

# SAFECOM and NCSWIC Guidance on CARES Act Grants

## Overview

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), in partnership with SAFECOM and the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC), prepared guidance for emergency communications stakeholders on available funding in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). Stakeholders are encouraged to review this guidance and apply for funding, where applicable. CARES Act money is available to all 50 states, five territories, and the District of Columbia, with several fast-approaching application deadlines (e.g., **Emergency Management Performance Grant COVID-19 Supplemental applications due by April 28, 2020**).

This guidance includes three sections:

- **CARES Act Summary:** Provides the intent and high-level federal grant funding associated with the CARES Act.
- **CARES Act Grants:** Details available funding opportunities provided by the CARES Act, including program amounts, application deadlines, eligible applicants, and allowable costs that may relate to emergency communications.
- **Additional Resources:** Provides additional funding opportunities and resources, sometimes independent of the CARES Act, that may help stakeholders build and sustain emergency communications capabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Note, this guidance will be revised as updates occur. For questions, contact [ECD@cisa.dhs.gov](mailto:ECD@cisa.dhs.gov).

## CARES Act Summary

On March 27, 2020, the President signed the CARES Act into law, providing emergency assistance and healthcare response for individuals, families, and businesses affected by the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. The Act includes over \$2.2 trillion in economic relief, split across the public and private sector.

Within the CARES Act, Division B: Emergency Appropriations for Coronavirus Health Response and Agency Operations, provides supplemental funding for new and existing federal grant programs. **Figure 1** provides a summary of supplemental funding with potential applicability to emergency communications, listed by federal department and agency. These funding opportunities are detailed in the **CARES Act Grants** section.



Figure 1: CARES Act grant funding, with potential applicability to emergency communications, detailed by federal department and agency

## CARES Act Grants

**Table 1** identifies federal financial assistance programs (i.e., grants, loans, cooperative agreements) provided through the CARES Act, which could support emergency communications investments.<sup>1</sup> This list includes new funding opportunities provided by the CARES Act, as well as additional funds to existing grant programs dedicated to COVID-19 response activities. Note, this list is not all encompassing; other opportunities may exist or be announced in the future. CISA, in partnership with SAFECOM and NCSWIC, will revise this list as updates occur. Stakeholders should refer to specific Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs), as this list provides a summary of program information related to emergency communications and does not reflect all program requirements. In addition to this list, stakeholders are encouraged to review [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and the **Additional Resources** section to determine the availability of other funding opportunities, independent of the CARES Act.

*Table 1: List of Emergency Communications-Related CARES Act Grants*

Office	Program Description and Website	Funding, Application Deadline, and Allocation Method	Eligible Applicants and Emergency Communications-Related Allowable Costs
<b>Department of Agriculture</b>			
Rural Utility Service	<p><a href="#">Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT)</a></p> <p>DLT funds telecommunications enabled information, audio and video equipment, and related advanced technologies that extend educational and medical applications into rural areas. Funds may also be used to provide for communication upgrades between ambulances, emergency transportation vehicles, and medical facilities.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> \$25,000,000 in supplemental program funding; available until expended</p> <p><b>Application Deadline:</b> First application period was due 4/10/2020; second application period due 7/13/2020</p> <p><b>Allocation Method:</b> Eligible projects are selected based on specific criteria in the NOFO; minimum 15% match is required</p>	<p><b>Eligible Applicants:</b> Entities that provide education or health care through telecommunications, including most state and local governmental entities, federally-recognized tribes, nonprofits, for-profit businesses, and a consortium of other eligible entities</p> <p><b>Allowable Costs:</b> Acquisition of eligible capital assets, such as broadband transmission facilities; audio, video and interactive video equipment; terminal and data terminal equipment; computer hardware, network components, and software; inside wiring and similar infrastructure; instructional programming</p>

<sup>1</sup> Entities applying for federal financial assistance for emergency communications projects should reference the latest [SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants](#). The guidance provides general information on eligible activities, technical standards, and other terms and conditions that are common to most federal programs funding emergency communications. Note, recipients of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's preparedness grants must comply with SAFECOM Guidance, as required in its Appendix D. Other federal programs encourage entities to follow SAFECOM Guidance recommendations and best practices.

