



# Harvard Model Congress Boston 2024

---

## SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES IN RURAL AREAS

*By Nia Burch*

---

### INTRODUCTION

---



*Sen. Peter Welch  
touring downtown  
Wilmington in rural  
Vermont.*

*Brattleboro Reformer*

***Business resiliency***  
*– The ability for a  
business to withstand  
unforeseen economic  
disruptions.*

“Small merchants make up the majority of Vermont's small businesses and thread our state together. It is the mom-and-pop grocers, farm-supply stores, coffee shops, bookstores and barber shops where Vermonters connect, conduct business and check in on one another” (Welch, 2022). These are the words of Peter Welch (D-VT), a member of the US Senate from Vermont, who represents a rural state and lives in the small town of Hartford. Senator Welch’s statement holds true for many rural communities across the country. Although entrepreneurship is often associated with urban areas, rural small businesses serve as vital contributors to local economies, providing access to jobs and wealth generation that produce long-term community benefits.

However, much like small businesses across the country, small businesses in rural communities are facing challenges that threaten their survival. Small businesses that managed to recover from reductions in demand and government-mandated closures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic are now facing inflation, rising interest rates, and supply chain shocks (Swanek, 2023). These factors have made it increasingly difficult for small businesses to compete with larger firms with greater resources and ability to withstand economic downturns (Investopedia Team, 2023). For small businesses in rural areas, these effects are compounded by a lack of access to financial capital, broadband connectivity, and diverse talent pools. Throughout this conference, you will explore various approaches to building rural small **business resiliency** and addressing the specific issues facing small businesses that operate in remote areas. In your proposals, you should think creatively about how to leverage the strengths of rural communities.

## EXPLANATION OF THE ISSUE

---

### *Historical Development*

*65% of rural workers are employed by small businesses.*

**Small Business Administration** – Government agency responsible for supporting small businesses through funding and counseling.

**Department of Agriculture’s Office of Rural Development** – A subdivision of the Department of Agriculture responsible for promoting economic security in rural areas through funding for business and development projects.

**Capital** – The financial assets used for the operation and growth of a business.

**Broadband** – Technology that allows for the transmission of data

Over the past half a century, rural communities have undergone a gradual transition away from agricultural and manufacturing-based economies. In 1970, the agricultural industry accounted for nearly 15% of employment in rural areas, but as of 2020, agriculture employs less than 5% of the rural workforce (Abbott, 2022). Furthermore, manufacturing, which provides employment for 15% of the rural workforce, is seeing employment declines in many counties (Love and Powe, 2022). Currently, 65% of rural workers are employed by small businesses, most of which are non-farm businesses.

As a result, federal agencies including the **Small Business Administration** (SBA) and the **Department of Agriculture’s Office of Rural Development** (USDA-RD) have expanded to support the growth of small businesses in rural areas, mostly in the form of loan and financing options.

### *Covid-19 Pandemic*

During the Covid-19 pandemic, cases quickly spread from metropolitan areas into rural communities. Despite their lower population density, many rural areas were quickly overwhelmed due to the prevalence of disease transmission in the meatpacking and manufacturing industries (“The Covid-19 Pandemic,” 2021). As a result, federal agencies like the USDA-RD provided critical emergency assistance to rural businesses in the form of emergency loans (USDA, 2021). Aside from the need for financial support, the pandemic also illuminated opportunities for interventions targeted to the specific needs of rural communities. For example, many small businesses managed to continue their operations by shifting to online platforms (Engidaw, 2022). This transition highlighted the need for better internet connectivity in rural areas, which is one of the policy issues you will explore during this conference.

### *Scope of the Problem*

As mentioned previously, small businesses across the country are struggling to cope with inflation, high interest rates, and supply chain shocks. While policy interventions are needed in these areas, the additional challenges facing small businesses in rural areas are often overlooked. Some of the biggest challenges are limited access to **capital**, **broadband** connectivity, and diverse **talent pools** (Weston, 2022).

## Lack of Access to Capital

**Capital**– *The financial assets used for the operation and growth of a business.*

**Credit** – *Access to financial borrowing and loans, giving you the ability to pay later.*

**Bank desert** – *A region with zero bank branches in a 10-mile radius.*



*Fiber-optic lines being installed to deliver high-speed internet.*

*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

In many rural areas, a lack of access to financial capital can make it difficult to start or run a small business. **Capital**, which refers to the financial assets used for the operation and growth of a business, can come in many forms. Often, small businesses acquire capital through investors or loans. These funds are critical for purchasing equipment, securing space, and sustaining operations when revenue streams are low.

