

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To provide grants to States, territories, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and eligible Tribal entities to promote access to affordable, high-speed broadband and digital equity.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. BENNET (for himself, Mr. KING, and Mr. PORTMAN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

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**A BILL**

To provide grants to States, territories, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and eligible Tribal entities to promote access to affordable, high-speed broadband and digital equity.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Broadband Reform  
5 and Investment to Drive Growth in the Economy Act of  
6 2021” or “BRIDGE Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress finds the following:

1           (1) Access to affordable, reliable, and high-  
2           speed broadband is essential to full participation in  
3           modern life in the United States.

4           (2) The persistent “digital divide” in the  
5           United States is a barrier to the economic competi-  
6           tiveness of the United States and equitable distribu-  
7           tion of essential public services, including health care  
8           and education.

9           (3) The digital divide disproportionately affects  
10          communities of color, lower-income areas, and rural  
11          areas.

12          (4) In many communities across the country,  
13          increased competition among broadband providers  
14          has the potential to offer consumers more afford-  
15          able, high-quality options for broadband service.

16          (5) The 2019 novel coronavirus pandemic has  
17          underscored the critical importance of affordable,  
18          high-speed broadband for individuals, families, and  
19          communities to be able to work, learn, and connect  
20          remotely while supporting social distancing.

21 **SEC. 3. GRANTS FOR BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT.**

22          (a) DEFINITIONS.—

23               (1) AREAS LACKING BROADBAND ACCESS.—In  
24          this section—

1 (A) the term “unserved area” means an  
2 area that lacks access to broadband service with  
3 a speed greater than—

4 (i) 25 megabits per second for  
5 downloads; and

6 (ii) 3 megabits per second for uploads;

7 (B) the term “underserved area” means an  
8 area that—

9 (i) is not an unserved area; and

10 (ii) lacks access to broadband service  
11 with a speed of not less than—

12 (I) 100 megabits per second for  
13 downloads; and

14 (II) 25 megabits per second for  
15 uploads;

16 (C) the term “other qualifying area”  
17 means an area that—

18 (i) is not an unserved area or under-  
19 served area; and

20 (ii) lacks access to gigabit-level  
21 broadband service; and

22 (D) the term “eligible area” means an  
23 unserved area, underserved area, or other quali-  
24 fying area.

25 (2) OTHER DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

1 (A) the term “affordable broadband service  
2 plan” means a plan under which broadband  
3 service is provided at a rate that is determined  
4 by the Commission, in coordination with the As-  
5 sistant Secretary, to be affordable for a 4-per-  
6 son household that—

7 (i) includes 2 dependents under the  
8 age of 18; and

9 (ii) has an income of 136 percent of  
10 the poverty line applicable to a family of  
11 the size involved (as determined under sec-  
12 tion 673(2) of the Community Services  
13 Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)));

14 (B) the term “Assistant Secretary” means  
15 the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Com-  
16 munications and Information;

17 (C) the term “broadband” or “broadband  
18 service” has the meaning given the term  
19 “broadband internet access service” in section  
20 8.1(b) of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations,  
21 or any successor regulation;

22 (D) the term “Commission” means the  
23 Federal Communications Commission;

24 (E) the term “community anchor institu-  
25 tion” means an entity such as a school, library,

1 health clinic, hospital or other medical provider,  
2 public safety entity, institution of higher edu-  
3 cation, public housing organization, or commu-  
4 nity support organization that facilitates great-  
5 er use of broadband service by vulnerable popu-  
6 lations, including low-income individuals, unem-  
7 ployed individuals, and aged individuals;

8 (F) the term “digital equity” means the  
9 condition in which all individuals and commu-  
10 nities have the information technology capacity  
11 needed for full participation in the society and  
12 economy of the United States;

13 (G) the term “digital inclusion”—

14 (i) means the activities that are nec-  
15 essary to ensure that all individuals in the  
16 United States have access to, and the use  
17 of, affordable information and communica-  
18 tions technologies, such as reliable fixed  
19 and wireless broadband service, internet-  
20 enabled devices that meet the needs of the  
21 user, applications and online content de-  
22 signed to enable and encourage self-suffi-  
23 ciency, participation, and collaboration;  
24 and

1 (ii) includes obtaining access to digital  
2 literacy training, the provision of quality  
3 technical support, and obtaining basic  
4 awareness of measures to ensure online  
5 privacy and cybersecurity;

6 (H) the term “digital literacy” means the  
7 skills associated with using technology to enable  
8 users to find, evaluate, organize, create, and  
9 communicate information;

10 (I) the term “eligible community anchor  
11 institution” means a community anchor institu-  
12 tion that lacks access to gigabit-level broadband  
13 service;

14 (J) the term “eligible entity” means a  
15 State, a territory, the District of Columbia, or  
16 an eligible Tribal entity;

17 (K) the term “eligible Tribal entity”  
18 means—

19 (i) a Tribal government;

20 (ii) a Tribal College or University (as  
21 defined in section 316(b) of the Higher  
22 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.  
23 1059c(b)));

24 (iii) the Department of Hawaiian  
25 Home Lands on behalf of the Native Ha-

1                   waiian Community, including Native Ha-  
2                   waiian Education Programs;

3                   (iv) a Tribal organization; or

4                   (v) a Native Corporation;

5                   (L) the term “Fund” means the  
6                   Broadband Access Fund established under sub-  
7                   section (b);

8                   (M) the term “gigabit-level broadband  
9                   service” means broadband service with a speed  
10                  of not less than—

11                  (i) 1 gigabit per second for downloads;

12                  and

13                  (ii) 1 gigabit per second for uploads;

14                  (N) the term “high-cost area” means an  
15                  unserved area in which the Assistant Secretary  
16                  determines that the cost of deploying broadband  
17                  service is higher than the average cost of de-  
18                  ploying broadband service in the United States  
19                  because of—

