Treasury Department Announces Approval of Federal Funds to Connect Thousands of Rhode Island Homes and Businesses to Affordable, High-Speed Internet as Part of President Biden’s Investing in America Agenda

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To date, the Capital Projects Fund has awarded over $7 billion for broadband, digital technology, and multi-purpose community center projects in 46 states, which those states estimate will reach nearly two million locations.

Combined with other Administration initiatives, President Biden’s Investing in America agenda has brought affordable internet to over 19 million American households.

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced the approval of $112 million in federal funds for broadband infrastructure and multi-purpose community facility projects in Rhode Island under the American Rescue Plan’s Capital Projects Fund (CPF), part of President Biden’s Investing in America Agenda. Today’s announcement includes two funding plans: $25 million for broadband infrastructure, which the state estimates will connect 7,500 homes and businesses; and $81.7 million for multi-purpose community facilities, which will bring connectivity to Rhode Island communities for years to come.

A key priority of the CPF program is expanding economic opportunities and providing internet connectivity in communities with unmet needs. Already, President Biden’s Investing in America agenda has delivered affordable, high-speed internet to 19 million American households, through these CPF investments funded by the American Rescue Plan, and through the Affordable Connectivity Program funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

“Digital connectivity is central to expanding economic opportunity in communities across the country,” said Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adeyemo. “This funding is a key piece of the Biden-Harris Administration’s historic investments to increase access to high-speed internet for millions of Americans and provide more opportunities to fully participate in the 21st century economy.”

The CPF provides a total of $10 billion to states, territories, freely associated states, and Tribal governments to fund critical capital projects that enable work, education, and health monitoring. In
addition to the $10 billion provided by the CPF, many governments are putting a portion of their State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) toward meeting the Biden-Harris Administration’s goal of connecting every American household to affordable, reliable high-speed internet. Together, these American Rescue Plan programs and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law are working in tandem with President Biden’s Investing in America agenda to close the digital divide – deploying high-speed internet to those without access and lowering costs for those who cannot afford it.

Rhode Island is approved to receive $25 million for broadband infrastructure projects, which the state estimates will connect 7,500 homes and businesses to affordable, high-speed internet and serve about 30 percent of locations still lacking high-speed internet across the state. This funding will go toward the ConnectRI Broadband Deployment Program, a competitive grant program designed to fund last mile broadband infrastructure projects in areas that currently lack access to internet at speeds of 100/20 Mbps. Rhode Island will invest an additional $81.7 million of CPF funding in a formula grant program available to the state’s 39 municipalities to construct or rehabilitate multipurpose community facilities accessible to all residents. Grants will be awarded based on the municipalities’ population and per capita income, among other factors, with the goal of equitably distributing funding for necessary projects throughout the state while also prioritizing projects in low-income areas. Multi-purpose community facilities funded under this program will offer targeted programming to improve education and student performance, provide workforce training for better and higher-paying jobs, and help residents better monitor their physical and mental health. Together with the state’s administrative funds, these projects represent 100 percent of the state’s total allocation under the CPF program.

In accordance with the Treasury Department’s guidance, each state’s plan requires service providers to participate in the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) new Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The Affordable Connectivity Program, funded by President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, helps ensure that households can afford high-speed internet by providing a discount of up to $30 per month (or up to $75 per eligible household on Tribal lands). Experts estimate that nearly 40% of U.S. households are eligible for the program.

To further lower costs, President Biden and Vice President Harris announced last year that the Administration had secured commitments from 20 leading internet service providers—covering more than 80% of the U.S. population—to offer all ACP-eligible households high-speed, reliable internet plans for no more than $30 per month. As a result of this agreement and the ACP, eligible households can receive internet access at no cost and can check their eligibility and sign up at GetInternet.gov.
The Treasury Department began announcing state awards in June 2022. To date, CPF has awarded over $7 billion for broadband, digital technology, and multi-purpose community center projects in 46 states. States estimate that the broadband investments will reach nearly two million locations, in addition to the thousands of individuals who will be served annually by connected multi-purpose community facilities. The Treasury Department will continue approving state and Tribal plans on a rolling basis.

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