

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

ANNOUNCEMENT / DEADLINES:

RUS announced a Request for Proposals in [Federal Register](#) on May 7, 2010. The application window is 30 days with a deadline of June 7. Only paper applications will be accepted so plan to complete the application several days early.

FUNDING AMOUNT:

Up to \$3,000,000 is available for grants for Technical Assistance projects. Applicants may request up to \$200,000 in grant funds.

DESCRIPTION:

To leverage these grants with the Rural Business Opportunity Grants (RBOG) of USDA's Rural Business— Cooperative Service, RUS encourages applications that are designed to help rural areas in the region create wealth so that they are self-sustaining, repopulating, and thriving economically. Applicants must specifically 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.*

RUS also seeks applications that attempt to promote broadband strategies through a regional approach. Regions can be multijurisdictional areas within a state, territory, or Federally-designated tribal land or can cross state, territory, or tribal boundaries. Regional applications should focus on the broadband-related outcomes that promote economic integration and cohesion of their self-defined geographic area. This approach intends to combine the resources of the Agency with those of State and local governments, educational institutions, and the private and nonprofit sectors to implement regional economic and community development strategies.

Applicants should identify other related programs under the Department of Transportation, Health and Human Services, Education, Homeland Security, the Federal Communications Commission, Indian Health Service Telemedicine Program, and State and local programs.

The amount of the request should cover the costs of developing the plan. RUS, in its discretion, may decrease the requested award amount based on its evaluation of an application and based on the level of funding available for this program.

ELIGIBLE ENTITIES:

- Awardees under the First Round NOFA or Second Round NOFA; and
- Applicants under the Second Round NOFA.

However, 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 an award for Rural Library Broadband projects.

Moreover, Indian tribes are not required to receive a BIP or BTOP award in order to be eligible to receive a grant for Technical Assistance.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES:

- 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 percent 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; and
- To fund the cost of creating a pro forma financial analysis of a proposed future loan.

EVALUATION:

Applications for Technical Assistance grants will be evaluated on the strength and scope of the regional broadband development strategies and plan to address the logical components of a broadband plan. Moreover, 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, and the strength of the Applicant will all be considered in the evaluation. RUS, in its discretion, may decrease the requested award amount based on its evaluation of the application and the level of funding available for this program. The Agency reserves the right to reject Applications that do not conform to the page, font, and spacing requirements.

APPLICATION FORMAT:

A complete application must not exceed twenty (20) consecutively numbered, 8.5 x 11-inch pages of singles paced, standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins