



## Connect Alaska Receives ARRA Grant for Broadband Expansion Efforts

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*New Grant Money Aims at Overcoming Alaska's High-Speed Internet Challenges*

**Juneau, AK** – New federal dollars will help radically improve the lives of rural residents and remote towns across the Last Frontier. The Connect Alaska initiative is receiving approximately \$4.5 million in new funds aimed at overcoming the state's unique barriers to widespread high-speed Internet service. The grant is funding a new plan to thoroughly assess current broadband services and create sensible solutions to expand high-speed Internet, and the vital services it offers, to everyone across the state.

"Top-notch telecommunications infrastructure is essential to economic growth and sustainability," said Wanetta Ayers, director of the state's Office of Economic Development. "Especially for rural Alaskans, high-speed Internet can be a valuable lifeline to the outside world and all the opportunity that brings."

With the support of the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, Connect Alaska launched the first major step in this undertaking on September 1, 2010, with the unveiling of the state's first broadband inventory map. The map is currently available to everyone through the [www.connectak.org](http://www.connectak.org) website. The map is the result of an initial two-year project that the new federal grant is now expanding into a five-year project.

"This new grant now changes the focus and scope of the Connect Alaska initiative," explains Brian Mefford, CEO of Connect Alaska's parent company, Connected Nation. "Connect Alaska will be able to not only pinpoint the state's broadband problem areas, but work with the public and private sectors to fix the problems. The result will be better access to vital services like telemedicine, higher education opportunities, e-government, business, and personal communication for people living in Alaska's remote towns and villages."

The grant money, which is administered by the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, comes to Connect Alaska through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) State Broadband Data and Development (SBDD) grant program. The funds will support the initiative in:

- Helping to organize regional technology planning
- Offering technical assistance to communities and providers that are expanding broadband services
- Developing quality e-government applications that will make government services easily available to all residents
- Continued collection of imperative broadband market data

The purpose of SBDD is to assist states in pinpointing local broadband availability for inclusion in the development of the National Broadband Map. NTIA, as required by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), will make a national broadband map publicly available by February 17, 2011. The grant money is also intended to help improve statewide broadband capacities so that states can stay competitive in the digital economy through improved planning for broadband availability and adoption.

For more information about Connect Alaska, please visit [www.connectak.org](http://www.connectak.org).

To learn more about the grant project, please visit <http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/grantee/connected-nation-alaska>.

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**About Connect Alaska:** *Connect Alaska is a subsidiary of Connected Nation, a national nonprofit that promotes broadband adoption and availability across America. Connect Alaska partners with technology-minded businesses, government entities, and universities to accelerate technology in the state. The work of Connect Alaska is made possible by support from the State of Alaska and the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development. The project is funded, in part, by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) State Broadband Data and Development (SBDD) grant program. For more information about what Connect Alaska is doing to accelerate technology in Alaska's communities, please visit [www.connectak.org](http://www.connectak.org).*