

## **Review and Prioritization Criteria**

### **Applications for Grants under the Broadband Technologies Opportunities Program**

On July 1, 2009, the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service, and the United States Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), issued a Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) to administer the Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) and the Broadband Technologies Opportunities Program (BTOP). In the NOFA, NTIA indicates that each state will be provided the opportunity to review and prioritize projects from that state or that affect the state and are under consideration for funding from BTOP.

According to the NOFA, eligible entities will submit applications to NTIA, and NTIA will conduct a two-step review process. NTIA will conduct an initial screen of an application to determine if it meets mandatory thresholds. In the second step, applicants will be asked to submit additional information and undergo state review and prioritization. Once the state has completed its review and provided the NTIA a list and prioritization of recommended projects, the grant applications will undergo further internal review by NTIA, and ultimately, the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information, NTIA, will make final awards.

To perform the review and prioritization role established by the NOFA, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), in conjunction with the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) and the Texas Public Safety Commission (PSC), will identify applications/projects that will meet the greatest needs of Texas. In addition to guidance from NTIA provided in the NOFA, TDA, PUC and PSC will also consider the following criteria when reviewing and prioritizing broadband infrastructure projects:

- Impact on the state and local economy;
- Number of Texans to gain broadband access;
- Ability to provide sustainable broadband service where currently no broadband service exists;
- Level of service provided, including downstream and upstream speed;
- Sustainability and potential to expand broadband access in future years through non-federal investment;
- Ability to use existing infrastructure to increase broadband access and availability;
- Ability to harmonize the goal of providing necessary broadband services to suppliers of critical infrastructure, such as hospitals, educational institutions, emergency responders, fire departments, health care providers, law enforcement, public libraries, and local governmental institutions, with the goal of providing increased broadband access and availability to all Texans, including rural areas and unserved or underserved urban areas;
- Ability to address specific priorities identified in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the BTOP;
- Ability to exceed federal match requirement; and
- Efforts to create partnerships, including public/private partnerships; and
- Demonstration of local support.