**May 20, 2015**
**3:00pm CT**

Coordinator:    Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time, all lines are in listen-

only mode for the duration of today's conference. This conference will feature

a question and answer session. To ask a question, please press star 1.

Today's call is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may

disconnect at this time. Now I'll turn the call over to our first speaker, Ms.

Karen Hanson. Ma'am, you may begin.

Karen Hanson:   Thank you so much and good afternoon everybody. Thank you for joining this

webinar, which is cohosted by NTIA and USDA. I'm Karen Hanson with

NTIA and I'll be the moderator for our webinar today.

The topic of today's webinar is the broadband opportunity council and the

request for comment that our two agencies published last month on behalf of

the full council.

Today's webinar is intended to provide a high level overview of the goals of

the council and to explain the request for comment, to give you a sense of the

process that's underway, what kind of information would be most useful, and

encourage all stakeholders to reply.

It would be premature to discuss any of the policy ideas that the council is

looking into, so be aware that we won't be addressing specific policy

questions today.

Our presenters for today's webinar are Keith Adams, Assistant Administrator

for Telecommunications with the Rural Utility Service with USDA, Doug

Kinkoph, Associate Administrator for Broadband USA at NTIA, and we're also pleased that several members of the council's working group will also be available to participate during the Q&A portion of today's webinar, if questions are directed to them.

So I'm pleased to welcome Darrell Smith with Department of Homeland Security, Mark DeFalco with the Appalachian Regional Commission, Mary Alice Ball with the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and Leila Samy with HHS Office of the National Coordinator.

So we have some technical housekeeping items to share. Phones are in listen-only mode until the Q&A portion when the Operator will unmute lines for those of you who wish to pose questions.

If you have questions throughout the webinar, please feel free to use the chat box. Our team will be monitoring the questions that come in and we can pose them to the presenters on your behalf if you'd prefer to remain anonymous.

Also as an FYI the sides and a recording of this webinar will be shared afterwards. We'll circulate the slides to those who registered, and we will post a link to the recording when it is available.

With that, I'd like to introduce Keith Adams from USDA who will kick off our presentation today.

Keith Adams: Good afternoon. As Karen mentioned, my name is Keith Adams. I'm with the US Department of Agriculture Rural Utility Service. And what I want to talk about briefly is what the Broadband Opportunity Council is and what we expect moving forward.

The Council was established as you can see on March 23, 2015 by President Obama in an Executive Order. And the plan is to make sure that we develop a national broadband expansion plan. And we must seize the unique opportunity to collectively join in with the President's broadband mission and deliver unprecedented impact -- one that helps bring about opportunities of high speed internet for economies nationwide.

This is going to include a wide ranging examination of all executive branch options for action. You will see that we have quite a few departments that are part of the working group and the council.

The requirements are we have an agency survey, so we're in the process of doing that right now. We are surveying all of the agencies to find the programs that either support broadband services now or have the potential to promote broadband services via any type of modifications to any rules or regulations or that sort of thing.

We are looking at recommendations from agency for executive actions and we will produce a final report to the President in August.

The next slide will tell you about all the agencies that make up the Broadband Opportunities Council. The co-chairs are Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Pritzker of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Commerce. And as you can see here, we have members from 24 executive office agencies.

Each agency has a principal and each agency has at least one working group member. We are confident that among the member agencies and departments that we will be able to identify several options to present in our report to the President at the end of August.

Ok let's talk about the goals of the Broadband Opportunity Council. And one of them, which this webinar is about toady, is to engage with industry and other stakeholders to understand the ways government can better support the needs of communities seeking broadband.

So we want to hear from you and we will talk about later our request for comment that's out here. But we want to make sure that we're getting all types of information -- from industry, from state, local governments, from anybody who has a stake in understanding how we can provide broadband and make sure that our investments are wise.

We want to identify our barriers that unduly impede broadband deployment or competition. So we'll be looking at all of the different barriers that we face in the Rural Utility Service as far as land rights and anything that has to do with legislation, anything that has to do with any type of barrier that would prevent us from moving forward broadband deployment.

And as we mentioned, we're going to survey existing programs that currently support broadband, making sure that we're not dismissing any idea, saying that we can't do this or we can't do that. We want to explore everything we can to make sure that we don't leave any stone unturned.

