

Media Contact:

Tina Pelkey, (202) 418-0536
tina.pelkey@fcc.gov

For Immediate Release**CHAIRMAN PAI TEES UP \$20.4 BILLION RURAL DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY FUND FOR VOTE AT FCC'S JANUARY MEETING*****Fund Would Deploy High-Speed Broadband to Millions of Rural Homes and Businesses***

WASHINGTON, January 8, 2020—Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai today presented his colleagues with final rules to launch the new \$20.4 billion Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. The rules, which will be voted on by the Commission at its Open Meeting on January 30, would establish a two-phased process to provide funding for the deployment of high-speed broadband in areas of the United States where there is currently not fixed broadband service that meets the Commission's minimum speed standard (25/3 Mbps).

“While we've made substantial progress in expanding broadband deployment over the last three years, the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund would be the biggest step the FCC has taken to date to close the digital divide,” said Chairman Pai. “This new fund would target rural areas across the country where residents currently lack access to adequate broadband and would deploy high-speed broadband to millions of rural Americans in an efficient and effective manner. In particular, as suggested by many Members of Congress, to encourage support for broadband networks that will stand the test of time, we are taking new steps to prioritize the deployment of faster-speed service, including gigabit connections.”

Building on the success of the Commission's 2018 Connect America Fund Phase II auction, the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund would allocate \$20.4 billion through a reverse-auction format to connect millions of rural homes and small businesses to high-speed broadband networks. The Fund would target areas that lack access to 25/3 Mbps broadband services in two stages. For Phase I, the FCC would target \$16 billion to areas that are wholly unserved by such broadband (where there is no 25/3 Mbps service at all). For Phase II, the FCC would use its new granular broadband mapping approach, called the Digital Opportunity Data Collection, to target unserved households in areas that are partially served by such broadband (areas where some households have access to such service but others do not). Phase II would also include areas that do not receive winning bids in Phase I.

Commission staff's initial estimate is that approximately six million model-determined locations would be eligible for bidding in Phase I of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. This figure is subject to change for a variety of reasons, including updated data regarding broadband deployment and construction as well as any modifications made to Chairman Pai's draft rules.

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Media Relations: (202) 418-0500 / ASL: (844) 432-2275 / TTY: (888) 835-5322 / Twitter: @FCC / www.fcc.gov

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