

Rural Development
United States Department of Agriculture

Rural Utilities Service
Broadband Initiatives Program
Technical Assistance
Grant Program
Application Guide



For reference please see our website:

<http://www.broadbandusa.gov>

Issue Date: []

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Rural Utilities Service (“RUS”) Broadband Initiatives Program Technical Assistance Grant Program

The Broadband Initiatives Program (“BIP”) was established in response to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (“Recovery Act”). The primary goal of the Recovery Act is to provide a fiscal boost to the Nation during its greatest economic crisis. Providing access to broadband services will increase economic development and improve the quality of life for all Americans. BIP will furnish grants to assist with addressing the challenge of rapidly expanding the access and quality of broadband services across Rural America and to meet the objectives of the Recovery Act. Furthermore, The Technical Assistance Grant Program was established under the Broadband Initiatives Program (“BIP”) to allow Awardees under the First Round NOFA and Second Round NOFA, as well as Indian Tribes, the opportunity to create regional broadband development plans for regions or USDA regions in rural areas.

BEFORE GETTING STARTED

The Agency noted in the Second Round Notice of Funds Availability (“NOFA”) that more specific requirements for the Technical Assistance Grant Program would be outlined in a Request For Proposals (“RFP”). Applicants MUST read both the Second Round NOFA and the RFP published in the Federal Register.

The Second Round NOFA and RFP **MUST** be utilized in conjunction with this Application Guide. Should any differences result in the interpretation of this Application Guide, NOFA, and the RFP, the NOFA and RFP takes precedence over information contained in this Application Guide.

NOTICE: This Application Guide follows the format required for paper submissions of Technical Assistance Grant applications. Use the information presented in this guide to complete the paper application form.

Please see Page 7 of this Application Guide for guidance on the use of various Attachments required to submit a complete Technical Assistance Grant application.

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General Information

1. Background

In accordance with the Recovery Act, the Rural Utilities Service (“RUS”) published its Second Round Notice of Funding Availability (“NOFA”) on January 22, 2010, identifying new funding opportunities for Last and Middle Mile Infrastructure projects. In that Second Round NOFA, RUS also announced the opening of a future window for specific grants for Satellite, Technical Assistance, and Technical Assistance, and that any requirements would be outlined in the RFP.

The Technical Assistance Grant Program was established under the Broadband Initiatives Program (“BIP”) to allow Awardees under the First Round NOFA and Second Round NOFA, as well as Indian Tribes, the opportunity to create regional broadband development plans for regions or USDA regions in rural areas.

2. Funding Availability

RUS will offer 100% grant funding to projects submitted by Awardees under the First and Second Round NOFA, Applicants under the Second Round NOFA, or Indian tribes to request for funding regional broadband development planning activities associated with regions or USDA Regions in rural areas.

The Technical Assistance Grant Program has up to \$3,000,000 in funding available for eligible grant projects; however, the maximum grant request cannot exceed \$200,000.

3. Application Process

Applications will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility. Incomplete and ineligible applications will be rejected. Eligible applications will be evaluated on several criteria

4. Definitions

The Recovery Act, Second Round NOFA, and RFP use several terms that have been redefined and/or not previously defined by RUS. **A complete list of definitions is included in the Second Round NOFA and RFP**; however, the following warrant notice from Technical Assistance Grant Applicants and are listed below:

Applicant – An entity requesting an award under the RFP, and where applicable, the First Round NOFA or Second Round NOFA.

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.

Grant agreement – The agreement between RUS and the Awardee for grants awarded under this RFP, including any amendments thereto, available for review at <http://www.broadbandusa.gov>.

Grant documents - The grant agreement and security documents between the RUS and the Awardee and any associated documents pertaining to the grant.

Grant funds - Federal funds provided pursuant to a grant made under this RFP.

Indian tribe – Any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, 43 U.S.C.A. § 1601 et seq., which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians., as provided in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, 25 U.S.C. § 450b.

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.

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

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.

5. Applicant Eligibility

The following entities are eligible to apply for funding under the Technical Assistance Grant Program:

- Awardees under the First Round NOFA or Second Round NOFA
- Applicants under the Second Round NOFA
- Indian Tribes

Applicants under the Second Round NOFA that have not yet been notified of the status of their application may apply for assistance; however, such submissions are at the applicant's own risk. Only those applicants that are ultimately selected as Awardees under the Second Round NOFA will be eligible to receive a Technical Assistance Grant Program award.

