all the work that folks are doing this very important area during the pandemic.

We look forward to seeing you all again at 4:00 o'clock, and we have another session coming up. So, see you there. Thanks, everyone.

(END)