



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC EXPANDS ELIGIBILITY TO INCLUDE NATIONAL LAMBDA RAIL'S BACKBONE IN RURAL HEALTH CARE PILOT

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission today expanded eligibility in its new rural health care pilot program to include connections to National LambdaRail, Inc. (NLR), in addition to Internet2. NLR is a non-profit backbone provider that, like Internet2, serves government research and academic institutions, as well as public and private health care institutions.

To give applicants sufficient time to consider this change, the Commission also extended the deadline for applications to the program by an additional 30 days. The new deadline for submission of applications will be 60 days after the Commission receives approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) of the information collection requirements of the program. The OMB is in the process of reviewing these requirements. The FCC will issue a Public Notice upon OMB approval, which will be posted at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/rural/rhcp.html>.

Launched by the Commission on September 26, 2006, the Rural Health Care Pilot Program initially specified that applicants may seek funding for connections to Internet2, a non-profit dedicated nationwide backbone. In response to a petition filed by NLR, the Commission found several public interest benefits in the participation of more than one backbone provider, including, but not limited to, providing network redundancy, which will improve the health care community's ability to respond in a national crisis.

With today's ruling, program applicants seeking funding may pre-select either Internet2 or NLR, or seek competitive bids for nationwide backbone services from Internet2 or NLR.

Congress in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 recognized the importance of providing advanced telecommunications and information services to rural health care providers by authorizing universal service fund support for rural telemedicine services. The Rural Health Care Pilot Program is exploring ways to better use the fund for this purpose. For successful applicants, the pilot will fund up to 85 percent of the cost of deploying state or regional broadband networks dedicated to health care, and up to 85 percent of the costs of connecting these networks to Internet2 or NLR. Funding for the program is capped at \$100 million dollars,

less what is committed in a particular funding year for the existing universal service rural health care program.

Action by the Commission, February 5, 2007, by Order on Reconsideration (FCC 07-6).
Chairman Martin, Commissioners Copps, Adelstein, Tate, and McDowell.

Docket No.: 02-60

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