

Broadband Access Resources

Introduction & Contact

This document has been prepared by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in response to the pressing need for broadband access as casework, service delivery, and learning have moved online.

If you have any questions or additional resources to be shared, please contact Emily Hopkins:

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The coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency has greatly impacted our society – from changing how service providers and schools provide services as well as how families and children receive services or instruction. Programs have had to quickly change how they provide services and move to a virtual platform in order to interact with clients and families.

A 2020 Report from the Federal Communication Commission found that **18 million people**, including **7 million children**, lack internet access. The lack of a stable internet connection or appropriate devices limits who is able to access services delivered virtually. Low-income families and rural communities are disproportionately affected.

This information about available streams of funding for human services providers, educational institutions, and individuals and families to access broadband and devices has been compiled in response to the pressing need for connectivity and internet access in these times. While this is not intended to be a comprehensive resource, The National Telecommunications and Information Administration has a comprehensive guide to all federal funding opportunities for broadband on their website: BroadbandUSA (<https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/new-fund-search>)

Funding is available to provide different types of connectivity. The two main categories of funding include access to broadband (internet services) or access to equipment/devices. Many federal funding streams provide funds for both of these categories.

The BROADBAND category includes services such as:

- Broadband services
- Voice and data services
- Data transmission services
- Internet access
- Internal connections

The EQUIPMENT and DEVICES category includes services such as:

- Network equipment (i.e., routers, wireless controller systems, cabling, software, etc.)
- Distance learning equipment (i.e., laptops, tablets)

The information in this document will be presented on Youth.gov in the following manner

Audience

Reflects the primary people eligible to receive funding. There are three categories of audience: Human Service Providers, Educational Institutions, and Individuals/Families

Benefit

Reflects what benefit is offered by funding programs. There are two primary categories of benefit: Broadband Access and Equipment/Devices

Funding Options

Reflects what Federal agencies offer funding that meet the previous two criteria. You will be provided with the agency, program name, funding offered, and how to apply for the funding.

For Human Services Providers

Ex: medical professionals and therapists



Broadband

FCC Rural Health Care (RHC) – Healthcare Connect Fund Program

- **Name:** FCC – Healthcare Connect Program
- **Summary:** The Healthcare Connect Fund Program offers discounts on broadband services, network equipment, and more. This program provides a flat 65% discount on eligible broadband connectivity expenses.
- **Description:** The purpose of this funding stream is to support healthcare facilities in bringing world class medical care to rural areas through increased connectivity. Applicants can apply as an individual health care provider (HCP) or as a consortium of HCPs (both rural and non-rural). Applicants can request multi-year funding for up to three years. The Rural Health Care division of the FCC also offers funding for voice and data through the Telecommunications Program; applicants can apply for both programs at the same time.
- **Application Information/Link:** <https://www.usac.org/rural-health-care/healthcare-connect-fund-program/>
 - The filing window for FY2020 closed June 30, 2020. FY2021 filing window will be open from January 4, 2021 – April 1, 2021.

FCC Rural Health Care (RHC) – Telecommu- nications Program

- **Name:** FCC - Telecommunications Program
- **Summary:** The Telecommunications Program offers discounts on voice, data, and other telecommunication services. Voice and Data services discount is determined using the urban/rural differential.
- **Description:** The purpose of this funding stream is to support healthcare facilities in bringing world class medical care to rural areas through increased connectivity. Individual health care providers are eligible to apply. Applicants must seek a new funding commitment for each funding year. The Rural Health Care division of the FCC also offers funding for broadband through the Healthcare Connect Fund program; applicants can apply for both programs at the same time.
- **Application Information/Link:** <https://www.usac.org/rural-health-care/telecommunications-program/>
 - The filing window for FY2020 closed June 30, 2020. FY2021 filing window will be open from January 4, 2021 – April 1, 2021.



