



NEWS

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>
TTY: 1-888-835-5322

This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 11, 2014

NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:
Mark Wigfield, 202-418-0253
E-mail: mark.wigfield@fcc.gov

FCC LAUNCHES RURAL BROADBAND EXPANSION EXPERIMENTS

Applicants Will Compete to Deploy High-Performing Service at Lower Cost

Washington, D.C. – Experiments to explore how robust broadband can be expanded at lower cost in rural America were launched today by the Federal Communications Commission.

The experiments will inform the agency's broader effort to expand rural broadband through its Connect America Fund. They will also inform the FCC's efforts to ensure that consumers everywhere can benefit from the sweeping technological advances occurring now in the communications industry, while preserving consumer protection, competition, universal service and access to emergency services during these transitions.

Up to \$100 million will be available for the experiments, which will be divided into three groups as follows:

- \$75 million to test construction of networks offering service plans providing 25 Mbps downloads and 5 Mbps uploads – far in excess of the current Connect America Fund standard of 4/1 – for the same or lower amounts of support than will be offered to carriers in Phase II of Connect America
- \$15 million to test interest in delivering service at 10/1 speeds in high cost areas
- \$10 million for 10/1 service in areas that are extremely costly to serve.

Applicants will compete nationwide for the funds, which will be awarded to projects that are most cost effective. A key goal of the experiments is to test this competitive bidding process before it is used to allocate funds more broadly from the Connect America Fund, anticipated to occur later in 2015.

The experiments will also test service over diverse technologies, including fiber and wireless networks, and will be open to non-traditional providers, including electric utilities, wireless internet service providers, and others. To ensure diverse experiments, project sizes are capped, while entities serving Tribal lands are eligible for a 25% bidding credit.

The FCC's initial announcement of rural broadband experiments in January received an enthusiastic response in the form of over 1,000 expressions of interest from a wide range of entities proposing service over diverse technologies. Final applications for the experiments are due 90 days after release of the FCC order, with selection expected by the end of 2014.

The FCC is also seeking comment on how the Connect America Phase II competitive bidding process can offer bidding credits when states provide matching funds to expand rural broadband. Action by the Commission, July 11, 2014, by Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 14-98). Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel and Pai, with Commissioner O’Rielly concurring. Separate statements issued by Chairman Wheeler and Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai and O’Rielly.

Docket No.: 14-58, 10-90

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