

More Opportunities for Rural Economies (MORE) Grants Act Package

Senator Cortez Masto (D-NV) and Senator Risch (R-ID)

The federal government owns roughly 28% of the 2.27 billion acres of land in the United States and, in many counties, the majority of land is publically owned. This land does not generate tax revenue and the communities that are found in these areas are typically small, rural, and under resourced. Not only do these communities lack the resources to build and maintain adequate infrastructure, they also struggle to access federal dollars for these purposes because they do not have the resources for paid grant writers and struggle to come up with matching dollars. The More Opportunities for Rural Economies (MORE) Grants Package seeks to address this disparity and level the playing field for rural communities in areas with large amounts of federal land.

Package Summary:

All legislation in the package creates a definition of High-Density Public Land Counties (HDPLCs) – within the U.S., defined as:

- the acreage of an individual county or local jurisdiction is greater than 50% owned or managed by the federal government in any form and;
- the population is less than 100,000.

The More Opportunities for Rural Economies (MORE) from USDA Grants Act

For these USDA economic development and broadband programs,

1. Rural Business Development grant program;
2. Economic Impact Initiative grant program;
3. Telemedicine and Distance Learning Services grant program;
4. Community Connect Grant Program;
5. Rural eConnectivity Pilot Program or the “ReConnect Program”; or
6. any other discretionary grant program of the Department of Agriculture under which grants are awarded to— (i) counties; (ii) other units of local government; or (iii) Tribal governments.

There will be:

- 50% reduction in the congressionally designated local match requirements for grant applications;
- Specific additional technical assistance provided the department, or it’s sub agencies, before and during the application period for each annual grants process;
- Priority consideration is given to applications from such counties that specifically go to serve local governments applying who have not received support under the designated program in the past 10 years.
- Any other additional support the Secretary considers possible for these local jurisdictions.

The More Opportunities for Rural Economies (MORE) from DOT Grants Act

For these USDOT transportation grants:

1. Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation discretionary grant program;
2. Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program;
3. Public transportation innovation grant program;
4. Public transportation safety program;
5. Federal lands access program;
6. Airport Improvement Program (AIP); or
7. any other discretionary grant program of the Department of Transportation under which grants are awarded to— (i) counties; (ii) other units of local government; or (iii) Tribal governments.

There will be:

- 50% reduction in the congressionally designated local match requirements for grant applications;
- Specific increased consideration for selection within any rural set asides designated for these programs by Congress;
- Specific additional technical assistance provided the department, or it’s sub agencies, before and during the application period for each annual grants process;
- Priority consideration is given to applications from such counties that specifically go to serve local governments applying who have not received support under the designated program in the past 10 years.
- Any other additional support the Secretary considers possible for these local jurisdictions.

The MORE Grants Package is endorsed by the National Association of Counties