Equipment & Devices

USDA Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants

- **Name:** USDA - Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grants
- **Summary:** DLT Grants fund the cost of purchasing distance learning equipment and related instructional programming. Awards can range from \$50,000 to \$1,000,000. A minimum 15% match is required and cannot be from another federal source.
- **Description:** The purpose of this funding stream is to help rural residents tap into the potential of modern telecommunications and the Internet for education and health care. Eligible applicants include most entities that provide education or health care through telecommunications. DLT Grants utilize existing broadband networks and do not fund infrastructure. Grant funds are awarded through a nationally competitive process.
- **Application Information:** The application deadline for FY2020 was on July 13, 2020. Learn more about the DLT Grants [here](#)
- **Bonus:** Due to the impacts of COVID-19, Congress allocated an additional \$25 million in funding for FY2020 of the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants

For K-12 Education

Ex: Schools



Broadband

FCC E-Rate Program

- **Name:** FCC – E-Rate Program
- **Summary:** The E-Rate Program offers up to 90% discounts on eligible data transmission services, internet access, internal connections, and managed internal broadband services and equipment
- **Description:** The purpose of the E-Rate Program is to ensure that schools and libraries across the U.S. are connected to information and resources through the internet. Eligible applicants include public or private K-12 schools, libraries, and groups of schools/libraries (e.g., consortia, districts). This program requires an annual application and priority is given to the highest poverty areas.
- **Application Information/Link:** <https://www.usac.org/e-rate/get-started/>
 - Learn more about the application process [here](#)

ED
Elementary
and Secondary
School
Emergency
Relief Fund
(ESSER)

- **Name:** U.S. Department of Education - Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER)
- **Summary:** The U.S. Department of Education has allocated \$13.2 billion of CARES Act funds for K-12 schools. The Department will award grants to State educational agencies (SEAs) to provide local educational agencies (LEAs) to address the impact that COVID-19 has and continues to have on elementary and secondary schools across the nation.
- **Description:** ESSER funds **may be used** to support distance education through purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software, and connectivity) for students, including low-income students and students with disabilities, which may include assistive technology or adaptive equipment.
- **Application Information:** Each SEA will receive funds in the same proportion as each State received funds under Part A of Title I. School districts must apply to the relevant SEA, who will award subgrants to LEAs.
 - State Allocations Table - <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/04/ESSER-Fund-State-Allocations-Table.pdf>
 - ESSER [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

ED CARES Act Project SERV

- **Name:** U.S. Department of Education – CARES Act Project SERV
- **Summary:** Congress awarded \$100 million for Project SERV under the CARES Act to respond to COVID-19 disruptions to the learning environment in schools and postsecondary institutions.
- **Description:** Since other CARES Act funds are still being allocated/spent, the Department will announce plans for making Project SERV funds available to eligible applicants later this year, with a likely focus on applicants with significant unmet needs stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic as well as additional needs that could emerge due to future related issues affecting schools and postsecondary institutions during the 2020-2021 school year.
- **Website:** <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/cares-act-project-serv/>



Equipment & Devices

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- **Application Information/Website:** The application deadline for FY2020 was on July 13, 2020. Learn more about the DLT Grants [here](#)
- **Bonus:** Due to the impacts of COVID-19, Congress allocated an additional \$25 million in funding for FY2020 of the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants

For Individuals and
Families



Broadband

FCC Lifeline Program

- **Name:** FCC – Lifeline Program
- **Summary:** The Lifeline Program allows eligible consumers to receive a monthly benefit up to \$9.25 towards phone or internet services (and up to \$34.25 for those living on Tribal and Native lands).
- **Description:** The purpose of the Lifeline Program is to lower the monthly cost of home/mobile phone service or high-speed broadband. Eligible applicants include people with income that is 135% or less than the federal poverty guidelines or households receiving federal assistance (i.e., SNAP). Additionally, all HUD-assisted households are eligible. This program requires annual certification. Consumers can use this program for *either* phone or internet services, but not both.
- **Application Information:** There are three ways to apply for Lifeline: online, by mail, or by contacting your service provider. Learn more or apply here: <https://www.lifelinesupport.org/how-to-get-lifeline/>

HUD ConnectHome USA

- **Name:** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - ConnectHomeUSA
- **Summary:** HUD, in partnership with the non-profit EveryoneOn, is able to offer free or \$9.95 home internet service by partnering with local Internet Service Providers.
- **Description:** The purpose of ConnectHomeUSA is to provide affordable access and bridge the digital divide to low-income families in HUD-assisted housing. Eligible applicants include low income families, families that live in public housing, and families that receive federal assistance such as TANF or SNAP.
- **Application Information:** Offers are available by location. Find offers in your area using your zip code: <https://www.everyoneon.org/find-offers>
- **Bonus:** EveryoneOn also offers a Digital Learning Center, which provides free resources in the following categories: employment and career training, online healthcare, financial literacy, K-12 education, adult literacy programs, and communicating with loved ones online. <https://www.everyoneon.org/digital-learning>



