

# USDA/Rural Development

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **VENEMAN ANNOUNCES \$20 MILLION IN BROADBAND TECHNOLOGY GRANTS**

WASHINGTON, May 16, 2003 - Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced the selection of the first broadband community grants to be awarded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The grants total \$20 million with over \$8.2 million benefiting 13 Native American and Native Alaskan communities. Through these grants, the communities will be able to participate and take advantage of the high-speed telecommunications tools needed to be a part of the global digital community.

“Expanding the reach of information technology brings to the homes and businesses of America’s most remote rural communities new opportunities for accessing education, health and economic resources,” said Veneman. “Placing the vast knowledge and resources at the fingertips of a great number of Americans will bring anew a world of information and opportunities.”

At the Economic Summit held last year in Waco, Texas, President Bush stated, “In order to make sure the economy grows, we must bring the promise of broadband technology to millions of Americans...And broadband technology is going to be incredibly important for us to stay on the cutting edge of innovation here in America.”

This investment in rural America goes to 40 communities in 17 states and supports the Bush Administration’s efforts to enable all sectors of the economy to grow. A complete listing of the communities selected is available on the USDA Rural Development web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/newsroom/2003/BBGrantApplicants2003.html>. The 40 application selected were among over 300 to submit requests. Communities selected do not have access to broadband connectivity for essential services of police, fire protection, hospitals, libraries and schools. In return for receiving a grant, the communities will provide community residents with computer and Internet access. The grant program supplements USDA Rural Development’s standard high-speed telecommunications loan program.

In Texas, the grants will provide broadband access to the communities of La Pryor, Batesville, San Ygnacio, Miami, Progreso, and Zapata County, Texas. Bryan Daniel, Texas State Director for USDA Rural Development said “The grant funds are vital in providing these rural Texas communities broadband service for critical community facilities, including public schools, libraries, clinics and hospitals, community colleges, public universities, law enforcement, fire and ambulance stations. The funds will also allow for the creation of “tech” centers which will provide free broadband access, e-commerce incubators for small businesses and distance learning capabilities”.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. Rural Development is Rural America's Venture Capitalist. Providing equity, liquidity, and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on these and other rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/>.



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