And we also want to work with the Department of (unintelligible) to make sure that we have the proper authorities in place to remove any barriers or realign existing programs. We found out within our group in the Rural Utility Service within the rural development portfolio at US Department of Agriculture that there are opportunities that we have with our Rural Business Cooperative Services, opportunities we have with our Electric Program, opportunities we have with our Community Facilities Program that we may be able to put into play here.

So with that, I think I'm going to turn it over to my colleague Doug Kinkoph.

Doug Kinkoph:    Thank you, Keith. Just a let's walk through why this request for comment. The Executive Order directed the Broadband Opportunity Council to seek input from a wide range of entities, including state and local tribal territorial governments, telecom companies, philanthropic entities, et cetera.

So the best way to do that is to do a request for comment and seek the input from a broad range of those stakeholders and get first hand feedback on the current issues.

Sitting here in Washington, you know, and working on the BTOP Awards et cetera, and Keith on the (BIP) Awards we understand that you guys have a lot of experience, both in industry from the grants side, et cetera that can be shared with us, relative to your own experience. And we want to solicit new bold ideas. This isn't, you know, as Keith said, we're open to all ideas and issues that you experience or you envision being helpful to you and not only moving forward on deployment of broadband, but also in adoption issues. Let's go to the next slide.

So your comments make the most effective, it's important to be specific in regards to the programs, rules, agencies, obstacles, and opportunities that you experience. It's best if you provide the clear information about the anticipated benefit of those. So the more specific you can be, if it's a rule that's causing you a problem or a specific program, spell that out in your comments.

And also explain the benefit of the change that you're proposing. And if you know the cost of such an action, please include that in your comments.

To adjust how stakeholders can engage in recommended actions, you know, we want to understand a wide range of your proposals and how for associations please share with your stakeholders and, you know, provide comprehensive feedback on that.

One thing we do not want to turn the BOC into or the Broadband Opportunity Council is an issue addressing the FCC rulemaking. So if you have specific comments about areas under the FCC scope -- net neutrality, et cetera, you know, inter carrier compensation -- those stay at the FCC.

The intent of the Broadband Opportunity Council is not to address regulatory proceedings, but look at ways government agencies can modify their current programs and processes to help expand broadband adoption and deployment.

And it's beneficial if you can provide these in word type format over a PDF so that they're machine readable, that definitely helps us on the analysis side after we receive them. Next slide.

So how will we use this information once it's received? All comments will be made public. Comments will be analyzed by the various staff here to analyze them and break them down to be presented to the Broadband Opportunity Council. And then we will use them as input and advice on things that can be put into the report that will be submitted to the President in August.

So while we give some suggestions here of potential areas that you can comment on, we don't view this as comprehensive and we definitely know that you have experience well beyond this and with issues that would be broader than this.

So broadband competition, some of the issues we listed here are broadband competition deployment and adoption barriers, program guidelines, or other regulations, discretionary barriers that have been beneficial and/or a hindrance to your organizations or (unintelligible), ways to promote public and private investment of broadband -- individually or as a public/private partnership-type entity, et cetera.

And I've said it all along, this isn't just about infrastructure but it's about adoption also. We're, you know, that's a critical component of expanding broadband throughout the US is getting individuals to actually adopt it and utilize it to its fullest.

From the state and local tribal governments, you know, specific issues that you're facing that we could help with, issues you've seen, et cetera, and then, you know, vulnerable or unserved issues -- issues specifically to communities that are vulnerable or underserved. And, you know, Keith can definitely relate to this. We saw it a lot in the BTOP side, issues related to rural issues.

So that's a handful of just potential suggested areas for comments. As I said, we expect a much broader and comprehensive list as we start to review and analyze the comments.

So the deadline for submitting the comments are June 10, 2015 and you can submit them in several ways. You can submit them by submitting them via email to the address there up on the screen or you can mail them to NTIA at the address set forth on the screen. And then there is a link there to the Federal Register if you have not yet reviewed it and/or you need additional information from it.

So what I'm going to do is hand this back to Karen Hanson. So Karen, I'll turn it back over to you.

Karen Hanson:    Thank you so much. So we planned for an ample time for Q&A from the audience. So please be prepared for that. In the meantime, I also wanted to note that we have a few other members from the Broadband Opportunity Council who have joined us. So I will let them dial into the right number and they can be available for Q&A.

One of them is Jim Campion from the Department of Defense. So just wanted to say is anyone else on the line from the Council and would like to speak, send me a quick note through the question box and I will send you the code to dial into.

