

Broadband Planning and Implementation

Funding Potentials

February 2022

Introduction

Grafton County has been planning and engineering for the construction of a middle-mile backbone network throughout the County, helping to reduce costs to municipalities to deliver last-mile services to homes and businesses. The County is also completing high level designs (HLDs) for last mile connections which will be turned over to municipalities when they are completed this spring.

While the County is focusing on the middle mile construction, there are numerous grant programs that exist to support the planning and construction of last mile broadband infrastructure in communities. The following are a sample of these opportunities. These grant programs are competitive and will likely require match funds to be secured in order to access the funds. It is in the municipalities best interest to begin securing match funding as soon as possible. We also encourage municipalities to consider collaborating on grant applications to strengthen the odds of a successful award. Grafton County and its team of professional service providers are willing and able to help facilitate coordination amongst the municipalities to achieve project financing.

It should be noted that program rules and regulations are subject to change year by year. We expect new and additional programs to continue rolling out from the federal government under the new Infrastructure Bill.

Funding Potentials

Community Development Block Grant – Planning Grant

Deadline: Rolling

Eligible Applicants: Municipalities

Purpose: The primary objective of the CDBG program is the development of viable communities by expanding economic opportunities, providing decent housing and a suitable living environment principally for persons of low to moderate income.

Federal or Non-Federal Funds? Non-Federal

Match Requirement: Not required but affects scoring

Max Request Amount: \$25,000

More Info Available At: <https://resources.nhcdfa.org/programs/community-development-block-grant/pre-application/program-overview-objectives/>

Community Development Block Grant – Public Facilities

Deadline: Last Monday of January and July, annually

Eligible Applicants: Municipalities

Purpose: The primary objective of the CDBG program is the development of viable communities by expanding economic opportunities, providing decent housing and a suitable living environment principally for persons of low to moderate income.

Federal or Non-Federal Funds? Non-Federal

Match Requirement: 1:1

Max Request Amount: \$500,000

More Info Available At: <https://resources.nhcdfa.org/programs/community-development-block-grant/pre-application/program-overview-objectives/>

USDA ReConnect

Deadline: February

Eligible Applicants: State and local governments, corporations, limited liability companies

Purpose: Used to build infrastructure for essential internet eConnectivity services to rural areas without sufficient access to broadband, through loans and grants (or a combination thereof). Funds may be used: To fund the construction or improvement of facilities, including buildings and land, required to provide fixed terrestrial broadband service; To fund reasonable pre-application expenses (max of 5% of total award); or to fund the acquisition and upgrade of an existing system that is not currently providing sufficient access to broadband service (eligible for 100 percent loan requests only) --funding for the acquisition of an existing system may not exceed 40 percent of the award amount.

Special Note: USDA will review both the technical and financial feasibility of the project. Eligible projects must meet at least two of the following requirements by the end of the forecast period: a minimum Times Interest Earned Ratio (TIER) requirement of 1.20, a minimum Debt Service Coverage Ratio (DSCR) requirement of 1.20, and a minimum Current Ratio of 1.20.

Required Match: 20%

Max Request: \$25,000,000

More Info Available At: <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect>

USDA Rural Business Development Grant

Deadline: February

Eligible Applicants: Public Bodies and nonprofit entities

Purpose: Acquisition, development/construction, technical assistance, equipment purchases to benefit small and emerging businesses.

Federal or Non-Federal Funds? Federal

Match Requirement: Not required but contributes to application scoring.

Max Request: \$30,000

More Info Available At: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants/nh>

USDA Community Facility Direct Loan and Grant Program

Deadline: April and December each year

Eligible Applicants: Public Bodies and nonprofit entities

Purpose: This program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area, and does not include private, commercial or business undertakings. Funds can be used for construction or purchase of equipment.

Required Match: Varies by community.

Max Request: No definitive max but typically around \$100,000

More Info Available At: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/nh?pid=>

Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund – Large Grants Program

Deadline: Letters of intent due mid-January with full applications due in May (full applications by invite only). Note that there is also a Local Grants program for requests under \$20,000; applications due in July.

Eligible Applicants: Organizations recognized as tax-exempt by the IRS or CRA are eligible, including US nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(3) status, tax-exempt public agencies, schools and municipalities.