20                  (i) the remote location of the area;

21                  (ii) the population density of the area;

22                  (iii) the unique topography of the  
23                  area;

24                  (iv) a high rate of poverty in the area;

25                  or

1 (v) any other factor that contributes  
2 to the cost of deploying broadband service;

3 (O) the term “Native Corporation” has the  
4 meaning given the term in section 3 of the  
5 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43  
6 U.S.C. 1602);

7 (P) the term “Native Hawaiian” has the  
8 meaning given the term in section 801 of the  
9 Native American Housing Assistance and Self-  
10 Determination Act of 1996 (25 U.S.C. 4221);

11 (Q) the term “State” means any of the 50  
12 States;

13 (R) the term “subgrantee” means an enti-  
14 ty that receives grant funds from an eligible en-  
15 tity to carry out activities under subsection (g);

16 (S) the term “territory” means the Com-  
17 monwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States  
18 Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the  
19 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Is-  
20 lands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the  
21 Federated States of Micronesia, and the Repub-  
22 lic of Palau; and

23 (T) the term “Tribal government” means  
24 the governing body of any Indian or Alaska Na-  
25 tive Tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, com-



1 munity, component band, or component reserva-  
2 tion, individually recognized (including par-  
3 enthetically) in the list published most recently  
4 as of the date of enactment of this Act pursu-  
5 ant to section 4104 of the Federally Recognized  
6 Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (25 U.S.C.  
7 5131).

8 (b) BROADBAND ACCESS FUND.—

9 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in  
10 the Treasury of the United States a fund to be  
11 known as the “Broadband Access Fund”.

12 (2) DIRECT APPROPRIATION TO FUND.—There  
13 is appropriated to the Fund, out of amounts in the  
14 Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for the fiscal  
15 year ending September 30, 2021, \$40,000,000,000,  
16 to remain available until expended.

17 (3) AVAILABILITY OF FUND.—Amounts in the  
18 Fund shall be available to the Assistant Secretary to  
19 make grants to eligible entities to—

20 (A) deploy broadband; and

21 (B) fund efforts that bridge the digital di-  
22 vide, increase the adoption of broadband, and  
23 facilitate affordable access to broadband.

24 (c) GRANTS.—From the amounts appropriated under  
25 subsection (b), the Assistant Secretary shall award a grant

1 to each eligible entity that submits an initial proposal or  
2 final proposal that the Assistant Secretary approves.

3 (d) ALLOCATION.—

4 (1) MINIMUM AMOUNTS.—Of the amounts ap-  
5 propriated under subsection (b)—

6 (A) \$100,000,000 shall be made available  
7 to each State;

8 (B) \$75,000,000 shall be made available to  
9 each of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and  
10 the District of Columbia;

11 (C) \$100,000,000 shall be made available  
12 to, and divided equally among, the United  
13 States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa,  
14 the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Is-  
15 lands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the  
16 Federated States of Micronesia, and the Repub-  
17 lic of Palau; and

18 (D) not less than 5 percent shall be made  
19 available to eligible Tribal entities—

20 (i) on an equitable basis; and

21 (ii) of which not less than 3 percent  
22 shall be made available for the benefit of  
23 Native Hawaiians.

24 (2) REMAINING AMOUNTS.—

1 (A) IN GENERAL.—Amounts remaining  
2 after the allocations under paragraph (1) shall  
3 be allocated to States based on population in  
4 accordance with subparagraph (B) of this para-  
5 graph.

6 (B) ALLOCATIONS.—Of the amounts allo-  
7 cated under subparagraph (A)—

8 (i) 50 percent shall be allocated  
9 among the States based on the proportion  
10 that the population of each State bears to  
11 the population of all States;

12 (ii) 25 percent shall be allocated  
13 among the States based on the proportion  
14 that the number of individuals living in  
15 rural areas in each State, as determined by  
16 the Bureau of the Census, bears to the  
17 number of individuals living in rural area  
18 in all States, as determined by the Bureau  
19 of the Census; and

20 (iii) 25 percent shall be allocated  
21 among the States based on the proportion  
22 that the number of individuals with a  
23 household income that is below 150 per-  
24 cent of the poverty line applicable to a  
25 family of the size involved (as determined

1 under section 673(2) of the Community  
2 Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C.  
3 9902(2)) in each State bears to the num-  
4 ber of such individuals in all States.

5 (C) POPULATION DETERMINATION.—For  
6 purposes of subparagraph (B), the population  
7 of a State or a category of residents of a State  
8 shall be determined based on the most recent  
9 year for which data are available from the Bu-  
10 reau of the Census.

11 (3) REALLOCATION.—

12 (A) FAILURE TO SUBMIT INITIAL PRO-  
13 POSAL.—If an eligible entity does not submit an  
14 initial proposal under subsection (f)(2) for  
15 amounts allocated to the eligible entity under  
16 this subsection by the applicable date under  
17 subparagraph (A) of that subsection, the As-  
18 sistant Secretary shall reallocate the amounts  
19 on a competitive basis to—

20 (i) in the case of an eligible entity de-  
21 scribed in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of  
22 paragraph (1) of this subsection, other eli-  
23 gible entities described in those subpara-  
24 graphs that have submitted an initial pro-

1           positional under subsection (f)(2) as of that  
2           date; or

3                   (ii) in the case of an eligible entity de-  
4           scribed in subparagraph (D) of paragraph  
5           (1) of this subsection, other eligible entities  
6           described in that subparagraph that have  
7           submitted an initial proposal under sub-  
8           section (f)(2) as of that date.

