



NYS Broadband Flash Bulletin

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USDA Amends Regulations for Community Connect Broadband Grant Program

This week the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), a Rural Development agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) proposed to amend its existing regulations for the Community Connect broadband grant program and is seeking public comment on how RUS should change the current regulations governing this grant.

The plan would allow USDA to give funding priority to broadband projects in areas of greatest need. The changes would apply to projects funded through the Community Connect grant program, which is administered RUS.

In addition to targeting resources to the most unserved rural communities, the proposed changes would streamline the grant application process. Applicants would be able to use matching funds to cover operating costs of broadband projects (they cannot do so now), and they would be able to use grant funds for an entire geographic area instead of for a single community. The changes also would allow application scoring criteria to include factors such as the speed of proposed broadband service, and the level of service provided to people with disabilities.

The deadline to submit comments is before January 15, 2013. To review the entire proposal visit <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-11-16/html/2012-27631.htm>.



FCC Seeks Comments on the Connect America Fund

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is seeking comment on potential modifications to the rules governing the Connect America Fund (CAF). These changes are being proposed to accelerate the deployment of broadband to consumers who lack access and also to allocate the \$185 million in remaining 2012 broadband funds.

The FCC hopes to disburse the available funds to bring robust broadband networks to consumers and businesses as soon as possible, and intends to proceed expeditiously with this rulemaking. **Comments are due on or before January 28, 2013** and reply comments are due on or before February 11, 2013.

These changes would expand on the steps the FCC has already taken in Phase I earlier this year, while they continue to implement Phase II.

To view the proposed changes visit and information on how to submit comments visit <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-12-28/html/2012-31084.htm>.

For more information on the Connect America Fund, visit <http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/connecting-america>.



FCC Creates Healthcare Connect Fund

The Federal Communications Commission established the Healthcare Connect Fund, to reform and modernize its universal service program for health care. The program will provide \$400 million annually to expand access for health care providers to the high-bandwidth connections they need for modern telemedicine.

The program is designed to:

- Remove limitations on technology and provider type involved in tele-health services
- Encourage collaboration between smaller rural health care providers and urban medical centers. This will enable remote hospitals and clinics to draw on the medical, technical and administrative resources of larger providers
- Require healthcare providers participating in the initiative to contribute 35% of the costs, while providing lower rates through group buying
- Support most cost-effective way for healthcare providers to connect, whether it be purchasing broadband services from providers or allowing health care providers to construct new broadband networks when that is the most cost effective option
- Paying for upgrades to higher speed service necessary for health care applications



In addition, the reforms establish a new competitive Pilot Program to test expanding broadband healthcare networks to skilled nursing facilities. Up to \$50 million over three years will be available from the fund for these competitively-awarded pilots.

To read the FCC's press release visit http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2012/db1212/DOC-317912A1.pdf.

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