ReConnect FOA 2 Overview

USDA RUS ReConnect Program

USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development

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Agenda

- Orientation to the Post-Award Workshop
  - Agenda for the Week
  - Technology Best Practices
  - How to Use the Workshop PDF
- ReConnect Overview
- ReConnect FOA 1 & FOA 2
- Working with USDA Regional Resources
- State Offices
- Q&A

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Orientation to the Post-Award Workshop

Agenda for the Week: Live Sessions

Date	Start Time			Duration	Presentation
	ET	CT	PT		
Jan 11	2:00 PM	1:00 PM	11:00 AM	30 min presentation + 15 min Q&A	ReConnect FOA 2 Overview
Jan 11	2:45 PM	1:45 PM	11:45 AM	45 min presentation + 15 min Q&A	Award Documents
Jan 12	2:00 PM	1:00 PM	11:00 AM	45 min presentation + 15 min Q&A	NEPA & Section 106
Jan 12	3:15 PM	2:15 PM	12:15 PM	45 min presentation + 15 min Q&A	Advance Procedures
Jan 13	2:00 PM	1:00 PM	11:00 AM	45 min presentation + 15 min Q&A	Construction Procedures
Jan 14	2:00 PM	1:00 PM	11:00 AM	60 min presentation + 15 min Q&A	Financial Compliance
Jan 15	2:00 PM	1:00 PM	11:00 AM	60 min Q&A	Open Q&A

Agenda for the Week: On-Demand Sessions & Office Hours

On-Demand Sessions		
Available All Week On-Demand	60 min presentation + Office Hours available	Accounting
Available All Week On-Demand	60 min presentation	Reporting & Compliance Platform Demo
Available All Week On-Demand	15 min presentation + Office Hours available	Reporting Requirements

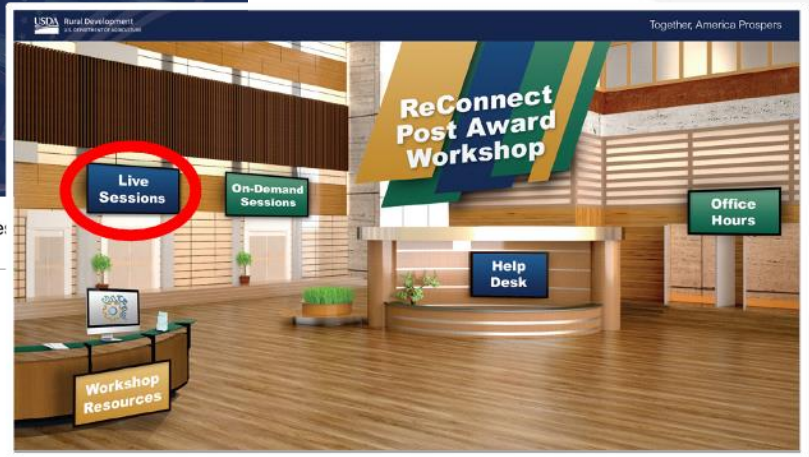
Technology Best Practices

- Make sure you're using a secure internet connection
- Turn up the volume
- Double check the timing of the presentation you are interested in attending
- Use Google Chrome for all sessions
- Find a quiet, distraction-free zone
- Download and open the Workshop PDF in Adobe Reader

