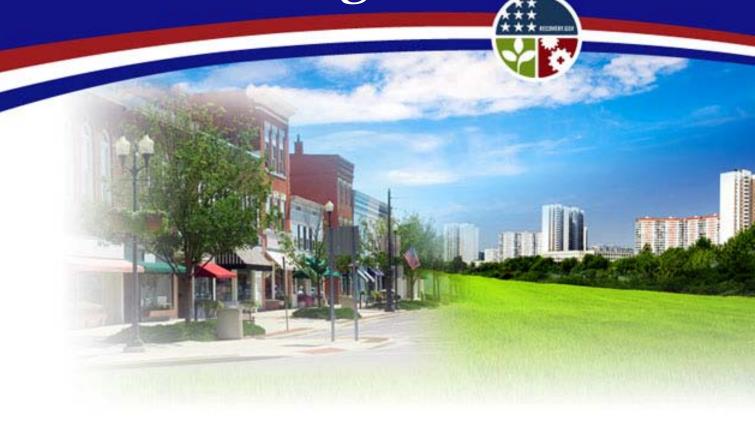# Technical Assistance Grant Program

Program Purpose and Funding Target

In accordance with the Recovery Act, the priority for the Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) is to provide and improve broadband services to the highest proportion of rural residents who do not have access to broadband services for rural development.

The Technical Assistance Grant Program was established in order to allow Awardees the opportunity to create regional broadband development plans in rural areas.

Available Funds: Up to $3 million in grant funding.

Information Sources

➤Round Two Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) – published on January 22, 2010. Provided guidance on submitting BIP Round Two Infrastructure applications and announced the opening of a future window for specific grants for Satellite, Rural Library Broadband, and Technical Assistance programs.

➤Request for Proposals (RFP) – Published May 7, 2010. Provided additional guidance on submitting grant applications for Satellite, Technical Assistance Broadband, and Technical Assistance funding.

Changes in the RFP

➢ Indian Tribes are **not required** to receive a BIP or BTOP award in order to be eligible to receive a Technical Assistance Grant.

➢ Eligible costs include up to five percent of pre-application expenses incurred after January 22, 2010 (Round 2 NOFA).

Important Definitions

➢Broadband – Providing two-way data transmission with advertised speeds of at least 768 kilobits per second (kbps) downstream and at least 200 kbps upstream to end users, or providing sufficient capacity in a middle mile project to support the provision of broadband service to end users.

➢First Round NOFA – The NOFA published in the Federal Register, Vol. 74, No. 130, Thursday, July 9, 2009 at FR 33104. (for both the BIP and BTOP programs)

➢Second Round NOFA - The NOFA published in the Federal Register, Vol. 75, No. 14, Friday, January 22, 2010 at FR 3820. (BIP Only)

Important Definitions

➤Region – Either multi-jurisdictional areas, as proposed by an Applicant, within a state, territory, or Federally-designated tribal land, or an area that crosses state, territory, or tribal boundaries.

➤Rural area – Any area, as confirmed by the latest decennial census of the Bureau of the Census, which is not located within: (1) a city, town, or incorporated area that has a population of greater than 20,000 inhabitants; or (2) an urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants. For the purposes of the definition of rural area, an urbanized area means a densely populated territory as defined in the latest decennial census of the Bureau of the Census.)

➤USDA Region – Either multi-jurisdictional areas, as designated or defined by the Secretary of Agriculture, within a state, territory, or Federally-designated tribal land or an area that crosses state, territory, or tribal boundaries.

Eligible Applicants

➤ Awardees under the First Round NOFA or Second Round NOFA

➤ Applicants under the Second Round NOFA

➤ Indian Tribes

Applicants under the Second Round NOFA can apply for Technical Assistance Grant Program funding at their own risk, but only those Applicants that are ultimately selected as Awardees will be eligible to receive a Technical Assistance Grant Program award.

Eligible Projects

➢Applications Must Meet the Following Minimum Requirements:

   ➢The submission of a "complete" application

   ➢The application must be submitted by an eligible entity

   ➢The application must demonstrate timely completion with all award funds being advanced **within 12 months** from the date of the award documents.

   ➢The application must request funds for **eligible purposes not to exceed $200,000**.

Eligible Purposes

BIP Technical Assistance Grant funds may be used for the following:

➢ To fund the proposed technical assistance for regional broadband development planning activities associated with a Region or USDA region in Rural areas. Such technical assistance must include planning, technical and economic expertise.

➢ To reimburse up to 5% of the costs of the total proposed budget for pre-application expenses incurred no earlier than the date of the publication of the Second Round NOFA, January 22, 2010.

➢ To fund the cost of a market study of the selected region.

➢ To fund the cost of an engineering design for a broadband network to cover the selected region.

➢ To fund the cost of creating a pro forma financial analysis of a proposed future loan.

Completing Your Application

There are seven questions in Technical Assistance Broadband Application:

➢ Questions 1-4 must be completed using the Application form.

➢ Question 5 is the Grant Proposal, to be submitted along with the application form and subject to RFP guidelines.

