



Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission

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News & Updates: June 19, 2013

[USDA Announces New Rules to Fund Broadband Service in Un-served Rural Communities](#)

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced [new rules](#) to better target Community Connect broadband grants to areas where they are needed the most. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) remains focused on carrying out its mission, despite a time of significant budget uncertainty. This announcement is one part of the Department's efforts to strengthen the rural economy.

"These rules give communities better access to the benefits that broadband service provides," Vilsack said. "The Obama Administration is working to ensure that rural residents share in the opportunities provided by modern Internet service."

USDA Rural Development's Community Connect Grant program serves rural communities where broadband service is least likely to be available, but where it can make a tremendous difference in the quality of life for citizens.

The changes:

Simplify the application process by requiring a single project summary and map.

- ◆ Allow grant applicants to use a USDA web-based mapping tool to define their proposed service area. The old rules did not accommodate some of the most rural communities, which often are not Census-designated places or were not recognized by a commercial atlas.
- ◆ Give grant applicants more flexibility on the types of resources, in-kind services and monetary contributions that can be used to meet the 15 percent matching fund requirement.
- ◆ Allow USDA to consider giving funding priority to projects in:
 - ◆ persistent poverty counties;
 - ◆ communities experiencing population declines; the most rural areas.

USDA's Rural Utilities Service plans to publish information on Community Connect funding opportunities, including application deadlines and the amount of assistance available, in the Federal Register soon.

In addition to Community Connect grants, USDA Rural Development provides loans and loan guarantees to help finance the construction of rural broadband networks. For example, USDA Rural Development awarded a Community Connect grant to the Texas County Rural Area Informational Network (TRAIN) to install and operate a Fiber-to-the-Home network in Raymondville, Texas. The grants helped fund a Community Center called the Public Access Community Room. TRAIN also is providing broadband service to community residents and businesses.

Since its inception, the Community Connect program has funded 229 projects with USDA investments of \$122 million. In 2012, USDA assistance led to improved broadband service nationwide for nearly 65,000 rural households, businesses, and community institutions – such as libraries, schools and first responders. Information about the rules is available at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-05-03/pdf/2013-10502.pdf>.

President Obama's plan for rural America has brought about historic investment and resulted in stronger rural communities. Under the President's leadership, these investments in housing, community facilities, businesses and infrastructure have empowered rural America to continue leading the way – strengthening America's economy, small towns and rural communities. USDA's investments in rural communities support the rural way of life that stands as the backbone of our American values. President Obama and Agriculture Secretary Vilsack are committed to a smarter use of Federal resources to foster sustainable economic prosperity and ensure the government is a strong partner for businesses, entrepreneurs and working families in rural communities.

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, has a portfolio of programs designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America.

USDA has made a concerted effort to deliver results for the American people, even as USDA implements sequestration – the across-the-board budget reductions mandated under terms of the Budget Control Act. USDA has already undertaken historic efforts since 2009 to save more than \$828 million in taxpayer funds through targeted, common-sense budget reductions. These reductions have put USDA in a better position to carry out its mission, while implementing sequester budget reductions in a fair manner that causes as little disruption as possible.

[Upcoming Export & Business Assistance Events in Ohio](#)

Below is a list of upcoming events in Ohio. For more information or to register, please use the links below.

June 26, 2013 – The US-Saudi Arabian Business Council (USSABC) will be hosting the event **Saudi Arabia: New Auto market Hub for the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia** in Birmingham, Michigan. This event will feature various high level Saudi officials and company representatives. To learn more and to register, please visit www.us-sabc.org/autoconference.

July 9, 2013 – The U.S. Commercial Service in Cleveland is hosting **Export University 101** in North Canton. This event is designed for new to export and small exporting firms that would like expert advice on export basics. To learn more or to register, please visit <https://emenuapps.ita.doc.gov/ePublic/event/editWebReg.do?SmartCode=3Q97>.

July 12, 2013 – The SBA will be conducting a **HUBZone Boot Camp** in Cincinnati. This FREE event is designed to introduce your business to the HUBZone program, help determine whether your business is eligible for the program, and support your business' efforts to participate in the program. To register, please contact [Jill Nagy-Reynolds](mailto:Jill.Nagy-Reynolds@sbaregion.com) at 614-469-6860 ext. 247 or [Gwendolyn List](mailto:Gwendolyn.List@sbaregion.com) at 513-684-2814 ext. 200.

July 19, 2013 – The International Trade Assistance Center (ITAC) at Wright State will be hosting a seminar on **Export Control Reform** (Program 1) in Dayton. This program will cover the changes to export regulations and how they will impact businesses. To learn more or to register, please go [here](#) or call 937-775-3503.

August 1-2, 2013 – The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and SCORE will be hosting the **Great Lakes Lenders Conference** in Detroit, MI. This premier event will provide attendees the opportunity to learn more about the lending process, how to get a "yes" on more loans, and network with SBA staff and industry exhibitors. To learn more and to register, please visit www.GreatLakesLenders.com.

August 9, 2013 – The International Trade Assistance Center (ITAC) at Wright State will be hosting a seminar on **Export Control Reform** (Program 2) in Dayton. This program will delve deeper in the changes to export regulations and how they will impact businesses. To learn more or to register, please go [here](#) or call 937-775-3503.

September 25, 2013 – The International Trade Assistance Center (ITAC) and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Columbus State will be hosting the **2013 Export Matchmaker**. The second installment of this event will feature a trade show, one-on-one meetings with international trade facilitators, and breakout sessions on various international topics. More information will be forthcoming.

The Ohio International Market Access Grant for Exporters (IMAGE) program is accepting applications!

IMAGE is a program funded by the State of Ohio and the U.S. Small Business Administration as part of the National Export Initiative to double U.S. exports by 2015. This program is designed to increase exports and create jobs by helping small businesses to promote their products and services in new international markets. Ohio has received additional funding for this program that will extend until September 30, 2013. There are updates to the program including increased reimbursement amounts and activities covered. Please visit the website to learn more.

Qualifying Ohio companies can apply for up to **\$15,000 (50% financial reimbursement on \$30,000 in expenditures)** to offset the costs of export-related activities such as: international trade show participation, subscription to services provided by the U.S. Commercial Service, export education programs, marketing and translation services, and international trade mission participation. Appalachian companies are eligible for almost **65% financial reimbursement (on the first \$12,000 in expenditures)** on the same activities. To apply, please visit www.IMAGE.development.ohio.gov or contact the Office of Export Assistance at IMAGE@development.ohio.gov or (614) 466-5017 for more information.

Small Business Development Series

The Small Business Administration (SBA) in conjunction with the Ohio Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), SCORE, Ohio's Minority Business Enterprise Division, and other local partners are offering a FREE 6 month resource training seminar series. Each individual seminar is designed to enhance the setup and/or growth of your small business concern. These seminar series will be offered in Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, and Mansfield. To register, please contact:

- Cincinnati – [Trenise Stowers](mailto:Trenise.Stowers@sbaregion.com) at (513) 487-1155
- Columbus – [Robin Wotring](mailto:Robin.Wotring@sbaregion.com) at (614) 469-6860 ext. 282
- Dayton – www.EntrepreneurOhio.org or (937) 281-0118
- Mansfield – [Michalina Lacy](mailto:Michalina.Lacy@sbaregion.com) at (419) 755-9011