6. Project Eligibility

All applications MUST meet the following application eligibility criteria to be eligible for an award:

- The application must be complete.
- The application must demonstrate timely completion with all award funds being advanced within **12 months**.
- The application must request funds for eligible purposes **not to exceed \$200,000**.

7. Eligible Purposes

BIP Technical Assistance Grant funds may be used by the Applicant 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.

8. Evaluation Criteria

Applications for Technical Assistance grants will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- 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 will be integrated in the region
- The number of unserved communities that will be connected
- How regional economic development will be promoted
- The strength of the Applicant

RUS reserves the right to reject Applications that do not conform to the page, font, and spacing requirements of Section V.C.3 of the RFP, which requires that the Applicant's proposal must not exceed twenty (20) consecutively numbered, 8.5x11-inch pages of single-spaced, standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins.

9. Application Submission

Applications for Technical Assistance Grant projects will only be accepted in paper format from [Date], 2010 at 8:00 a.m. Eastern Time (ET) until [Date], 2010 at 5:00 p.m. ET. The application packages are available at <http://www.broadbandusa.gov>.

Paper Format: Paper applications must include proof of mailing consisting of one of the following:

- (i) A legibly dated U.S. Postal Service postmark. Please note that the U.S. Postal Service does not uniformly provide a dated postmark. Before relying on this method, Applicants should check with their local post office;
- (ii) A legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the U.S. Postal Service; or
- (iii) A dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier.

Neither of the following will be accepted as proof of mailing: a private metered postmark, nor a mail receipt that is not dated by the U.S. Postal Service.

Paper applications must be typed, single-sided, single-spaced on 8 ½” by 11” paper. Fonts should be no less than 12 points and margins should be no less than one inch. The application and certifications must have original signatures.

Mailing Address: One original and one copy of the completed application must be mailed, shipped, or sent overnight express 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 Washington, DC 20250-1599	Broadband Initiatives Program Rural Utilities Service U.S. Department of Agriculture 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Room 2868 Washington, DC 20250

10. Contact Information

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) can be found at <http://broadbandusa.gov/faq.htm>. For additional information concerning the Technical Assistance Grant Program, direct all questions to the Broadband USA Help Desk.

Broadband USA Help Desk
Hours of Operation: 9AM-5:30PM EDT
Phone: 1-877-508-8364
Email: BroadbandUSA@usda.gov

Instructions for Completing the Technical Assistance Grant Application

Before assembling your Application, please note:

General Application items #1 - #4 can be answered using the General Application Information Form. Item #5, the Applicant's Grant Proposal, must adhere to specified page limits, margins, font size, and line spacing.

The remaining items, #6 - #8, are items/questions that the applicant will complete and attach in the same order outlined within the Application Guide.

Several Application items/questions require the completion of Attachments which can be downloaded from www.broadbandusa.gov and are included within a separate zip file. Some of these Attachments allow Applicants to fill-in information directly into the PDF, Excel, or Word files, while others do not.

If the description of your project in a particular Attachment requires more space, rows, columns, fields, or detail than the standard Attachment allows for, you may create and submit expanded or modified versions of these Attachments. However, if you choose to do so, you MUST adhere to the following guidelines to assist our reviewers in properly evaluating your information:

- **Clearly label EACH Attachment by original letter and title
(e.g., Attachment D – Detailed Project Budget)**
- **Format your Attachment as closely as possible to the original**
- **At a minimum, include as much information as was originally requested in the Attachment**

A. General Application Information

1. **Applicant Information:** Applicants must supply general information about their organization in this section. It is important that Applicants complete every relevant entry to help ensure that the application is sent to the proper reviewers.
 - A. **Name, Address, and Contact Information of Applicant:** Enter the legal name of the applicant, name and title of the Primary Point of Contact for the project. In addition, you must provide the physical address, email address, telephone number, and fax number for the applicant. The business address provided should be the applicant's physical mailing address so that RUS may send correspondence by overnight delivery service is necessary. If the Applicant does not have a fax number, a reliable e-mail address must be included. Otherwise, correspondence will be sent by mail. It is important that you complete every applicable field and that the information be accurate. RUS will use the contact information provided in this section for all future contact concerning the application.
 - B. **Required Identification Numbers:**
 - i. Employer Identification Number (EIN) as assigned by the Internal Revenue Service.
 - ii. As required by the Office of Management and Budget, all applicants must supply a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. If you do not already have one, please call the dedicated toll-free D&B request line at 1-866-705-5711 or via the Internet at <http://www.dunandbradstreet.com>.
 - iii. Once an Applicant has a DUNS number, the Applicant can begin the CCR registration process. If registering on-line, go to www.ccr.gov and select "Start New Registration." You will need your DUNS number to start this registration. The CCR Customer Assistance Center can be contacted toll free at 1-888-227-2423. The Federal Acquisition Regulation requires that contractors be registered in the CCR database prior to being awarded a contract.
 - iv. The Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number for BIP grants is **10.787**.
 - C. **Name and Contact Information of Additional Project Contact:** Enter the name, organization, project role, and contact information for an additional person to be contacted on matters involving the application.
 - D. **Type of Organization:** Check the appropriate box for your organization.
 - E. **Type of Eligible Entity:** Check the appropriate box for your entity type.
 - F. **Applicant Federal Debt Delinquency Explanation:** Indicate whether the applicant or any co-applicant is delinquent on any Federal debt. If yes, provide an explanation. Keep in mind that this question applies to the Applicant itself, not the individual who signs as the authorized representative. Categories of debt include delinquent audit disallowances, loans and taxes.