➢ Questions 6-7 are attachments which should completed and included with your application.

    ➢Please note that Attachment A, which corresponds to Question 2, is not required for all applicants. It is only required if there will be more than one co-applicant to the project.

    ➢<u>All other attachments are required for every applicant.</u>

Completing Your Application

Questions 1-4 in the Application form:

1) General information about the applicant including the applicant's organizational information, address, EIN number, DUNS number, contact information, congressional district, etc.

2) **If Applicable –** Information about any co-applicants (note that if there is more than 1 co-applicant on the project, Attachment A should be completed)

3) A project title and brief project description (will be made public)

4) Project budget request (along with Attachment B)

Completing Your Application

Question 5 – Grant Proposal

The Grant Proposal is the main focus of the grant application. Applicants must address multiple factors in a narrative not to exceed twenty (20) consecutively numbered, 8.5x11-inch pages of single-spaced, standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins.

The Grant Proposal must address and describe multiple aspects of the Applicants regional broadband plan required by the RFP.

Completing Your Application

Question 5 – Grant Proposal (cont.'d)

✓ An overview of the plan to address the following RBOG key strategy: Use of broadband and other critical infrastructure as a strategy to facilitate local entrepreneurship and expansion of market opportunities for small businesses.

✓ The description of the identified Region or USDA Region in need of assistance.

✓ An explanation of the economic integration and cohesion that will be created in the Region or USDA Region with the Award. Proposals with detailed plans for a market study, engineered broadband network, or pro forma financial analysis will be favored. The qualifications of consultants to provide such work should also be addressed.

Completing Your Application

Question 5 – Grant Proposal (cont.'d)

✓ Evidence of resources which will be used to implement the regional economic and community development strategies, such as letters of endorsement from State and local governments, educational institutions, and the private and nonprofit sectors.

✓ The identity of communities within the Region or USDA Region that would be eligible under RUS' Infrastructure Telecommunications, Rural Broadband Access, Community-Oriented Connectivity Broadband, and/or Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant and loan programs, and basic data regarding population, numbers of households, numbers and types of businesses, local revenue and employment should be provided.

Completing Your Application

Question 5 – Grant Proposal (cont.'d)

✓ The amount of the grant request, supported by a detailed budget estimate to create the plan.

✓ A list of the objectives of the plan and why the objectives are important. This section should also include any background or introductory information that would help explain the objectives.

✓ An outline of the research design, methods, analytical tools, and techniques that the applicant intends to use in meeting the objectives stated above. Methods must be clearly stated so that the agency can evaluate the appropriateness of the applicant's approach and tools to be used. A statement such as: "we will evaluate the data using the usual statistical methods" is not specific enough for evaluation.

Completing Your Application

Question 5 – Grant Proposal (cont.'d)

✓ Describe the expected results, benefits, and outcomes the applicant expects to achieve if awarded the grant and the potential benefits of the results to the communities and region served in the plan. A clear, concise description will help the agency understand the merits of the proposal

✓ Discuss other information relevant to the potential success of the project. This should include facilities, personnel expertise/experience, project schedules, proposed management, interactions with other institutions, etc.

Completing Your Application

Questions 6-7: Attachments that must be completed and included with your application:

6) Detailed Project Budget

7) Certifications

   a)   Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Certification;

   b)   Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters –Primary Covered Transactions;

   c)   Certification Regarding Lobbying for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements.

Evaluation of Applications

Applications will be evaluated in terms of:

➤ The strength and scope of the regional broadband development strategies and plan to address the logical components of a broadband plan

➤ The extent to which existing infrastructure within the region may be integrated by a broadband plan

➤ The number of unserved communities that may be connected by a broadband plan

➤ How regional economic development will be promoted by a broadband plan

➤ The strength of the Applicant, as indicated by, but not limited to, the following: organizational capability, strategic planning expertise, and financial position.

Application Submission

➤ Application packages are available at: www.broadbandusa.gov.

➤ Applications must be submitted by June 7, 2010.

➤ Applications must be submitted in **paper format only**.

  ➤ The grant proposal cannot exceed twenty (20) consecutively numbered, 8.5x11-inch pages of single-spaced, standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins.

  ➤ Required Attachments **will not be counted** towards this 20 page limit.

  ➤ The application and certifications must have original signatures.

Where do I send my completed Application?

One original and one copy of the completed application must be mailed, shipped, or sent overnight express delivery to:

Package Service Delivery Address	Hand-Delivery Location
Broadband Initiatives Program Rural Utilities Service U.S. Department of Agriculture 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Stop 1599, Room 2868 Washington, DC 20250-1599	Broadband Initiatives Program Rural Utilities Service U.S. Department of Agriculture 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Room 2868 Washington, DC 20250

Questions:

Additional FAQs are available at www.broadbandusa.gov by going to the BIP Portal, then selecting the "Apply" menu option

Please direct all questions not answered during this presentation to the Broadband USA Help Desk:

Phone: 877-508-8364

Email: BroadbandUSA@usda.gov