



Research

Broadband Subsidies Totaled \$8.2 Billion Last Year

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About 13 percent of Americans aren't connected to the Internet. Various government programs have been implemented to close the gap between users and non-users. Closing the digital divide will confer the benefits of Internet access to those without it. While thin on details, the Trump Administration's new budget proposes new support for broadband technologies as part of a larger infrastructure package. But, how much does the federal government currently spend on broadband and related technologies?

According to our tally, the federal government dedicated \$8.2 billion in fiscal year 2016 to support broadband and related technology efforts through loans, grants, planning support, and digital literacy. Below is a table of those programs, organized by agency.

Name of Program	2015 Total Funding	2016 Total Funding	Source
Appalachian Regional Commission			
Telecommunications and technology grants	\$22,300,000	\$11,700,000	link , link
Department of Agriculture			
Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program	\$24,100,000	\$20,600,000	link
Community Connect Broadband Grants Program	\$10,372,000	\$10,372,000	link
Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program	\$690,000,000	\$690,000,000	link
Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loans and Grants Program	\$22,000,000	\$22,000,000	link
Department of Education			
Educational Technology, Media, and Materials	\$28,000,000	\$30,000,000	link
Department of Health & Human Services			
Telehealth Network Grants	\$15,000,000	\$17,000,000	link
Federal Communications Commission			

Connect America Fund (formally known as High-Cost Support)	\$4,500,000,000	\$4,560,000,000	link
Schools and Libraries (E-Rate)	\$2,090,000,000	\$2,390,000,000	link
Rural Health Care	\$276,550,000	\$298,080,000	link
Institute of Museum and Library Services			
Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States	\$154,848,000	\$155,789,000	link
Total	\$7,833,170,000	\$8,205,541,000	

A range of other federal programs support these advanced technologies, like the Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Yet, these programs aren't included in this tally because they are not specifically dedicated to singular use.

Clearly, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is the largest of these program, supporting broadband development at \$7.2 billion. [As Senator Thune suggested](#), if a broadband infrastructure plan does pass Congress then the FCC should be in charge. However, before new monies are pumped into the FCC, the agency needs to put into place better assessment models and guidelines, as both [AAF](#) and the Government Accountability Office have [recommended](#). Already the agency does a lot to support broadband. What is needed now is guidance and goals to be achieved.