

Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Distance Learning, Telemedicine, and Broadband Program

Total Funding Available: \$2.5 Billion

Overview: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Broadband Program promotes broadband infrastructure in rural areas that do not have sufficient access to high-speed networks. The program is likely to resemble the existing RUS Community Connect Grant Program and Rural Development Broadband Loan and Loan Guarantee Program that were piloted in 2001 and 2002

Special Factors: At least 75% of the area to be served “shall be in a rural area without sufficient access to high-speed broadband service to facilitate rural economic development”. Rural area is defined as “any area of the United States not included within the boundaries of any incorporated or unincorporated city, village, or borough having a population in excess of 20,000 inhabitants.” 7 CFR § 1739.3.

How to Access Funding: Application details will be announced by the Rural Utilities Service. A “Notice of Funding Availability” is expected to be available within 2 months of act.

Update: 7/28/09

Newly released FAQ now available online – [click here](#)

Update: Broadband Grants Available

USDA has released grant guidance for \$13.4 million to expand broadband service to rural areas. Local governments are eligible to apply for grants from \$50,000 to \$1 million. Grant applicants must match 15 percent of the grant, either in cash or in kind. Applications will be accepted through June 19.

Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis and can be used to: construct, acquire or lease broadband transmission services; improve, expand or lease community centers that provide free access to broadband for at least two years before, during and after normal work hours and on Saturdays and Sundays; purchase computer equipment; and provide broadband to all critical community facilities – first responders, police, etc. – within the proposed Service Area.

The application guide for this grant program can be found here: [Broadband Grant Application Guide](#). It is also suggested you view the April 20 Federal Register announcement (page 17941), available here: [\[TEXT\]](#) [\[PDF\]](#). The press release is available here: [Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Seeks Applicants For Broadband Grants In Rural Areas](#).

July 2009 Workshop Information

- In addition, several workshops have been announced that will include an overview of BTOP-BIP programs, a review of the application process for NTIA and RUS grants and loans and individual meetings with Rural Development headquarters and field staff. The online application can be found on this [link](#).

Federal Contact: USDA Information related to ARRA
http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/?navid=USDA_ARRA

State Contact: The e-NC Authority, info@e-nc.org, 919-250-4314
Baller Herbst Law Group Report (Updated 4/14/09)
http://www.baller.com/pdfs/Baller_Herbst_Stimulus_4-14-09.pdf

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