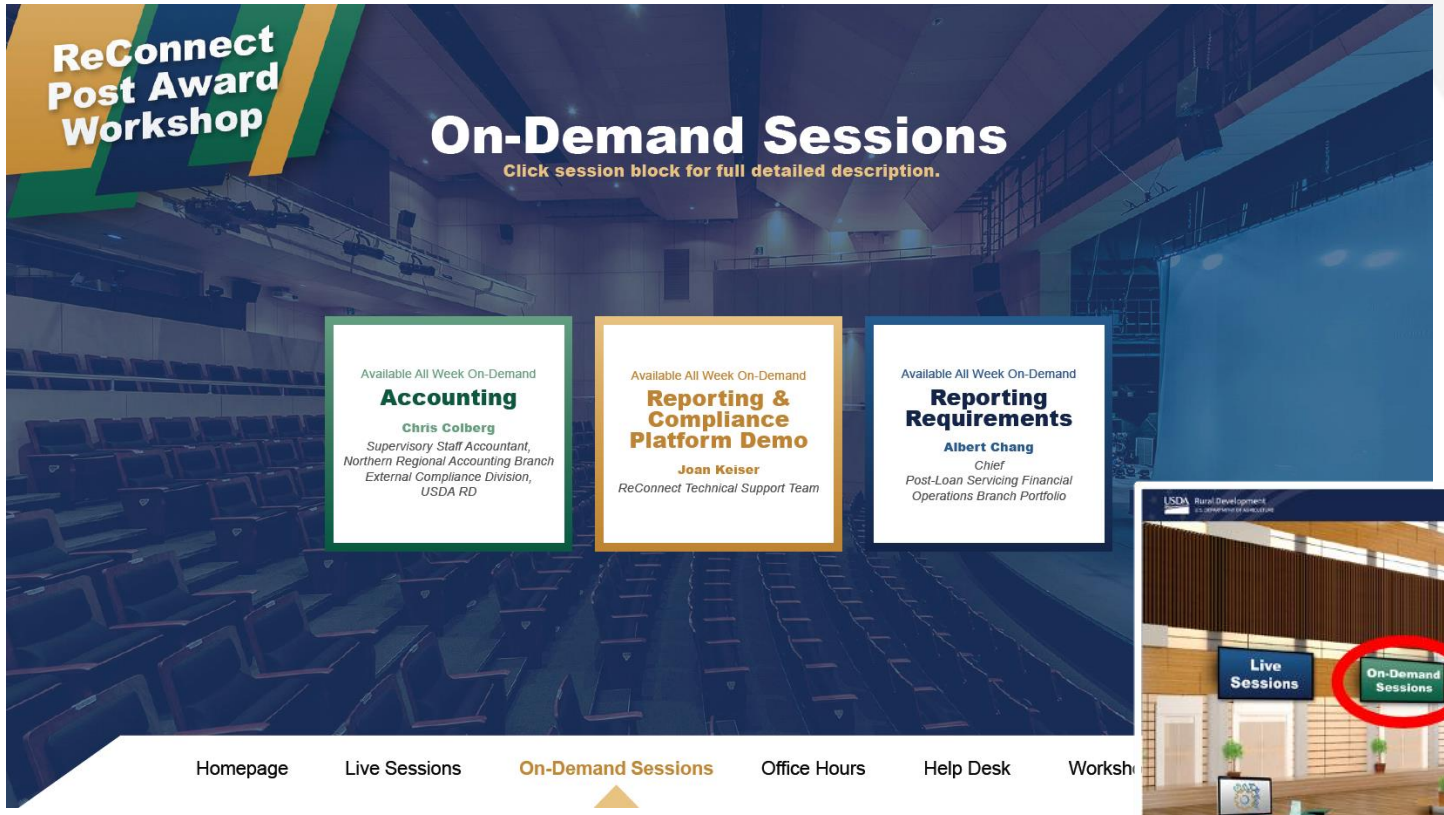
How to Use the Workshop PDF

Attending Live Sessions

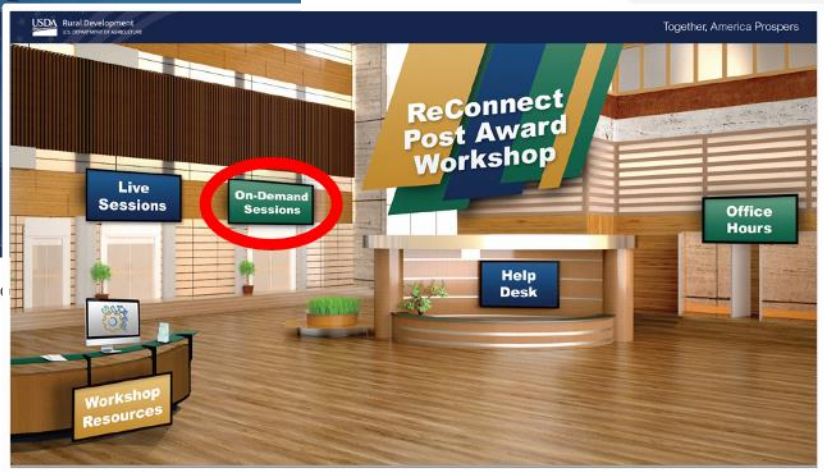
- Live Sessions: Live-streamed topic-specific workshop sessions
- Live Sessions will be streamed through Adobe Connect
- Don’t forget to use Google Chrome as your browser



