

## MTA NTIA Grant Proposal

Below are ideas related to project concept development, the beginning to end grant proposal/application development process and budget for the NTIA grant development project. Specifically:

- **Concept Development** – It will be important for the Project (or amalgam of projects) to be as wide and varied as possible in order to meet as many of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act’s (ARRA’s) evaluation criteria for the NTIA BTOP (Broadband Technology Opportunities Program) Grants, which could mean developing a variety of partnerships between the MTA and allied agencies (as well as a variety of agencies of the MTA’s members being involved), while also making sure that the Project meets, and that grant funding would provide benefits to, the needs and the mission of the MTA’s member jurisdictions. Because of the potential nature, complexity and extent of the project(s), it will be important to work as diligently as feasible ahead of the issuance of the NOFA (Notice of Funding Availability) or RFP by the NTIA (potentially as early as late April after comments are received concerning the NTIA’s Request for Information and feedback and the FCC’s determination of key definitions such as “unserved” and “underserved”) and then crystallize, refine and detail the concept within the bounds of the application requirements so that it can be submitted on time and have the greatest chance of success.

Some overall project component ideas at this point include (which should be consistent with or may be in addition to the types of project ideas that you are hearing back from the MTA’s member cities, towns and the County):

- ***Improve Broadband use by, and access by the public to, public safety agencies*** – This could include:
  - *Deployment of remote hotspots and mobile remote hotspots for the Sheriffs’ Department* -As I understand, these are currently being designed to be deployed at fire stations and used by Sheriff’s Deputies for uploading and downloading to and from the remote data terminals in their vehicles. This concept could also be expanded to add mobile remote hotspots (similar to what we discussed with the MGSA during our report on the Pilot Project). The hotspots would leverage the existing infrastructure provided to the fire stations by MIDAS, and could also be partitioned so that it provides public access to broadband at those locations (especially if the Fire Department was close to another public area such as a park). Since the County is already pursuing this project, it would be considered “shovel ready” and there should be some funding that could constitute the 20 % match (if not, as you’ve indicated, the State of California may be able to provide that).



provides cable modem services at modest speeds within Point Reyes, the MIDAS connection to this point could be used to backhaul both higher speed services for the underserved that need them and basic broadband services to surrounding, unserved areas that either Horizon doesn't serve or don't have reliable broadband over cellular service. Either MIDAS or the County could provide the wireless/wireline infrastructure or it could be done in combination with Horizon and/or one of the WISPs.

- ***Provide sustainable access by disadvantaged populations*** – This could include:
  - *Greater access at public locations* – this could include expansion of the current number of public locations that provide broadband access, such as greater provision at public facilities beyond libraries and community centers, as well as expanded provision of computer and technology literacy programs in concert with access to computers and broadband.
  - *Access at the CMCM (and satellite locations) as well as computer, technology and multimedia literacy training* – similar to the above, this could be done in partnership with Michael Eisenmenger and the developing staff at the CMCM.

There are specific pots of funding for both computer access and training initiatives, and these initiatives also are consistent with Strategic Direction Number 4 of the MTA. They also would help increase the services that could be provided to residents by each one of the MTA's members and their pertinent agencies. Such initiatives further, through those agencies, can focus on low income, aged and other disadvantaged populations, which as indicated above is another criteria of the NTIA's BTOP. Moreover, each one of these initiatives also focuses on another criteria-improving public computing capacity (here the MTA could also pursue development of laptop repurposing and distribution programs, but would likely need to work with a partner to do that).

- ***Provide provision of equipment and training at schools, libraries, healthcare providers and community centers*** – The above project component already captures libraries and community centers (and would expand on them through the BTOP grant program). For others, including:
  - *Schools* – the MTA should most likely work with the MCOE and determine how a grant application could build on existing programs at the schools. I think also that COM, Dominican or other higher education institutions might also be pertinent partners, and already have some training programs which work back into workforce development as well.
  - *Healthcare providers* – here the MTA may want to work with the County's Health Department, but would also want to work with the Office of Emergency Services as well as Emergency Medical agencies to

additionally focus on the public safety aspect. Specifically, the focus would be on development of broadband and broadband related technologies for more efficient and effective provision of healthcare.

These are just some of the ideas that we should explore and try to consolidate into a comprehensive, integrated concept, potentially with a catchy, catch-all name (we'll need to do some brainstorming on this). It will also be important to remember five (5) key tests that must be applied to the project and all of its elements:

1. The proposed project would not have been implemented during the grant period without federal assistance;
2. The entire project must be completed within two (2) years of the award;
3. The project should serve as an economic stimulus in as many ways as possible (economic development, creating or saving jobs, developing the workforce for the future, etc.);
4. There must be a verifiable, allocated 20% match in funds for the entire project, from the entities involved or the State, or through in-kind matches (the in-kind match and cash provision evaluation criteria are in 15CFR, Section 24.24); and
5. The entire project should be sustainable once the grant has been utilized and the project has been completed.

