



Via electronic mail

February 12, 2010

Lawrence E. Strickling, Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information,
Administrator, National Telecommunications and Information Administration

Jonathan S. Adelstein, Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, Department of Agriculture

Dear Mr. Strickling and Mr. Adelstein:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing the interests of local governments, non-profits, and other entities that are deeply engaged in preparing Round 2 BTOP and BIP applications, we are writing to respectfully request an extension of the programs' application due date from March 15, 2010 to April 30, 2010.

We understand and truly appreciate how hard your respective teams are working, and how much effort and analysis it takes to fully vet and perform due diligence on Round 1 applications. We do not in any way want to suggest that the time and scrutiny you are committing to that process is unnecessary. On the contrary, we appreciate the resources you are investing to ensure that you select the most qualified awardees.

However, the overlap of pending Round 1 award announcements and preparations for Round 2 applications is proving to be extremely difficult for applicants. NTIA and RUS have made a commitment to resolving Round 1 awards by the end of February, but this will leave Round 2 applicants only 15 days to complete their planning and submit their applications. We think this abbreviated timeframe will adversely impact their ability to file high-quality and fully conceived applications, which is not in the best interest of the applicants, NTIA, or RUS.

Because many Round 1 applicants are still waiting to hear whether they will receive funding, for example, those applicants do not know whether they should plan Round 2 applications. Round 2 applicants whose plans overlap the footprints of proposed projects that are currently in Round 1 due diligence find themselves in an even more precarious position. They are unable to complete their full engineering and business planning because their project may change depending on whether pending Round 1 applications are funded or not. For example, a Round 2 applicant, in order to do appropriate business and technical planning, needs to know such matters as: which anchor institutions they should plan to serve; which residences they should plan to pass; how far they will have to build plant in order to connect to the Internet; from whom they may be able to purchase backhaul and/or Internet capacity. Answers to all these questions will change depending on the outcome of pending Round 1 applications – making planning very difficult until those pending applications are resolved.



Compounding this complexity, for applicants and obviously for NTIA and RUS staff in the Washington, D.C. area, has been the ongoing weather emergency in the Mid-Atlantic region (that has spread to the entire Northeast with the most recent storm). With no public transportation, un-passable roads, and the unprecedented four-day closing of federal government offices, everyone involved in the Round 1 and Round 2 application processes has effectively lost a week of work on their projects.

Given these issues, we believe that extending the Round 2 application deadline until the end of April would give RUS and NTIA sufficient time to resolve all pending Round 1 applications, and would give Round 2 applicants sufficient time thereafter to complete the necessary level of planning and analysis for their applications.

Let us reiterate how much we appreciate that you and your staffs are doing due diligence right, rather than in haste. We have no complaint with the process. We merely ask, for the sake of all applicants' ability to submit the highest quality, best-planned applications, that you extend the Round 2 application deadline to allow applicants adequate time to plan based on full knowledge of all Round 1 awards.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tonya Rideout, Acting Executive Director, NATOA
Amina Fazlullah, Legal Counsel, U.S. Public Interest Research Group
Todd Wolfson, Co-Founder, Media Mobilizing Project
Sean McLaughlin, Executive Director, Access Humboldt
Joshua Breitbart, Policy Director, People's Production House
Loris Ann Taylor, Executive Director, Native Public Media
Harold Feld, Legal Director, Public Knowledge
Dee Davis, President, Center for Rural Strategies
Charles Benton, Chairman and CEO, Benton Foundation
Beth McConnell, Executive Director, Media and Democracy Coalition
Steven Renderos, Media Justice Organizer, Main Street Project
Helen Soule, Executive Director, Alliance for Community Media
Jonathan Lawson, Executive Director, Reclaim the Media
Sascha Meinrath, Director, Open Technology Institute