Office	Program Description and Website	Funding, Application Deadline, and Allocation Method	Eligible Applicants and Emergency Communications-Related Allowable Costs
<b>Federal Communications Commission (FCC)</b>			
Wireline Competition Bureau	<p><a href="#">COVID-19 Telehealth Program</a></p> <p>COVID-19 Telehealth Program provides immediate support to health care providers responding to the pandemic by fully funding their telecommunications services, information services, and devices necessary to provide critical connected care services.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> \$200,000,000 in supplemental funds</p> <p><b>Application Deadline:</b> FCC released <a href="#">application guidance</a> on 4/8/2020; rolling application period</p> <p><b>Allocation Method:</b> Funds via the System for Award Management</p>	<p><b>Eligible Applicants:</b> Health care providers with an eligibility determination from the Universal Service Administrative Company for each health care provider site included in the application</p> <p><b>Allowable Costs:</b> Telecommunications services including voice and broadband; information services software, platforms, and equipment; internet connected devices and equipment</p>
<b>Department of Health and Human Services</b>			
Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response	<p><a href="#">Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP)</a></p> <p>HPP's purpose is to strengthen and enhance the acute care medical surge capacity through the maintenance and growth of strong health care coalitions.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> \$250,000,000 in supplemental program funding, available until 9/30/2024</p> <p><b>Application Deadline:</b> FY 2020 application period to be announced</p> <p><b>Allocation Method:</b> Cooperative agreement is awarded to states or consortium of states with 10% matching requirement</p>	<p><b>Eligible Applicants:</b> State, county, city, or township, and special district governments</p> <p><b>Allowable Costs:</b> Funds to build acute care medical surge capacity; staff to assist with planning, training, and exercises; engage emergency communications stakeholders in planning; develop assessments and inventories</p>
Centers for Disease Control (CDC)	<p><a href="#">Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP)</a></p> <p>PHEP's purpose is to strengthen and enhance the capabilities of state, local, and territorial public health systems to respond effectively to evolving threats and other emergencies, and to improve the readiness of the public health system to save lives during emergencies that exceed the day-to-day capacity and capability of the public health emergency response systems.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> \$1,500,000,000 in supplemental program funding, available until 9/30/2024</p> <p><b>Application Deadline:</b> FY 2020 applications were due 3/17/2020 prior to CARES Act; FY 2021 application period to be announced</p> <p><b>Allocation Method:</b> Cooperative agreement is awarded to states or consortium of states with 10% matching requirement</p>	<p><b>Eligible Applicants:</b> State, county, city, or township, and special district governments</p> <p><b>Allowable Costs:</b> Staff to assist with planning, training, and exercises; whole community planning for all populations, including tribal engagement; continuity of operations and administrative preparedness plans tested via tabletop exercises; personal protective equipment</p>

