PPACG TRI-COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS & BROADBAND WORKING GROUP

MAY 12TH, 2022

2:30 – 4:00 PM
AGENDA

1. Introductions
2. Purpose & Need
3. Broadband Funding Opportunities
4. Facilitated Discussion
   • What current or upcoming broadband-related plans, projects, or initiatives are underway in your community?
   • What are the main obstacles or challenges related to next steps or future projects?
   • What kind of multi-jurisdictional collaboration, conversation, or pooling of resources might be helpful? What topics you would be interested in exploring further through this group?
   • Do you agree that broadband infrastructure is appropriate to integrate into a broader ‘one dig’ policy for roadway construction projects?
5. Next Steps
BROADBAND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

• Federal
  • Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment (BEAD) Program
  • Affordable Connectivity Program
  • Community Connect Grant Program
  • Community Development Block Grant Program
  • Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program

• State
  • Broadband Interconnectivity Grant Program
  • Broadband Planning and Infrastructure Set-Aside (DOLA)
Broadband Funding Opportunities

- Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment (BEAD) Program
  - Main broadband component of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
  - $43 billion for states, territories, and DC to use for broadband deployment, mapping, and adoption projects
    - Initial allocation of $100 million to each state for planning efforts
  - Funding priority goes to un/underserved locations (based on service metrics)
  - Technical assistance webinars have been offered ahead of the formal program launch
    - Broadband tech/economics; engagement and partnerships; enabling conditions for deployment
    - [https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/grant-programs/broadband-equity-access-and-deployment-bead-program](https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/grant-programs/broadband-equity-access-and-deployment-bead-program)
  - Full program and application rules will be released later this year (advance planning encouraged)
BROADBAND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

• Community Connect Grant Program
  • USDA program providing financial assistance for acquiring broadband in rural, economically challenged communities
    • Applicants can be government agencies, Tribes, and other legal entities
  • Eligibility based on current broadband speed levels
  • Funds can be used for construction, land acquisition, and service costs (15% local match required)
  • Next application window will open in Fall 2022
    • $80 million awarded in 2021, about $3 million per project
BROADBAND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

• Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program
  • USDA program offering loans to help finance construction, maintenance, improvement, and expansion of broadband in rural communities
  • Legal entities in areas/towns with populations below 5,000 may apply
  • Variety of loan structures and terms are available
  • Applications are accepted and considered on a rolling year-round basis
BROADBAND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

• Affordable Connectivity Program
  • Formerly known as the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program
  • Provides financial assistance to individuals and families for purchasing internet service
  • Up to $30 per month is provided
  • Eligible individuals/families must meet one of several specific income and need-based criteria
Broadband Funding Opportunities

- Other
  - Community Development Block Grant Program:
    - Broad-scope HUD program to help fund a variety of community development activities
  - Colorado Department of Local Affairs Programs:
    - One-time $5,000,000 allotment was approved for broadband connectivity grants in 2021 (application window has closed)
    - Broadband Planning and Infrastructure Set-Aside – ongoing State program to support a variety of broadband projects, mostly focused on planning (all three counties in the study area have previously acquired funding for broadband planning through this program)
WHAT WE’VE HEARD

- Need for broadband expansion and for faster, more reliable, and more affordable internet and cell phone service
- Limited access to internet keeps people who rely on that (WFH jobs, business, Zoom calls, etc.) tethered to certain areas of the Tri-County region.
- Improved cell phone and broadband coverage will help hikers on trails, drivers on the roadways, and residents
- Connectivity gaps are also a concern for healthcare services and transit service.
- The region and counties should bring private entities in the process to collaborate, expedite, and help with funding
- Additional fiber is being installed in parts of the region in the near-term but there are still considerable gaps to address to accommodate more people moving to the area