Equipment & Devices

HUD ConnectHome USA

- **Name:** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - ConnectHomeUSA
- **Summary:** HUD, in partnership with the non-profit EveryoneOn, works with device refurbishers to allow people to purchase discounted devices, including \$150 tablets and \$199 laptops.
- **Description:** The purpose of ConnectHomeUSA is to provide affordable access and bridge the digital divide to low-income families in HUD-assisted housing. Eligible applicants include low income families, families that live in public housing, and families that receive federal assistance such as TANF or SNAP.
- **Application Information:** Offers are available by location. Find offers in your area using your zip code: <https://www.everyoneon.org/find-offers>
- **Bonus:** EveryoneOn also offers a Digital Learning Center, which provides free resources in the following categories: employment and career training, online healthcare, financial literacy, K-12 education, adult literacy programs, and communicating with loved ones online. <https://www.everyoneon.org/digital-learning>

Allowable Uses

There are many funding streams available that CAN BE used to support broadband access, but are not specifically devoted to this purpose. In this section, you will find funding options that can be used to support broadband.

ED Impact Aid Program

- **Name:** U.S. Department of Education – Impact Aid Program
- **Summary:** Impact Aid funds are available for all general fund purposes and can be expended for any purpose, similar to local revenue for education. Funds be used to support connectivity (i.e., broadband infrastructure and adoption), digital skills training, and mobile hotspots (including data plans)
- **Description:** The purpose of the Impact Aid program is to support local education agencies that are financially burdened by federal activities. Funds are provided under Section 7002 and 7003(b) of the ESEA to local public school districts that serve significant numbers of federally connected children and that have lost a substantial portion of local property tax base due to the acquisition of federal property.
- **Application Information/Link:** <https://impactaid.ed.gov/>
 - The regular application deadline is always January 31. The deadline to amend FY 2021 Impact Aid applications has been extended to August 31, 2020.
- **General Website:** <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/impact-aid-program/>

The **Department of Education** has multiple programs, similar to the Impact Aid Program, where funds could be used to support broadband access including:

Promise Neighborhoods

- <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/school-choice-improvement-programs/promise-neighborhoods-pn/>

Rural and Low-Income School Program

- <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/rural-insular-native-achievement-programs/rural-education-achievement-program/rural-and-low-income-school-program/>

Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) Program

- <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/rural-insular-native-achievement-programs/rural-education-achievement-program/small-rural-school-achievement-program/>

Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program, Title IV, Part A

- <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/safe-supportive-schools/student-support-and-academic-enrichment-program/>

DOL Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

- **Name:** Department of Labor - Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- **Summary:** WIOA funds are administered through the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the Department of Labor. WIOA funds can be used to pay for devices and broadband internet service that will allow a participant to create or maintain a wireless connection for distance learning, etc. where such services are already allowable.
- **Description:** The purpose of WIOA is to strengthen our nation's public workforce and reduce barriers for those seeking employment, including youth. ETA grant funds cannot be used to enhance or build the infrastructure needed to support local broadband internet service
- **Website:** <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa/>

The Department of Housing and Urban Development has multiple programs where funds could be used to support broadband access including:

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) & Section 108 Loan Guarantee

- <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4891/cdbg-broadband-infrastructure-faqs/>

Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG), Title VI, and ICDBG

- <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/BROADBANDGUIDANCE.PDF>

Neighborhood Networks – Public and Indian Housing

- https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/ross/aboutnn

Commerce Economic Adjustment Assistance Program (EAA)

- **Name:** U.S. Department of Commerce – Economic Adjustment Assistance Program (EAA)
- **Summary:** Congress allocated \$1.5 billion of CARES Act funds for the EAA program. Allowable use of funds include the deployment of broadband for purposes including supporting telehealth and remote learning for job skills.
- **Description:** The EAA program is intended to be flexible and responsive to the economic development needs and priorities of local and regional stakeholders. Eligible applicants include district organizations, Tribes, state and local governments, public and private non-profits and others.
- **Application Information/Link:** Apply online at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=321695>
 - There are no submission deadlines under this opportunity. Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis until the publication of a new PWEAA NOFO.