Hopeful business owners in rural areas face specific challenges related to access to capital, including poor **credit** and lower proximity to physical branches. In rural areas, residents tend to have lower incomes, credit scores, and more missed credit payments than their urban counterparts (Kirkham, 2019). To lenders, a poor credit score indicates a risk that a borrower will not be able to repay their debts, which makes lenders less likely to approve these borrowers for loans.

In addition to poor credit, rural areas are less likely to have accessible financial institutions. According to the Federal Reserve, many rural areas have vast **bank deserts**, with more than 25% of rural residents living more than 50 miles from the nearest bank (Scott, 2021). As a result, there is less credit available to residents in the areas. This issue is compounded by lower uptake of online banking services (Richardson and Whitman, 2022).

Due to these factors, many business owners are left to self-finance their businesses. A 2019 report showed that 71% of small businesses in rural areas used their own savings to start their business (Weston, 2022). For individuals without adequate savings, this path to business ownership is infeasible.

## Limited Broadband Connectivity

Another issue facing small businesses in rural areas is limited broadband connectivity. Broadband technologies allow for the transmission of data over a high-speed internet connection. While these technologies come in various forms, the most cited are fiber-optic internet, digital subscriber line (DSL), wireless, and satellite technologies. Fiber-optic internet is the fastest and most reliable, but it is also the most labor-intensive and expensive, so it is less common in rural areas where lower population density makes investment less attractive to private companies. Cost estimates for fiber-optic installation range anywhere from \$1,000 to \$231,000 per home or business connection (Goovaerts, 2022).

DSL, wireless, and satellite technologies are much more common in rural areas, but they usually do not offer fast speeds that meet the Federal Communications Commission definition of high-speed broadband (de Wit and Dawson, 2021). As a result, many people living in rural areas are left without adequate access to high-speed internet necessary for digital communication.

For small businesses owners, broadband connection is important for daily operations. It helps owners connect with customers, market their business, and save time and money in an increasingly digital world. If rural broadband access does not expand, these communities will struggle to attract and maintain the business that is vital to their economic development.

*Cost estimates for fiber-optic installation range anywhere from \$1,000-\$231,000*

## Shrinking Talent Pools

Rural small businesses also struggle to find candidates with the necessary experience to meet their needs. According to 2021 U.S. Census data, less than 1 in 5 rural residents have a bachelor's degree ("Rural Students," 2023). A survey of rural business owners found that 39% were unable to find suitable candidates (Weston, 2022). Another culprit is shrinking **talent pools** caused by a decline in the rural population (Parker et al., 2018). In the same survey, 52% of small business owners reported that their employees relocated to urban areas. This finding is part of a larger trend of rural **brain drain** which contributes to a shortage of skilled workers and threatens the vitality of small businesses.

***Talent pool** – The collection of potential job candidates capable of meeting an employer's needs.*

***Brain drain** – the emigration of highly skilled or trained individuals from an area..*

## Congressional Action

In recent legislative sessions, members of Congress have made efforts to pass legislation to support rural small businesses. In the 116th Congress, S 1822, a bill requiring the FCC to improve data collection on broadband availability, was signed into law (S.1822). Because FCC data is used to grant awards for broadband funding projects, this piece of legislation was instrumental in improving broadband access to rural communities, which are largely underserved by broadband providers. Aside from this bill, few efforts focusing on rural small businesses have been passed.

In the most recent legislative session, other members of Congress have attempted to expand broadband access through legislation focused on prioritizing broadband grant funding in rural areas. For example, S 275 would require the FCC to create a standardized procedure for processing requests for broadband deployment funding in areas where installation costs are high (S.275). Another bill, HR 43, would require the FCC to prioritize funding for broadband deployment in areas with short construction seasons, due to inclement weather (H.R.43).

In the 117th Congress, HR 5128, a bill that would require the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission's office of the Advocate for Small Business Capital Formation to consider issues facing rural small businesses, passed the House but died in the Senate (H.R.5128). Although this bill does not directly provide additional funding for financing in rural areas, it would ensure that the needs of rural small businesses are considered in future policies.



