New Jersey

Office of Broadband Connectivity

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment
Program
NJ BEAD

Frequently Asked Questions

and Answers (FAQs)

Note

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) under the U.S. Department of Commerce, is a key initiative funded through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, Division F, Title I, Section 60102, Public Law 117-58, 135 Stat. 429 (November 15, 2021) also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. With an allocation of $42.45 billion, the BEAD program aims to deploy high-speed internet infrastructure to unserved and underserved locations across the United States.

In New Jersey, the BEAD-funded initiative is known as the New Jersey Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (NJ BEAD) program. Managed by the Office of Broadband Connectivity (OBC) within the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU), NJ BEAD aims to provide a reliable, high-bandwidth internet service of at least 100/20 Mbps to every serviceable location in New Jersey. New Jersey has received $263,689,548.65 in BEAD funding to advance this goal.

NJ BEAD will run a competitive subgrant process to fund deployment initiatives including broadband infrastructure projects, prioritizing broadband services for unserved and underserved locations, including Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs). The program also includes initiatives for digital skills training, device access, and increasing broadband adoption among New Jersey residents, ensuring comprehensive broadband utilization across New Jersey.

This FAQ document offers general information and guidance about the deployment initiatives of the NJ BEAD program. It is not intended to serve as a comprehensive legal interpretation of the program's rules and regulations, nor does it supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements or the specific application requirements set by the OBC or the NTIA. Statutory and regulatory mandates, as well as the requirements detailed in New Jersey's Notice of Fund Availability (NOFA) and NTIA-approved Initial Proposal Volume 2, will take precedence over any inconsistencies in the FAQs.

This FAQ document will be updated regularly with new questions and answers as they are received. Please check frequently for the latest information on the BEAD website: https://www.nj.gov/connect/grants/bead/resources/index.shtm.

For further information or clarification, please contact the Office of Broadband Connectivity at broadband@bpu.nj.gov. **Please make sure to include "BEAD" in the subject line.**

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1 General

1.1 What is considered a serviceable location, unserved location, and underserved location under the NJ BEAD program?

As described in the federal BEAD NOFO (Section 1.C):

- **A serviceable location** or **broadband serviceable location** (BSL) is defined as a business or residential location in the United States at which fixed broadband Internet access service is, or can be, installed.
- **An unserved location** is defined as a broadband-serviceable location that does not have access to broadband service, or lacking access to Reliable Broadband Service offered with—(i) a speed of not less than 25 Mbps for downloads; and (ii) a speed of not less than 3 Mbps for uploads; and (iii) latency less than or equal to 100 milliseconds.
- **An underserved location** is defined as a broadband-serviceable location that is (a) not an unserved location, and (b) that the Broadband DATA Maps show as lacking access to Reliable Broadband Service offered with—(i) a speed of not less than 100 Mbps for downloads; and (ii) a speed of not less than 20 Mbps for uploads; and (iii) latency less than or equal to 100 milliseconds.

As emphasized in the NTIA-approved Initial Proposal Volume 2 (Section 2.4.1), BEAD recipients are required to serve all unserved and underserved BSLs (Broadband Serviceable Locations), as well as all CAIs (including, if requested, wiring or special construction required to connect a CAI within 10 business days from its request), within all PABBs included in their proposed project areas.

1.2 What is NTIA's definition of reliable broadband service?

As referenced in the federal BEAD NOFO (Section 1.C), the NTIA defines "reliable broadband service" as broadband service that meets performance criteria for service availability, adaptability to changing end-user requirements, and length of serviceable life. Specifically, it includes broadband service provided via fiber-optic technology, cable modem/hybrid fiber-coaxial technology, digital subscriber line (DSL) technology, or terrestrial fixed wireless technology utilizing entirely licensed spectrum or a hybrid of licensed and unlicensed spectrum.

1.3 Will OBC publish official guidance for the prequalification phase and the subgrantee selection process?

The NJ BEAD NOFA will be posted on the OBC website and the NJ Register. OBC will post additional guidance on the reference prices for minimization of BEAD outlay and affordability, updated unserved and underserved BSLs and CAIs lists, and guidance on NEPA, NHPA, and BABA on the OBC website. Applicants will also be given detailed guidance in the application forms on what is expected from them.

1.4   What is the difference between BEAD NOFO and BEAD NOFA? Where can I access them?

The BEAD NOFO refers to the federal BEAD Notice of Funding Opportunity issued by NTIA, which explains how states can receive broadband funding under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The NJ BEAD NOFA refers to the New Jersey BEAD Notice of Funding Availability which explains how applicants in New Jersey can compete for and receive portions of the state's allocated BEAD funding. The federal BEAD NOFO can be found on the OBC website under the Additional Resources section of the Resources for NJ BEAD Applicants page. The NJ BEAD NOFA will be published in the New Jersey Register and on the OBC website, and we will update these FAQs when the NOFA is published.

1.5   Any update on the Final Determination and where can we access it?

OBC has submitted the results of the statewide BEAD Challenge Process to NTIA and is awaiting its Final Determination. The expected list of post-Challenge locations will be posted online. OBC will indicate this on its website once the locations have been approved by NTIA.

2   Application Timeline

2.1   What is the application process and what are the key deadlines for the NJ BEAD program?

As outlined in the NTIA-approved Initial Proposal Volume 2 (Section 2.4.1), the competitive subgrant process begins with a pre-qualification phase where potential subgrantees must provide select BEAD-required financial, operational, managerial and technical qualifications as well as submit required certifications and authorizations and any other information required by OBC in the pre-qualification application form. Only applicants who successfully prequalify will be eligible to apply for funding in the next phase. The prequalification phase opened on April 14, 2025, and will remain open until May 23, 2025.

