

Request for Approval under the “Generic Clearance for the Collection of Solution for Funding Opportunity Announcement”

TITLE: Rural eConnectivity Program – Broadband Technical Assistance

USDA Agency: *Rural Utilities Service*

Alignment with Information Collection Package: (Check one)

One-Time Pilot Program.

One-Time Funding Announcement of New Program.

Purpose: *(Briefly describe the program. Explain the information to be collected to clearly describe to OMB the requirements and burden on the respondents. For example, if the table below shows 150 burden hours for project summary, provide additional detail elaborating on what the respondents are required to provide to meet that requirement.)*

The Rural eConnectivity Program (ReConnect) was authorized under [7 U.S.C. 901](#) *et seq.*, and Pub. L. 115-141, §779. The Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) will use technical assistance funds appropriated under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) ([Pub. L. 117-58](#)). Applications received under the FOA will be administered by the Rural Utilities Service (RUS or the Agency), a Rural Development (RD) agency of the United States Department of Agriculture. The assistance instrument for this program will be through cooperative agreements which RD is authorized to administer pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 2204b(b)(4).

This FOA provides competitive cooperative agreement funding to eligible entities to ensure technical assistance and training is delivered to rural communities in need of high-speed internet and rural broadband providers. Program funds must be used to support broadband technical assistance activities which include, but are not limited to, project planning and community engagement, operations support, financial sustainability, environmental compliance, engineering, accessing federal resources, and data collection and reporting. The goal of the program is to support the expansion of high-speed internet into unserved rural communities.

The Agency provides forms and/or guidelines to assist in collection and submission of the information required. In some cases, use of Agency forms is optional and the applicant may submit the information required on other forms. The Agency will utilize standard and existing RD forms to the greatest extent possible to continue to meet the needs of the program. The forms or related items completed by the applicant are submitted to and evaluated by the Agency. Failure to collect proper information from applicants could result in improper determinations of assistance, hinder the government’s recovery of such loans as well as encumber customer service.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS COLLECTION – Written/Non Forms

A. Application Phase

SAM Registration and General Certifications and Representation. To do business with the Federal government, the applicant is required to obtain a Unique Identification Number and register in the

System for Award Management (SAM). Registration in SAM allows the applicant to complete the Online Representations and Certifications which replaces several paper forms. Registration in SAM is also required in order to submit applications into www.grants.gov and the registration must be updated annually.

Written Narrative Proposal. Applicants are required to submit a detailed written narrative that is limited to 25 pages. The narrative must clearly identify the funding category they have chosen. The narrative must also address each evaluation criteria in the order they are presented in the FOA. The evaluation criteria to be addressed are as follows:

1. Project Work Plan - The applicant must provide a detailed project work plan that demonstrates the soundness of the proposed broadband technical assistance approach. The work plan must consist of the work plan approach, work plan implementation plan, and a detailed budget that is accompanied by a budget justification.

2. Organizational Capacity - All applicants must demonstrate the capacity to deliver and/or support broadband technical assistance activities. The applicant's proposal should demonstrate that the applicant has identified appropriate key personnel, both in terms of number of personnel and qualifications of personnel and should provide specific detail of qualifications of key personnel relating to broadband technical assistance. Capacity of personnel to access data for needs assessments and access to planners and other technical experts will be evaluated.

3. Targeted Communities – The applicant must describe how the technical assistance will benefit targeted communities and how the project will promote the expansion of broadband within the target area(s) the project may impact. Points will be awarded if at least 50 percent of the rural communities benefiting from the project consist of Tribes and Tribal Entities, Colonias, Persistent Poverty Counties, and Distressed Energy Communities.

4. Rurality - Applicants must provide the population and/or population density of the rural communities to be served.

5. Economic Need - Applicants must provide the county poverty percentages of the communities proposed to be served in the application. The percentages must be determined by utilizing the United States Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program. Communities located in geographic areas, for which no SAIPE data exist, will be determined to have an average SAIPE poverty percentage of 30 percent.

