

Rural Broadband Programme (New Zealand)

Good practice: Delivering high-speed rural access and connectivity through public-private partnerships

Relevant DFI commitment: Promote affordable, inclusive, and reliable access to the Internet for individuals and businesses where they need it and support efforts to close digital divides around the world to ensure all people of the world are able to benefit from the digital transformation.

Type of the initiative: Project

Stakeholder Group: Government

Launch/adoption: 2010 - Now

Goals

New Zealand's Rural Broadband Programme (RBP) aims to enhance digital connectivity in rural and remote regions, ensuring universal access to high-quality internet services. The program's primary goal is to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural areas by expanding broadband infrastructure, fostering economic growth, and improving the quality of life for rural communities.

By delivering faster and more reliable internet to underserved areas, the RBP supports education, healthcare, agriculture, and businesses increasingly relying on digital technologies. It also seeks to address gaps in digital access, enabling rural populations to participate fully in New Zealand's digital economy and society. This aligns with the government's broader objective of achieving universal connectivity and ensuring no region is left behind in the country's digital transformation.

Description

The Rural Broadband Programme, overseen by Crown Infrastructure Partners, is a multi-phase initiative aimed at delivering high-speed broadband to rural and remote areas of New Zealand. Since its inception, the program has focused on deploying fibre, fixed wireless, and satellite technologies to provide diverse and reliable connectivity solutions tailored to the unique needs of rural regions.

The RBP is implemented with telecommunications providers and local stakeholders, ensuring efficient delivery and community engagement. Its phased approach includes the completion of the initial Rural Broadband Initiative (RBI), which provided broadband to schools, healthcare facilities, and rural households. The current phase, RBI2, and the Mobile Black Spot Fund (MBSF) aim to extend coverage to hard-to-reach areas further, addressing critical connectivity gaps and improving mobile network reach along transport routes.

Key achievements of the program include providing thousands of rural homes and businesses with access to broadband speeds of at least 20 Mbps, with ongoing upgrades to deliver even higher speeds as technology advances. The program also ensures reliable connectivity to priority sites, such as schools and health centres, creating significant social and economic benefits for rural communities.

The RBP underscores New Zealand's commitment to digital inclusivity, enabling rural areas to benefit from telehealth, remote education, and e-commerce opportunities. The program strengthens New Zealand's position as a digitally connected nation by addressing the unique challenges of rural connectivity through innovative technologies and collaborative efforts. It ensures that all citizens can participate fully in the digital age.

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