





HAWAII NEWS

DHHL receives over \$72 million for broadband connectivity expansion

By Victoria Budiono Today · Last updated 11:10 p.m.

Business Editors' Picks

The state Department of Hawaiian Home Lands has received a more than \$72 million grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program to expand high-speed internet access for Native Hawaiian households.

The \$72.7 million, combined with a \$17 million grant awarded to DHHL earlier this year by the NTIA, brings a total of \$89 million to expand broadband access for thousands of underserved households on Hawaiian home lands.

The funding, part of the nearly \$3 billion Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program within the Biden-Harris administration's Internet for All Initiative, supports the development of telecommunications infrastructure, workforce training and digital equity initiatives specifically for DHHL lessees.

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The connectivity program will enable fast fiber-optic internet connections for thousands of DHHL lessees across the state. The funding will support telecommunications infrastructure on Hawaiian home lands with limited broadband access and will be used to establish connections in upcoming housing developments.

The \$72.7 million award will support both infrastructure deployment and adoption projects to connect unserved Native Hawaiian households to high-speed internet.

The grant funds will be distributed over a four-year period, with projects scheduled through 2028. The initiative will primarily benefit Molokai, Kauai and Hawaii island as well as rural communities across the Hawaiian Islands.

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Native Hawaiian households will gain crucial access to telehealth, remote education and job training through the grant, providing them with essential resources to fully participate in the digital economy.

"Reliable broadband opens doors to new opportunities for job creation, entrepreneurship and economic growth," Doug Kinkoph, associate administrator of the NTIA Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, said Tuesday at a news conference. "Local businesses will have the ability to expand their reach; new industries will emerge through the meeting strengths and talents of the people here," he said. "The project is a testament for what is to come. The availability of these services will not only improve the quality of life, but it will also provide critical resources for public health and education."

Infrastructure efforts include an investment of over \$26.1 million to deploy middle-mile fiber-optic lines to Hawaiian homestead communities, \$15.45 million to construct community digital innovation centers for workforce development and digital literacy training, and the management of wireless telecommunications towers across the islands to ensure stable connections.

"Coming out of the struggles of the pandemic, we realized connectivity and reliable internet is not just something that is nice to have, but it's a necessity, whether it is for online learning, whether it is for opportunity or work from home," Lt. Gov. Sylvia Luke — who is also the leader of Connect Kakou, Hawaii's high-speed internet initiative — said. "In rural communities even health care access depends on reliable internet."

Adoption initiatives will provide digital literacy classes for Native Hawaiians on several islands, distribute computers to participants and offer workforce development opportunities, including hands-on training and certification in telecommunications. New outreach coordinators will also be created to support these efforts within the DHHL.

"In today's world, digital access is a fundamental right. Whether it's for school, work, or health, broadband connectivity is essential to daily life, but sadly, too many families especially in rural areas are living without it," U.S. Rep. Jill Tokuda said in a statement. "That's why this award to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands is urgently needed and essential for our beneficiaries. It will provide more Native Hawaiian families with the tools needed to thrive online and beyond while supporting digital equity. We must continue to move forward in this digital age by equipping everyone with equal access to a brighter future."

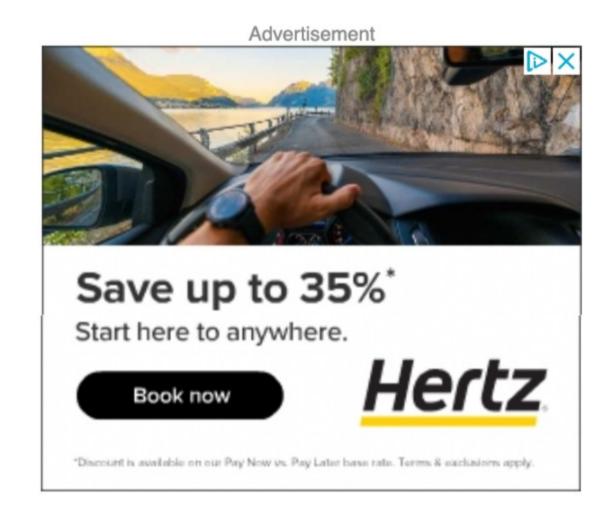
The Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, funded by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 — \$980 million — and the Biden-Harris administration's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law — \$2 billion — continues to expand internet access in underserved communities. Additional grants will be announced on a rolling basis.

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Projects funded through this program are either completed or under construction across 27 tribal communities, and over 4,600 households now have access to free or low-cost high-speed internet services. The initiative represents a major step in closing the digital divide, providing more communities with the connectivity necessary for economic, educational and health opportunities.

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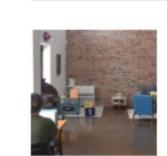
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