



BROADBANDUSA

CONNECTING AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES

Broadband Technology Opportunities Program

Service Provider Responses Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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1 General Information

1.1 What are the dates of the comment period?

NTIA will allow broadband service providers to submit information related to BTOP grant applications for a 25 day period from April 15th through Monday, May 10, 2010 at 5 p.m. EDT. For more information and detailed instructions on submitting a response, please visit: <http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/ServiceProviderResponses>.

1.2 Is there a spreadsheet version of all the BTOP applications? Can I download full copies of applications?

The "Application Database" section of BroadbandUSA.gov (<http://www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants/applications/search.cfm>) serves as the primary database for grant applicants. NTIA will continue to post applications submitted in accordance to the Round 2 Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA). You can search projects by organization, keywords, project type, program, state, and proposed funded service areas. NTIA will not release the full applications submitted for Round 2.

1.3 I am an existing broadband service provider and would like to post comments about an application. What information do I need to include?

To submit a response to Round 2 CCI applications, service providers will need to download the Service Response Template posted to <http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/ServiceProviderResponses> and follow the detailed instructions.

Please note that existing service providers submitting a response are required to complete the Service Tiers and Coverage and Subscription Data worksheets in the Template. Service providers also have the option of completing the Points of Presence worksheet.

In general, a complete Public Notice Filing includes:

1. Name of the company providing information on its service territory;
2. Summary describing the information it has presented to NTIA;
3. Number of households that have access to broadband service in its service territory;
4. Type of broadband services the existing broadband service provider offers in its service territory and the technology used to provide those services;
5. Prices at which the broadband services are offered;
6. Speed of the broadband services that are offered; and
7. Number of subscribers that the existing broadband service provider currently has for each of the broadband services it offers in its service territory.



The information described in items 1 and 2 above, which include the identity of the company submitting information and a summary of its response, will be made publicly available. The information submitted by an existing broadband service provider relating to items 3 through 7 above will be treated as proprietary and confidential to the extent permitted under applicable law.

This information can also be found in Section V.D.3.d of the Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) which details about the information that an existing broadband service provider needs to include when submitting comments to NTIA.

1.4 Do I have to be a broadband service provider to comment?

Responses to the proposed service areas for BTOP funding should come from existing service providers with relevant information to applications. In order for input to be considered, responders to the Public Notice Filing period are required to complete the Service Tiers and the Coverage and Subscription Data worksheets, and may optionally complete the Points of Presence worksheet.

1.5 How is the Round 2 process different from the Round 1 process?

NTIA eliminated the mapping tool used in the Round 1 for the second round of funding. In Round 2, CCI applicants were required to submit Census block groups or tracts of their Proposed Funded Service Areas.

Pursuant to section V.D.3.d of the NOFA, NTIA has posted a list of the Census block groups or tracts that each Round 2 CCI applicant has proposed to serve through its project. The posting of that announcement initiated a window for existing broadband service providers to submit information about the broadband services they currently offer in their respective service territories by Census block group or tract. In order for their data to be considered, existing service providers are required to complete the Service Tiers and the Coverage and Subscription Data worksheets. Service providers may optionally complete the Points of Presence worksheet.

1.6 Can I comment on PCC or SBA applications?

No. The review and evaluation process for BTOP PCC and SBA applications does not include responses from existing service providers.



2 Submitting a Response

2.1 Can I comment on an application directly?

No. Existing service providers should comment on Census block groups or tracts they currently serve. The challenges will be connected to all applications that included that particular Census block group or tract as part of their Proposed Funded Service Area.

2.2 Where can I find the Census block group or tract information for BTOP CCI applicants?

NTIA has posted a list of the Census block groups or tracts that Round 2 CCI applicants proposed to serve at:

<http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/ServiceProviderResponses>.

2.3 Does an existing service provider need to submit multiple responses?

No. Existing service providers should comment on Census block groups or tracts they have determined they currently serve in one BTOP CCI Service Template file. The challenges will be connected to all applications that included that particular Census block group or tract as part of their Proposed Funded Service Area. Service providers will only need to file a single response.