9           (B) FAILURE TO SUBMIT FINAL PRO-  
10          POSAL.—If an eligible entity does not submit a  
11          final proposal under subsection (f)(3) for the  
12          remainder of the amounts allocated to the eligi-  
13          ble entity under this subsection by the applica-  
14          ble date under subparagraph (A) of that sub-  
15          section, the Assistant Secretary shall reallocate  
16          the amounts on a competitive basis to—

17                   (i) in the case of an eligible entity de-  
18          scribed in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of  
19          paragraph (1) of this subsection, other eli-  
20          gible entities described in those subpara-  
21          graphs that have submitted a final pro-  
22          posal under subsection (f)(3) as of that  
23          date; or

24                   (ii) in the case of an eligible entity de-  
25          scribed in subparagraph (D) of paragraph

1 (1) of this subsection, other eligible entities  
2 described in that subparagraph that have  
3 submitted a final proposal under sub-  
4 section (f)(3) as of that date.

5 (e) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—

6 (1) ASSISTANT SECRETARY.—The Assistant  
7 Secretary may use not more than 2 percent of  
8 amounts appropriated under subsection (b) for ad-  
9 ministrative purposes, including the provision of  
10 technical assistance to eligible Tribal entities.

11 (2) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—An eligible entity  
12 may use not more than 2 percent of grant funds re-  
13 ceived under this section for expenses relating (di-  
14 rectly or indirectly) to administration of the grant.

15 (f) IMPLEMENTATION.—

16 (1) REQUIREMENTS; OUTREACH.—Not later  
17 than 120 days after the date of enactment of this  
18 Act, the Assistant Secretary shall—

19 (A) issue a notice to each eligible entity  
20 that—

21 (i) contains the estimated amount  
22 available to the eligible entity under this  
23 section; and

24 (ii) invites the eligible entity to submit  
25 an initial proposal and final proposal for a

1 grant under this section, in accordance  
2 with paragraphs (2) and (3);

3 (B) develop and make public a standard,  
4 online application form that an eligible entity  
5 may use to submit an initial proposal and final  
6 proposal for the grant amounts made available  
7 to the eligible entity under this section;

8 (C) outline—

9 (i) the requirements for initial pro-  
10 posals and final proposals for grants under  
11 this section; and

12 (ii) the allowed uses of grant funds  
13 awarded under this section, as provided in  
14 subsection (g); and

15 (D) publish a model—

16 (i) initial proposal that complies with  
17 paragraph (2)(A), including the certifi-  
18 cation requirements under clause (i)(VI) of  
19 that paragraph; and

20 (ii) final proposal that complies with  
21 paragraph (3)(A).

22 (2) INITIAL PROPOSAL.—

23 (A) SUBMISSION.—

24 (i) IN GENERAL.—During the 90-day  
25 period beginning on the date on which the

1 Assistant Secretary issues the notice under  
2 paragraph (1), an eligible entity that wish-  
3 es to receive a grant under this section  
4 shall submit an initial proposal for a grant,  
5 using the online application form developed  
6 by the Assistant Secretary under subpara-  
7 graph (B) of that paragraph, that—

8 (I) outlines long-term objectives  
9 for deploying broadband and closing  
10 the digital divide;

11 (II)(aa) identifies, and outlines  
12 steps to support, local and regional  
13 broadband planning processes or on-  
14 going efforts to deploy broadband or  
15 close the digital divide; and

16 (bb) describes coordination with  
17 local governments, along with local  
18 and regional broadband planning  
19 processes;

20 (III) identifies existing efforts  
21 funded by the Federal government or  
22 a State within the jurisdiction of the  
23 eligible entity to deploy broadband  
24 and close the digital divide;



1 (IV) includes a plan to competi-  
2 tively award subgrants;

3 (V) identifies, using data drawn  
4 from sources including the map cre-  
5 ated by the Commission under section  
6 802(c)(1)(A) of the Communications  
7 Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 642(c)(1)(A)),  
8 another broadband map of the Com-  
9 mission that is in effect, the National  
10 Broadband Availability Map created  
11 by the Assistant Secretary, or State-  
12 level broadband data—

13 (aa) each unserved area, un-  
14 derserved area, or other quali-  
15 fying area under the jurisdiction  
16 of the eligible entity; and

17 (bb) each community anchor  
18 institution under the jurisdiction  
19 of the eligible entity that is an el-  
20 igible community anchor institu-  
21 tion;

22 (VI) certifies the intent of the eli-  
23 gible entity to comply with all applica-  
24 ble requirements under this section,

1 including the reporting requirements  
2 under subsection (j)(1); and

3 (VII) includes a description of  
4 the challenge process for classification  
5 of eligible areas and institutions re-  
6 quired under subsection (i)(2) that  
7 the eligible entity will use.

8 (ii) ELIGIBLE TRIBAL ENTITIES.—In  
9 the case of an eligible Tribal entity, clause  
10 (i) shall be applied by substituting “120-  
11 day period” for “90-day period”.

12 (iii) LOCAL COORDINATION.—To the  
13 greatest extent practicable, a State shall  
14 coordinate with units of local government  
15 within the State in submitting an initial  
16 proposal under clause (i).

17 (B) SINGLE INITIAL PROPOSAL.—An eligi-  
18 ble entity may submit only 1 initial proposal  
19 under this paragraph.

20 (C) CORRECTIONS TO INITIAL PRO-  
21 POSAL.—The Assistant Secretary may accept  
22 corrections to the initial proposal of an eligible  
23 entity after the initial proposal has been sub-  
24 mitted.

1 (D) CONSIDERATION OF INITIAL PRO-  
2 POSAL.—Not later than 90 days after receipt of  
3 an initial proposal for a grant under this para-  
4 graph, the Assistant Secretary shall—

5 (i) acknowledge receipt;

6 (ii) evaluate whether the use of funds  
7 proposed in the initial proposal complies  
8 with subsection (g);

9 (iii) if the initial proposal is com-  
10 plete—

11 (I) disburse to the eligible entity  
12 20 percent of the grant funds that  
13 were allocated to the eligible entity  
14 under subsection (d); or

15 (II) at the discretion of the As-  
16 sistant Secretary, disburse to the eli-  
17 gible entity a higher percentage of the  
18 grant funds that were allocated to the  
19 eligible entity under subsection (d);  
20 and

21 (iv) if the initial proposal is incom-  
22 plete, notify the eligible entity and provide  
23 the eligible entity with 30 days to resubmit  
24 the initial proposal.

