

Connect America Fund Phase II FAQs

The Connect America Fund (CAF) – also known as the universal service High-Cost program – is the FCC’s program to expand access to voice and broadband services for areas where they are unavailable. Through one component of the program, called CAF Phase II, the FCC provides funding to local telephone companies to subsidize the cost of building new network infrastructure or performing network upgrades to provide voice and broadband service in areas where it is lacking.

CAF is a multi-year program, comparable to extending electricity and phone service to rural America early in the twentieth century, and building the interstate highway system in the 1950s and ‘60s. To ensure CAF support is used efficiently, the FCC has focused on areas that are clearly unserved or underserved by unsubsidized service providers.

How can I find out if broadband might be offered in my area through the Connect America Fund?



For a map of the areas where service providers have accepted and will receive CAF Phase II support over the course of the six-year program, visit www.fcc.gov/reports-research/maps/caf-2-accepted-map.

Larger companies that accepted CAF Phase II support have committed to adding service for more than 3.6 million homes and businesses in 45 states and the Northern Mariana Islands.

However, in some states and areas, service providers declined the offered funding. In such areas, they may continue to have an obligation to provide voice services to new locations, but they do not have the CAF Phase II obligation to provide broadband services to new locations.

If I am able to get access to broadband through the Connect America Fund, what’s the timetable?

If you live in a state where a service provider has accepted CAF Phase II support, you may have access to broadband service within the next several years. Companies that accepted CAF Phase II support have six years to plan and provide broadband to consumers, although not every household is guaranteed access to broadband. The exact deployment schedule is determined by the service provider themselves, not the FCC.

What are the minimum requirements for broadband services under the Connect America Fund?

The companies that accepted CAF Phase II support must meet the following requirements for voice and broadband services:

- **Speed:** Service providers must offer broadband at speeds of at least 10 megabits per second (Mbps) downstream and 1 Mbps upstream.

- **Latency** (the time it takes for a data packet to travel back and forth over a broadband network): Service providers' network latency cannot be higher than 100 milliseconds round trip.
- **Usage Allowance**: Currently, the carrier must offer at least one plan with a minimum usage allowance of at least 150 gigabytes (GB) per month, or in certain circumstances, a plan with 100 GB of usage.
- **Pricing**: Service providers must offer service at rates reasonably comparable to rates in urban areas.

What are the plans for broadband deployment beyond Connect America Fund Phase II?

In areas where service providers accepted CAF Phase II support, the Commission plans to evaluate and address the areas that remain unserved after the completion of this six-year program in 2020. In other areas, the service providers declined the offer of CAF Phase II support. In the areas that remain unserved, the FCC will award support through a competitive bidding process. Finally, certain areas are served by another group of service providers, primarily smaller local telephone companies called rate-of-return carriers that were not eligible for the offer of Phase II support. These service providers receive support through other mechanisms and in most circumstances are subject to broadband obligations. For more information regarding support mechanisms for rate-of-return carriers, please visit <https://www.fcc.gov/general/rate-return-resources>.

The FCC will monitor progress and consider additional ways to ensure access to broadband service for unserved consumers.

For more details about the Connect America Fund, please visit www.fcc.gov/general/connect-america-fund-caf.

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