But with that, (Jeremy), could you kick off the Q&A portion for us?

Coordinator:    Thank you. To ask a question, please press star 1 and record your name and organization. Your name and organization will be required to introduce your question.

To withdraw your question you may press star 2. Once again to ask a question, please press star 1 and record your name and organization. One moment for the first question please.

And we do have our first question coming in. One moment for the name please. And our first question is from (Eric Freeman) from the Broadband Collaborative. Your line is open.

(Eric Freeman): Yes did you say you were going to send us the slides or are those just going to be up on a Web site? And could you put back up where to send comments, please? That would be helpful to leave that slide up. Thank you very much.

Karen Hanson: Sure. Thank you very much and we will circulate the slides to everybody who registered for the webinar and we will also post them on our Web site once the recording of the webinar is available as well.

Keith Adams: And USDA will be posting it to our Web site also.

(Eric Freeman): And will you then once the comments are made and the President, will you give us back the feedback of the action that's going to be taken based on that?

Keith Adams: Are you - I'm going to make sure I understand the question. The comment that - each comment will be addressed on the report to the President. I'm not quite sure that that is going to be part of our report to the President, but what we will do is we will take all of the comments into consideration and make sure...

(Eric Freeman): No the question was and then what's the process after the President gets it? Will you tell us the outcome after the President receives the report what the outcome is and what the decisions that are made to how you're going to proceed?

Doug Kinkoph: Yes so the Broadband Opportunity Council will generate the report and submit that to the President. The decision on making that report public will reside with the White House. But I think that's what you're asking -- will the recommendations set forth in a report be made public to all of you. And it is I think the Council's position that probably will be, but that ultimately resides with the White House.

(Eric Freeman): No it's one step beyond that. It's the results, the outcomes after the report. Is there a process by which you're going to inform us of the outcomes?

Doug Kinkopf: So the - yes I think once the President gets the report and recommendations are accepted, if any are accepted, right? The President will do that review. Then we will, once we have those recommendations in hand that have been accepted, we can share that with the public.

(Eric Freeman): Thank you ever so much.

Doug Kinkopf: Yes sorry about that.

Karen Hanson: So before we take another question, I just want to let the presenters know we got a question through the chat box. Can you please clarify who is considered a stakeholder? For example, are faculty from universities doing research in this area encouraged to comment?

Keith Adams: Yes. This is Keith Adams. We want to hear from everybody who has any interest in this particular subject -- academia, people who implement, end users, state local governments, municipalities -- anybody who has a stake in improving how we get broadband distributed or adopted or advanced in this economy, we're interested in hearing from you.

Karen Hanson: I also wanted to note that we have (Irwin) from the National Science Foundation who joined us as well. So thank you (Irwin) for being with us. (Jeremy) do we have any other questions?

Coordinator: I'm currently showing no questions in queue. However, I would like to remind participants to ask a question please press star 1 and record your name and organization.

And it looks like we do have a few questions coming in. One moment for the name, please. And the next question is from (Lynn Merrill) from (Monty Lee and Company). Your line is open.

(Lynn Merrill): Hi. Thank you for taking my question. You know, we talked a little bit about not really mentioning anything dealing with the FCC. Can we discuss anything dealing with state and local governments as far as something that may happen at county commissioner level or things like this that really impede the, you know, the placement of fiber as far as in rural areas?

Doug Kinkopf: You know, my view would be that you're more than welcome to share that. Whether or not it would be picked up as a solution in that federal agencies could address. But we would definitely pull that out as part of Broadband USA so I think there is a value in if you wish to share that in your response.

(Lynn Merrill): Ok thank you very much.

Karen Hanson: This is Karen. We are getting a lot of questions that are getting into some specifics around how treatments will be dealt with in terms of pole attachments and quantifications to funding programs. I would just say that if you have specific recommendations regarding modifications to grant programs that federal agencies can make, those would be very welcomed but we are not going to be able to answer some of those specific questions here because it would at this point be very speculator.

Keith Adams: And if I could -- this is Keith Adams again. The request for comment is to solicit ideas and to solicit feedback on what the Broadband Opportunity Council can consider and include possibly in recommendations to the President in our August report.

Karen Hanson: So I think this question might be for you, Keith as well perhaps. But what influence will a comment from an individual institution have? For example, a rural library or a rural electric cooperative.

