

## **TOP TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW.... TO GET BROADBAND STIMULUS FUNDING FOR YOUR LIBRARY**

Though not all of the details about the funding programs created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in the National Telecommunications and Information Administration in the U.S. Department of Commerce and in the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture have been determined by the agencies, there are important steps that can be taken now.

Libraries have many opportunities. It's not too early to start gathering information and developing strategies to assure that libraries are ready to participate in the ARRA broadband programs.

- **Inventory the connectivity at your library** and in the surrounding community. What types of telecommunications services are offered? What providers serve your library and your community, campus or school? What are your patrons' needs? [E-rate recipients: Build on your tech plans and other features of your E-rate applications.]
- **Assess your library's telecommunications services and identify future needs.** Think about the library services that can be enhanced by broadband applications. Focus especially on your library's role in helping people gain new job and career skills, search for and apply for new jobs and support small businesses. Also start to identify resource people who might work with you to develop proposals to NTIA and RUS.
- **Talk with your campus or school administrators, your local government officials and the governor's office in your state.** What plans do they have for broadband and the ARRA? Will you have to work through them or will your library be able to apply directly for ARRA programs? Check out their Web sites.
- **Think collaboration and aggregation.** Contact other libraries of all types to find out what they may be planning. Can you work together to aggregate demand for broadband? Connect with your state library agency to find out what they are doing; the same goes for any regional or multi-type library cooperatives. As you learn more about what other libraries are doing, identify potential models that you may want to adapt for your community.
- **Contact potential partners – public and private.** Talk to phone companies cable providers, ISPs and even power companies. Ask about their plans and needs while explaining to them how your library utilizes its telecommunications services and why expanded broadband services for libraries will help the whole

community. Push for “fiber to the library” and other advanced technologies to enhance your library’s connectivity.

- **Identify the job/career, employment and small business needs and resources in your community.** While you are doing this research, share information about what your library is already doing to help people find jobs, learn new career skills and serve small businesses. Describe how having broadband will expand your services for “recovery and reinvestment.”
- **Start thinking about “sustainability.”** What will your library need to make sure that your broadband services are stable and robust? Will you need other human and software resources? [Although undetermined at this time, some parts of the NTIA and RUS programs may support “non-technology” resources.]
- **Say “thank you” to your U.S. senators and congressional representatives for passing the ARRA.** Keep them informed about your library services related to job growth and employment information – and share with them your concepts for ARRA grant applications and broadband deployment.
- **Think BIG!** Even a small fraction of \$7.2 billion dollars is a lot of money. And, we know that libraries need broadband to serve their users. The ARRA is a one-time opportunity to advance broadband build out to the underserved, the unserved and “special populations.” Libraries potentially may fit into several parts of the NTIA and RUS programs. Think “fiber (and other technologies) to the library.”

As ALA learns more about the NTIA and RUS stimulus programs, we’ll have more “TOP TEN STEPS.” Stay tuned.