

# **Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) Guide**

**An Overview of the U.S. Department of Commerce's National  
Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)  
Broadband Program for the Recovery Effort**



**Presented by**

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## Overview of Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP)

As a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment act of 2009, a total of \$4.7 billion in funds have been made available to U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) for the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). BTOP's purpose is to expand broadband internet access to unserved and underserved areas of the country. The first Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) accounts for up to \$1.6 billion in grants to be awarded for broadband infrastructure, public computer centers and sustainable broadband adoption. By providing funding for broadband access, education, awareness, training, equipment and general support, the BTOP program will contribute to the overall goal of spurring job creation and stimulating long term economic growth.

### Project Categories

**Broadband Infrastructure:** funding for projects that deliver broadband service through last mile and middle mile facilities to unserved and underserved areas. (\$1.2 billion)

**Unserved Area** defined as; "a proposed funded service area, composed of one or more contiguous census blocks where at least 90 percent of households in the proposed funded service area lack access to facilities-based, terrestrial broadband service, either fixed or mobile, at the minimum broadband transmission speed."

**Underserved area** defined as; "a proposed funded service area, composed of one or more contiguous census blocks meeting certain criteria that measure the availability of broadband service and the level of advertised broadband speed." These conform to the two components of Broadband Infrastructure eligible projects; last mile and middle mile facilities.

**Last Mile** defines as; "any infrastructure project the predominant purpose of which is to provide broadband service to end users or end user devices (including households, business, community anchor institutions, public safety entities, and critical community facilities)."

**Middle Mile** defined as "a broadband infrastructure project that does not predominantly provide broadband service to end users or to end-user devices, and may include interoffice transport, backhaul, Internet connectivity or special access."

**Public Computer Centers:** funding for projects to expand computer center capacity at entities that permit the public to use these computers, such as community colleges or public libraries. (\$50 million)

**Sustainable Broadband Adoption:** funding for innovative projects that promote broadband demand, education, awareness, training, access equipment or support. (\$150 million)

## **Eligibility**

The NTIA recognizes that it is in the public interest to allow for-profit corporations and certain other organizations not otherwise encompassed in the Recovery Act to be eligible for BTOP grants. Further details on entities eligible for BTOP grants can be found in the NOFA.

All applicants must meet the following mandatory threshold requirements to qualify for review:

- Submit a complete application and all supporting documents.
- Demonstrate the project can be substantially completed within two years of the grant issuance date and fully completed within three.
- Advance one or more of BTOP's five statutory purposes;
  - 1) To provide access to broadband service to consumers residing in unserved areas of the country.
  - 2) To provide improved access to broadband service to consumers residing in underserved areas of the country.
  - 3) To provide broadband access, education, awareness, training, equipment and support to community anchor institutions or organizations and agencies serving vulnerable populations, or job creating strategic facilities located in state or federally designated economic development areas.
  - 4) To improve access to, and use of, broadband service public safety agencies.
  - 5) To stimulate the demand for broadband, economic growth and job creation.
- Provide matching funds of at least 20% towards total eligible project costs, unless a waiver petition is approved.
- Document that the project would not be implemented during the grant period but for a federal grant.
- Demonstrate a reasonable budget.

Additional requirements for Broadband Infrastructure grants:

- The applicant must propose to offer “broadband” service as defined as “two-way data transmission with advertised speeds of at least 768 kbps downstream and at least 200kbps upstream to end user”; or sufficient capacity in a middle-mile project to support “broadband” service to end users.
- For any project requesting over \$1 million, the applicant must submit a system design, and a project timeline certified by a professional engineer in order to demonstrate to the NTIA that the proposed project is technically feasible.
- The applicant must demonstrate the project's ability to be sustained beyond the funding period.

- The applicant must commit to the program's Nondiscrimination and Interconnection Obligations.
- Applicants for Last Mile infrastructure projects must provide service to the entire territory of each census block included in the funded service area unless the applicant can provide a reasoned explanation as to why providing coverage for an entire census block is infeasible.

The NTIA will take into consideration whether an applicant is a socially and economically disadvantaged small business as defined under section 8(a) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C 637(a)(4)).

## **Procedure**

Applications will be accepted from **July 14, 2009** through **August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009**. Electronic and paper submissions are available at <http://www.broadbandusa.gov>. All applicants requesting more than \$1 million dollars in assistance must file their application electronically unless their authorized representatives are individuals with disabilities.

Applications will undergo a preliminary review to ensure all mandatory threshold requirements listed above. A satisfactory application will then advance to a two step process consisting of three individual expert evaluations and follow up due diligence.

Preliminary award announcements are expected in mid **September 2009**. Final announcements expected in **November 2009**.

## **Contact**

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