

Pursuant to Executive Order 14058 (December 13, 2021)
on *Transforming Federal Customer Experience and
Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government*

2024 HISP CX Action Plan

Rural Development

As a High Impact Service Provider (HISP), RD focuses on improving customer experience and delivery for the following services:

- 1) Filing an application under the OneRD Guarantee Loan Initiative:** The OneRD Guarantee Loan Initiative provides government-backed loans through commercial lenders to rural small business owners, agricultural producers, community organizations, utility providers, or municipalities seeking financing to develop a project and who may have challenges securing a loan without a guarantee. RD annually issues over \$2 billion in loan guarantees.
- 2) Receiving technical assistance for broadband deployment:** RD, through the Rural Utilities Service, provides hundreds of millions of dollars annually to support modern broadband in rural communities, including through the ReConnect Program. ReConnect has invested over \$1 billion to expand high-speed broadband infrastructure in unserved rural areas and tribal lands.

What we will deliver in 2025:

- **Pilot a professional development public speaking program for RD Telecom staff**

Following initial results from ad hoc listening efforts for technical assistance workshops delivered in 2024, the ReConnect Program leadership team identified an opportunity to support staff development in public speaking to improve technical assistance efforts. Through a peer-based cohort model, the program will provide staff with opportunities to learn and practice public speaking skills, with the aim of improving learning and satisfaction for attendees of technical assistance workshops.

- **Develop a standardized program for understanding RD customer needs from digital channels**

Using existing Voice of the Customer tools and capabilities, RD will launch a digital listening program that will focus on collecting feedback across RD's public web-based channels in a consistent way across rd.usda.gov. This first phase will allow RD to obtain a baseline for measuring and analyzing customer sentiments about RD programs that can be used to inform and measure improvements to RD's programs.

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What we will deliver in 2025:

- **Issue a rule change to RD's environmental regulations to streamline reviews for OneRD Guarantee Loan applications**

RD's current environmental review process is viewed as a bottleneck in the processing of OneRD Guarantee loans for commercial lenders, borrowers, and RD staff: in some cases, the current environmental review processes can add months to processing times and hundreds or thousands of dollars to project costs for small, rural borrowers participating in the OneRD Guarantee program. In addition, customers point out that environmental reviews for RD guarantees are not treated in the same manner as similar guarantees at other agencies and do not fully implement the authorities in the Fiscal Responsibility Act. This issue has made the programs administered under OneRD Guaranteed Loan Initiative less attractive to commercial lenders. To address these issues and make OneRD Guarantee programs more attractive to commercial lenders, RD plans to update its environmental regulations in an effort to enable an environmental review process that mirrors similar loan guarantee programs run by other federal agencies.