There has not been any legislative action to remedy brain drain in rural areas. However, any legislation that improves the economic development of rural areas will likely impact resident’s willingness to stay in rural areas, especially for those who choose to migrate out in search of better professional opportunities. Thus, your proposed policy ideas can take on a larger scope.

## *Other Policy Action*

Outside of Congress, federal agencies including the Small Business Administration (SBA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA-RD) have developed programs to support rural business through direct funding and investment. The USDA-RD Reconnect Loan and Grant Program has provided loans and grants to fund the deployment of broadband in rural areas. According to the allocation structure, grant preference goes to applicants in the most remote areas (“ReConnect Loan”). In fiscal year 2022, more than \$1.6 billion dollars were awarded to broadband projects (“ReConnect Program FY 22”).

The SBA has established Rural Opportunity Zones which give investors tax incentives for investing in businesses in rural areas and HUBZones which give small businesses owners in underused business areas special access to federal contracts (“Rural Businesses”). Federal contracts can be particularly important for small businesses since they tend to be long-term and provide stable cash flows.

## IDEOLOGICAL VIEWPOINTS

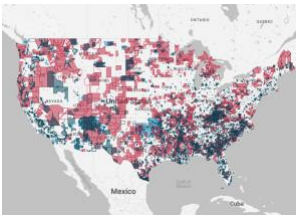
---

Conservatives and liberals have both emphasized the importance of supporting small business owners in rural areas. However, their ideal responses to the challenges of rural small businesses may differ.

### *Conservative View*

In general, conservatives prefer reduced government spending, which may mean reduced support for large infrastructure projects like broadband expansion. On the other hand, conservatives are more likely to support tax cuts that can reduce operating costs for small businesses, although tax cuts have historically tended to favor wealthier businesses (Shaheen). It is also worth noting that most small business owners affiliate with the Republican party, so it is in the best interest of conservatives to support the interests of rural small business owners (Marks, 2021).

*Rural Opportunity Zones give investors tax incentives for investing in businesses in rural areas.*



*The HUBZone map identifies historically under-utilized business zones.*

*Small Business Administration*

## *Liberal View*

Liberals are generally more supportive of government spending, especially in relation to infrastructure development projects like broadband expansion which creates new jobs (Newport, 2021). They are also more likely to favor redistributive policies targeted toward underserved communities. As such, they might prefer to use federal funding garnered through taxes to support rural small businesses through flexible financing options.

**Community development corporation** – A non-profit organization dedicated to supporting community development in an under resourced area.

**Downtown vitalization** – The process of developing downtown areas for the purposes of economic and community development.

**Department of Housing and Urban Development** – Government agency responsible for housing and urban development laws.

---

## AREAS OF DEBATE

---

Despite action from Congress and federal agencies, rural small businesses are still in need of creative solutions. The following section discusses some of the possible solutions to the issues facing small rural businesses, including expanding **community development corporations** (CDCs), promoting alternative funding sources, improving broadband tracking maps, and funding **downtown vitalization** projects.

### *Expanding Community Development Corporations*

One approach to supporting rural small businesses is to expand Community Development Corporations (CDCs) to rural communities. CDCs are non-profit organizations dedicated to supporting community development in under-resourced areas. Historically, they have been created in urban areas to support education, healthcare, and other social services. CDCs can be funded by public and private sources, but much of their funding comes from federal grants by agencies like the **US Department of Housing and Urban Development (DHUD)** (Erekaini). Because these organizations are community-run, they have the added advantage of specific knowledge about community needs.

In the context of rural small businesses, CDCs can provide funding for the development of commercial spaces and provide direct funding to support the capital needs of small business owners (Tyndall). This gives small business owners access to capital streams they might not otherwise have access to. As such, ensuring that federal agencies like the DHUD are mandated to allocate funding to the creation of CDCs in rural areas can directly support small business owners in these areas.

As mentioned before, the primary benefit of CDCs is that community leaders are most familiar with community needs. For example, if there was a clear demand for business counseling, CDC leaders could use their funding to invest in business education for local business owners. However, because these organizations are community-led, there is little oversight over their actions, which

might present concerns about program efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Additionally, there is concern that CDCs can make communities too dependent on external funding.

## Political Perspectives on this Solution

Generally, community development corporations have bipartisan support. However, federal funding for CDC expansion would require budget increases or adjusted funding allocations, which may present an issue for conservatives who prefer to limit government spending.