- G. **Congressional District:** Provide the state and congressional district where the Applicant is physically headquartered, not where the applicant is incorporated. (e.g., CA-04)
2. **Co-Applicant Name and Contact Information:** If applicable, enter the organization, point of contact name, project role, and contact information for each additional co-applicant. Please use **Attachment A - Additional Co-Applicant Information**, if you are listing more than one co-applicant.
 3. **Project Description:** Provide a title and description for your project and the number of jobs that will be created or saved by the project. The project description should include a few sentences that concisely describe your project. This description will be published on a publicly accessible website; therefore, you should ensure that the description explains your project in the manner in which you want the public to view it. Do not include any proprietary information within this description.
 4. **Project Budget:** List the total amount of BIP funding being requested for the project. Ensure that this amount matches the information contained in **Attachment B**.

B. Technical Assistance Grant Proposal

5. **Grant Proposal** – The Applicant must submit the following information, which must not exceed twenty (20) consecutively numbered, 8.5x11-inch pages of single-spaced, standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins, as part of a complete application:
 - a. An overview of the plan to address the following USDA key strategy: Use of broadband and other critical infrastructure as a strategy to facilitate local entrepreneurship and expansion of market opportunities for small businesses;
 - b. The description of the identified Region or USDA Region in need of assistance;
 - c. 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;
 - 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;
 - e. 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;

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

g. A list 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.

h. 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.

i. 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; and

j. 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. Applications for multi-investigator projects must identify project management and the functions of each investigator in each team and describe plans to communicate and share data.

C. Required Attachments

6. **Detailed Project Budget:** The purpose of this attachment is to break down the specific costs involved in your project and categorize them. Complete **Attachment B** by providing a detailed listing of the budget line items applicable to your project.
7. **Project Timelines and Milestones:** Complete **Attachment C** by providing details on the incremental capital projects costs that you anticipate during the one (1) year build-out period and the project milestones over that one year period.
 - i. **Step 1 – Project Build-Out Timeline:** On this worksheet you need to provide the incremental capital costs of your project, showing those costs on a quarterly basis. You should also show a running total of all project costs on the "Total Project Funding" line. The total project funding at the end of Year 1 should match the information provided in Attachment E, the Detailed Project Budget. Your project must be fully complete after Year 1, with 100% of all award funds being drawn.
 - ii. **Step 2 – Project Milestones:** Use this table to list the major project build-out phases and milestones that can demonstrate that your entire project will be fully complete by

the end of Year 1. Indicate on this chart how the milestones listed showcase your project's progress.

8. Certifications: Complete all of the certifications listed below. (**Attachments D-F**)

- **Attachment D** - Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Certification;
- **Attachment E** - Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters –Primary Covered Transactions; and
- **Attachment F** - Certification Regarding Lobbying for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements.

D. Attachments Checklist

The following is a list of the Attachments and references to specific items/questions where Attachments are required. There is a template available for each Attachment outlined below and these templates can be downloaded from www.broadbandusa.gov and are included within a separate zip file.

Keep in mind that Attachment A is not required for all applicants. It is only required if there is more than one co-applicant to the application.

Use the table below to check and ensure that you have provided all Attachments needed to submit a complete application.

Attachment	Description	App. Question	Completed
A	Additional Co-Applicants (if applicable)	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Detailed Project Budget	6	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Project Timeline and Milestones	7	<input type="checkbox"/>
D	Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Certification	8	<input type="checkbox"/>
E	Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters-Primary Covered Transactions	8	<input type="checkbox"/>
F	Certification Regarding Lobbying for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements	8	<input type="checkbox"/>