



Sec. Vilsack announces rural broadband projects to spur growth across 18 states

By Agri-Pulse Staff

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Washington, March 4 –Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the selection of 22 broadband infrastructure projects Thursday to give rural residents in 18 states or territories access to improved economic and educational opportunities. Funding for the projects is being provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

“These broadband projects will provide rural America access to the tools it needs to attract new businesses, educational opportunities and jobs,” Vilsack said. “The Obama administration understands that bringing broadband to rural America is an economic gateway for people, business owners, and key institutions – such as libraries, hospitals, public safety buildings and community centers. Broadband is important for rural communities to remain strong in the 21st Century.”

In all, more than \$254.6 million will be invested in 22 projects. An additional \$13.1 million in private investment will be provided in matching funds. Congress provided USDA \$2.5 billion in Recovery Act funding to assist applicants to bring broadband services to rural unserved and underserved communities. To date, \$895.6 million has been provided to support 55 broadband projects in 29 states or territories.

For example, in rural regions of northeastern Oklahoma and southeastern Kansas, Totah Communications, Inc., has been selected to receive a \$4.8 million loan and a \$3.6 million grant to provide high-speed broadband to areas that are currently restricted to dial-up or first generation DSL facilities. This project will leverage an additional \$2.1 million of applicant contributions and will reach customers in Ocheleta, Lenapah, Talala and Wann in northeastern Oklahoma; and Elgin and Hewins in southeast Kansas.

In northern New Mexico, Pueblo de San Ildefonso has been selected to receive a \$632,225 loan and a \$632,225 grant to expand broadband service in the Northern Rio Grande Valley. This project will directly support economic development efforts currently being implemented in New Mexico. In addition, jobs will be created by Pueblo de San Ildefonso solar and geothermal energy projects dependent on broadband services.

Funding of individual recipients is contingent upon their meeting the terms of the loan, grant, or loan/grant agreement. A complete list of recent Recovery Act broadband award recipients by state is below:

Alaska

- Supervision Inc.: The Farther and Faster Project; \$174,680 grant and \$43,671 private investment. The funding will provide last mile cable to deliver broadband capability to homes, businesses, and community facilities in Tanana, a predominantly Alaska Native community located on the Yukon River.

American Samoa

- American Samoa Telecommunications Authority: Broadband Linking the American Samoa Territory (BLAST) Project; \$10,000,000 loan, \$81,034,763 grant and \$4,462,000 private investment. The funding will replace an old, deteriorating legacy copper infrastructure, with a more robust and weather-durable fiber optic network that will link the main islands of American Samoa, making it possible to provide broadband services to every household, business, and critical institution in the region.

California

- Ponderosa Cablevision: Millerton Project; \$1,926,431 loan and \$1,926,431 grant. The funding will provide Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP) in a 31-square-mile area adjacent to Ponderosa's current service territory. Telemedicine and online education applications will now be accessible since the closest medical and school facilities require a 45-minute drive.

Colorado

- Wiggins Telephone Association: Weldona-Orchard FTTP Project; \$2,168,544 loan and \$2,159,887 grant. The funding will provide FTTP in the Weldona-Goodrich-Orchard area of northeastern Colorado.

Georgia

- Flint Cable TV: Flint Digital Wave Project; \$4,095,913 loan and \$4,095,913 grant. The funding will provide a Hybrid Fiber Coaxial (HFC) network to homes in underserved areas of Culloden, Yatesville, and Friendship Community in rural central Georgia. This HFC network will use the latest DOCSIS 3.0 cable standard, enabling channel bonding and speeds up to 100Mbps.

Idaho

- Coeur d'Alene Tribe: Coeur d'Alene Reservation Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) Project; \$6,142,879 loan and \$6,142,879 grant. The funding will provide a FTTH broadband system offering broadband services to anchor institutions, critical community facilities, and approximately 3,770 unserved and underserved

households in the communities of Plummer, Worley, Tensed, and DeSmet, as well as isolated farms and rural home sites on the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation in North Idaho.

Indiana

- Sunman Telecommunications: 700MHz WiMAX Wireless Broadband Plan Project; \$5,694,611 loan and \$5,694,611 grant. The funding will provide needed broadband services to households, businesses and key community organizations that are currently underserved in rural communities of Indiana. (About one percent of this network also serves a small area in Kentucky.)

Kansas and Oklahoma

- Totah Communications, Inc.: The Totah Broadband Expansion Project; \$4,852,105 loan, \$3,660,360 grant, and \$2,100,000 private investment. The funding will upgrade existing copper-fed DSL nodes to fiber-fed DSL nodes and install additional fiber-fed DSL nodes throughout the service area.

Michigan

- Southwest Michigan Communications: Paw Paw and Antwerp, MI FTTP Project; \$4,165,513 loan and \$4,165,512 grant. The funding will provide advanced broadband services to the residents in the rural Paw Paw area.

Minnesota

- Halstad Telephone Company (HTC): The HTC Minnesota Exchanges Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP) Project; \$3,277,500 loan and \$3,277,500 grant. The funding will provide FTTP broadband in five towns and surrounding rural/farm areas in Norman and Polk Counties in Minnesota, using 320 miles of fiber optic cable and providing those locations with broadband capability up to 100 Megabits. (less than five percent of this network will serve an area in North Dakota)

Mississippi

- Bay Springs Telephone Co.: Bay Springs Broadband Initiatives Project; \$4,304,496 loan and \$4,135,693 grant. The funding will expand advanced DSL broadband services to unserved and underserved areas within Jasper, Jones, Rankin, Scott, and Smith Counties, Mississippi.

New Mexico

- Pueblo de San Ildefonso: TewaCom Broadband Initiative (TBI), Phase 1-Upper Rio Grande Valley Project; \$632,225 loan and \$632,225 grant. The funding will enable the Pueblo to expand service to 2,405 households.
- Penasco Valley Telephone Cooperative Inc.: The Penasco Valley Telephone (PVT) Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier (ILEC) Project; \$4,818,607 loan and

\$4,770,660 grant. The funding will provide high-speed broadband to unserved areas in the ILEC territory through fiber and wireless technology.

North Dakota

- Halstad Telephone Company (HTC): The HTC Hillsboro North Dakota Town Broadband Project; \$246,500 loan, \$246,500 grant, and \$7,000 private investment. The funding will increase broadband capability up to 100 Megabits for Internet and video service to 800 locations in the town of Hillsboro in Traill County.

Ohio

- Wabash Mutual Telephone Co.: Fort Recovery Area FTTH Project; \$2,201,042 loan and \$2,174,787 grant. The funding will provide an optical fiber network in the region that allows digital television and high-speed Internet using fiber optics deployed directly to the premises.
- Intelliwave: The Athens, Fairfield, and Pickaway County Ohio Rural Broadband Initiative Project; \$1,162,599 loan and \$1,116,997 grant. The funding will provide affordable wireless broadband and VoIP phone service to underserved rural Ohio communities in Athens, Fairfield, and Pickaway counties.
- Benton Ridge Telephone Co.: The Broadband Expansion Project - Benton Ridge; \$1,611,124 loan and \$1,547,942 grant. The funding will provide Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) in the Benton Ridge exchange of South Central Ohio, including dedicated fiber optic connections for each customer.

Oregon

- Canby Telephone Association: Rural Clackamas Co. Service Expansion Project; \$248,046 loan and \$496,090 grant. The funding will provide advanced DSL infrastructure and connectivity to underserved areas of rural Clackamas County.

Texas

- PRIDE Network, Inc.: The Texas South Plains Project; \$22,720,551 loan and \$21,829,549 grant. The funding will provide a FTTP telecommunications infrastructure, with a WiMAX service-extension overlay that will bring advanced broadband services to rural communities of the Texas South Plains region.
- PRIDE Network, Inc.: The Burkburnett and Iowa Park Project; \$12,811,071 loan and \$6,309,931 grant. The funding will provide a FTTP telecommunications infrastructure, with a WiMAX service-extension overlay, that will bring advanced broadband services to the rural communities of Burkburnett and Iowa Park (less than five percent of this network will serve an area in Oklahoma).
- XIT Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc.: The FTTP and Very High Speed DSL2 (VDSL2) Combination Application Project; \$3,065,440 grant, and \$3,190,560 private investment. The funding will provide a FTTP and Fiber-to-the-Node (FTTN) advanced DSL technology within two separate service areas in and around the communities of Dalhart and Stratford.

West Virginia

- Gateway Telecom LLC: West Virginia Last Mile Project; \$1,475,459 loan and \$1,417,597 grant. The funding will provide a wireless last-mile broadband solution to serve residences and anchor institutions in unserved rural areas of West Virginia.

President Obama signed The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 into law on Feb. 17, 2009. It was designed to jumpstart the nation's economy, create or save millions of jobs, and "put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges." The Act includes measures to modernize the nation's infrastructure, enhance energy independence, expand educational opportunities, preserve and improve affordable health care, provide tax relief, and protect those in greatest need.

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