Office	Program Description and Website	Funding, Application Deadline, and Allocation Method	Eligible Applicants and Emergency Communications-Related Allowable Costs
CDC	<p><a href="#">Supporting Tribal Public Health Capacity in Coronavirus Preparedness and Response</a></p> <p>This emergency funding opportunity is designed to fund federally-recognized tribes that contract or compact with the Indian Health Service. The funding supports tribal public health emergency response to COVID-19.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> \$40,000,000</p> <p><b>Application Deadline:</b> 5/31/2020</p> <p><b>Allocation Method:</b> Notice of award will include a pre-determined base funding amount, calculated by the CDC</p>	<p><b>Eligible Applicants:</b> Federally-recognized tribes, tribal organizations, consortia of federally-recognized tribes, or their bona fide agents</p> <p><b>Allowable Costs:</b> Emergency operations and coordination; health information technology; surveillance and epidemiology; laboratory capacity; communications guidance and information sharing; procurement of supplies and equipment; restoration of communications to pre-event functioning; development of improved plans; establishment of emergency operations centers, incident management systems, and continuity of operations plans</p>
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)	<p><a href="#">Rural Tribal COVID-19 Response</a></p> <p>This emergency funding opportunity provides support to help federally-recognized tribes prevent, prepare, and respond to COVID-19 in rural communities.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> \$15,000,000</p> <p><b>Application Deadline:</b> 5/6/2020</p> <p><b>Allocation Method:</b> Applications will be scored based on criteria provided in the NOFO</p>	<p><b>Eligible Applicants:</b> Federally-recognized tribes, tribal organizations, urban Native American health organizations, and health service providers to tribes</p> <p><b>Allowable Costs:</b> Establishing testing sites; purchasing test kits; implementing telehealth strategies/activities; purchasing personal protective equipment and other supplies; hiring or training health care providers and personnel to provide care for COVID-19 patients. While communications are not specifically mentioned in the NOFO, recipients should consider integrating activities into planning related to public safety efforts</p>
<b>Department of Homeland Security</b>			
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	<p><a href="#">Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)</a></p> <p>AFG supports firefighters and emergency response personnel by providing critically needed resources that equip and train emergency personnel to recognized standards, enhance operational efficiencies, foster interoperability, and support community resilience.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> \$100,000,000 in supplemental program funding, available until 9/30/2021</p> <p><b>Application Deadline:</b> FY 2019 applications were due 3/20/2020 prior to CARES Act; FY 2020 application period to be announced</p> <p><b>Allocation Method:</b> Cost share is based on population</p>	<p><b>Eligible Applicants:</b> Fire departments, nonaffiliated emergency medical service organizations, and state fire training academies</p> <p><b>Allowable Costs:</b> Protective gear; emergency vehicles; training and other resources for operations and safety; regional projects; Project 25-compliant interoperable communications equipment</p>

Office	Program Description and Website	Funding, Application Deadline, and Allocation Method	Eligible Applicants and Emergency Communications-Related Allowable Costs
FEMA	<p><a href="#">Emergency Management Performance Grant COVID-19 Supplemental (EMPG-S)</a></p> <p>EMPG-S program provides funds to assist state, local, tribal, and territorial emergency management agencies with preventing, preparing for, and responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> \$100,000,000</p> <p><b>Application Deadline:</b> 4/28/2020; required work plan must be submitted by 7/30/2020</p> <p><b>Allocation Method:</b> Amounts for each state/territory are listed in the NOFO; 50% match is required</p>	<p><b>Eligible Applicants:</b> State Administrative Agency of states/territories or Emergency Management Agency</p> <p><b>Allowable Costs:</b> Funds activities for preventing, preparing for, and responding to the coronavirus, including: planning; organization; equipment; training; hiring consultants/contractors to assist with training and planning; domestic travel; rental of real property; supplies; construction and renovation; maintenance and sustainment</p>
FEMA	<p><a href="#">Public Assistance (PA) Grants</a></p> <p>PA grants assist communities in responding to and recovering from major disasters or emergencies declared by the President. It provides funding for permanently restoring community infrastructure.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> Up to \$45,000,000,000 in supplemental funding, available until expended</p> <p><b>Application Deadline:</b> Rolling application period</p> <p><b>Allocation Method:</b> Minimum 25% cost share is required</p>	<p><b>Eligible Applicants:</b> States, federally-recognized tribal governments, U.S. territories, local governments, and certain private nonprofit organizations</p> <p><b>Allowable Costs:</b> Funds labor, equipment, materials, contract work, as well as direct and indirect administrative costs</p>
<b>Department of the Interior</b>			
Office of Insular Affairs	<p><a href="#">Technical Assistance Program (TAP)</a></p> <p>TAP provides funding for short-term, non-capital projects. Priorities include: accountability, financial management, economic development, education, energy production, management control initiatives, disaster assistance, natural and cultural resources, capacity building, public safety/emergencies, health initiatives, and invasive species management.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> \$55,000,000 in supplemental program funding, available until 9/30/2021</p> <p><b>Application Deadline:</b> FY 2020 applications due 5/1/2020; FY 2021 application period to be announced</p> <p><b>Allocation Method:</b> Applications will be scored based on criteria provided in the NOFO</p>	<p><b>Eligible Applicants:</b> Non-federal entities such as local government agencies and institutions of higher education in U.S. territories</p> <p><b>Allowable Costs:</b> Public safety and emergencies; disaster assistance; information technology</p>