1 (E) CONSIDERATION OF RESUBMITTED  
2 INITIAL PROPOSAL.—Not later than 14 days  
3 after receipt of a resubmitted initial proposal  
4 for a grant under this paragraph, the Secretary  
5 shall—

6 (i) acknowledge receipt;

7 (ii) if the initial proposal is com-  
8 plete—

9 (I) disburse to the eligible entity  
10 20 percent of the grant funds that  
11 were allocated to the eligible entity  
12 under subsection (d); or

13 (II) at the discretion of the As-  
14 sistant Secretary, disburse to the eli-  
15 gible entity a higher percentage of the  
16 grant funds that were allocated to the  
17 eligible entity under subsection (d);  
18 and

19 (iii) if the initial proposal is incom-  
20 plete, notify the eligible entity and provide  
21 the eligible entity with 30 days to resubmit  
22 the initial proposal.

23 (3) FINAL PROPOSAL.—

24 (A) SUBMISSION.—

1 (i) IN GENERAL.—During the 120-day  
2 period beginning on the date on which the  
3 Assistant Secretary disburses grant funds  
4 to an eligible entity under subparagraph  
5 (D) or (E) of paragraph (2), the eligible  
6 entity may submit a final proposal for the  
7 remainder of the grant, using the online  
8 application form developed by the Assist-  
9 ant Secretary under paragraph (1)(B),  
10 that includes—

11 (I) spending priorities consistent  
12 with the long-term objectives outlined  
13 in paragraph (2)(A)(i)(I);

14 (II) a preliminary budget;

15 (III) a detailed plan that speci-  
16 fies how the eligible entity will—

17 (aa) allocate not less than  
18 50 percent of the total grant  
19 funds allocated to the eligible en-  
20 tity under subsection (d) to the  
21 deployment of broadband net-  
22 works to unserved areas, includ-  
23 ing high-cost areas (if applica-  
24 ble), or to other eligible uses in  
25 areas with above-average poverty,

1 as required under subsection  
2 (h)(1); and

3 (bb) align the grant funds  
4 allocated to the eligible entity  
5 under subsection (d), where prac-  
6 ticable, with the use of other  
7 funds or other assistance that the  
8 eligible entity has received to de-  
9 ploy broadband infrastructure  
10 from the Federal Government, a  
11 State, or a private entity;

12 (IV) a timeline for implementa-  
13 tion;

14 (V) processes for oversight and  
15 accountability to ensure the proper  
16 use of the grant funds allocated to the  
17 eligible entity under subsection (d);

18 (VI) a description of coordination  
19 with local governments, along with  
20 local and regional broadband planning  
21 processes; and

22 (VII) a description of efforts to  
23 prohibit waste, fraud, and abuse  
24 through—

1 (aa) the challenge process  
2 for classification of eligible areas  
3 and institutions required under  
4 subsection (i)(2); and

5 (bb) coordination with other  
6 Federal and State broadband  
7 programs.

8 (ii) ELIGIBLE TRIBAL ENTITIES.—In  
9 the case of an eligible Tribal entity, clause  
10 (i) shall be applied by substituting “150-  
11 day period” for “120-day period”.

12 (iii) LOCAL COORDINATION.—To the  
13 greatest extent practicable, a State shall  
14 coordinate with units of local government  
15 within the State in submitting a final pro-  
16 posal under clause (i).

17 (iv) FEDERAL COORDINATION.—To  
18 ensure efficient and effective use of tax-  
19 payer funds, an eligible entity shall, to the  
20 greatest extent practicable, align the use of  
21 grant funds proposed in the final proposal  
22 under clause (i) with funds available from  
23 other Federal programs that support  
24 broadband deployment and access.

1 (B) SINGLE FINAL PROPOSAL.—An eligible  
2 entity may submit only 1 final proposal under  
3 this paragraph.

4 (C) CORRECTIONS TO FINAL PROPOSAL.—  
5 The Assistant Secretary may accept corrections  
6 to the final proposal of an eligible entity after  
7 the final proposal has been submitted.

8 (D) CONSIDERATION OF FINAL PRO-  
9 POSAL.—Not later than 90 days after receipt of  
10 a final proposal for a grant under this para-  
11 graph, the Assistant Secretary shall—

12 (i) acknowledge receipt;

13 (ii) evaluate whether the use of funds  
14 proposed in the final proposal complies  
15 with subsection (g);

16 (iii) if the final proposal is complete,  
17 disburse to the eligible entity the remain-  
18 der of the grant funds allocated to the eli-  
19 gible entity under subsection (d); and

20 (iv) if the final proposal is incomplete,  
21 notify the eligible entity and provide the el-  
22 igible entity with 30 days to resubmit the  
23 final proposal.

24 (E) CONSIDERATION OF RESUBMITTED  
25 FINAL PROPOSAL.—Not later than 14 days



1 after receipt of a resubmitted final proposal for  
2 a grant under this paragraph, the Secretary  
3 shall—

4 (i) acknowledge receipt;

5 (ii) if the final proposal is complete,  
6 disburse to the eligible entity the remain-  
7 der of the grant funds allocated to the eli-  
8 gible entity under subsection (d); and

9 (iii) if the final proposal is incomplete,  
10 notify the eligible entity and provide the el-  
11 igible entity with 30 days to resubmit the  
12 final proposal.

13 (4) EXTENSION.—The Assistant Secretary may  
14 grant an extension of a deadline under paragraph  
15 (2) or (3).