- **Regarding the Process** – There are a number of elements from start to finish, in the registration, concept development, grant application and proposal development, filing and follow-up process, that we want to make sure that we continue to focus on and ramp up efforts, as follows:

- **Registration activities** – there would need to be a designated applicant for the grant application, that could be registered in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) (it typically takes at least a couple of days to do this and receive confirmation), designate a point of contact (POC) for the applicant, and then ensure that the proper NAICS codes are noted and that the applicant has a DUNS number for the receipt of funds. Any eligible entity or a formal partnership of eligible entities (or the lead applicant on behalf of its allied partners) could be the applicant, but it would be important to ensure that designation is made such that the registration could be completed well in advance.
- **Comprehensive concept development** - The concept should be fully developed and agreed to by all participating parties as soon as feasible because it is likely that the grant proposal will need:
  - A formal, detailed technical proposal on all of the components of the broadband system, their development, operations and management, including sustainable operation after implementation.
  - A formal budget and cost schedule indicating the total cost as well as acknowledgement and attestation that a 20% match is available.

- A build out and implementation schedule that shows that the entire project will be completed within two (2) years of grant award.

It will be important to develop these concepts in a modular fashion, such that if the full award isn't made, the MTA and its partners could go forward with a portion of the concept that would still benefit the project participants.

- **Partnership development** - Any partnerships that are developed that will carry through the project and its implementation will probably need some type of partnership agreement so that it is clear how and to whom the funding will be distributed if received.
- **Coordination with the State** – as you indicated, the State is highly involved in the process in order to help bring as much funding to entities within the State as possible. It will be important to coordinate early-on related to the final concept that is being proposed (so that the State will back the concept and verify the availability of the 20% match).
- **Review of the application forms and development of a grant proposal outline** – this will be critical to ensure that before a significant amount of work is done on the application and the proposal that everyone agrees how the criteria will be met and what the final product should look like.
- **Development of the full grant proposal and completion of the application** – this will require some significant coordination, timely and quick inputs from all involved parties and a high amount of expert oversight by a grant writing specialist to ensure that the proposal hits all the right targets as required by the NTIA, and has a high chance of success in a highly competitive environment. The application and proposal will need to stand out.
- **Grant application and proposal submission** – we'll need to ensure that all critical timeframes are met and the grant application/proposal is submitted as much in advance as possible. It would be beneficial to deliver it in person and follow that up with a “confirmation of receipt of application” call, especially to contacts we will have made in the process.
- **Follow-up** – We'll want to follow-up frequently with the NTIA on the review of the grant to make sure that any questions or requests for additional information are responded to immediately and in a manner that provides the quantity and quality of response that the NTIA is seeking.

The aim is for detailed attention to the above to provide the highest potential for a successful grant award.

- **Budget for the Project** – As has been indicated in various webinars, materials and discussions with colleagues, a grant development project like this one, especially related to the likely complexity of the application and proposal and the need to stand out in a highly competitive environment for the somewhat limited available grant funding, will take a considerable amount of time and resources from all involved in a fairly tight

timeframe. The grant writing specialists on our team have echoed this sentiment and indicated that, even with a broad-based group contributing to grant proposal development, it can take hundreds of combined man-hours to develop a proposal and application that will get a high degree of attention at the NTIA. I think that the MTA Board members were cognizant that this will be a resource intensive process from comments that were made at the Strategic Plan Update Session.

Accordingly, based on the projections of our team related to the concepts and process discussed above, an allocation of 200 task hours plus expenses, for approval by the MTA Board, would give the CBG team the greatest flexibility it needs for the project. Our belief is that as part of this we will also be able to pursue further progress and develop implementation possibilities for allied projects such as Wireless Marin that work directly back into the broadband development focus of the BTOP (in other words, serving another of the MTA's aims, before specifically allocated funding may be available in the next fiscal year's budget for Wireless Marin-related activity). 200 hours plus expenses would equate to roughly \$40,000 and would cover the time that would be needed for me, Dick, Dr. Connie Book and one of our federal grant writing specialists to work comprehensively with you, Scott, Michael, Dave and others, as you direct, on all of the various elements. Depending on the NTIA's ultimate timetable, a high-level breakdown of the 200 hours would be as follows:

- 70 hours in April to assist with registration, full concept development, detailed NTIA Application form and criteria review from the grant writer's perspective and helping define partnership responsibilities and components as part of the overall concept development;
- 70 hours in May to provide a wide range of inputs and insert the comprehensive technical plan, business plan, cost analysis and budget and sustainability plan into the detailed grant application and proposal as required by the NTIA; assist with redrafts and responding to grant-related questions and reviews by project partners;
- 40 hours in June to polish the draft based on the grant writing specialist's analysis; submission by the deadlines, verifying receipt and beginning follow-up; and
- 20 hours in July to frequently follow-up and help respond to NTIA questions and requests.

If that is too great an amount for the Board to approve, it would be important to allocate at least 145 hours plus expenses, which would equate to approximately \$29,000. However, based on all of the elements above, we believe that this may only provide our team with a minimum amount for key tasks in each one of the critical areas, and could inhibit and reduce needed flexibility at critical junctures.

After you have had a chance to review, let's discuss, brainstorm on the concepts, and then determine the work plan that works best for you and the Board.