OBC will regularly update this FAQ document and the NJ BEAD website with updates on the timing of the application phase.

2.2   How long will the BEAD application window be open?

The pre-qualification window will remain open until May 23, 2025. Please note that NTIA is currently reviewing BEAD program requirements. Updates to NTIA guidance may impact application timing or requirements, and OBC will make necessary adjustments to timelines to ensure compliance.

3 Eligible Applicants

3.1 What does "applicant" mean in the context of NJ BEAD?

In the NJ BEAD program, the term "applicant" refers to entities that are eligible to apply for grant funding to support broadband expansion projects. Consistent with federal guidance outlined in the federal BEAD NOFO (Section IV.C.1.a), applicants may include internet service providers (ISPs), local governments, cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, public-private partnerships, private companies, public or private utilities, and public utility districts.

3.2 Is the NJ BEAD funding opportunity exclusively available for private sector providers?

No. Both the federal BEAD NOFO and New Jersey's NTIA-approved Initial Proposal Volume 2 emphasize that the following classes of potential providers—cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, public-private partnerships, private companies, public or private utilities, public utility districts, or local governments—are eligible to participate in the subgrant competition for broadband deployment. Eligible entities can submit a proposal for last-mile broadband projects, provided they meet the financial, managerial, technical, and operational qualifications required. Those requirements are outlined in the federal BEAD NOFO (Section IV.D) and detailed in NTIA-approved Initial Proposal Volume 2 (Sections 2.4.11–2.4.15).

4 Project Eligibility and Project Areas

4.1 How are project areas defined for the NJ BEAD program?

As outlined in NTIA-approved Initial Proposal Volume 2 (Section 2.4.1), potential subgrantees for NJ BEAD will design their overall project area proposals by combining a set of project area building blocks (PABBs). For the purposes of NJ BEAD, PABBs will correspond to Census Block Groups (CBGs). These PABBs will exclusively include unserved and underserved Broadband Serviceable Locations (BSLs) and Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) within their boundaries. Importantly, no served locations will be included in these project areas. Applicants are required to serve all unserved and underserved BSLs and CAIs within the proposed area. Prior to the launch of the NJ BEAD application phase(s), OBC will publish a list of PABBs eligible for funding and their associated reference prices.

5   Compliance

5.1   How do I get access to the FCC's broadband data?

Access to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) broadband data, including coverage maps, is available via the [FCC Broadband Map](). Applicants that participate in Federal Broadband Programs need to obtain a no-cost Tier D license from CostQuest and can then use the broadband serviceable location fabric to search for specific locations, view reported service availability and download datasets. More guidance on how to obtain this license is available on the [Resources for NJ BEAD Applicants]() website under Application Support Resources. The maps are based on data submitted by providers during the Broadband Data Collection (BDC) process and are used to determine unserved and underserved locations for the BEAD program. Providers may also file location-specific challenges through the FCC's BDC system if they believe data is inaccurate.

5.2   How should an applicant ensure compliance with the NJ BEAD program's cybersecurity and supply chain risk management requirements?

As detailed in the NTIA-approved Initial Proposal Volume 2 (Section 2.16.4), prospective NJ BEAD subgrantees must have a cybersecurity risk management plan that is either already operational (if they currently provide service) or ready to be implemented once service begins. This plan must be periodically updated as needed, and submitted to the OBC before any funds are allocated. Any substantive changes must be reported within 30 days of revision.

Similarly, applicants must also maintain a supply chain risk management plan, following the best practices outlined in [NISTIR 8276]() and [NIST SP 800-161](). This plan must be operational or ready for deployment and must detail the specific supply chain risk management controls in use. The plan must be submitted to the OBC before funding is awarded and updated regularly. The OBC certifies that it will enforce these requirements and, where a subgrantee relies on third-party infrastructure, will obtain equivalent attestations from those applicants to ensure compliance with both cybersecurity and supply chain protocols.

5.3   What are the reporting requirements for applicants to maintain compliance throughout the NJ BEAD program's period of performance?

As detailed in the NTIA-approved Initial Proposal Volume 2 (Section 2.16), applicants participating in the NJ BEAD program are required to comply with a comprehensive reporting framework throughout the project lifecycle. Subgrantees must submit quarterly progress reports detailing the status of broadband infrastructure deployment, including the list of service locations (with classification as residential, commercial, or community

anchor institutions), types of facilities installed, advertised and actual speeds, service pricing, and interconnection agreements. These reports must also include data on contractor diversity, compliance with federal mapping standards, financial reports (e.g., SF-425), and labor compliance certifications or workforce impact reports for projects exceeding $5 million. Additional required information includes ACP (Affordable Connectivity Program) enrollment figures, local hiring data, status of apprenticeship programs, and a description of permits and milestones. Subgrantees must also submit a final report within 90 days of project completion, summarizing infrastructure activities, service capabilities, affordability measures, and final financials.

To enforce compliance, as detailed in the NTIA-approved Initial Proposal Volume 2 (Section 2.16.2), OBC will employ a milestone-based reimbursement system and retain the final 10% of grant funds until all project obligations are met and verified. OBC conducts risk assessments of all subgrantees to tailor the depth of monitoring and will implement claw back provisions for failure to meet deployment, service, or reporting requirements. Ongoing monitoring may include site visits, invoice and desk reviews, internal compliance checks, and communication logs. Subgrantees that underperform may be placed on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).