

Broadband stimulus update August 3, 2009

Applications for the first round of broadband stimulus funds are due by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, August 14. Localities planning on submitting in this round have no doubt started on their applications, and are furiously working to compile all the required information. All projects meeting the RUS definition of “rural” will have to apply for the RUS program first (a combination of loans and grants), but may also apply for the NTIA program (all grants).

At [Senator Warner’s broadband summit](#) in Charlottesville last week, the NTIA and RUS administrators strongly emphasized the importance of submitting complete applications. Applications that lack required information or documentation will be automatically rejected, as will applications that are not submitted by the deadline. Both agencies are encouraging electronic applications, which should be filed before August 14, if possible, in order to address any technical difficulties with the electronic submission.

The state will have a role in prioritizing projects that make the initial cut in this funding round. Karen Jackson, Virginia’s Deputy Secretary of Technology, has indicated that the state will develop a set of objective criteria in order to score the projects referred to it by the federal agencies. During this “due diligence” phase, applicants will be required to submit more detailed information and documentation regarding their proposals, including such things as environmental and construction permits, if applicable. The awards to successful applicants will be announced in early November. So, even if your locality is not applying in the first round, there should be a great deal to learn from successful and unsuccessful first round applicants.

The Department of Housing and Community Development is assisting a group of about 10 localities/regions as they prepare first round stimulus applications. DHCD has indicated that it plans to work with all the localities that have done broadband planning over the past few years with the help of planning grants from the agency, but for this initial round, they are focusing on the projects that are the most “shovel ready”.

Meanwhile, the state is applying to NTIA for broadband mapping funds, in hopes of improving the quality and accuracy of the state’s existing [broadband availability map](#). Ms. Jackson also said last week that the state will soon have more detail on the current map, including census block data, which is required in the stimulus application. This should assist applicants once available.

Please visit the [broadbandusa.gov website](http://broadbandusa.gov) for more information on stimulus applications, including an updated FAQ section.

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