

# Deadline for U.S. broadband grants, loans extended

Reuters

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The deadline for online applications for the first round of the U.S. government's \$7.2 billion program to provide broadband access to all Americans was extended to August 20 from August 14 because of technical problems caused by the high number of applicants.

Applicants who started the process using the online Easygrants System will be given until the close of business Thursday, August 20, the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) said.

The NTIA said additional servers had been added.

Paper applications are still due by Aug 14.

The Commerce Department administers the broadband program with the Agriculture Department.

The government is awarding \$4 billion in loans and grants to applicants who meet certain criteria and compete for the funds. The money would have to be used to expand broadband infrastructure.

Companies, organizations, and state and local governments are eligible to apply in the first round. Big carriers like Verizon Communications Inc and AT&T Inc are not expected to apply.

Broadband has been the central focus of workshops being held by the Federal

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Communications Commission, which has been charged with creating a national broadband plan, that will be presented to Congress in February.

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As part of the stimulus broadband plan, the government is overseeing a \$350 million mapping program to determine the extent of broadband use in U.S. homes and bring high-speed Internet service to more people.

Last week, the NTIA said telecommunications providers such as Verizon, AT&T and Comcast Corp had agreed to provide some information about their broadband networks as part of the mapping program.

(Reporting by John Poirier; Editing by Toni Reinhold)

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