## *Promoting Alternative Funding Sources*

There are many ways to acquire the capital necessary to start or expand a small business, but rural small business owners are less likely to access alternative sources of funding such as **venture capital**. In some cases, this is an access issue. Information asymmetries make it difficult for investors to vet borrowers, and vice versa. This makes venture capital extremely hard to access outside urban areas. In fact, researchers reporting to the House Committee on Small Business stated that only 1% of venture capital funds went to rural business owners (Robb).

Connecting potential investors with new small businesses in rural areas could expose a new source of funding for rural small businesses that find it difficult to access traditional capital markets. An online database with investment opportunities specifically targeted at rural entrepreneurs could give rural small businesses unprecedented access to venture capital markets. This could be combined with the SEC's Rural Business Investment Program, which currently exists to support venture capital funds focused on rural investment opportunities (Robb). In addition to creating new opportunities for venture capital investment, rural small business owners need education on the different funding opportunities available to them.

The main benefit of this approach is that it utilizes already existing capital markets, which limits the need for government funding. Additionally, businesses without access to funding through banks can still acquire the necessary funding for their business. However, venture capitalists are known to focus on innovative products and industries which may not be best suited for rural small businesses.

## Political Perspectives on this Solution

This solution leverages free markets, which are strongly associated with conservative values. However, there could certainly be bipartisan support for this sort of policy.

***Venture capital*** –  
*Funds invested in start-ups or businesses with strong growth potential.*



*Members of a community development corporation break ground on a transit project in Pennsylvania.*

WHYY

## *Improving Broadband Tracking Maps*

**National  
Broadband Map** –  
*A map created by the  
FCC to show where  
high-speed internet is  
accessible across the  
United States.*

Most legislative action regarding broadband expansion in rural areas has focused on providing grant money for broadband deployment in rural areas with high installation costs. However, the distribution of grant money is dependent on FCC data tracking broadband access across the country. The FCC's **National Broadband Map**, which currently tracks this data, has been criticized for a lack of transparency in its methodology. Additionally, it is reliant on self-reporting by internet service providers which may intentionally provide inaccurate information about access speeds. (Meinrath, 2022). This is a very important issue because, without accurate tracking data, federal funds for broadband deployment will fail to prioritize the regions that are most in need.

To best serve rural small business owners, the FCC should publicize the data it uses to create the National Broadband Map and commit to providing accurate and updated information. Better transparency in data collection is better for consumers and business owners and will improve equity in grant distribution. However, the associated administrative costs and lags in funding implementation should be considered. No tracking system will be perfect, and it is important to consider whether increased costs and time horizons are worthwhile.

### Political Perspectives on this Solution

There has been bipartisan support for improving the accuracy of broadband maps. Delegates should consider whether improving broadband accuracy is a relevant concern for their constituencies and whether lag times will do more harm or good.

*Revitalizing  
downtown areas  
can attract new  
companies and new  
residents that  
contribute to the  
economic  
development of  
rural communities.*

## *Funding Downtown Vitalization Projects*

Another strategy to address the problems facing rural small businesses is downtown revitalization. Downtown revitalization encompasses a series of investment activities aimed at rebuilding downtown areas into places for community engagement (Love & Powe, 2022). Revitalizing downtown areas can attract new companies and new residents that contribute to the economic development of rural communities. These effects can be especially impactful for small business owners seeking new customers and employees. However, this method of community investment is quite costly.

Federal agencies like the USDA-RD can play an important role in supporting downtown revitalization projects by designating funds specifically for revitalization projects. This kind of system would allow community leaders to apply for grant funding for



downtown revitalization projects, while the USDA-RD vets applications based on growth potential.

Downtown revitalization is a great strategy because it supports rural small businesses while also promoting community engagement and attracting residents to rural areas. That said, it can cost millions of dollars, with lagging effects on communities.

## Political Perspectives on this Solution

Downtown revitalization requires large funding sources. While both parties might support downtown revitalization, conservatives might be more skeptical of the government's role in rural development, especially it means diverting taxpayer dollars to development programs. Liberals are likely to support such a solution, viewing the long-term potential benefits as greater than present-day costs.

## BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

---

As you propose legislation in committee, it is critical that you consider the budgetary costs of your proposals. Much like in real congressional proceedings, proposals that do not reasonably consider budgetary constraints are less likely to pass. It may be helpful to refer to the budgets of the SBA and USDA-RD. The 2024 budget for the USDA-RD is \$980 million across USDA-RD programs, with \$33 million designated for electric and telecommunications projects and \$4 million designated for rural development loans (“United States Department of Agriculture,” 2023). In 2023, Congress appropriated \$43.55 billion to the SBA to fund its various programs (“Small Business Administration”). However, you should consider that SBA uses these funds to support small businesses across the country, regardless of geographic area.

## CONCLUSION

---

As the economy of rural America changes, small businesses are becoming increasingly important vehicles for economic development. For this reason, it is imperative that the government take action to support rural small business owners that face specific challenges when opening and sustaining their small businesses. Throughout this conference, you will have to develop strategies to address some of the primary issues facing rural small businesses, including a lack of access to capital, broadband connectivity, and talent pools.

When you consider legislation, you will have to think carefully about how to balance your allegiances to your party, your

constituents, and the greater prosperity of the nation. Remember that these are the difficult considerations that members of Congress must make every day. You should also recognize that these issues are complex problems that require creative solutions. Part of your goal is to develop innovative ideas, so while you can use the topics in this briefing as a starting point, you should also develop your own solutions.

Lastly, as delegates, you should take these issues seriously and remember that people's livelihoods and communities depend on your actions. It is up to you to think critically and ensure a bright future for rural small businesses across the United States.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER RESEARCH

---

As you prepare for the conference, you should conduct your own research on the issues facing rural small businesses. A great place to start is the bibliography of this briefing. You will find government websites, reports, legislation, and more relevant sources for your research. Outside of these sources, I encourage you to consult reputable journals such as the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post. While you will be assigned to a member of Congress and expected to debate from their perspective, you should try to consult resources that present factual information and follow ethical standards or reporting. You can also consult Google Scholar for access to scholarly articles and reports.

Because this is a congressional committee, you should also consult Congress.gov to check the progress of existing legislation. Congress.gov allows you to filter your search by keywords, legislative session, committee, and more. You can also find relevant information on actions to support small business on the House Committee on Small Business website. Remember that the quality of your research will determine your ability to make informed and compelling arguments in committee!

## GLOSSARY

---

**Bank desert** – A region with zero bank branches in a 10-mile radius.

**Business resiliency** – The ability for a business to withstand unforeseen economic disruptions.

**Brain drain** – The out-migration of skilled workers from a particular area.

**Broadband** – Technology that allows for the transmission of data over a high-speed internet connection.

**Capital** – The financial assets used for the operation and growth of a business.

**Community development corporation** – A non-profit organization dedicated to supporting community development in an under resourced area.

**Credit** – The ability to borrow funds that will be repaid in the future.

**Department of Agriculture’s Office of Rural Development** – A subdivision of the Department of Agriculture responsible for promoting economic security in rural areas through funding for business and development projects.

**Department of Housing and Urban Development** – Government agency responsible for housing and urban development laws.

**Digital subscriber line** – A type of high-speed internet connection that operates through existing phone lines.

**Downtown vitalization** – The process of developing downtown areas for the purposes of economic and community development.

**Federal contract** – A agreement by the federal government to purchase goods or services from a business.

**Federal Communications Commission** – Government agency responsible for regulating interstate and international communications.

**Fiber-optic internet** – A type of high-speed internet connection that transmits lights waves through fiber-optic cables; Provides the fastest and most reliable internet connection.

**National Broadband Map** – An FCC map that shows where high-speed internet is accessible across the United States.

**Securities and Exchange Commission** – Government agency responsible for protecting investors, markets, and capital formation.

**Small Business Administration** – Government agency responsible for supporting small businesses through funding and counseling.

**Talent pool** – A collection of potential job candidates capable of meeting an employer’s needs.

**Venture capital** – Funds invested in start-ups or businesses with strong growth potential.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