6. Performance Measures - The applicant's proposal should include a description for how the results of the technical assistance will be measured, including the indicators and benchmarks to be used for measuring effectiveness. Performance measures should align with the goal of the program which is to expand broadband access into rural areas.

Tribal Certification. This certification, from the appropriate Tribal official, is required if a project is being proposed over or on Tribal Lands and the applicant is not the Tribe nor a Tribal Entity owned by the Tribe. This requirement is necessary to ensure the Agency does not inadvertently fund projects that the Tribe is not in support of over or on their lands.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS – FORMS APPROVED UNDER OTHER OMB CONTROL NUMBERS

Form RD 400-4, “Assurance Agreement” (Approved under 0575-0201).

The form is completed by the applicant and used to confirm that recipients of Rural Development loan and grant assistance have been reminded of their obligation to comply with all provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and regulations of Rural Development.

SF-424 “Application for Federal Assistance” (Approved under 4040-0004). Completed once, by the applicant, at the time of application. The form is required to collect necessary information on the applicant.

SF-424B “Assurances—Non-Construction Programs” (Approved under 4040-0007). The form is completed and submitted by applicants to provide assurances to comply with the laws, regulations and policies to which the grant is subjected. This form is submitted as part of the pre-application and if the project is selected as part of the formal application.

SF-270 “Request for Advance or Reimbursement” (Approved under 4040-0012). This form is used to request funds for all grant programs when letters of credit or predetermined advance methods are not used. The Federal awarding agencies and OMB use information reported on this form for general management of the Federal assistance awards programs.

Announcement Dates: The application window will open on the Date of Publication in the Federal Register and close 90 days after the date of publication.

Type of Collection: (Check one)

Grant.

Cooperative agreement.

Other: _____

How will information collected be submitted to the agency?

Grants.gov

Other: _____

Does the agency need to collect information, such as progress reports, beyond the expiration of this generic ICR (November 2025)? If so, will the agency be submitting a regular ICR package?

Yes. No.

Announcement:

Notice of Funding of Opportunity (NOFO)

Grants.gov Announcement

Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)

Request for Application (RFA)

Notice of Funding of Announcement (NOFA) (Announced in the Federal Register)

Notice of Solicitation of Application (NOSA)

Notice of Awards

Other Funding Announcement Types: _____

Is the agency asking any questions of a sensitive nature? If yes, provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. Include the reasons justifying why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

Yes. No.

If yes, additional info:

Certification:

I certify this grant or cooperative agreement to be true:

Yes. No.

This Gen IC is requesting approval for the Notification of Award (Signature Only) issues to the applicants to grant the award.

Brief description of information being collected (project summary, NOA, etc.)	Forms number	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses per respondent	Total Annual Responses	Burden hours per responses	Total Burden hours
A. Application Package						
SAM Registration and General Certifications and Representations	SAM.gov	50	1	50	2.00	100
Written Narrative:						
Project Work Plan	Written	50	1	50	5.00	250
Organizational Capacity	Written	50	1	50	2.00	100
Targeted Communities	Written	50	1	50	2.00	100
Rurality	Written	50	1	50	2.00	100
Economic Need	Written	50	1	50	2.00	100
Performance Measures	Written	50	1	50	2.00	100
Tribal Government Resolution of Consent	Written	1	1	1	4.00	4
TOTAL BURDEN HOURS						854

Brief description Reporting Requirements Approved under other Numbers	Forms number	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses per respondent	Total Annual Responses	Burden hours per responses	Total Burden hours
Application for Federal Assistance	SF-424 (4040-0004)	50	1	50	1.00	50
Assurances - Non Construction Programs	SF-424B (4040-0007)	50	1	50	0.5000	25
Assurance Agreement	400-4 (0575-0201)	50	1	50	0.25	12.5
Request for Advance or	SF-270	20	1	20	1.00	20

Reimbursement	(4040-0012)					
						107.5