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For Immediate Release**FCC ANNOUNCES KICKOFF OF GROUNDBREAKING \$16 BILLION
RURAL DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY FUND PHASE I AUCTION*****386 Providers Qualified to Bid in Reverse Auction to Bring Broadband
to Up to 10.25 Million Unserved Rural Americans***

WASHINGTON, October 29, 2020—The Federal Communications Commission today announced the start of bidding in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I auction, which will target up to \$16 billion to deploy networks to serve up to 10.25 million Americans that currently lack access to fixed broadband service meeting the Commission’s benchmark speeds. The auction has attracted significant interest, with 386 providers qualified to bid, representing a more than 75% increase over the number that qualified for the Commission’s successful 2018 Connect America Phase II auction.

“Today, I’m excited to announce that the bell has rung on the start of our historic \$16 billion auction—one that will pave the way for up to 10 million rural Americans to get broadband service. This is the biggest step yet in our ongoing commitment to close the digital divide,” said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. “It represents a major investment in rural America that will benefit the entire country as we connect consumers who are currently missing out on digital opportunity, from the Pacific Coast to Appalachia and from the Great Plains to the Gulf Coast. I’m especially pleased with the hard work our staff has put in to carefully plan this auction and bring it to fruition, and I look forward to sharing updates on our progress in coming weeks.”

Eligibility for participation is technologically neutral and open to new providers, and the bidding procedures prioritize bids for higher speeds (up to 1 Gbps). The auction will proceed using a multi-round, descending clock auction format in which bidders will indicate in each round whether they will bid to provide service to an area at a given performance tier and latency at the current round’s support amount. The auction will end after the aggregate support amount of all bids is less than or equal to the total \$16 billion budget and competition for support in any given area no longer exists.

Additional information about the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I (Auction 904) can be found at: <https://www.fcc.gov/auction/904>.

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).