Keith Adams: Well, we are all about rural, so whether it's a library, whether it's a cooperative, whether it's a hospital, we want to hear about how we can serve rural America better with our suite of programs in the rural utility service. But even more so, the question that you ask or the comment that you make may be able to connect some dots between the US Department of Agriculture and the say the US Department of Education or the US Department of Agriculture and say the US Department of (Unintelligible) Affairs.

That's why we have the working group established. That's why we have experts from each particular department so that we can connect those dots. If there's funding out there that the Small Business Administration has that can be connected to some of our programs or some programs that other executive branch offices have that come after that question can help us in connecting the dots.

Karen Hanson: If any of the other council members who are on the line would like to chime in on any questions they've heard so far, we welcome you to do so.

Leila Samy: Hi Karen. This is Leila Samy with the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT and HHS. There was a question on audience and stakeholders I just wanted to specifically reference.

Of course, health care providers and their access to connectivity as well as health care consumers in their homes, so both angles and certainly training for workers in the health care space, hands on training and the connectivity needed for that -- so these are some stakeholders I wanted to underscore.

Karen Hanson: Thank you Leila. (Jeremy) do we have any other questions on hold?

Coordinator: We do have one question in queue from (Zack Champ) with TCIA. Your line is open.

(Zack Champ): Well thank you, and thank you for hosting this. Question about how commenters should consider the 2012 Executive Order 13-616 on expanding executive order when commenting before the Broadband Opportunities Council?

Doug Kinkopf: Yes, if I remember my numbers right, basically permitting on federal lands. I think the issue is that if it is specifically about permitting on federal lands, it would be best probably left to the current EO working group that's addressing those issues.

However, if you're uncertain, there's no harm in submitting those comments as it could expand beyond what that group is currently looking at. But it is a separate EO and we are trying to separate out the issues of federal land permitting, which is addressed by that from the current Executive Order.

Karen Hanson: And Doug I would expand on that too to say that we are in communication with those working group members and so we can certainly track if their items are still being worked on that we could help underscore. But I think, you

know, as Doug pointed out, that is a separate issue. However, the issues are very much aligned.

Keith Adams:   And if I could just add, we do have a couple of members of the working group that are currently on the Broadband Opportunity Council who were part of the other Executive Order who can shed some insight and expertise into that.

Karen Hanson:   We have a question as well about page limit on the number of comments. We don't have a set page limit, but obviously if you could keep it to the point, that would be much appreciated.

(Jeremy) any other questions?

Coordinator:   There are currently no questions in queue.

Karen Hanson:   Ok any other council members who would like to make any comments? Sorry wait, I got another question coming in that we might be able to answer. Is the CPO of the United States involved in this Council? That's an easy one. Yes.

There was a question, let's see... sorry it's a little hard to read this. Ok. Any other council members who would like to say anything? Sounds like not. So Keith and Doug, would you like to make some closing remarks?

Keith Adams:   Well I'll go and then Doug can conclude. I just want to thank everyone in advance for interest in this topic. Expanding broadband to all areas -- urban, suburban, and rural -- are very important to the economic growth of this country, to literacy, to health, to almost each and every segment of our economy and our country. So this is very important -- so important that the President established this Council at a high level with the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Commerce as co-chairs.

And as part of what we're doing internally within the US government amongst the Executive branch offices and surveying each of the 24 entities that you saw earlier, you know. We're reaching out and we're asking for comments from you which are as the second piece of the three legged stool. And the last leg will be the report that we hope will just be the beginning.

We don't think that this Broadband Opportunity Council is going to end with the report in August. That's just going to be the building block and we hope to expand and expand and expand until we run out of possibilities. So that we just thank you for helping start this process by giving us your feedback and your comments.

Doug Kinkoph: Yes. No, I would second what Keith just said. I would also state that, you know, for this report to be the best that it can be and to address as broad a scope of issues as possible that can help move the needle on broadband deployment and adoption, we need your input, you know. Both (RUS) and NTIA have done quite a bit of work in this area and we know that the experiences come from, you know, from external stakeholders so please get your comments in so we have a full array of topics and issues to review and to work into the report. So thank you in advance for your comments.

Karen Hanson: Thanks everyone for joining and please feel free to reach out to us if you have further questions. We will circulate the slides after this webinar to everyone who registered. Thanks very much.

Coordinator: Thank you for your participation in today's conference. All parties may disconnect.

END