16 (5) EXEMPTION FROM SERVICE STANDARDS.—  
17 In submitting an initial proposal or final proposal  
18 under paragraph (2) or (3), respectively, an eligible  
19 entity may request an exemption from the service  
20 standards under subsection (i)(4)(A)(i)(I) for the de-  
21 ployment of a broadband network in an area if meet-  
22 ing the standards in that area would be techno-  
23 logically or financially infeasible.

24 (g) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity may use  
25 grant funds received under this section to—

- 1 (1) competitively award subgrants for—
- 2 (A) the deployment of broadband networks
- 3 to eligible areas;
- 4 (B) connecting eligible community anchor
- 5 institutions;
- 6 (C) broadband mapping and planning;
- 7 (D) distance learning, including partnering
- 8 with service providers in existence when the
- 9 subgrant is awarded, or purchasing and install-
- 10 ing equipment, to extend broadband service
- 11 from the campus of a school, library, or other
- 12 community anchor institution to unserved
- 13 households;
- 14 (E) telehealth;
- 15 (F) installing internet and Wi-Fi infra-
- 16 structure or providing free or reduced-cost
- 17 broadband within a multi-family residential
- 18 building, with a priority given to a residential
- 19 building that—
- 20 (i) has a substantial share of unserved
- 21 households; or
- 22 (ii) is in an area in which the percent-
- 23 age of individuals with a household income
- 24 that is at or below 136 percent of the pov-
- 25 erty line applicable to a family of the size

1 involved (as determined under section  
2 673(2) of the Community Services Block  
3 Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)) is higher  
4 than the national percentage of such indi-  
5 viduals;

6 (G) affordable broadband programs, in-  
7 cluding providing free or reduced-cost  
8 broadband service, that—

9 (i) subject to clause (ii), provide  
10 broadband service at a speed greater  
11 than—

12 (I) 50 megabits per second for  
13 downloads; and

14 (II) 10 megabits per second for  
15 uploads; and

16 (ii) make every reasonable effort to  
17 prioritize broadband service at faster  
18 speeds than the speeds required under  
19 clause (i);

20 (H) digital inclusion, such as digital lit-  
21 eracy and digital equity programs, including  
22 programs to provide affordable internet-capable  
23 devices; or

24 (I) broadband adoption;

1           (J) initiatives to develop a skilled tele-  
2           communications workforce necessary for the de-  
3           ployment of high-speed broadband; and

4           (K) accelerating the completion of a  
5           project, or enabling a public-private partner-  
6           ship, to deploy a broadband network to an eligi-  
7           ble area that was ongoing as of the date of the  
8           award, if the network meets the requirements  
9           under subsection (i)(4); and

10          (2) provide technical assistance to local, re-  
11          gional, private, or nonprofit entities to carry out ex-  
12          isting efforts to—

13                (A) deploy broadband or close the digital  
14                divide; or

15                (B) implement the subgrants awarded  
16                under paragraph (1).

17          (h) GENERAL SUBGRANT REQUIREMENTS.—

18                (1) MINIMUM ALLOCATION FOR UNSERVED  
19                AREAS OR AREAS WITH SUBSTANTIAL POVERTY.—An  
20                eligible entity, in awarding subgrants using grant  
21                funds received under this section, shall allocate not  
22                less than 50 percent of the grant funds received by  
23                the eligible entity to—

1 (A) the deployment of broadband networks  
2 to unserved areas, including high-cost areas (if  
3 applicable); or

4 (B) other eligible uses in areas in which  
5 the percentage of individuals with a household  
6 income that is at or below 136 percent of the  
7 poverty line applicable to a family of the size in-  
8 volved (as determined under section 673(2) of  
9 the Community Services Block Grant Act (42  
10 U.S.C. 9902(2)) is higher than the national  
11 percentage of such individuals.

12 (2) NONPERFORMANCE STIPULATIONS.—An eli-  
13 gible entity shall stipulate, in any contract with a  
14 subgrantee for the use of grant funds received under  
15 this section, reasonable provisions for recovery of  
16 funds for nonperformance.

17 (i) BROADBAND NETWORK DEPLOYMENT.—

18 (1) ORDER OF AWARDS; PRIORITY.—An eligible  
19 entity, in awarding subgrants for the deployment of  
20 a broadband network using grant funds received  
21 under this section, as authorized under subsection  
22 (g)(1)(A)—

23 (A) shall award funding in a manner  
24 that—

1 (i) first provides funding for deploy-  
2 ment of broadband infrastructure to  
3 unserved areas;

4 (ii) after providing funding for deploy-  
5 ment of broadband infrastructure to areas  
6 described in clause (i), provides funding for  
7 deployment of broadband infrastructure to  
8 underserved areas and eligible community  
9 anchor institutions; and

10 (iii) after providing funding for de-  
11 ployment of broadband infrastructure to  
12 areas and institutions described in clause  
13 (ii), provides funding to other eligible  
14 areas;

15 (B) may not exclude cooperatives, non-  
16 profit organizations, public-private partner-  
17 ships, private companies, public or private utili-  
18 ties, Tribally owned entities, or local govern-  
19 ments from eligibility for such grant funds; and

20 (C) shall give priority to an entity that—

21 (i) will provide not less than 1 tier of  
22 gigabit-level broadband service;

23 (ii) will, subject to a waiver from the  
24 Assistant Secretary due to unforeseeable,  
25 extenuating circumstances—

1 (I) begin construction of the  
2 broadband network not later than 1  
3 year after being awarded the  
4 subgrant; and

5 (II) deploy the broadband net-  
6 work and begin providing broadband  
7 service to each customer that desires  
8 broadband service by a date that is  
9 earlier than the deadline under para-  
10 graph (4)(B); and

11 (iii) in the case of a subgrant awarded  
12 by a State or territory, has a letter of en-  
13 dorsement for the project from the local  
14 government for each community that the  
15 project will serve.

