



Farm Bill Priorities in the 118th Congress

All Titles

NATaT Supports Enhancing Accessibility to Farm Bill Programs

Current regulations and statutory requirements are cumbersome and restrict many communities from accessing the resources provided by Farm Bill programs. NATaT supports legislative action to streamline application processes and reporting requirements for Farm Bill programs and efforts to use competitive grants over direct and guaranteed loans. NATaT supports decreasing or eliminating federal match requirements that often keep our most disadvantaged rural communities from accessing these much-needed resources.

Rural Development Title

NATaT Supports Funds Directed to Capacity Building in Rural Areas

NATaT supports efforts to secure additional funding for rural capacity building — a provision in the Rural Development title of the Farm Bill that supports the development of rural communities by providing technical assistance and training to local communities and organizations. It is aimed at improving the capacity of rural communities to plan, implement and sustain projects that will promote economic development, environmental sustainability, and social well-being. By investing in rural capacity building and preparedness, Congress will help ensure that rural towns and townships have access to vital resources to meet the needs of rural America.

NATaT Supports Efforts to Bridge the Digital Divide

Access to high-speed internet connectivity is critical to rural America's economic and social sustainability. According to the Federal Communications Commission, approximately 14.5 million Americans lack access to broadband speeds of at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload, with 11 million of these Americans residing in rural areas. Universal deployment of high-speed internet to rural communities would bring many essential benefits, including improved health care access through telemedicine services, increased ability for remote education and to help close the homework gap, and the promotion of quality economic development through the ability to support remote work opportunities.

The Farm Bill is a critical opportunity to authorize universal deployment and adoption of high-speed broadband services in rural America. In the next Farm Bill, NATaT supports increased authorizations for the Rural Broadband, Community Connect, and Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Programs. NATaT also supports a multi-year authorization of the ReConnect Loan and Grant Program, as Congress currently reauthorizes the program annually through the appropriations process.

We also support the Middle Mile Infrastructure Program, which did not receive a multi-year authorization in the 2018 Farm Bill. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provided one-time middle mile funding, but Congress has not appropriated funding specifically for middle mile, which helps reduce the cost of bringing high-speed Internet to unserved and underserved communities.