

2019 POLICY BRIEF

MAINTAIN FUNDING FOR USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

QUICK FACTS

- USDA programs are funded through the annual Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill
- USDA Rural Development operates programs that provide grants and loan financing for water/wastewater infrastructure, community facilities, broadband, electric, telephone, housing, renewable energy and business development
- Some key USDA Rural Development Programs include the USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS); the USDA Rural Housing Service (RHS); and the Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS)

ACTION NEEDED:

Urge your members of Congress to support U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development programs throughout the FY 2020 appropriations process by meeting or exceeding FY 2019 funding levels. USDA Rural Development programs provide critical investments to key rural county priorities.

BACKGROUND:

USDA programs are funded through the annual Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. USDA Rural Development operates a broad range of grant and loan programs critical to rural counties. These programs include grant funding and loan financing for water/wastewater infrastructure, community facilities, broadband, electric, telephone, housing, renewable energy and business development.

In February 2019 Congress passed and the president signed an omnibus spending package that included over \$23 billion in total discretionary funding authority for USDA, including over \$3 billion for USDA's Rural Development Programs, an increase of \$2.1 billion over FY 2018 funding levels. Additionally, the omnibus includes \$550 million in appropriated funding for a rural broadband pilot program, administered by the USDA, to target areas that currently lack broadband access.

Counties encourage Congress to maintain funding levels at or above FY 2019 levels as it considers appropriations for FY 2020.

Below is a breakdown of FY 2019 funding levels:

Under the USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS):

- **Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Programs:** \$1.4 billion in funding for direct loans under the Water and Waste Disposal Program – \$200 million above FY 2018 enacted levels – and \$400 million in grants for the Water and Waste Disposal Program, level with FY 2018. This program helps rural communities address the backlog of clean water and waste disposal projects.
- **Distance Learning, Telemedicine, and Broadband Program:** \$690 million for the Rural Telecommunications Program, a \$5 million increase compared to FY 2018. This funding includes \$69.8 million for the Distance Learning, Telemedicine and Broadband Program. Of this, \$16 million is set aside for initiatives to address the opioid crisis.



Under the USDA Rural Housing Service (RHS):

- **Rural Communities Facilities Program:** \$2.8 billion for the Rural Community Facilities Program, equal to enacted FY 2018 levels. This program helps fund rural hospitals, schools, and health clinics.
- **Single-Family Housing Program:** \$1 billion for the Single-Family Housing Direct Home Loans Program, \$100 million below FY 2018 levels. This program helps provide affordable housing to underserved families in rural communities.

Under the USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS):

- **Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program:** \$1 billion dollars for the Rural Business Development Grant Program. The omnibus also provided \$29.1 million for Rural Cooperative Development Grants, a \$1.6 million increase from FY 2018. These programs help rural communities create and expand new markets and products through strategic investments.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- USDA Rural Development operates a broad range of grant and loan programs that are critical to rural counties. These programs include grant funding and loan financing for water/wastewater infrastructure, community facilities, broadband, electric, telephone, housing, renewable energy and business development.
- Urge your Members of Congress to support U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development programs throughout the FY 2020 appropriations process by meeting or exceeding FY 2019 funding levels. USDA Rural Development programs provide critical investments to key rural county priorities.

For more information, contact: Arthur Scott at 202.942.4230 or ascott@naco.org.



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