16 (2) CHALLENGE PROCESS FOR CLASSIFICATION  
17 OF ELIGIBLE AREAS AND INSTITUTIONS.—

18 (A) CHALLENGE PROCESS.—After submit-  
19 ting an initial proposal under subsection (f)(2)  
20 and before allocating grant funds received  
21 under this section for the deployment of  
22 broadband networks, an eligible entity shall en-  
23 sure a transparent, evidence-based, and expedi-  
24 tious challenge process under which a unit of  
25 local government, nonprofit organization, or

1 other broadband service provider can challenge  
2 a determination made by the eligible entity in  
3 the initial proposal as to whether a particular  
4 area or community anchor institution within the  
5 jurisdiction of the eligible entity is eligible for  
6 the grant funds, including whether a particular  
7 area is an unserved area, underserved area, or  
8 other qualifying area.

9 (B) FINAL IDENTIFICATION; NOTIFICATION  
10 OF FUNDING ELIGIBILITY.—After resolving  
11 each challenge under subparagraph (A), and  
12 not later than 30 days before allocating grant  
13 funds received under this section for the deploy-  
14 ment of broadband networks, an eligible entity  
15 shall provide public notice of the final classifica-  
16 tion of each eligible area and eligible community  
17 anchor institution within the jurisdiction of the  
18 eligible entity.

19 (C) CONSULTATION WITH NTIA.—An eligi-  
20 ble entity shall notify the Assistant Secretary of  
21 any modification to the initial proposal of the  
22 eligible entity submitted under subsection (f)(2)  
23 that is necessitated by a successful challenge  
24 under subparagraph (A) of this paragraph.



1           (3) SUBGRANTEE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF  
2 BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE DEPLOYMENT  
3 COSTS.—

4           (A) IN GENERAL.—

5           (i) MATCHING REQUIREMENT.—In al-  
6 locating grant funds received under this  
7 section for deployment of broadband net-  
8 works, an eligible entity other than an eli-  
9 gible Tribal entity shall require a sub-  
10 grantee to provide a contribution, derived  
11 from non-Federal funds (or funds from a  
12 Federal regional commission or authority),  
13 of not less than 20 percent of project costs.

14           (ii) WAIVER.—The Assistant Sec-  
15 retary may reduce or waive the required  
16 matching contribution under clause (i).

17           (B) SOURCE OF MATCH.—A matching con-  
18 tribution under subparagraph (A)—

19           (i) may be provided by an eligible en-  
20 tity, a unit of local government, a utility  
21 company, a cooperative, a nonprofit orga-  
22 nization, a for-profit company, regional  
23 planning or governmental organization, or  
24 a Federal regional commission or author-  
25 ity; and

1 (ii) may include in-kind contributions.

2 (C) DEFINITION.—For purposes of this  
3 paragraph, the term “Federal regional commis-  
4 sion or authority” means—

5 (i) the Appalachian Regional Commis-  
6 sion;

7 (ii) the Delta Regional Authority; and

8 (iii) the Northern Border Regional  
9 Commission.

10 (4) DEPLOYMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICE  
11 REQUIREMENTS.—An entity that receives a subgrant  
12 under subsection (g)(1)(A) for the deployment of a  
13 broadband network shall—

14 (A) in providing broadband service using  
15 the network—

16 (i) provide broadband service—

17 (I) except as provided in sub-  
18 clause (II)—

19 (aa) at a speed of not less  
20 than 100 megabits per second for  
21 downloads and 100 megabits per  
22 second for uploads;

23 (bb) with a latency that is  
24 sufficiently low to allow reason-

1 ably foreseeable, real-time, inter-  
2 active applications; and

3 (cc) with network outages  
4 that do not exceed, on average,  
5 48 hours over any 365-day pe-  
6 riod; or

7 (II) at a speed of not less than  
8 100 megabits per second for  
9 downloads and 25 megabits per sec-  
10 ond for uploads, if the eligible entity  
11 that awarded the subgrant has re-  
12 ceived an exemption from the Assist-  
13 ant Secretary under subsection (f)(5);

14 (ii) provide access to broadband serv-  
15 ice to each customer that desires  
16 broadband service in the area to which the  
17 subgrant applies; and

18 (iii) to an eligible area, offer not less  
19 than 1 affordable broadband service plan  
20 for customers;

21 (B) deploy the broadband network and  
22 begin providing broadband service to each cus-  
23 tomer that desires broadband service—

1 (i) except as provided in clause (ii),  
2 not later than 3 years after the date on  
3 which the entity receives the subgrant; or

4 (ii) in the case of—

5 (I) a subgrant awarded by an eli-  
6 gible Tribal entity, if exigencies re-  
7 quire additional time, by a date speci-  
8 fied by the eligible Tribal entity  
9 that—

10 (aa) is later than the date  
11 required under clause (i); and

12 (bb) may not be later than 5  
13 years after the date on which the  
14 entity receives the subgrant; or

15 (II) a subgrant awarded by an el-  
16 igible entity other than an eligible  
17 Tribal entity, if a delay in receiving a  
18 Federal, State, or local permit, or a  
19 delay due to supply chain constraints,  
20 that is outside the control of the sub-  
21 grantee makes compliance with the  
22 deadline under clause (i) impossible,  
23 by a date specified by the eligible enti-  
24 ty that—

1 (aa) is later than the date  
2 required under clause (i); and

3 (bb) may not be later than 4  
4 years after the date on which the  
5 entity receives the subgrant;

6 (C) if laying middle-mile fiber or conduit  
7 underground or along a roadway, include inter-  
8 spersed access points at regular intervals;

9 (D) once the network has been deployed,  
10 provide public notice, online and through other  
11 means, of that fact to the area in which  
12 broadband service has been provided and share  
13 the public notice with the eligible entity that  
14 awarded the subgrant; and

15 (E) if the entity is no longer able to pro-  
16 vide broadband service to the area covered by  
17 the subgrant at any time, sell the network ca-  
18 pacity at a reasonable, wholesale rate on a non-  
19 discriminatory basis to other broadband service  
20 providers or public sector entities.

