

ARRA BROADBAND STIMULUS UPDATE

November 2009

❖ ONE MORE FUNDING ROUND, COMING EARLY 2010

- ❖ RUS and NTIA officially announced that remaining funding will be awarded in just one more round, instead of the two additional rounds previously anticipated.
- ❖ The Notice of Funds Availability (establishing deadlines and application procedures) for the final round is expected to be released in early 2010.
- ❖ RUS and NTIA released a Request for Information (RFI) seeking input from interested parties on the following issues, with comments due 14 days after publication in the Federal Register:
 - ◆ **STREAMLINING:** RUS and NTIA have tentatively concluded that the application process should be streamlined, and ask commentors for specific recommendations on how to best do so.
 - ◆ **CENSUS BLOCK REVIEW:** RUS and NTIA acknowledge that submitting data on a census block level was burdensome for some applicants, and request recommendations on alternatives.
 - ◆ **BTOP FUNDING FOR RURAL PROJECTS:** In Round One, Applicants with proposed funded service areas in rural areas were required to submit applications to RUS; the RFI seeks comment on whether rural applicants should be permitted to submit grant applications directly to NTIA without submitting to RUS as well.
 - ◆ **FUNDING PRIORITIES:** RUS and NTIA are considering a “targeted funding” approach to Round Two, and seek comment on possible approaches, such as middle-mile infrastructure projects that connect key anchor institutions within a group of communities, regional economic development programs, and targeted populations.

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- ◆ **DEFINITIONS:** RUS and NTIA request input on the definitions of “unserved area,” “underserved area,” “remote area,” and “broadband.”
- ◆ **INTERCONNECTION & NONDISCRIMINATIONS:** RUS and NTIA are not inclined to make significant changes to the interconnection and nondiscrimination obligations, but welcome recommendations for minor adjustments or clarifications.
- ◆ **SALE OF PROJECT ASSETS:** RUS and NTIA seek comment on whether the prohibition on the sale or lease of award-funded broadband facilities should be relaxed.
- ◆ **OTHER ISSUES:**
 - ◆ How to measure cost-effectiveness of particular projects;
 - ◆ Should the public be given greater access to application data;
 - ◆ Should the NTIA revise its three-member panel application review process;
 - ◆ Should the public notice process for review of the unserved/underserved qualification of a proposed funded service area be revised.

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