2.4 How do I use the information provided by NTIA related to the applicant coverage areas?

NTIA published a single aggregated list of all Census tracts and block groups that reflect the proposed funded service areas for CCI applications submitted in accordance to the Federal Register Notice. Existing service providers are allowed to comment on Census tracts that they currently serve using the provided Service Response Template. This template includes detailed instructions on completing the worksheets. For additional details about using the list of the Census block groups or tracts that each Round 2 CCI applicant has proposed, please visit <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/tractez.html>.

The Census tract and block group numbers provided in the list NTIA posted are 11 digits for tract numbers and 12 digits for block group numbers. For tracts, this includes a 2-digit state FIPS code, a 3-digit county code, and a 6-digit tract code. For block groups it includes 2-digit state FIPS code, a 3-digit county code, a 6-digit tract code, and a 1-digit block group code. When preparing the Coverage and Subscription Data worksheet for their response, service providers must provide tract and block group numbers in the exact same format as they appear in this list.



2.5 What needs to be included on the Service Tiers worksheet?

Respondents should provide data on the broadband service offerings available to consumers in each of the areas for which the service provider is providing data in the Coverage and Subscription Data worksheet.

For each offering, service providers should provide:

- **Broadband Service Tier Name:** the name of the service offering.
- **Broadband Platform:** the technology platform of the service offering (e.g., fiber to home, cable, DSL, WiMax, 3G mobile wireless).
- **Downlink Speed:** the advertised speed of the downstream connection (should be clearly labeled as either Mbps or Kbps).
- **Uplink Speed:** the advertised speed of the upstream connection (should be clearly labeled as either Mbps or Kbps).
- **Price per month:** the price per month of the service.
- **Geographic Scope:** denote the geographic scope in which this service offering is available (e.g., nationwide, southeastern US (FL, GA, SC) California, New York metro area).
- **Other Key Features, Terms, or Limitations:** Note any other key features, terms, or limitations for this service offering.

2.6 What needs to be included on the Coverage and Subscription Data worksheet?

Respondents should provide data on coverage and subscription levels in each Census tract or block group from the BTOP Round 2 Applicant Service Area List where service is provided.

For each Census tract or block group, existing service providers should provide:

- **Census tract and block group number:** the Census tract or block group number of the area for which the service provider is providing data. The tract or block group number should be in exactly the same format that it is found in the BTOP Round 2 Applicant Service Area List (11-digit Census tract numbers, includes the 2-digit State FIPS code, the 3-digit county code, followed by a unique 6-digit tract number, plus an additional 1-digit block group number for block groups). Please refer to pp. 118-1999 of the BTOP CCI Grant Guidance for additional information on the format of the Census tract and block group numbers.
- **Number of Households:** the number of households in the Census tract or block group.
- **Number of Households with Access to Broadband Service Provider:** the number of households in that Census tract or block group that the service provider offers access to. Offering access to a household means that a household can readily subscribe to broadband service upon request.



- **Number of Households Subscribing to Broadband from Service Provider:** the number of households in that Census tract or block group that subscribe to broadband from the service provider.
- **Highest Available Speed Tier Offered by Service Provider:** the downlink speed of the fastest available service tier offered in that Census tract or block group. The speed should be provided in Mbps, as a numeric value without a label.

2.7 What needs to be included on the Points of Presence worksheet?

Existing service providers must submit data on network points of presence that are in or near the Census tracts or block groups listed in the BTOPI Round 2 Applicant Service Area List. Provision of this data is optional, but if provided it will be utilized in considering the level of need for applications proposing to provide middle mile services.

With respect to each point of presence, service providers should submit:

- **Facility Name:** a name to identify the point of presence.
- **Address (Line 1, City, State, Zip) OR geocoordinates (Longitude, Latitude) of the point of presence:** it is not necessary to provide both a street address and geo coordinates.
- **Description:** provide a brief description of what the facility is (a few words or a phrase is sufficient (e.g., a central office, collocation facility)).
- **Middle Mile Services Available:** provide a brief description of the middle mile services, if any, available at this location [e.g., Internet access, transport (100 Mbps, 1 Gbps, 10 Gbps), dark fiber].

2.8 What is an internet point of presence?

A point of presence (POP) is a physical place in a network where a broadband service provider has a presence for network access, generally in the form of a switch or router. It may also be a meet point for Broadband service providers, where they exchange traffic and routes. This broad definition affords service providers the discretion to determine, given their business and network architecture, what information regarding their facilities and services they wish to provide to best assist NTIA in evaluating projects proposing to provide middle mile services within the service provider's service area.

2.9 What needs to be included in the "Broadband Service Tier Name" column on the Service Tiers worksheet?

Broadband Internet service contracts can provide a variety of technologies and services with a wide range of bandwidth options. Internet service providers may have a specific brand name, or an internal designation for the various options in service. Please include the brand name or internal designation for the type of service provided to households. If you do not have a specific Tier Name for each



type of service, service providers may include a generic reference point (i.e., Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, etc.).

2.10 How does NTIA define a household on the Coverage and Subscription Data worksheet?

A household includes all persons who occupy a housing unit. A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied as separate living quarters (or if vacant, is intended for occupancy). Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live and eat separately from any other persons in the building and which have direct access from the outside of the building or through a common hall. The occupants may be a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any other group of related or unrelated persons who share living arrangements. (People not living in households are classified as living in group quarters.) For more information, please visit http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/meta/long_71061.htm.

2.11 Can service providers include businesses as part of the Coverage and Subscription Data worksheet?

For each Census tract or block group, service providers should provide information related to number of households. Please do not make changes to the Service Response Template.



3 Troubleshooting

3.1 How do I register to submit a response?

1. Please go to the service provider comment submission site at:
<https://btopcomments.ntia.doc.gov>
[Note: First time users on a Mozilla Firefox browser will need to click through several security screens: on **Screen 1**) Click “I understand the risks; on **Screen 2**) Click “Add Exception;” on **Screen 3**) Click “Confirm Security Exception]
2. Click “Create new account.”
3. Enter your e-mail address.
4. An auto-generated password will be sent to the e-mail address provided.
5. Use your e-mail address and auto-generated password to login to the site.

Please be sure to check your junk or spam filters if you do not receive an e-mail.

3.2 How do I format the spreadsheet to ensure Census block groups or tracts are accurate?

Excel truncates leading zeros from numbers. Consequently, the Census block groups/tracts column on the worksheet must be formatted as text. To do this, please highlight the “Census Tract or Block Group Number” column and go to “Format Cells,” then select “Text” under Category.

3.3 I downloaded the Service Response Template and there are no worksheets in the file. Where can I find the other worksheets?

In order to access the template please follow these steps:

1. Visit <http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/ServiceProviderResponses>.
2. Click on the link to the Service Response Template (MS Excel).
3. Make sure that the spreadsheet is **maximized** in your Excel window.
4. The four templates are located on worksheets at the bottom of the window after the instructions worksheet.

3.4 I lost/forgot my username and/or password to the “Manage Proposed Funded Service Area Response Files” Site. Can you send me my information?

Password: Click on the hyperlink: “Forgot your password.” A new screen will appear prompting you to enter your username. Once this is submitted, a new password will be emailed to you.

Username: If you’ve forgotten your username, please call or email the BTOP help desk.



3.5 Why are the census tracts available in different formats?

NTIA has released the Census block groups or tracts in different formats to accommodate various applications/versions. NTIA is supporting the following applications/versions:

1. MS Excel 2007 (1 file) – For respondents using MS Excel 2007, download one single file (.xlsx). **Recommended browser: Mozilla Firefox.**
2. MS Excel 2003 (2 files) – For respondents using MS Excel 97-2003, download two files (Part I and Part 2) in order to see the full complement of Census block groups or tracts
3. Comma Delineated .csv file (1 file) – For respondents not using MS Office

NOTE: To use the .csv file with Excel, you must create a new Excel file, then import the data from the .csv file into the new file and set the data type for the tract/block group number column to text. Opening the file directly in Excel or importing the data as numbers will cause Excel to drop significant leading zeros and cause some of the tract and block group numbers to become invalid.

3.6 Why does the system keep timing out when I upload my file?

If your file size is too large, the upload may not completely upload and cause the system to time out. If this occurs, please try to reduce your upload size and submit again.

The Service Response Template must be no greater than 50MB. To ensure your Response is processed successfully, use only Census tract or block group information in the Excel File. Do not make changes to the Excel file. NTIA requests that you do not submit PDF or other document formats.

Please contact us at btop@ntia.doc.gov or 202-482-2048 if you have additional questions.