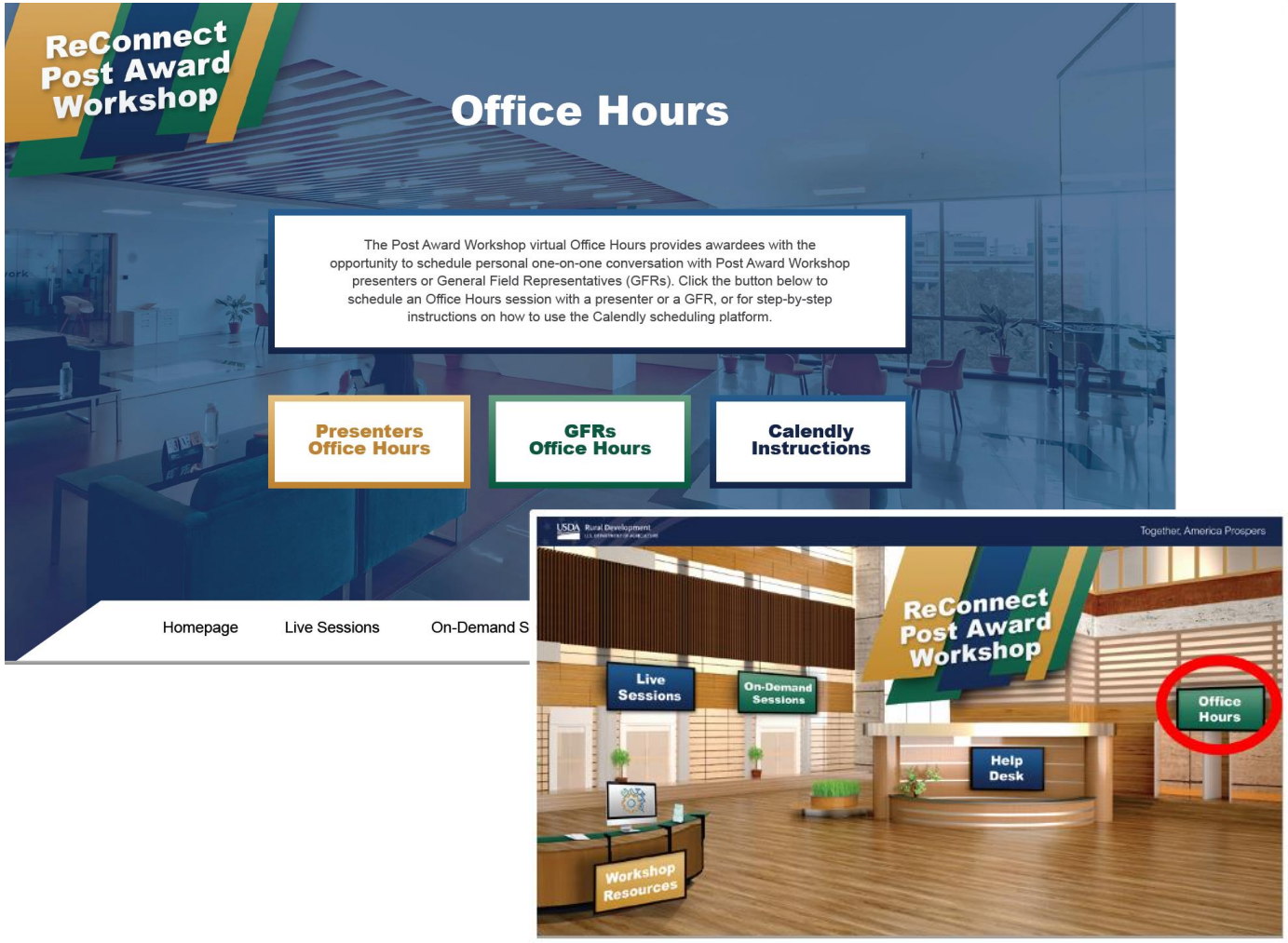
Watching On-Demand Sessions



- On-Demand Sessions: Pre-recorded presentations available for viewing outside the set workshop schedule
- USDA staff members who are On-Demand presenters will still be available for Office Hours