- Abbott, Chuck. “Increasingly, ‘farm’ and ‘Rural’ Are Not Synonymous.” *Successful Farming*, 20 Sept. 2022, [www.agriculture.com/news/business/increasingly-farm-and-rural-are-not-synonymous](http://www.agriculture.com/news/business/increasingly-farm-and-rural-are-not-synonymous).
- “The Covid-19 Pandemic and Rural America.” *USDA ERS - The COVID-19 Pandemic and Rural America*, [www.ers.usda.gov/covid-19/rural-america/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/covid-19/rural-america/).
- de Wit, Kathryn, and Doug Dawson. “A Primer on Rural Broadband Deployment.” *The Pew Charitable Trusts*, 8 Sept. 2021, [www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2021/09/08/a-primer-on-rural-broadband-deployment](http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2021/09/08/a-primer-on-rural-broadband-deployment).
- Engidaw, Abriham Ebabu. “Small Businesses and Their Challenges during COVID-19 Pandemic in Developing Countries: In the Case of Ethiopia - Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship.” *SpringerOpen*, 10 Jan. 2022, [innovation-entrepreneurship.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s13731-021-00191-3](http://innovation-entrepreneurship.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s13731-021-00191-3).
- Erekaini, Rachid. “What Is a Community Development Corporation?” Home, [www.naceda.org/index.php?option=com\\_dailyplanetblog&view=entry&category=bright-ideas&id=25%3Awhat-is-a-community-development-corporation-&Itemid=171#:~:text=Community%20development%20corporations%20](http://www.naceda.org/index.php?option=com_dailyplanetblog&view=entry&category=bright-ideas&id=25%3Awhat-is-a-community-development-corporation-&Itemid=171#:~:text=Community%20development%20corporations%20). Accessed 3 June 2023.
- Goovaerts, Diana. “The Cost of Running Fiber in Rural America: \$200,000 per Passing.” *Fierce Telecom*, 27 Sept. 2022, [www.fiercetelecom.com/broadband/cost-running-fiber-rural-america-200000-passing](http://www.fiercetelecom.com/broadband/cost-running-fiber-rural-america-200000-passing).



H.R.43 - 118th Congress (2023-2024): Rural Broadband Window of Opportunity Act, [www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/43](http://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/43). Accessed 2 June 2023.

H.R.5128 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): Expanding Access to Capital for Rural Job Creators Act, [www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5128](http://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5128). Accessed 2 June 2023.

Investopedia Team. “The Impact of Recessions on Businesses.” *Investopedia*, 5 Apr. 2023, [www.investopedia.com/articles/economics/08/recession-affecting-business.asp#:~:text=Large%20companies%20do%2C%20however%2C%20have, costs%20if%20all%20else%20fails.](http://www.investopedia.com/articles/economics/08/recession-affecting-business.asp#:~:text=Large%20companies%20do%2C%20however%2C%20have, costs%20if%20all%20else%20fails.)

Kirkham, Elyssa. “Country vs. City: Which Has Larger Balances, Better Credit Scores?” *LendingTree*, 2019, [www.lendingtree.com/debt-consolidation/country-vs-city-which-has-larger-balances-and-better-credit-scores/](http://www.lendingtree.com/debt-consolidation/country-vs-city-which-has-larger-balances-and-better-credit-scores/).

Love, Hanna, and Mike Powe. “Rural Small Businesses Need Local Solutions to Survive.” *Brookings*, 9 Mar. 2022, [www.brookings.edu/research/rural-small-businesses-need-local-solutions-to-survive/](http://www.brookings.edu/research/rural-small-businesses-need-local-solutions-to-survive/).

Marks, Gene. “Study: Republicans Are 24 Percent More Likely than Democrats to Be Business Owners.” *The Washington Post*, 27 Oct. 2021, [www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-small-business/wp/2016/10/12/study-republicans-are-24-percent-more-likely-than-democrats-to-be-business-owners/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-small-business/wp/2016/10/12/study-republicans-are-24-percent-more-likely-than-democrats-to-be-business-owners/).

Meinrath, Sascha. “The National Broadband Rollout Lacks Accurate Data about Internet Speeds.” *Governing*, 18 Sept. 2022, [www.governing.com/community/the-national-broadband-rollout-lacks-accurate-data-about-internet-speeds.](http://www.governing.com/community/the-national-broadband-rollout-lacks-accurate-data-about-internet-speeds.)

Newport, Frank. “Republicans, Democrats Disagree on Gov’t Role in Creating Jobs.” *Gallup.Com*, 9 Sept. 2021, [news.gallup.com/poll/150236/republicans-democrats-disagree-gov-role-creating-jobs.aspx](http://news.gallup.com/poll/150236/republicans-democrats-disagree-gov-role-creating-jobs.aspx).

Parker, Kim, et al. “Demographic and Economic Trends in Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities.” *Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project*, 22 May 2018, [www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/05/22/demographic-and-economic-trends-in-urban-suburban-and-rural-communities/](http://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/05/22/demographic-and-economic-trends-in-urban-suburban-and-rural-communities/).

