



Rural Community Assistance Partnership

"Improving the quality of life in rural communities"



American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Rural Broadband Assistance Proposal

With funding provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the Department of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and USDA Rural Development issued a NOFA to support deploying broadband Internet infrastructure.

The RCAP network submitted a Sustainable Broadband Adoption category application to NTIA to provide small, rural communities technical assistance and training, as well as pre-development financing, to effectively compete for available broadband infrastructure funds.

Broadband Delivery to Rural Communities

Rural broadband service permits interactive distance education; telemedicine for those without ready access to advanced health care; remote contact, monitoring and care for seniors; and delivery of telecommunications, media, and news. Another benefit, one that is related to RCAP's work with water and wastewater systems, is the opportunity to install remote sensing networks to monitor system operations. A SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) system maintains local ownership and control while contributing to sustainability; it consolidates operations and maintenance by certified operators, reduces operator travel time and cost, provides operator stability and a livable wage, and results in cost savings. Since many rural communities are USDA borrowers, SCADA can help protect the federal investment.

Rural Communities Need Assistance

The process for accessing federal broadband funds is complex and expensive. Communities must evaluate broadband service alternatives and determine feasibility, then prepare an application and complete numerous pre-development and compliance tasks. After the NTIA-USDA broadband NOFA was announced, several Fortune 500 telecommunications companies announced that they would not apply because of the complexity of the process. If experts are daunted by the process, small communities will certainly need assistance to access federal broadband funds.

RCAP Network Training and Technical Assistance Capabilities

RCAP has no vested interest in the sale of technology or ISP service.

The RCAP partnership can deliver what it does best:

- Conduct feasibility assessment to determine existing usage, need, and applications for increased bandwidth, willingness to pay for service, desirability of project
- Assist in formation of local broadband task force
- Assist in formation of legal entity
- Train and educate broadband board (e.g. various technologies, interview ISP provider, etc.)
- Organize and conduct community information meetings
- Assist with development and writing of business plan
- Assist with grant application and administration
- Assist with/conduct community media/education campaign
- Facilitate/conduct seminars and public meetings on Internet use and applications
- Establish public access computer centers
- Assist with budget development, rate setting, permitting, bidding, contracting, facility management, and service management
- Provide short-term financing for pre-application and pre-development costs