Purpose: The Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund supports projects in Coös County, NH and bordering communities in the United States and Canada that focus on community revitalization.

Special Note: Discuss with funder prior to submission of application to determine eligibility and potential benefits to Coos County residents

Federal or Non-Federal Funds? Non-Federal

Match Requirement: For capital projects, funder prefers to be middle-to-last dollars in. No set definition.

Max Request Amount: \$300,000

More Info Available At: <https://www.nhcf.org/how-can-we-help-you/apply-for-a-grant/neil-and-louise-tillotson-fund-large-grants-program/>

USDA Community Facility Technical Assistance and Training Grant

Deadline: Likely April or May

Eligible Applicants: Public Bodies and nonprofit entities

Purpose: Ultimate Beneficiaries may apply to assist with planning of community facility projects. A priority is achieving e-Connectivity for Rural America.

Required Match: Not required but affects scoring.

Max Request: \$50,000

More Info Available At: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-technical-assistance-and-training-grant>

Northern Border Regional Commission – Economic Infrastructure Grants

Deadline: Likely May

Eligible Applicants: Public Bodies or 501c3 nonprofits

Purpose: Priority projects include those that revitalize and modernize essential infrastructure in Northern Border region communities; Retain, expand and diversify business enterprise that capitalizes on the region's natural, cultural, and economic assets; and Foster entrepreneurial leadership and capacity for community economic development. Can be construction or non-construction. Engineering is eligible if part of a larger construction project.

Special Note: Only select communities in Grafton County are eligible. A list of eligible towns in 2021 can be found here; <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/distressed-counties>.

Federal or Non-Federal Funds? Combination. When combined with other federal funds, the federal portion of the total project cost cannot 80%. Example: A \$100,000 project could utilize \$50,000 in EDA funds; \$30,000 from NBRC; and the required nonfederal amount would be \$20,000.

Match Requirement: Eligible municipalities in Grafton County require a 1:1 match.

Special Note: Match funds do not need to be in-hand at time of application. Successful applicants have until September of the following year to secure match funding.

Max Request: Public infrastructure max \$1,000,000; non-construction max \$350,000. Subject to change in 2022.

More Info Available At: <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/economic-infrastructure-development-investments>

Economic Development Administration – Public Works

Deadline: Rolling

Eligible Applicants: Public bodies or nonprofits working in collaboration with a public body (demonstrated through a letter of support from a municipality).

Purpose: EDA provides strategic investments on a competitive merit basis to support economic development, foster job creation, and attract private investment in economically distressed areas of the United States. EDA investments can support construction, non-construction, planning, technical assistance, and revolving loan fund projects. Grants made under this program are designed to leverage existing regional assets and support the implementation of economic development strategies that advance new ideas and creative approaches to advance economic prosperity in distressed communities. EDA prioritizes job creation and private investments leveraged.

Federal or Non-Federal Funds? Federal

Match Requirement: Is based on distress criteria of the project area (per capita income and unemployment).

Special Note: Match funds must be identified at time of application

Max Request: EDA projects typically range from \$500,000 - \$3,000,000

More Info Available At: <https://www.eda.gov/funding-opportunities/>

USDA Distance Learning and Tele-Medicine

Deadline: June

Eligible Applicants: State and local government entities, nonprofits, for-profits, or a consortium of eligible applicants

Purpose: This grant program helps rural communities acquire the technology and training necessary to connect educational and medical professionals with students, teachers, and patients in rural areas. Eligible uses include: Acquisition of eligible capital assets, such as Broadband facilities; Audio, video and

interactive video equipment; Terminal and data terminal equipment; Computer hardware, network components and software; Inside wiring and similar infrastructure that further DLT services; Acquisition of instructional programming that is a capital asset and; Acquisition of technical assistance and instruction for using eligible equipment. Per Will Anderson, USDA, DLT program prefers to purchase equipment for end-users rather than fund the broadband connections.

Federal or Non-Federal Funds? Federal

Match Requirement: 15%

Max Request: \$1,000,000

More Info Available At: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/distance-learning-telemedicine-grants>

New Broadband Program to Keep on the Radar

- NTIA Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure

Other Funding Opportunities

- Charitable and Corporate Giving Programs
- Private Donations
- Tax Credits
- ARPA Funds