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Dave McClure • Jun. 29, 2010

I've been out of touch the last month or two, a fact that has made my editors here and at the magazine a little nervous. But it has all been for a good cause — a major national conference to discuss the Omnibus Broadband Initiative (government-speak for the National Broadband Plan) and the Broadband technology Opportunity Program (BTOP) grants issued or in process by the US Department of Commerce.

The conference was jointly hosted by the US Internet Industry Association, Net Literacy and Broadband for America, with the support of Verizon. It featured such speakers as Blair Levin, architect of the national broadband plan; John Horvath, the consumer research guru from the Federal Communications Commission; Brian David, who worked on the broadband adoption parts of the plan; Emy Tseng from the National Telecommunications and Information Agency; the best from Cisco Systems, Intel, the Fiber To The Home Council; and yours truly.

If you are beginning to nod off here, don't. Because the forty-some programs that make up the \$7 billion in broadband stimulus grants have accounting and reporting requirements that will water your eyes, and they present an opportunity (as do follow-on grants that are in the works) for high-visibility, important-to-the-nation kind of accounting work.

How do you get into the process? I have been working for the past year with one of the grant recipients, and suggest strongly that you send your best rain-maker to www.broadband.gov to track down the list of grant recipients...then approach them to determine whether they are hip-deep in alligators and in need of accounting help. Just as an aside, it would not hurt to familiarize yourself with the bewildering requirements of grant management for these grant. And cosy up to the engineering firms for these projects (as they are selected) to participate in the budgeting process.

Hint: Engineers never budget enough for the accounting and reporting, so you will

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