



P.O. Box 299
Galena, AK 99741
(907) 374-2200
(907) 374-2271 fax

April 11, 2009

Department of Commerce/NTIA - BTOP
1401 Constitution Ave, NW
Room 4812
Washington, DC 20230

Subject: NTIA's request for information

To Whom It May Concern:

IDEA International (IDEA) is pleased to submit comments for your consideration as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 under the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program. Our goals (and that of the ARRA of 2009) are the same in several key areas; to provide high speed connectivity to unserved and underserved Americans, to model efficiency, and to create jobs that would otherwise not exist.

I have limited my comments to sections 4a, 4b, 7a and 7b of the NTIA's notice and request for information. As you will see, our program focus is on education and the vital role it plays in systemic change especially for unserved and underserved citizens of our country. The synergy between broadband technology and education will generate economic activity and job expansion and play a vital role in the success of programs implemented by the Act.

Following our comments you will find a one page summary of an innovative program that accomplishes many of the goals outlined in the request for information. This program has a strong track record of successfully combining technology and education that produced benefits to a significantly underserved segment of our society. Education must be a key component for success.

Should you require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact me at (907) 388-0826 or email me at tim.cline@ideafamilies.org.

Sincerely,

K. Timothy Cline
Executive Director
IDEA International, Inc.

Request For Information NTIA [Docket No. 090309298-9299-01]
American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 Broadband Initiatives

Comments by IDEA International, Inc.

#4 Establishing Selection Criteria for Grant Awards: The Recovery Act establishes several considerations for awarding grants under the BTOP. In addition to these considerations, NTIA may consider other priorities in selecting competitive grants.

a. What factors should NTIA consider in establishing selection criteria for grant awards?

- For clarification of the criteria stated in 6001(b) of the Recovery Act, (1) provides access to broadband service to consumers residing in unserved areas of the United States; (2) provide improved access to broadband service to consumers residing in the underserved areas of the United States, that it be interpreted to include US citizens serving our country abroad (e.g., U.S. Military and Embassy personnel and U.S. contract support civilians).
- In addition to the goals set out in section 6001(b) of the Recovery Act, we believe priority should be given to programs that will impact children and their education. We believe that education is the key to sustainable growth and utilization of broadband technology and therefore should given additional weight in selection criteria for grant awards.
- Selection criteria weighting should include consideration for innovative programs that have previously demonstrated training, use, and support of broadband technology.

b. What should the weighting of these criteria be in determining consideration for grant and loan awards?

- We believe that education of the public is critical to the success of any systemic change. Therefore, significant weight should be given to proposals that educate unserved or underserved segments of our society.
- We believe that weight should be given to programs that impact children and their use of technology. The most effective programs will prepare children for their future rather than their parent's past.

#7 Grants for Innovative Programs to Encourage Sustainable Adoption of Broadband Service

a. What selection criteria should be applied to ensure the success of this program?

- Sustainability requires a connection to real-life situations. It's not enough to make the service available; there has to be a personal and/or societal benefit. In many unserved or underserved areas, improving technology is not necessarily a perceived need. They may not even understand that there is a connection between technology and economic development that could directly impact them. Education is the key. Additional weight should be given to those proposals that have an educational component.

b. What measures should be used to determine whether such innovative programs have succeeded in creating sustainable adoption of broadband services?

- Beyond simply measuring increased broadband usage, weight should be given to proposals that have a plan to show growth in understanding the power of broadband technology and how it can be used to better their lives and that of their communities.



Bringing Technology & Education to US Citizens Serving Overseas **A proposal to serve those who are serving America**

IDEA International is seeking grant funding to pilot a program for United States military and eligible civilian families who educate their children at home while stationed overseas around the world. It is a fact that many U.S. citizens choose to homeschool their children so as to provide a consistent educational program and avoid the upheaval resulting from transferring to new locations every few years. The personal commitment and financial cost to these families are great. Most work independently and in isolation without the benefit of tools regularly used in the traditional “brick and mortar” schools today. IDEA International previously piloted a small program in the Pacific Region aimed at helping US Military and eligible civilian homeschooling families to raise the bar by bringing innovative technology right into their homes. The results of that pilot were nothing short of outstanding.

Our objective with this new pilot would be to replicate the previous successes on a global scale by reaching out to US citizens homeschooling wherever they are stationed. High speed connectivity along with quality hardware and software makes it possible to **bring highly-qualified teachers and cutting-edge curriculum right into the home.** IDEA International proved with its Pacific pilot project that we need not confine education to the traditional four walls of a classroom. We have the ability to provide a free-flowing exchange of knowledge and ideas worldwide in real time **through the innovative use of technology.**

IDEA International is a rural Alaskan-based non-profit company with a strong record of providing quality distance education using a platform of delivery developed by the Galena City School District (GCSD) in Galena, Alaska. Working with GCSD’s homeschool program in Alaska (Interior Distance Education of Alaska), IDEA International is “**shovel ready**” to deliver services with our Alaska-based program. We have the technology and infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of families worldwide. This project would also provide much needed jobs both at home and abroad. Having served 1,200+ students in the Pacific Region with the previous pilot program, IDEA International is prepared to serve twice that many so as to reach out to homeschooling families residing in Europe and other locations. Alaska’s IDEA program, the largest in Alaska, currently serves over 3,500 students.



We are proud to bring this program forward to help U.S. families who are quietly serving our country abroad. Our proven system makes the cost of doing nothing for these families unacceptable. We will put more Americans to work and at the same time help to secure America’s future by providing quality education to those currently being overlooked.

For further information contact Tim Cline, Executive Director of IDEA International, Inc. by phone at (907) 388-0826 or by writing Tim at tim.cline@ideafamilies.org.

IDEA was first accredited by the Northwest Association of Accredited School and the Commission of Trans-Regional Accreditation in 2005.