21 (5) RETURN OF FUNDS.—An entity that re-  
22 ceives a subgrant from an eligible entity under sub-  
23 section (g)(1)(A) and fails to comply with any re-  
24 quirement under this subsection shall return up to

1 the entire amount of the subgrant to the eligible en-  
2 tity, at the discretion of the eligible entity.

3 (6) REASONABLE PERMITTING FEES.—If an en-  
4 tity that receives a subgrant under subsection  
5 (g)(1)(A) requires access to a right-of-way, including  
6 for a pole attachment, from the Federal Government  
7 or a State or local government in order to deploy the  
8 broadband network, the Federal Government or  
9 State or local government may only charge the enti-  
10 ty a reasonable fee in an amount that is consistent  
11 with the amount of the fee that the Federal Govern-  
12 ment or State or local government charges for utility  
13 permits.

14 (7) ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS IMPOSED BY  
15 ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—Nothing in this subsection shall  
16 be construed to prohibit an eligible entity from im-  
17 posing additional requirements relating to the use of  
18 a subgrant awarded under subsection (g)(1)(A) if  
19 the requirements do not conflict with this subsection,  
20 including by—

21 (A) increasing the minimum speed of  
22 broadband service that must be provided; or

23 (B) imposing penalties on noncompliant  
24 subgrantees in addition to the penalty under  
25 paragraph (5).

1           (8) BANKRUPTCY CONTINGENCY.—An eligible  
2           entity that awards a subgrant to an entity under  
3           subsection (g)(1)(A) for the deployment of a  
4           broadband network shall enter into an agreement  
5           with the subgrantee that requires the subgrantee, in  
6           the case of bankruptcy, to commit to repay the full  
7           amount of the subgrant before fulfilling any other fi-  
8           nancial obligations, except for salaries, compensa-  
9           tion, and severance payments for non-executive posi-  
10          tions.

11          (9) STANDARDS.—An eligible entity may not  
12          award a subgrant to an entity under subsection  
13          (g)(1)(A) for the deployment of a broadband net-  
14          work unless the eligible entity has confirmed that  
15          the subgrantee has the financial, operational, and  
16          technical capacity to meet the buildout obligations of  
17          the project.

18          (j) REPORTING.—

19                (1) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—

20                    (A) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 180  
21                    days after receiving grant funds under this sec-  
22                    tion, for the sole purposes of providing trans-  
23                    parency and providing information to inform fu-  
24                    ture Federal broadband planning, an eligible





1 (II) the number of locations at  
2 which broadband service was provided  
3 using the grant funds.

4 (C) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 1  
5 year after an eligible entity has expended all  
6 grant funds received under this section, the eli-  
7 gible entity shall submit to the Assistant Sec-  
8 retary a report that—

9 (i) describes how the eligible entity ex-  
10 pended the funds;

11 (ii) includes each report that the eligi-  
12 ble entity received from a subgrantee  
13 under paragraph (2); and

14 (iii) certifies that the eligible entity  
15 complied with the requirements of this sec-  
16 tion and with any additional reporting re-  
17 quirements prescribed by the Assistant  
18 Secretary, including—

19 (I) a description of each service  
20 provided with the grant funds; and

21 (II) the number of locations at  
22 which, and residents for whom,  
23 broadband service was provided using  
24 the grant funds.

1                   (D) PROVISION TO FCC AND USDA.—Sub-  
2                   ject to the sole purposes described in subpara-  
3                   graph (A)(i), and subject to subsection (l), the  
4                   Assistant Secretary shall enter into a memo-  
5                   randum of understanding with the Commission  
6                   and the Department of Agriculture under which  
7                   the Assistant Secretary provides the final re-  
8                   ports received under subparagraph (C) to the  
9                   Commission and the Department of Agriculture  
10                  to be used when determining whether to award  
11                  funds for the deployment of broadband under  
12                  any program administered by those agencies.

13                  (2) SUBGRANTEES.—

14                   (A) SEMIANNUAL REPORT.—The recipient  
15                   of a subgrant from an eligible entity under this  
16                   section shall submit to the eligible entity a  
17                   semiannual report for the duration of the  
18                   subgrant to track the effectiveness of the use of  
19                   funds provided.

20                   (B) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted  
21                   under subparagraph (A) shall—

22                           (i) describe each type of project car-  
23                           ried out using the subgrant and the dura-  
24                           tion of the subgrant;

1 (ii) in the case of a broadband infra-  
2 structure project—

3 (I) include a list of addresses or  
4 locations that constitute the service  
5 area that will be served by the  
6 broadband infrastructure to be con-  
7 structed;

8 (II) identify whether each ad-  
9 dress or location described in sub-  
10 clause (I) is residential, commercial,  
11 or a community anchor institution;

12 (III) describe the types of facili-  
13 ties that have been constructed and  
14 installed;

15 (IV) describe the peak and off-  
16 peak actual speeds of the broadband  
17 service being offered;

18 (V) describe the maximum adver-  
19 tised speed of the broadband service  
20 being offered;

21 (VI) describe the non-pro-  
22 motional prices, including any associ-  
23 ated fees, charged for different tiers  
24 of broadband service being offered;

1 (VII) include any other data that  
2 would be required to comply with the  
3 data and mapping collection standards  
4 of the Commission under section  
5 1.7004 of title 47, Code of Federal  
6 Regulations, or any successor regula-  
7 tion, for broadband infrastructure  
8 projects; and

9 (VIII) comply with any other rea-  
10 sonable reporting requirements deter-  
11 mined by the eligible entity; and

12 (iii) certify that the information in the  
13 report is accurate.

