

## ***PRESS RELEASE***

### ***E-connectivity listening session Sept. 20 in Denver***

**DENVER, COLO Sept. 10, 2018:** Regional and industry leaders, as well as rural broadband users are expected to participate in an E-Connectivity Listening Session on Thursday, Sept. 20, 2018 in Denver, Colo. This listening session—part of the project, *What’s on the Horizon for E-Connectivity in Rural America*—will be at 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. MDT at the Northwest Club Room in the Hall of Education on the National Western Complex, 4655 Humboldt St., Denver.

The project is organized by Farm Foundation, in collaboration with CoBank, NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

“Through these listening sessions, we want to focus on options to address the specific challenges rural residents encounter in accessing consistent, quality broadband services,” says Farm Foundation President Constance Cullman. “We will hear from regional experts, but an important element of the session will be hearing from the people who live and work with limited broadband access today.”

The Sept. 20 event is part of a series of listening session to gather insights into the tools that are needed to improve e-connectivity in rural America. This specific session will focus on the needs for and options for building quality broadband service to enhance educational opportunities, as well as to enhance quality of life in rural America.

There is no charge for this event, but reservations are requested by close of business Tuesday, Sept. 18. Reservations can be made by sending an e-mail to [Michelle@farmfoundation.org](mailto:Michelle@farmfoundation.org).

Brian Tagaban, Director of Governmental Policy at Sacred Wind Communications, Yatahey, N.M., will be part of a panel discussing tools providers are using to enhance broadband services today. Joining him on that panel will be Jon Saunders, Chief Operating Officer of SECOM, a division of the Southeast Colorado Power Association, and David Shipley, General Manager of Rye and South Park Telephone Company.

“This listening session is a valuable opportunity to engage in a very important discussion about connecting rural communities. Broadband access is crucial to the economic growth and strength of these communities,” said Tagaban. “Our customers in rural New Mexico share many of the challenges faced in other rural areas—particularly among the tribal populations. This event is a great way to not only consider those challenges, but also to celebrate the accomplishments of small, rural broadband providers across the region. We have achieved a lot in New Mexico and comparing notes at this listening session will benefit rural communities throughout the entire country.”

An opening panel will feature Brian Shepherd, Chief Operating Officer of the Colorado Broadband Office, as well as representatives from educational institutions. During open mic

sessions, which will be offered after each panel, individuals are invited to present brief perspectives on the availability and quality of broadband services in their rural communities.

The Sept. 20 session will conclude with a Washington update by Jannine Miller, Senior Advisor for Rural Infrastructure at USDA.

For those unable to attend the listening sessions in person, [a live webcast](#) will be available.

The Denver listening session is the fourth regional session to gather specific input from broadband providers and the people who use—or would like to be able to use—those services. A report of those sessions will be provided to federal and state public and private leaders to better inform their decisions regarding improvements to, and expansion of, broadband services in rural America.

Other sessions were Aug. 16 in Birmingham, Ala. and June 19 in Faribault, Minn. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai joined executives from the five partner organizations in Washington, D.C., to kick off the listening sessions in April. Perdue and Pai both highlighted the importance of e-connectivity to all sectors of rural America. Discussions from previous sessions are available on the Farm Foundation [website](#).

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

[Mary Thompson](#), Farm Foundation, 630-601-4152

[Kelly Wismer](#), NTCA, 703-351-2015

[Stephen Bell](#), NRECA, 571-205-7719

[Jo Solonika](#), CoBank, 720-583-9180

[Brad Captain](#), CFC, 800-424-2954

*Farm Foundation is an agricultural policy institute cultivating dynamic non-partisan collaboration to meet society's needs for food, fiber, feed and energy. Since 1933, the Farm Foundation has connected leaders in farming, business, academia, organizations and government through proactive, rigorous debate and objective issue analysis.*



*CoBank is a national cooperative bank serving vital industries across rural America. The bank provides loans, leases, export financing and other financial services to agribusinesses and rural power, water and communications providers in all 50 states. CoBank is a member of the Farm Credit System, a nationwide network of banks and retail lending associations chartered to support the borrowing needs of U.S. agriculture and the nation's rural economy. In addition to serving its direct retail borrowers, the bank also provides wholesale loans and other financial services to affiliated Farm Credit associations serving approximately 70,000 farmers, ranchers and other rural borrowers in 23 states around the country.*



*NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association (NTCA) represents nearly 850 independent, community-based telecommunications companies that are leading innovation in rural and small-town America. NTCA advocates on behalf of its members in the legislative and regulatory arenas, and it provides training and development; publications and industry events; and an array of employee benefit programs. In an era of transformative technological advancements, regulatory challenges and marketplace competition, NTCA members are leading the technological evolution for rural consumers, delivering robust and*



high-quality services over future-proof networks that make rural communities vibrant places in which to live and do business.

**The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)** is the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape. As local businesses built by the consumers they serve, electric cooperatives have meaningful ties to rural America and invest \$12 billion annually in their communities.



**National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC)** is the nonprofit finance cooperative created and owned by America's Electric Cooperative Network. CFC provides financing to members in 48 states, the District of Columbia and two U.S. territories. CFC also provides services to telecommunications systems that are members of the Rural Telephone Finance Cooperative (RTFC).



**National Rural Utilities  
Cooperative Finance Corporation**

###