



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA Announces Availability of Recovery Act Funding to Bring Broadband Service to More of Rural America

Requests Proposals to Extend Broadband Through Satellites, Libraries, and Technical Assistance

WASHINGTON – May 11, 2010 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that USDA is providing additional grant funds to expand broadband access in rural America. This Request for Proposals (RFP) is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009's (Recovery Act) second and final funding round through the Broadband Initiatives Program. The funding is being provided through the Rural Utilities Service, (RUS) a Rural Development mission area.

“Broadband is critical to the Obama Administration’s strategy to rebuild rural America because it opens the way for expansion of business, education, and health care opportunities in rural areas and assists in making the nation’s small towns and rural communities more competitive,” said Vilsack. “Availability of broadband supports business and job development and President Obama and I support the expansion of rural broadband across rural America so that all areas of the country have access to the tools for fair competition in a 21st century economy.”

USDA is making available up to \$105 million in funding including \$100 million for Satellite Projects; \$3 million for Technical Assistance Projects; and \$2 million for Rural Library Broadband Projects. RUS also announced the rules, which include eligibility requirements, for applicants.

Under the Satellite Projects grant program, eligible entities will submit competing proposals to provide affordable service to subscribers that are without terrestrial broadband service after all Recovery Act broadband awards have been made. This program is designed to enable the agency to select applications that provide the most cost-effective means for providing the lowest-cost broadband service to unserved residents and businesses.

Technical Assistance grants for regional economic development broadband plans will be available to awardees under the first and second funding rounds of the Broadband Initiatives Program. Federally recognized Tribes may submit grant requests for Technical Assistance funding regardless of whether they were awardees under either funding round. Applicants must

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specifically address the use of broadband and other critical infrastructure as a strategy to facilitate local entrepreneurship and expansion of market opportunities for small businesses.

Rural Library Broadband grants are available to awardees under the first and second funding rounds of the Broadband Initiatives Program. The grants provide broadband connection to any rural library in the applicant's proposed funded service areas that was constructed or will be constructed with funding from USDA Rural Development's Community Facilities program.

RUS will host a webinar to review the application process for these programs. Additional information will be available at: http://www.broadbandusa.gov/files/BIP_NOFA2_RFP.pdf Applications packages must be submitted in paper format and include an official proof of mailing. RUS will accept applications until June 7, 2010, and will announce all awards by September 30, 2010.

The RFP and the application guides for the programs are available on www.broadbandusa.gov.

To date, \$1.067 billion has been invested by USDA through the Recovery Act for 68 broadband projects. Together, the projects will make high speed Internet available to an estimated 529,000 households and 96,000 rural business and public facilities across 31 states, one territory and 17 tribal lands and predominantly Alaska Native regions. Many of the areas to be served are extremely remote, sparsely populated and in some cases not connected by roads. Secretary Vilsack and other cabinet officials visited some of the communities that will receive broadband Internet access during a "Rural Tour" last year. Funding is contingent upon the recipient meeting the terms of the loan, grant or loan/grant agreement.

Rural Development serves as the lead Federal entity for rural development needs and administers program assistance through its housing, business, community and infrastructure programs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Further information on USDA Rural Development may be obtained by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>. In West Virginia, call 1-800-295-8228 to be put in touch with the appropriate personnel serving your county. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202.720.2600 (voice and TDD).

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