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TELECOMMUNICATIONS LAW UPDATES

NTIA ANNOUNCES THE 1999 TIIAP GRANT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE MATCHING GRANTS FOR INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has announced its annual Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program (TIIAP) competitive matching grant program. Approximately \$17 million in grants will be awarded to non-profit organizations in FY1999 for innovative and exemplary projects that address specific telecommunications and information service needs for communities across the country. The sixth annual round was announced through a *Notice of Availability of Funds* published in the *Federal Register*. All applications must be received by TIIAP before **March 11, 1999 at 9:00 P.M. EST**.

Congress created TIIAP in 1994 to serve the public interest by promoting the development, widespread availability, and use of advanced telecommunications and information technologies. The program provides matching grants to non-profit organizations such as state, local, and tribal governments; hospitals; public safety providers; schools; libraries; museums; colleges; universities; and other non-profit entities or ventures. Grants are used to fund projects that improve the quality of, and the public's access to, education, health care, public safety, and other community-based services, via telecommunications or information technologies.

Under TIIAP, grant recipients are required to provide matching funds toward the total project cost. Applicants must document their capacity to provide matching funds, which may be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. NTIA will provide up to 50% of the total project cost, unless the applicant can document extraordinary circumstances warranting a grant up to 75%.

Since its inception, TIIAP has awarded 378 grants in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Approximately \$118 million in Federal grant funds has been matched by more than \$180 million in non-Federal funds. Based on previous grant rounds, TIIAP anticipates that the average size of a grant award will be approximately \$350,000, to be spread out generally over a period of two to three years. An applicant may request up to \$650,000 in total Federal support, and successful applicants will have between twelve and thirty-six months to complete their projects. While the completion time will vary depending on the complexity of the project, NTIA has found that most applicants require at least two years to complete and fully evaluate their projects. Accordingly, NTIA encourages applicants to propose projects that last two to three years.

For FY1999, TIIAP will support projects in the following five areas: (1) community networking, multi-purpose projects that enable a broad range of community residents and organizations to communicate, share information, promote community economic development, and participate in civic activities; (2) education, culture, and lifelong learning projects that seek to improve education and training for learners of all ages and provide cultural enrichment through the use of information infrastructure in both traditional and non-traditional settings; (3) health-related projects involving the use of information infrastructure in the delivery of health care and public health services; (4) public safety projects that seek to increase the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies, and emergency and rescue services; and, (5) public service projects that aim to improve the delivery of services for people with a range of social service needs. In this grant round, TIIAP is especially interested in projects that cut across application areas to better serve the needs of individuals and

communities. However, for purposes of the application, applicants must identify the one area that best categorizes the project being proposed.

Applicants must clearly identify the need they intend to service, and the proposed solution must be demonstrably innovative. The project must have clearly defined criteria for evaluating success, and feasibility must be illustrated. Projects should feature community involvement and should reduce disparities among and within community groups with respect to access to information services and technologies. Applicants also should describe their plans for disseminating the results of their projects. Applications may not exceed forty pages, including all appendices.

For more detailed information and application for the TIIAP grant program please contact: Stephen Downs, Director of TIIAP (202) 482-2048. In addition, detailed information and application are available on the NTIA web site: www.ntia.doc.gov

This letter is for general informational purposes only and does not represent our legal advice as to any particular set of facts, nor does this letter represent any undertaking to keep recipients advised as to all relevant legal developments. For further information on these or other telecommunications matters, please contact one of the lawyers listed below:

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