



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF  
**COMMERCE**  
**NEWS**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20230



## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **Agriculture's RUS and Commerce's NTIA Announce Public Meetings for Discussion and Public Comment on Broadband Initiatives Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act**

*For Immediate Release: March 13, 2009*

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WASHINGTON—The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utilities Services (RUS) and the U.S. Department of Commerce (Commerce) National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) have announced upcoming Public Meetings on the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) and the additional authority for the RUS to make grants and loans for the deployment and construction of broadband systems as published in the Federal Register.

**WHAT:** Public Meetings with roundtable discussions and public comment opportunities on various topics (see details below)

**WHEN:** March 16, 2009, 10:00am (Eastern Daylight Time), Washington, DC  
March 17, 2009, 4:00pm (Pacific Daylight Time), Las Vegas, NV  
March 18, 2009, 4:00pm (Mountain Standard Time), Flagstaff, AZ  
March 19, 2009, 10:00am (EDT), Washington, DC  
March 23, 2009, 10:00am (EDT), Washington, DC  
March 24, 2009, 10:00am (EDT), Washington, DC

**WHERE:** The meetings on March 16, 19, 23, and 24, 2009 will take place at the U.S. Department of Commerce, 1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20230. The meeting on March 17 will take place at the Charleston Heights Center, 800 South Brush Street, Las Vegas, NV 89107. The March 18 meeting will take place at the High Country Conference Center (Northern Arizona University Campus), 201 West Butler Avenue, Flagstaff, AZ 86001.

Attendance at each meeting is limited to space available and seating is on a first-come, first-served basis. All members of the press planning to attend are requested to RSVP to Kevin Griffis at [kgriffis@doc.gov](mailto:kgriffis@doc.gov), Karen Cowles Pullen at [kcpullen@doc.gov](mailto:kcpullen@doc.gov), or to call (202) 482-4883. All meetings will have sign language interpretation and other ancillary aids. Individuals requiring additional assistance are asked to inform Barbara Brown, NTIA, at (202) 482-4374 or [bbrown@ntia.doc.gov](mailto:bbrown@ntia.doc.gov), at least two (2) days prior to the applicable meeting. All meetings will be streamed live on the Web at [www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants). Materials will also be archived at [www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants) and [www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov).

For further information, contact Barbara Brown; Mary Campanola, RUS, at (202) 720-8822 or [mary.campanola@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:mary.campanola@wdc.usda.gov); or Christi Shewman, Federal Communications Commission, at (202) 418-1686 or [christi.shewman@fcc.gov](mailto:christi.shewman@fcc.gov).

### **Draft Agenda and Topics (Subject to Change)**

#### ***March 16, 2009 (Washington, D.C.)***

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Roundtable on Private Sector Eligibility
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Public Comment on Private Sector Eligibility
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Roundtable on Coordination with USDA Grant & Loan Program
2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Public Comment on Coordination with USDA Grant & Loan Program
2:45 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.	Roundtable on Innovative Programs to Encourage Sustainable Adoption of Broadband Service and Expanding Public Computer Center Capacity
3:45 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.	Public Comment on Innovative Programs to Encourage Sustainable Adoption of Broadband Service and Expanding Public Computer Center Capacity

#### ***March 17, 2009 (Las Vegas, Nev.)***

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. (PDT)	Reaching Vulnerable Populations, Driving Demand and the Role of Strategic Institutions
5:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.	Public Comment on Reaching Vulnerable Populations, Driving Demand and the Role of Strategic Institutions
5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.	Roundtable on Definitions of Broadband, Underserved, Unserved
6:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Public Comment on Definitions of Broadband, Underserved, Unserved
8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.	Roundtable on Selection Criteria and Weighing Priorities
9:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.	Public Comment on Selection Criteria and Weighing Priorities

#### ***March 18, 2009 (Flagstaff, Ariz.)***

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. (MST)	Reaching Vulnerable Populations, Driving Demand and the Role of Strategic Institutions
5:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.	Public Comment on Reaching Vulnerable Populations, Driving Demand and the Role of Strategic Institutions
5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.	Roundtable on Definitions of Broadband, Underserved, Unserved
6:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Public Comment on Definitions of Broadband, Underserved, Unserved
8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.	Roundtable on Selection Criteria and Weighing Priorities
9:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.	Public Comment on Selection Criteria and Weighing Priorities

#### ***March 19, 2009 (Washington, D.C.)***

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Roundtable on Definition of Broadband
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Public Comment on Definition of Broadband
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Roundtable on Definition of Underserved Areas and Reaching Vulnerable Populations
2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Public Comment on Definition of Underserved Areas and Reaching Vulnerable Populations
2:45 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.	Roundtable on Rural and Unserved Areas
3:45 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.	Public Comment on Rural and Unserved Areas