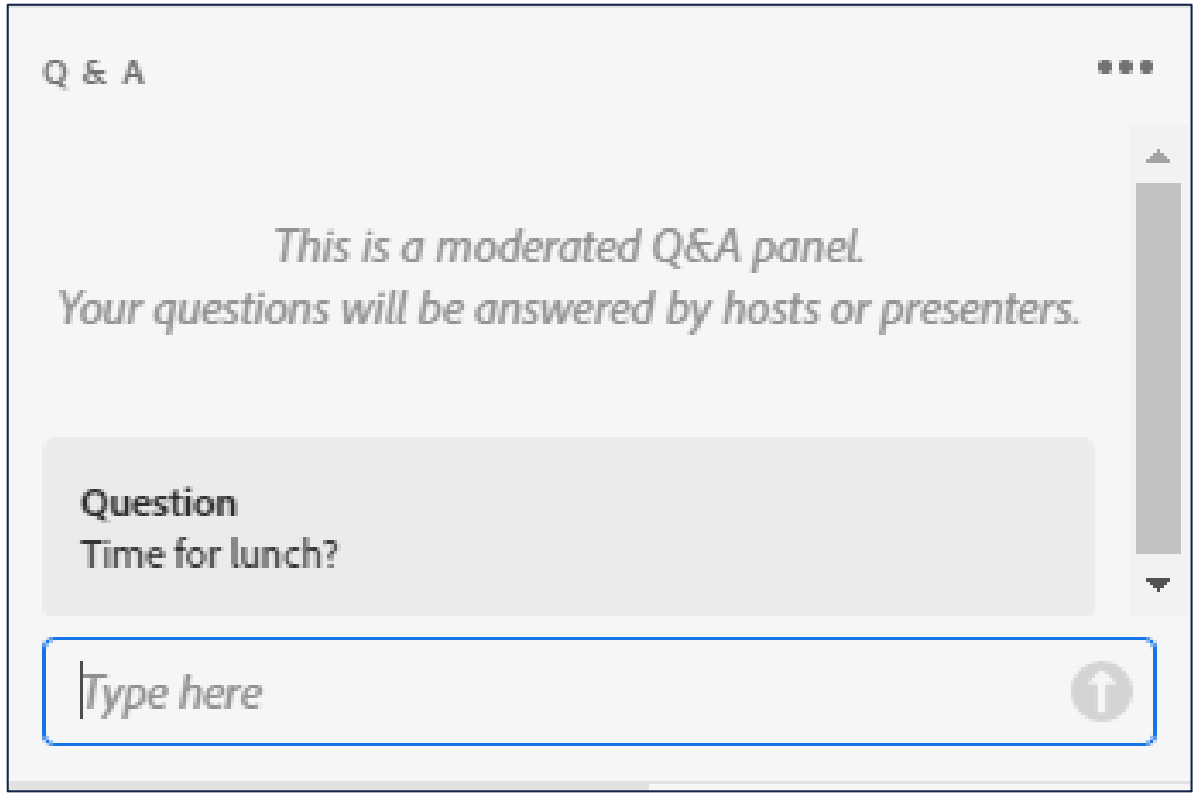


Using Office Hours



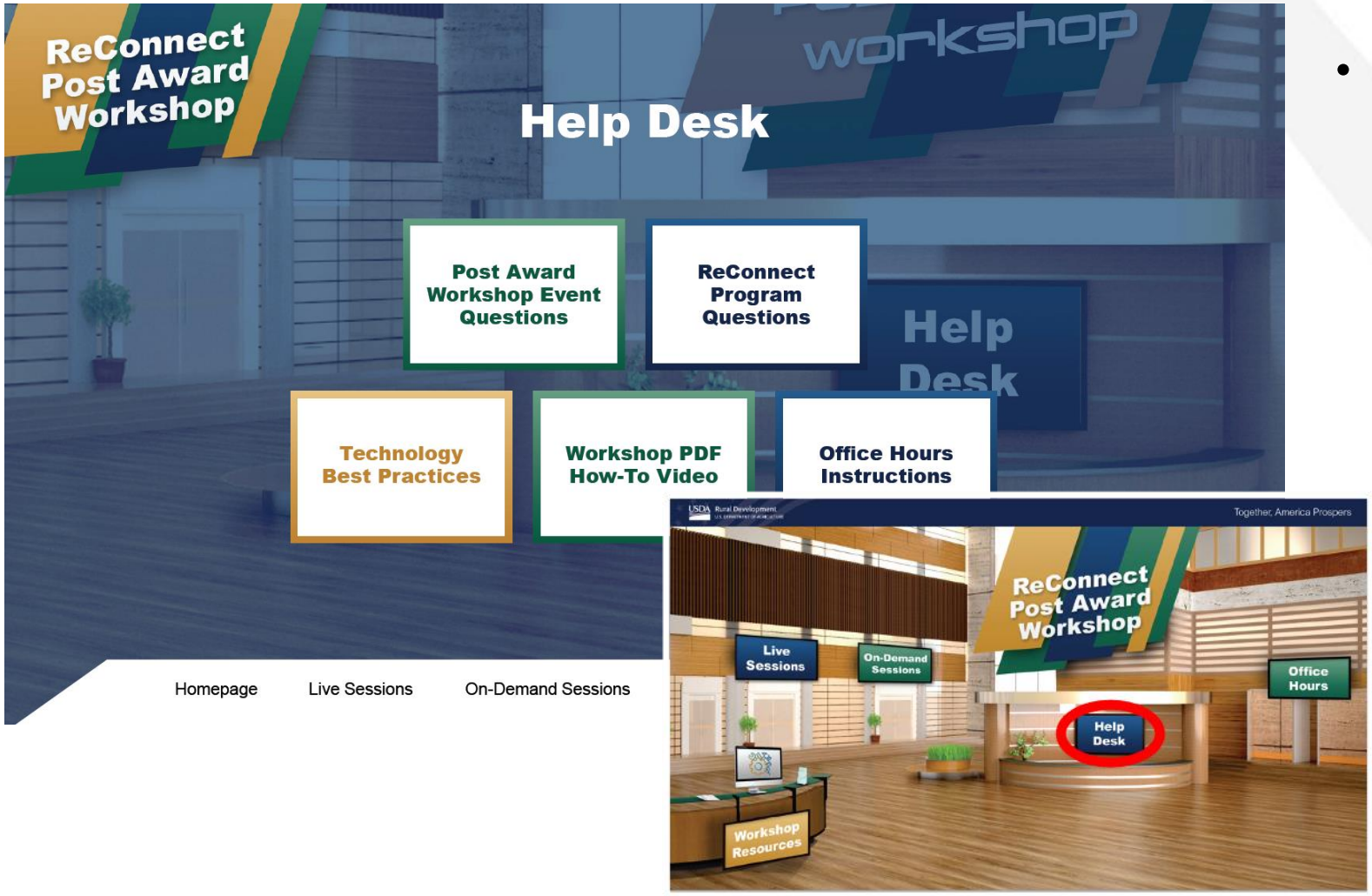
- Office Hours: the opportunity for personal, one-on-one conversations with Post Award Workshop presenters or General Field Representatives (GFRs)
- Schedule an Office Hour session with a **presenter** through Calendly where you will see the available time slots
- Schedule a conversation with **your GFR** through a Google Form
- No available time slots conflict with live sessions
- Refer to Calendly Instructions for details

Open Q&A



- There will be time for Q&A at the end of each session and a full session, Open Q&A, dedicated solely to Q&A on Friday, January 15th
- All questions during the sessions, must be submitted through the question box on the session's page
- Don't hesitate to submit questions because others may share similar thoughts and learn from the discussion
- If you don't have time to ask a question during the specific presentation session, feel free to submit your question during the live Open Q&A or discuss it during Office Hours

Help Desk



- Help Desk: The one-stop shop for technology-related information and questions. This includes:
  - Two Contact Us options
  - Technology best practices
  - A how-to video for workshop PDF navigation
  - Office Hours instructions

Workshop Resources

- Workshop Resources: The go-to location for:
  - The full workshop agenda
  - Presenter bios
  - All additional resources

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Rural Development

ReConnect Overview

Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development

Mission: USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) provides much-needed infrastructure or infrastructure improvements to rural communities. These include water and waste treatment, electric power and telecommunications services. All of these services help to expand economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for rural residents.

RUS ReConnect Program furnishes loans and grants to provide funds for the costs of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide broadband service in eligible rural areas.

