

Broadband Provisions in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Department of Agriculture (USDA) Programs

The enacted stimulus package authorizes \$2.5 billion for rural broadband loans and grants. These funds do not create new grant/loan programs but simply supplement funding for existing programs administered by the USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS).

Priority in applications will go for projects that:

- (1) deliver end users a choice of more than one service provider
- (2) provide broadband service to the largest proportion of rural residents without access to broadband service
- (3) are from borrowers or former borrowers under the rural telephone loan programs
- (4) begin promptly after approval.

Those interested in the program should contact USDA's Rural Development Michigan state office at (517) 324-5190.

Department of Commerce (DOC) Program

The Act also provides \$4.7 billion to the DOC's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) for a newly established competitive grant program known as the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP).

The BTOP program will award grants to eligible entities to develop and expand broadband services to rural and underserved areas and improve access to broadband by public safety agencies.

Eligible entities include: states or political divisions thereof; territories of the United States; Indian tribes; nonprofit foundations, corporations, institutions or associations; or any other entities, including broadband service or infrastructure providers, that NTIA finds by rule to be in the public interest.

NTIA is currently in the process of conducting public meetings in order to establish rules and application guidelines for the BTOP. Please visit <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants/> for up-to-date information on the rule-making process.