14 (3) STANDARDIZATION AND COORDINATION.—  
15 The Assistant Secretary and the Commission shall  
16 collaborate to—

17 (A) standardize and coordinate reporting  
18 of locations at which broadband service was  
19 provided using grant funds received under this  
20 section in accordance with title VIII of the  
21 Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 641 et  
22 seq.); and

23 (B) provide a standardized methodology to  
24 recipients of grants and subgrantees under this

1 section for reporting the information described  
2 in subparagraph (A).

3 (k) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ELIGIBLE ENTI-  
4 TIES.—Upon request by an eligible entity, the Assistant  
5 Secretary shall provide technical assistance to support  
6 identification of eligible areas, submission of the initial  
7 proposal or final proposal, competitive awarding of sub-  
8 grants, and oversight of subgrants under this section to  
9 ensure the efficient and effective use of funds.

10 (l) RELATION TO OTHER PUBLIC FUNDING.—Not-  
11 withstanding any other provision of law—

12 (1) an entity that has received amounts from  
13 the Federal Government or a State or local govern-  
14 ment for the purpose of expanding access to  
15 broadband service may receive a subgrant under  
16 subsection (g) in accordance with this section; and

17 (2) the receipt of a subgrant under subsection  
18 (g) by an entity described in paragraph (1) of this  
19 subsection shall not affect the eligibility of the entity  
20 to receive the amounts from the Federal Government  
21 or a State or local government described in that  
22 paragraph.

23 (m) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—Grant funds  
24 awarded to an eligible entity under this section shall be  
25 used to supplement, and not supplant, the amounts that

1 the eligible entity would otherwise make available for the  
2 purposes for which the grant funds may be used.

3 (n) SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING FEDERAL  
4 AGENCY COORDINATION.—It is the sense of Congress that  
5 Federal agencies responsible for supporting broadband de-  
6 ployment, including the Commission, the Department of  
7 Commerce, and the Department of Agriculture, to the ex-  
8 tent possible, should align the goals, application and re-  
9 porting processes, and project requirements with respect  
10 to broadband deployment supported by those agencies.

11 **SEC. 4. PREEMPTION OF STATE AND LOCAL RESTRICTIONS**  
12 **ON MUNICIPAL BROADBAND.**

13 Title I of the Communications Act of 1934 (47  
14 U.S.C. 151 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the  
15 following:

16 **“SEC. 14. PREEMPTION OF STATE AND LOCAL RESTRIC-**  
17 **TIONS ON MUNICIPAL BROADBAND.**

18 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

19 “(1) the term ‘advanced telecommunications ca-  
20 pability’ has the meaning given the term in section  
21 706(d) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (47  
22 U.S.C. 1302(d));

23 “(2) the term ‘advanced telecommunications ca-  
24 pability or services’ means—

1           “(A) advanced telecommunications capa-  
2           bility; or

3           “(B) services using advanced telecommuni-  
4           cations capability;

5           “(3) the term ‘Indian Tribe’ has the meaning  
6           given the term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Deter-  
7           mination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C.  
8           5304);

9           “(4) the term ‘public provider’ means—

10           “(A) a State or political subdivision there-  
11           of;

12           “(B) any agency, authority, or instrumen-  
13           tality of a State or political subdivision thereof,  
14           including an intergovernmental agency, author-  
15           ity, or instrumentality;

16           “(C) an Indian Tribe; or

17           “(D) any entity that is owned by, con-  
18           trolled by, or otherwise affiliated with—

19           “(i) a State or political subdivision  
20           thereof;

21           “(ii) an agency, authority, or instru-  
22           mentality of a State or political subdivision  
23           thereof, including an intergovernmental  
24           agency, authority, or instrumentality; or

25           “(iii) an Indian Tribe.

1       “(b) PREEMPTION.—No statute, regulation, or other  
2 legal requirement of a State or political subdivision thereof  
3 may prohibit, or have the effect of prohibiting or substan-  
4 tially inhibiting, any public provider from—

5           “(1) providing telecommunications services or  
6 advanced telecommunications capability or services  
7 to any person or any public or private entity; or

8           “(2) deploying a network and infrastructure  
9 used to provide services, or capability and services,  
10 described in paragraph (1).”.

11 **SEC. 5. REPORT ON FUTURE OF UNIVERSAL SERVICE**  
12 **FUND.**

13 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

14       (1) the term “Commission” means the Federal  
15 Communications Commission; and

16       (2) the term “universal service goals for  
17 broadband” means the statutorily mandated goals of  
18 universal service for advanced telecommunications  
19 capability under section 706 of the Telecommuni-  
20 cations Act of 1996 (47 U.S.C. 1302).

21 (b) EVALUATION.—Not later than 30 days after the  
22 date of enactment of this Act, the Commission shall com-  
23 mence a proceeding to evaluate the implications of this  
24 Act and the amendments made by this Act on how the



1 Commission should achieve the universal service goals for  
2 broadband.

3 (c) REPORT.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 270 days  
5 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Commis-  
6 sion shall submit to Congress a report on the op-  
7 tions of the Commission for improving its effective-  
8 ness in achieving the universal service goals for  
9 broadband in light of this Act and the amendments  
10 made by this Act, and other legislation that address-  
11 es those goals.

12 (2) RECOMMENDATIONS.—In the report sub-  
13 mitted under paragraph (1), the Commission may  
14 make recommendations for Congress on further ac-  
15 tions the Commission and Congress could take to  
16 improve the ability of the Commission to achieve the  
17 universal service goals for broadband.

18 (3) SCOPE OF UNIVERSAL SERVICE.—In sub-  
19 mitting the report under paragraph (1), the Com-  
20 mission—

21 (A) may not in any way reduce the con-  
22 gressional mandate to achieve the universal  
23 service goals for broadband; and

24 (B) may provide recommendations for Con-  
25 gress to expand the universal service goals for

1 broadband, if the Commission believes such an  
2 expansion is in the public interest.