Office	Program Description and Website	Funding, Application Deadline, and Allocation Method	Eligible Applicants and Emergency Communications-Related Allowable Costs
<b>Department of Justice</b>			
Office of Justice Programs (OJP)	<p><a href="#">Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding Program</a></p> <p>This emergency funding opportunity is designed to help public safety agencies respond to the challenges posed by the outbreak of COVID-19.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> \$850,000,000 in supplemental program funding, available until expended</p> <p><b>Application Deadline:</b> 5/29/2020</p> <p><b>Allocation Method:</b> Grants will be made based on NOFO and OJP Grant Application Resource Guide</p>	<p><b>Eligible Applicants:</b> States, territories, units of local government, and federally-recognized tribal governments that were eligible for funding under the FY 2019 State and Local Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program</p> <p><b>Allowable Costs:</b> Overtime; equipment, including law enforcement and medical personal protective equipment; hiring; supplies such as gloves, masks, sanitizer; training; travel expenses; addressing medical needs of inmates in state, local, and tribal prisons, jails, and detention centers</p>

## Additional Resources

In addition to funding provided by the CARES Act, federal departments and agencies have new and existing programs and resources that could assist stakeholders with COVID-19 response, as summarized in this section. CISA, SAFECOM, and NCSWIC also maintain the [List of Federal Financial Programs Funding Emergency Communications](#) for a comprehensive summary of available funding opportunities, which is updated throughout the year as new programs are announced.

### Department of Agriculture

#### *Rural Utilities Service*

- [Community Connect](#): The Community Connect program serves rural communities where broadband service is least likely to be available, but where it can make a tremendous difference in the quality of life for citizens. Projects funded by these grants help rural residents tap into the enormous potential of the internet.
- [Community Facilities](#): Community Facilities programs provide loans, grants, and loan guarantees for essential community facilities in rural areas and towns up to 20,000 in population. Priority is given to health care, education, and public safety projects. Effective March 31, 2020 until September 30, 2020, lenders may offer 180-day loan payment deferrals without prior agency approval.
- [ReConnect Program](#): The ReConnect Program offers unique federal financing and funding options in the form of loans, grants, and loan/grant combinations to facilitate broadband deployment in areas of rural America that don't have sufficient access to broadband. This program will generate private sector investment to deploy broadband infrastructure to provide high-speed internet e-Connectivity to as many rural premises as possible, including homes, community facilities for healthcare and public safety, schools, libraries, farms, ranches, factories, and other production sites.
- [Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program](#): The program provides long-term direct and guaranteed loans to qualified organizations for the purpose of financing the improvement, expansion, construction, acquisition, and operation of telephone lines, facilities, or systems to furnish and improve telecommunications, 911, and emergency communications services in rural areas.

### Federal Communications Commission

- [Keep Americans Connected](#): The FCC announced this initiative to ensure Americans do not lose their broadband or telephone connectivity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A variety of FCC resources are available on the Keep Americans Connected website.
- [Rural Health Care \(RHC\) Program](#): This program provides funding to eligible health care providers for telecommunications and broadband services necessary for the provision of health care. On March 18, 2020, the FCC waived gift rules until September 30, 2020, enabling service providers to offer RHC Program participants the ability to solicit and accept improved connections or additional telemedicine equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Temporary Spectrum Access](#): The FCC granted temporary authority to a number of wireless companies to use additional spectrum in order to meet their customers' needs. The Special Temporary Authority allows 33 wireless internet service providers in rural communities, as well as AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, U.S. Cellular, Verizon, and others to use additional spectrum to help meet increased customer demand for broadband during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Department of Health and Human Services  
*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

- [Interim Guidance for Emergency Medical Services \(EMS\) Systems and 911 Public Safety Answering Points \(PSAPs\) for COVID-19 in the United States](#): This guidance applies to all first responders, including law enforcement, fire services, EMS, and emergency management officials, who anticipate close contact with persons with confirmed or possible COVID-19 in the course of their work. CDC also provides recommendations for 911 PSAPs, including modified caller queries and additional resources.
- [Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Capabilities: National Standards for State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Public Health](#): CDC provides guidance and resources for its 15 public health preparedness capabilities, including information on Emergency Operations Coordination, Emergency Public Information and Warning, and Information Sharing.