ReConnect Program Overview

- **Mission:** To expand broadband service to rural areas without sufficient access to broadband, defined as 10 megabits per second (Mbps) downstream and 1Mbps upstream.
- **Funding categories:**
  - 100% Loan
  - 50% Grant/ 50% Grant
  - 100% Grant
- **Eligible entities:**
  - Non-profit entities;
  - For-profit corporations;
  - Limited liability companies;
  - Cooperative or mutual organizations;
  - States, local governments, or any agency, subdivision, instrumentality, or political subdivision thereof;
  - A territory or possession of the United States; and
  - An Indian tribe

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Rural Development

ReConnect FOA 1 & FOA 2

Awards and Applications

FOA 1 Summary: Awards

- **100% Loan:** 5 awarded projects; $58,067,668
- **100% Grant:** 41 awarded projects; $241,733,251
- **50/50 Loan/Grant:** 31 awarded projects; $363,397,819
- **Total:** 77 awarded projects; $663,198,738
  - 33 states
  - 159,811 households
  - 10,429 farms
  - 5,958 businesses
  - 202 critical community facilities
  - 273 educational facilities
  - 49 healthcare centers

FOA 2 Summary: Applications

- **100% Loan:** 7 applications; $63,505,379
- **100% Grant:** 123 applications; $903,962,310
- **50/50 Loan/Grant:** 42 applications; $602,897,398
  - $313,084,610 for Grants
  - $289,812,788 for Loans
- **Total:** 172 applications; $1.57 billion
  - 41 states

FOA 2 Summary: Awards

- **100% Loan:** 4 awarded projects; $20,227,155
- **100% Grant:** 64 awarded projects; $388,624,862
- **50/50 Loan/Grant:** 21 awarded projects; $266,018,344
- **Total:** 88 awardees to date; $674,870,361
  - 35 states
  - 112,803 households
  - 8,636 farms
  - 3,952 businesses
  - 190 essential community facilities
  - 155 educational facilities
  - 17 health care centers

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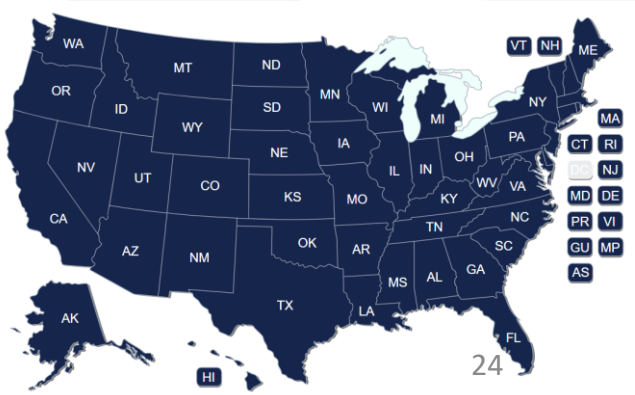
Rural Development

Working with USDA Regional Resources

Field Accountants and General Field Representatives (GFRs)

Regional Resources

- A variety of resources are available to provide technical assistance with your project and help you meet the requirements
- Specifically, General Field Representatives (GFRs) and Field Accountants will work with you throughout the process
- Each state has assigned Field Accountants and a GFR:
  - You can find the contact information for your state's resources on the ReConnect website:
    - GFRs: https://rd.usda.gov/contact-us/telecom-gfr
    - Accountants: https://rd.usda.gov/contact-us/field-accountants



Roles of Field Accountants

- Provide technical accounting assistance when needed
- Monitor for timely submission and review the annual CPA audits of awardees
- Perform Loan/Grant Accounting Reviews, that include the following procedures:
  - To determine whether construction fund advances and disbursements were made in compliance with RUS policy in amounts and for purposes approved by RUS
  - To evaluate the effectiveness of the borrower's internal accounting controls over construction fund receipts, construction fund disbursements, and plant accounting procedures
  - To evaluate the accuracy and validity of the financing-related documents (e.g., work order inventories, contracts, etc.,) submitted to RUS to encumber loan funds
  - To determine whether a borrower's plant accounting records and procedures are in compliance with RUS requirements and the applicable uniform system of accounts

When Awardees May Expect to Hear from a Field Accountant

- After a portion of the project is completed and financed through the ReConnect Program, Field Accountants will reach out to Awardees to schedule a Loan and Grant Fund Accounting Review
- Upon completion of the entire award, Field Accountants will perform a final Loan/Grant Accounting Review

Roles of General Field Representatives: Project Monitoring

Project Monitoring:

- Maintains general oversight of awardee's financial, management, engineering, construction, technical operations, and maintenance activities
- Regular contacts (by visit or other means) of all awardees requires GFR to travel across their service area on a regular basis
- Assures that awardees are aware of deadlines for submission of required reporting, including yearly and/or quarterly reports and annual audits
- Inspection of construction/installation to insure proper use of federal funds within the scope of the project to benefit rural America
- Verifies compliance to all EO/CR policies and responsibilities of awardee

Roles of General Field Representatives: Project Finalization

Project Finalizations:

- Insures proper completion of contracts and close-out documentation with National Office
- Assists customers with RUS procedures to insure appropriate documentation is retained for auditing purposes.

