



Broadband Technical Assistance (BTA) Overview

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The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. At the top, there are status bars: "gov Recording" on the left, "You are viewing RD Innovation Center's screen" in the center, and "View Options" on the right. The main content is a slide featuring a photograph of a street scene with brick buildings, a street lamp, and an American flag. Below the photo, the text "Welcome!" is displayed in a large, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the slide, the text "USDA Rural Development" and "U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE" is visible. The Zoom control bar at the bottom includes icons for "Audio Settings", "Chat", "Q&A", "Live Transcript", and "Leave".

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BTA Presentation Overview

- BTA Overview
- Understanding BTA
- BTA Requirements and Scoring Criteria
- BTA Application Submission and Reporting
- Q&A

BTA Overview



BTA Introduction



BTA provides financial assistance to eligible entities to receive or deliver broadband technical assistance and training and to support the expansion or development of broadband cooperatives.

Understanding BTA



Who can apply for BTA Funding?

- Federally recognized Tribes and Tribal Entities.
- States or local governments, including any agency, subdivision, instrumentality, or political subdivision thereof.
- A territory or possession of the United States.
- An institution of higher education (including 1862 Land-Grant Institutions, 1890 Land-Grant Institutions, 1994 Land-Grant Institutions, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities).
- Non-profit organizations with 501(c)(3) IRS status.
- Cooperatives or mutual organizations.
- Corporations.
- Limited Liability Companies or Limited Liability Partnerships.

Funding Vehicle

- **Cooperative Agreement** is the instrument used to fund the support of RD's goals of increasing rural economic growth. In a cooperative agreement, federal employees participate more closely in project activities, often working side-by-side with the cooperator.
- A cooperative agreement differs from a grant in that it allows the awarding agency to be substantially involved in carrying out activities.

Funding Vehicle (cont.)

- The proposed project must include a component that allows for active participation and substantial involvement by RD in the applicant's project proposal.
- Examples of measurable substantial involvement include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Joint convenings of community members, partners, and stakeholders
 - Joint delivery of training for RD programs
 - The development of training sessions and outreach materials
 - Joint efforts to form new broadband cooperatives and support existing cooperatives efforts to expand broadband service into rural areas.

Eligible Project Costs

- Award funds may be used for the following purposes:
 - Assist rural communities, cooperatives, consultants and other entities in identifying and planning for delivering broadband service to rural areas
 - Identify resources to finance broadband facilities from public and private sources
 - Prepare feasibility studies, financial forecasts, market surveys, environmental studies, and technical design information to support broadband services
 - Prepare reports and surveys necessary to support the need for broadband services, the price range and to request financial assistance
 - Analyze and improve operations related to the management of broadband facilities (i.e., implement automation, adopt new software, conduct training, etc.) and to the efficiency of the entity.

Ineligible Project Costs

- Indirect Costs are costs that are not readily identified with a particular grant, contract, project function or activity, but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the conduct of activities it performs
 - Construction in any form
 - Activities supporting communities with existing broadband access.
 - Duplicative project costs funded by another award
 - Indirect costs
 - Costs identified as unallowable by 2 CFR parts 200 or 400
- A certification from the appropriate tribal official is required if a project is being proposed by a non-Tribal applicant over or on Tribal Lands.
 - The appropriate certification is a Tribal Government Resolution of Consent.
 - The appropriate tribal official is the Tribal Council of the Tribal Government with jurisdiction over the Tribal Lands at issue.
 - Any non-Tribal applicant that fails to provide a certification to administer a project on Tribal Lands will not be considered for funding.

Funding Categories

- Applicants may only apply for **one** type of funding.
- Up to \$20 million will be available under this Funding Opportunity Announcement
 - **Technical Assistance Providers.** Up to \$7.5 million is available. The minimum award amount is \$50,000 and the maximum award amount is \$1,000,000. Entities submitting an application under this funding category must propose to deliver broadband technical assistance that will benefit rural communities.
 - **Technical Assistance Recipients.** Up to \$7.5 million is available. The minimum award amount is \$50,000 and the maximum award amount is \$250,000. Entities submitting an application under this funding category must be beneficiaries of broadband technical assistance.
 - **Projects Supporting Cooperatives.** Up to \$5 million is available. The minimum award amount is \$50,000 and the maximum award amount is \$1,000,000. Entities submitting an application under this funding category must propose a project that supports the establishment or growth of broadband cooperatives that will benefit rural communities.

BTA Requirements and Scoring Criteria



Scoring Criteria

Points	Criteria
Up to 30 Points	Project Work Plan
Up to 20 Points	Organizational Capacity
20 Points	Targeted Communities
Up to 20 Points	Rurality
Up to 20 Points	Economic Need
Up to 10 Points	Performance Measures
Total: 120 Points Maximum	

Project Work Plan

- A maximum of 30 points will be awarded for the Project Work Plan
- Contains three major sections:
 - **1) Work Plan Approach** – The work plan approach should identify and detail:
 - Project objectives
 - Rural communities to be served
 - Project key goals
 - Partnerships developed or to be developed
 - Anticipated deliverables of the project
 - Applicants must list all rural communities that will benefit from the broadband technical assistance project and describe characteristics of the communities being served including information such as population size, population density, poverty rate, and other economic indicators.

Project Work Plan (cont.)