***March 23, 2009 (Washington, D.C.)***

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Roundtable on Nondiscrimination and Interconnection Obligations
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Public Comment on Nondiscrimination and Interconnection Obligations
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Roundtable on the Role of the States
2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Public Comment on the Role of the States
2:45 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.	Roundtable on Broadband Mapping
3:45 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.	Public Comment on Broadband Mapping

***March 24, 2009 (Washington, D.C.)***

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Roundtable on Post-Award Compliance and Oversight
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Public Comment on Post-Award Compliance and Oversight
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Roundtable on Selection Criteria and Weighing Priorities
2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Public Comment on Selection Criteria and Weighing Priorities
3:15 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.	Roundtable on Community Economic Development
4:15 p.m. – 4:45p.m.	Public Comment on Community Economic Development

**About the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program**

The Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) is authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Title VI (Recovery Act, Public Law 111-5). The BTOP will provide grant support to enable consumers in unserved and underserved areas of the United States to access broadband services. The BTOP's \$4.7 billion in funding will stimulate demand and facilitate greater use of broadband services, while contributing to economic growth and job creation. Up to \$350 million may be expended pursuant to the Broadband Data Improvement Act (Public Law 110-385) and for developing a comprehensive nationwide inventory map depicting broadband availability in each State.

The BTOP grant categories and funds include:

- Infrastructure Grants – The BTOP funds will support among other things competitive grants for broadband deployment in unserved and underserved areas, and for strategic community institutions and public-safety agencies.
- Public Computer Center Grants (at least \$200 million) – Competitive grants to boost computing capacity at public computer centers, such as in community colleges and libraries.
- Sustainable Broadband Adoption Grants (at least \$250 million) – Competitive grants to fund innovative programs to enhance consumer demand for broadband service.
- Broadband Mapping (up to \$350 million) – Competitive grants to support State-centered activities to map the availability of and to assess consumer demand for broadband services and funds to support NTIA's development of a national broadband inventory map.

Eligible applicants include: states and political subdivisions; U.S and native Hawaiian organizations; nonprofit foundations, corporations, institutions, or associations; and other entities, including broadband service providers, whose participation is determined to be in the public interest.

Grant funding can be used, among other things, to: acquire equipment, instrumentation, networking capability, hardware and software; acquire network technology and infrastructure for broadband services; deploy broadband infrastructure; deploy broadband facilities that improve public safety communications; and facilitate access to broadband service by low-income, unemployed, aged and other vulnerable populations, and by community anchor institutions.

All BTOP materials, comments, and application information will be available on-line at [www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants).

### **About the National Telecommunications and Information Administration**

A bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce, NTIA is the President's principal adviser on telecommunications and information policy issues, and in this role frequently works with other Executive Branch agencies to develop and present the Administration's position on these issues. For more information about the NTIA, visit [www.ntia.doc.gov](http://www.ntia.doc.gov).

### **About RUS' Additional Broadband Loan and Grant Authority**

In order to improve access to broadband service in rural areas without service or that lack sufficient access to high speed broadband service to facilitate rural economic development, Congress provided, through the Recovery Act, \$2.5 billion to the Agency to provide grants, loans, and loan guarantees for the development and construction of broadband systems. The Recovery Act requires that 75 percent of a funded area be in a rural area that "lacks sufficient access to high speed broadband service to facilitate rural economic development." The newly created Broadband Loan and Grant program also gives priority to projects that will:

- Give end-users a choice of internet service providers.
- Serve the highest proportion of rural residents that lack access to broadband service.
- Be fully funded and ready to start once they receive funding under the Recovery Act.

All RUS Recovery Act materials, comments, and application information will be available on-line at [www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov).

### **About the Rural Utilities Service**

Modern utilities came to rural America through some of the most successful government initiatives in American history, carried out through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) working with rural cooperatives, nonprofit associations, public bodies, and for-profit utilities. Today, USDA Rural Development Utilities Programs carries on this tradition helping rural utilities expand and keep their technology up to date, helping establish new and vital services such as distance learning and telemedicine

### **About the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) was signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009. It is an unprecedented effort to jumpstart our economy, create or save millions of jobs, and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges so our country can thrive in the 21st Century. The Act is an extraordinary response to a crisis unlike any since the Great Depression, and includes measures to modernize our nation's infrastructure, enhance energy independence, expand educational opportunities, preserve and improve affordable health care, provide tax relief, and protect those in greatest need.

For more information about the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, visit [Recovery.gov](http://Recovery.gov).