Broadband Technology Opportunities Program

Notice of Funds Availability for Second Round—Fact Sheet

January 2010

Overview

NTIA announced a Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) and solicitation of applications on January 15, 2010, describing the availability of funds and application requirements for the second round of funding for the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). This program was established pursuant to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.[1] Funded at $4.7 billion, BTOP provides grants to support the deployment of broadband infrastructure, to enhance broadband capacity at public computer centers, and to encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service. With these grants, BTOP advances the Recovery Act's objectives to spur job creation and stimulate long-term economic growth and opportunity.

Changes from the First NOFA

NTIA has made a number of changes to BTOP for the second round of funding to increase efficiency, sharpen BTOP's funding focus, and improve the applicant experience:

- First and foremost, NTIA will focus on Comprehensive Community Infrastructure projects.

- The joint NTIA-RUS application process from Round One has been eliminated. Instead, each agency issued its own NOFA and will use its own separate applications and apply its own separate funding priorities (i.e., for NTIA, Comprehensive Community Infrastructure projects; and for RUS, Last Mile Rural Infrastructure projects).

- NTIA has improved the online application to streamline the intake of information and make the process more user-friendly. Improvements include reducing the number of attachments to be uploaded with the application, eliminating the proposed funded service area mapping tool, and modifying the service area delineations from Census blocks to Census tracts and block groups.

- NTIA no longer will require that an infrastructure project serve an unserved or underserved area; however, we will give priority to projects that are located in such areas and we do intend to carefully evaluate the extent to which proposed projects overbuild existing broadband infrastructure.

Project Categories and Funding

Approximately $2.6 billion in BTOP funds is available to be awarded under this NOFA and is allocated as follows.

- The ***Comprehensive Community Infrastructure (CCI)*** category (approximately $2.35 billion) will focus on Middle Mile broadband infrastructure projects that:
  1. offer new or substantially upgraded service to community anchor institutions;
  2. incorporate a public-private partnership among government, non-profit and for-profit entities, and other key community stakeholders;
  3. bolster growth in economically distressed areas;
  4. commit to serve community colleges;
  5. commit to serve public safety entities;
  6. include a Last Mile infrastructure component in unserved or underserved areas or, alternatively, commitment letters from one or more Last Mile broadband service providers;
  7. propose to contribute a non-federal cost match that equals or exceeds 30 percent of the total eligible costs of the project

- The ***Public Computer Center (PCC)*** category (at least $150 million) will fund projects that help expand public access to broadband service and enhance broadband capacity at entities that permit the public to use these computer centers, such as community colleges and public libraries.

- The ***Sustainable Broadband Adoption (SBA)*** category (at least $100 million) will fund innovative projects that promote broadband demand, such as projects focused on broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, or support, particularly among vulnerable populations.

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[1] Pub. L. No. 111-5, 123 Stat. 115 (2009). The Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) also announced a NOFA on January 15, 2010 regarding its Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP). This Fact Sheet summarizes elements of the NTIA NOFA only. For additional information regarding both BTOP and BIP, please visit www.broadbandusa.gov.

Application Review Process

Applications will be reviewed according to the following process:

(1) *Eligibility Factors* – Applications will be reviewed for eligibility (applicant must be an eligible entity, application must be fully complete, applicant must provide at least 20 percent of the total eligible costs of the project in matching contributions or request a waiver);

(2) *Scoring* – Applications will be compared to the evaluation criteria contained in the NOFA by at least two objective expert reviewers. The evaluation criteria include Projects Purpose, Project Benefits, Project Viability, and Project Budget and Sustainability; and

(3) *Due Diligence* – BTOP staff will consider "highly qualified" applications to confirm eligibility and evaluate applications with respect to general BTOP requirements and priorities.

As in Round One, States and tribes will be provided an opportunity to make recommendations concerning the allocation of funds for qualifying projects in or affecting their individual states or tribal lands. Existing broadband service providers will also be given an opportunity to provide information regarding current broadband availability in applicants' proposed service areas.

Other Key Information

- **Matching:** Applicants are required to provide matching funds of at least 20% or request a waiver, but will give additional consideration to projects that propose to contribute a non-federal cost share/match that equals or exceeds 30 percent of the total eligible costs of the project.

- **"But for" Test:** Applicants must demonstrate that the project could not have been implemented during the grant period without federal assistance.

- **Nondiscrimination and Interconnection:** All CCI applicants must adhere to the nondiscrimination and interconnection obligations specified in the NOFA, including adhering to the FCC's Internet Policy Statement and any subsequent applicable ruling or statement.

- **Timely Completion:** Applicants are encouraged to complete their projects within two years and must complete them within three years.

- **Searchable Database:** NTIA will post at www.broadbandusa.gov information regarding applications including the name of the applicant, summary of the project, federal grant request, cost match and application status.

- **Workshops:** NTIA will conduct 10 workshops regarding this NOFA and will make related information available to prospective applicants online. For more information or to register for workshops, please visit www.broadbandusa.gov/workshop.htm.

- **BroadbandMatch Tool:** Parties interested in exploring application partnership opportunities are invited to visit http://match.broadbandusa.gov.

- **Application Submission and Deadline:** Application packages for electronic submissions will be available at: www.broadbandusa.gov. The electronic portal for submitting Round Two applications will open on February 16, 2010 and close on March 15, 2010.

- **Award Announcements:** Awards will be announced on a rolling basis beginning in June 2010 and all awards must be made September 30, 2010.