*Health Resources and Services Administration*

- [Telehealth Network Grant Program](#): This funding opportunity aims to promote rural telehealth network and emergency services for public and private nonprofit entities and federally-recognized tribal governments.
- [Telehealth Resources to Address COVID-19](#): This website, maintained by HRSA, compiles telehealth resources including policy updates, a service provider directory, technology toolkits, and available funding opportunities.

Department of Homeland Security  
*Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency*

- [CISA Coronavirus Information and Updates](#): CISA provides an overview of the U.S. Government's COVID-19 websites, as well as resources for critical infrastructure sectors and the essential workforce to maintain necessary functions, cybersecurity guidance, and election security tools (e.g., [Identifying Critical Infrastructure During COVID-19](#), [Risk Management for Novel Coronavirus](#), [COVID-19 and Elections](#)).

*Federal Emergency Management Agency*

- [Coronavirus Response](#): FEMA's central COVID-19 website contains resources for state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, including the [COVID Geospatial Resource Center](#) and [Coronavirus Emergency Management Best Practices](#), from communities fighting COVID-19, as well as fact sheets for details on federal assistance programs and guidelines.
- [Nonprofit Security Grant Program \(NSGP\)](#): NSGP promotes coordination and collaboration in emergency preparedness activities among public and private community representatives, as well as state and local government agencies.
- [Operation Stonegarden \(OPSG\)](#): OPSG supports enhanced cooperation and coordination among local, tribal, territorial, state, and federal law enforcement agencies in a joint mission to secure the United States' borders.
- [Port Security Grant Program \(PSGP\)](#): PSGP provides funding to port authorities, facility operators, and state and local agencies required to provide security services to implement Area Maritime Transportation Security Plans and facility security plans.

- [State Homeland Security Program \(SHSP\)](#): SHSP supports the implementation of risk driven, capabilities-based strategies to address capability targets set in urban area, state, and regional Threat and Hazard Identification Risk Assessment (THRIA) and Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR) process, which inform planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise needs.
- [Transit Security Grant Program \(TSGP\)](#): TSGP supports transportation infrastructure security activities, part of the comprehensive set of measures to strengthen the Nation's critical infrastructure against risks associated with potential terrorist attacks and other hazards.
- [Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program \(THSGP\)](#): THSGP supports the building, sustainment, and delivery of core capabilities to enable tribes to strengthen their capacity to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks and other hazards.
- [Urban Area Security Initiative \(UASI\)](#): UASI addresses the risk driven and capabilities-based planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise needs of high-threat, high-density urban areas based on the capability targets identified during the THIRA and SPR process.

## Department of Justice

### *Community Oriented Policing Services*

- [Community Policing Development \(CPD\)](#): CPD program advances the practice of community policing in law enforcement agencies through the development and testing of innovative strategies; building knowledge about effective practices and outcomes; and supporting new, creative approaches to preventing crime and promoting safe communities.
- [COVID-19 Library of Resources](#): This library of resources is supported by the Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center, in partnership with the Department of Justice and eight other leading law enforcement agencies.

### *Office of Justice Programs*

- [Strategies in Policing Innovation \(SPI\) Program](#): SPI funds activities to reduce crime and improve the functionality of the criminal justice system, specifically through support for innovative and evidence-based policing practices, more effective information sharing, and multi-agency collaboration.

## Department of the Treasury

- [Coronavirus Relief Fund](#): Treasury is making payments from this fund of \$150 billion allocated by the CARES Act to states, eligible units of local government, territories, and tribal governments due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

## Department of Transportation

### *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*

- [COVID-19 Library of Resources](#): The 911 Program Office provides a list of resources for 911 personnel to reference when responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Resources include guidance on preparing for a pandemic, continuity of operations planning, and recommendations for Emergency Communications Centers.