“ReConnect Loan and Grant Program - Program Overview.” *USDA*, [www.usda.gov/reconnect/program-overview](http://www.usda.gov/reconnect/program-overview). Accessed 2 June 2023.

“Reconnect Program FY 2022 Funding Opportunity Announcement Awardees.” *USDA*, [www.usda.gov/reconnect/round-three-awardees](http://www.usda.gov/reconnect/round-three-awardees). Accessed 2 June 2023.

Richardson, Jason, and Isaiah Whitman. “The Stark Banking Challenges Facing Rural Communities ” *NCRC*.” *NCRC*, 30 June 2022, [ncrc.org/the-stark-banking-challenges-facing-rural-communities/](http://ncrc.org/the-stark-banking-challenges-facing-rural-communities/).

Robb, Alicia. Rural Entrepreneurship and the Challenges Accessing Financial Capital: An Overview of Funding in Rural America, [www.sec.gov/files/2021\\_Rural\\_Report\\_508\\_Compliance\\_FIN\\_AL.pdf](http://www.sec.gov/files/2021_Rural_Report_508_Compliance_FIN_AL.pdf). Accessed 3 June 2023.

“Rural Businesses.” U.S. Small Business Administration, [www.sba.gov/business-guide/grow-your-business/rural-businesses](http://www.sba.gov/business-guide/grow-your-business/rural-businesses). Accessed 2 June 2023.

“Rural Students in Higher Education Factsheet.” *Postsecondary National Policy Institute*, 2023, [pnpi.org/factsheets/rural-students-in-higher-education/](http://pnpi.org/factsheets/rural-students-in-higher-education/).

S.1822 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Broadband Data Act, [www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1822](http://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1822). Accessed 2 June 2023.

S.275 - 118th Congress (2023-2024): Rural Broadband Protection Act of 2023, [www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/275](http://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/275). Accessed 2 June 2023.

Scott, Andrew. *An Overview of Rural Credit Markets*, 2021, [crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46914](http://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46914).

Shaheen, Jeanne. *Small Businesses Lose in Trump Tax Plan*, [www.sbc.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/4/4/442d486a-cb9a-4a2e-b915-5c44a0935425/107AFBA80C610BEFB2BF5909743871C4.small-businesses-lose-out-in-trump-tax-plan-final.pdf](http://www.sbc.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/4/4/442d486a-cb9a-4a2e-b915-5c44a0935425/107AFBA80C610BEFB2BF5909743871C4.small-businesses-lose-out-in-trump-tax-plan-final.pdf).

“Small Business Administration (SBA).” *USAspending.Gov*, [www.usaspending.gov/agency/small-business-administration?fy=2023](http://www.usaspending.gov/agency/small-business-administration?fy=2023). Accessed 3 June 2023.

Swanek, Thaddeus. “The Biggest Challenges Small Businesses Are Facing Right Now.” *U.S. Chamber of Commerce*, 27 Feb. 2023, [www.uschamber.com/small-business/the-biggest-challenges-small-businesses-are-facing-right-now](http://www.uschamber.com/small-business/the-biggest-challenges-small-businesses-are-facing-right-now).

Tyndall, Margaret. “Rural CDCs: Building the Capacity for Success.” *Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis*, [www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2000/rural-cdcs-building-the-capacity-for-success](http://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2000/rural-cdcs-building-the-capacity-for-success). Accessed 3 June 2023.

*United States Department of Agriculture - FY 2024 - BUDGET SUMMARY*, 2023, [www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-usda-budget-summary.pdf](http://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-usda-budget-summary.pdf).

*USDA Implements Immediate Measures to Help Rural Residents, Businesses and Communities Affected by COVID-19*, 16 Feb. 2021, [www.rd.usda.gov/files/USDA\\_RD\\_SA\\_COVID19\\_ProgramImmediateActions.pdf](http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/USDA_RD_SA_COVID19_ProgramImmediateActions.pdf).

Welch, Peter. 2022.

Weston, Bridget. “Opportunities and Obstacles for Rural Entrepreneurs.” *SCORE*, 2022, [www.score.org/resource/blog-post/opportunities-and-obstacles-rural-entrepreneurs](http://www.score.org/resource/blog-post/opportunities-and-obstacles-rural-entrepreneurs).