- **2) Work Plan Implementation** – Applicants should include details on how the technical assistance will be provided and how it will lead to expanded broadband service in rural areas.
- Applicants should detail:
 - Major task(s)
 - Involvement of key personnel
 - Time period of task(s)
 - Substantial involvement of RD staff
 - Expected deliverables.

Project Work Plan (cont.)

- **3) Budget and Work Plan Alignment** – A detailed budget and budget justification must be provided.
 - The budget justification should align with the tasks detailed in the workplan.
 - Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities discussed in the project key tasks.
 - The format of the budget's narrative can be in a chart, spreadsheet, table, etc., but it should be readable on letter-size, printable pages.
 - The information needs to be presented in such a way that the reviewers can readily understand what expenses are incurred to support the project.
 - Statement(s) of work for any subcontractors and consultants must be included as part of the application.

Organizational Capacity

- All applicants must demonstrate the capacity to deliver and/or support broadband technical assistance activities.
- The maximum 20 points for this criterion will be based on the following:
 - The applicant's proposal should demonstrate that the applicant has identified appropriate key personnel, both in terms of number of personnel and qualifications of personnel and should provide specific detail of qualifications of key personnel relating to broadband technical assistance. Capacity of personnel to access data for needs assessments and access to planners and other technical experts will be evaluated.
 - Applicants that are technical assistance providers should specify the number of years of providing broadband technical assistance, detail experience in providing broadband technical assistance to rural communities, identify types of rural communities previously served, and detail experience in performance evaluation.

Targeted Communities

- The applicant must describe how the proposed technical assistance activities will benefit targeted communities.
- The applicant should provide detail on how the project will promote the expansion of broadband within the targeted communities.
- Describe how the plan will help entities plan for and access broadband funding opportunities.
- The applicant can receive 20 points if at least 50 percent of the rural communities benefiting from the project consist of:
 - Tribes and Tribal Entities
 - Colonias
 - Persistent poverty counties
 - Distressed energy communities

Rurality

- Up to 20 points will be awarded and points will be awarded for serving the least dense rural areas as measured by the population of the communities served.

Exceptionally Rural	Community with a population of 5,000 or less	20 points
Rural	An area with a population of 5,001-10,000	15 points
Mid-Rural	An area with a population of 10,001-20,000	10 points
Urban	An area with a population greater than 20,000	Ineligible for BTA

To receive rurality points in any of the above categories, an area **cannot be adjacent or contiguous to a city or town having a population in excess of 50,000.

Economic Need

- Up to 20 points will be awarded for economic need.
- Economic need is based on the county poverty percentage of the communities proposed to be served in the application.
- The percentages must be determined by utilizing the United States Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program.
- Communities located in geographic areas, for which no SAIPE data exist, will be determined to have an average SAIPE poverty percentage of 30 percent.
- SAIPE data can be found on the BTA website.

Performance Measures

- The applicant can receive up to 10 points based on the proposed performance measures to evaluate the progress and impact of the proposed project.
- Performance measures should be based on the applicant's proposal and must include a description for how the results of the technical assistance will be measured and the benchmarks to be used for measuring effectiveness. Indicators to be used should be specific and be quantifiable.

Additional Information

- There are no cost sharing or matching requirements associated with this funding opportunity.
- Applications are ranked by the final score and awardees will be selected based on those scores, subject to the availability of funds.
- RUS will approve no more than one application per applicant.
 - If an applicant submits more than one application for different projects, then the Agency will only consider the application with the highest score.
 - If an applicant submits more than one application for the same project, then the Agency will only consider the latest submission.

Additional Information

- At the time of application, each applicant must have an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its application in accordance.
- In order to register in SAM, entities will be required to create a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Instructions for obtaining the UEI are available at <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>.
 - Applicant must maintain an active SAM registration, with current, accurate and complete information, at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.
- Applicant must ensure they complete the Financial Assistance General Representations and Certifications in SAM.

Application Submission and Reporting



Application Submission

- All applications are submitted through Grants.gov.
- The deadline for applications to be submitted is **11:59pm Eastern on June 20, 2023.**
- Grants.gov requires some credentialing and online authentication procedures that may take several business days to complete.
 - If system errors or technical difficulties occur, use the customer support resources available at the Grants.gov website.

Reporting Requirements

- Reporting is comprised of three parts, including performance reporting, recipient and sub-recipient reporting, and record keeping and accounting.
- Performance reporting includes providing annual performance activity reports to RUS until the project is complete and the funds are expended.
- Project performance reports should include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Comparisons of actual accomplishments to objectives established for the period.
 - Issues which have occurred, or are anticipated, that may affect the attainment of overall project objectives, prevent meeting schedules or objectives, or preclude the attainment of particular project work elements during established time periods and shall be accompanied by a statement of the action taken or planned to resolve the situation.
 - Objectives and timetable established for the next reporting period.
 - Activities demonstrating coordination with the State Broadband Office

Reporting Requirements (cont.)

- Recipient and sub-recipient reporting is also required.
 - The applicant must have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the reporting requirements for first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation
 - This requirement is noted in the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (Transparency Act)
 - The exception is if the applicant is exempt from such reporting requirements pursuant to 2 CFR 170.110(b).
 - The reporting requirements under the Transparency Act are found at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-I/part-170><https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-I/part-170>.
- Record keeping and accounting is the third area of reporting.
 - The agreement will contain provisions related to record keeping and accounting requirements.





Rural Development

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