Roles of General Field Representatives: National Office Communications and Coordination

National Office Communication and Coordination:

The GFR is the front-line RUS presence for customers and project communication to National and State Offices:

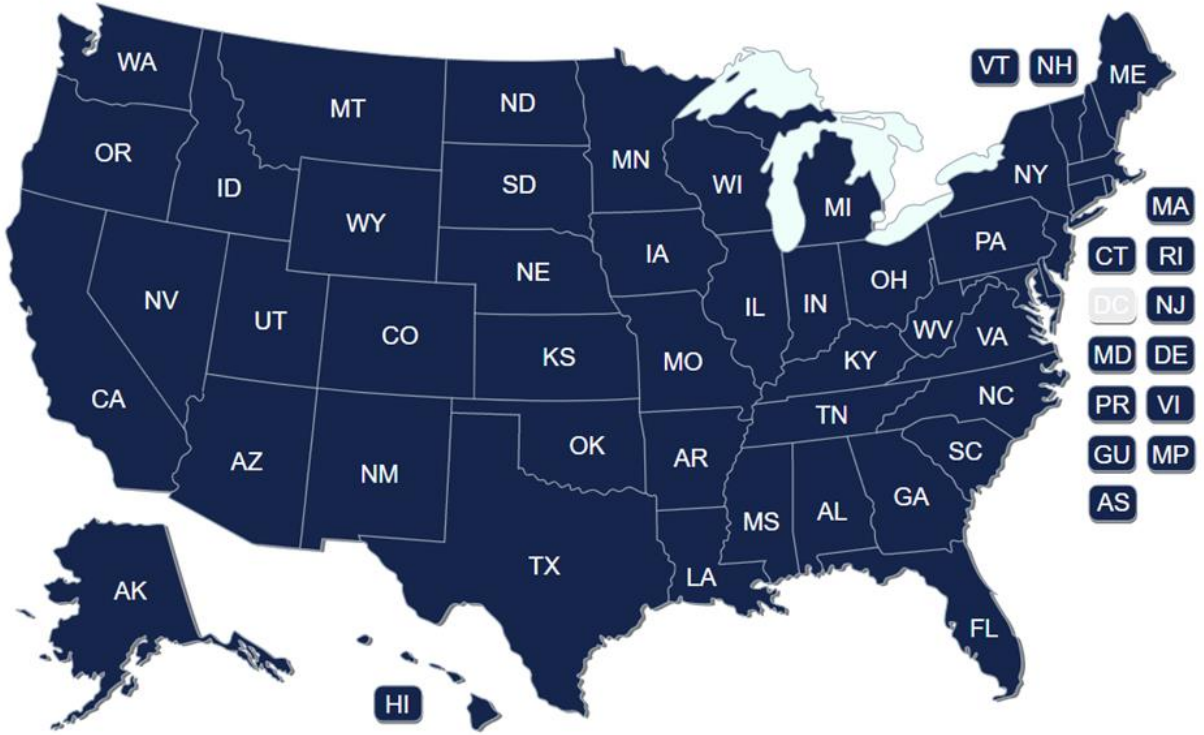
- Identifies projects for purposes of success stories, working w/ state office personnel as required
- Coordinates with PICs / Broadband Coordinators regarding program information, changes, funding opportunities, etc.
- Relationship with National Office
- Relationship with State Office

When Awardees May Expect to Hear from a General Field Representative

- GFRs meet regularly with Awardees and other program borrowers on site
- They serve as the local information conduit for the awardees and headquarters staff
- The Awardee, the Awardee's engineer, the contractor, and GFR will meet for a final inspection after construction is complete and acceptance tests made

State Offices

- State Directors and State Staff are available as a resource to awardees
- https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices



Q&A

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