New Jersey Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Equity (NJBIDE) Pilot Program

Overview and Application Process

Updated January 16, 2025

**Agenda**

How NJ is bridging the digital divide

NJBIDE overview
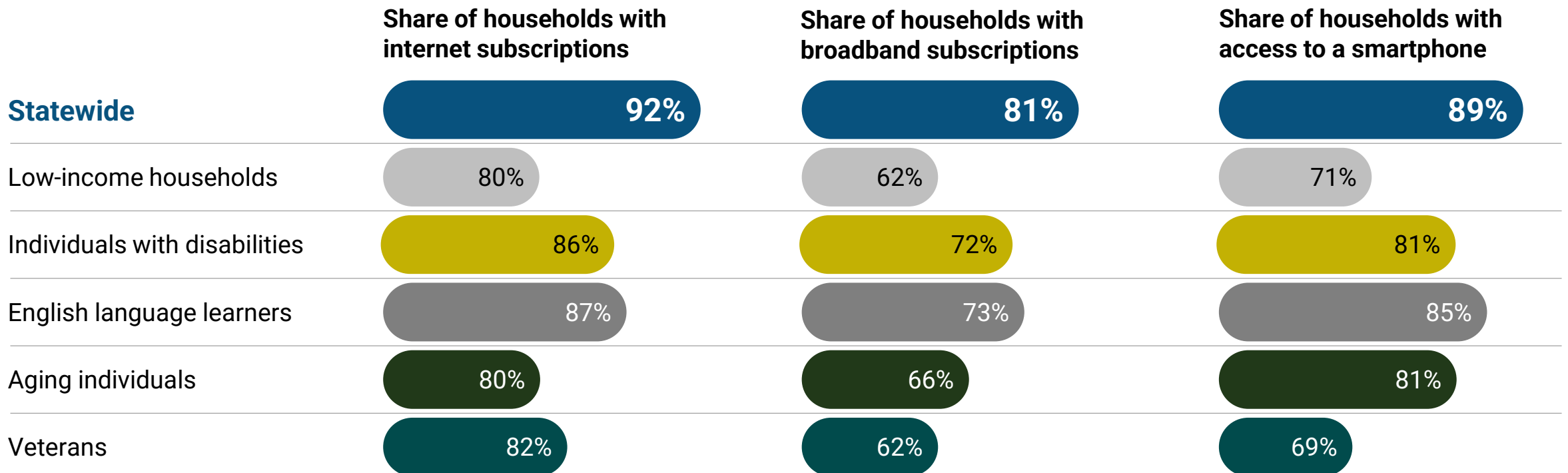
NJBIDE application process

> Every New Jerseyan deserves access to reliable, affordable, and fast broadband internet. Unfortunately, too many residents and businesses, especially in rural and low-income areas of our state, are still unable to take advantage of broadband internet access. Along with our congressional delegation and our Legislature, we are working to ensure that those living and working in New Jersey have access to reliable high-speed broadband services.

- Governor Phil Murphy, May 21, 2021
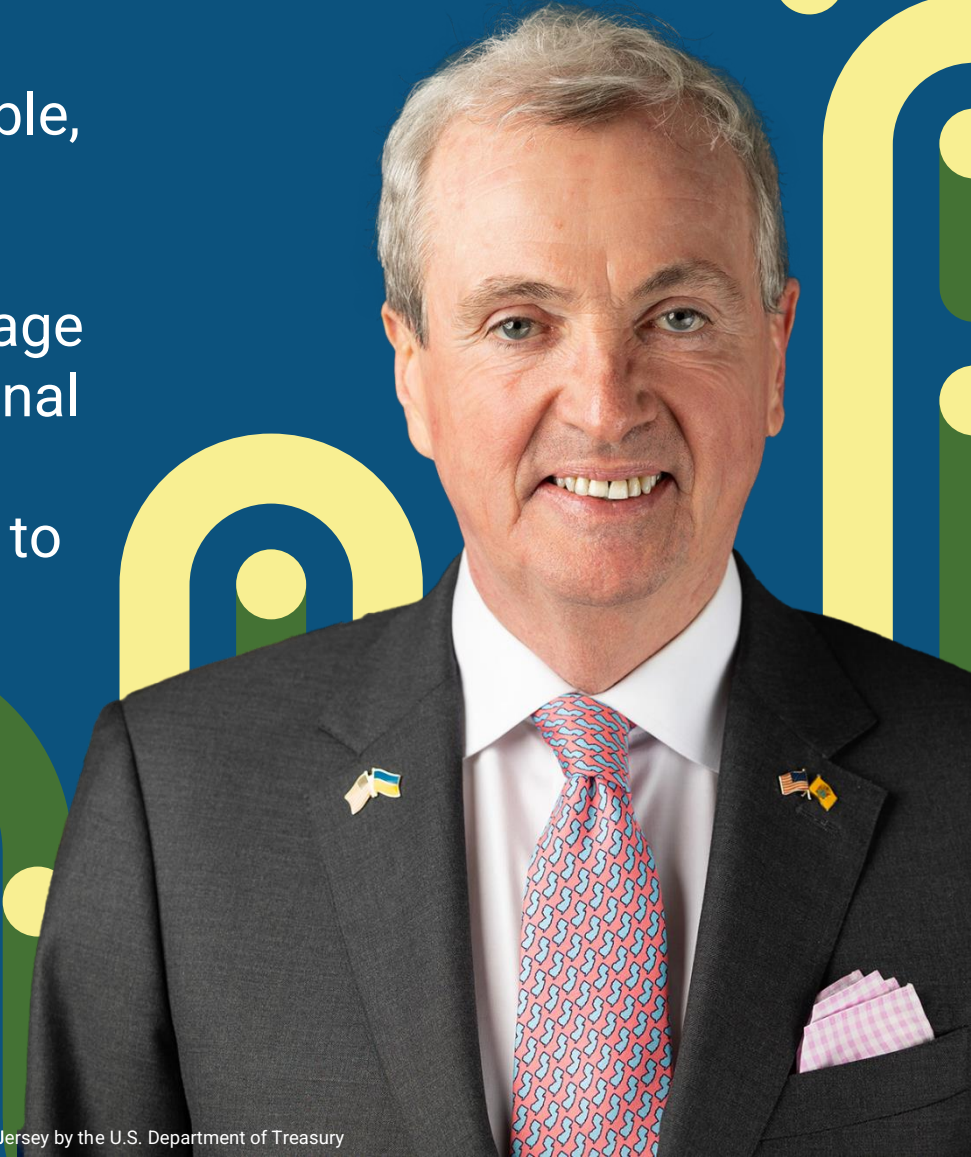
Facing New Jersey's Digital Divide

New Jersey residents **lacking access to high-quality modern infrastructure**, including broadband, **encounter obstacles** in fully engaging in daily activities such as remote work, telehealth, and distance learning.

	Share of households with internet subscriptions	Share of households with broadband subscriptions	Share of households with access to a smartphone
Statewide	92%	81%	89%
Low-income households	80%	62%	71%
Individuals with disabilities	86%	72%	81%
English language learners	87%	73%	85%
Aging individuals	80%	66%	81%
Veterans	82%	62%	69%

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ConnectNJ is a statewide initiative created to address these challenges of connectivity and bridge the digital divide in the State of New Jersey. This initiative seeks to empower every resident with the ability, confidence, and competence to harness the power of the internet, devices, and digitally accessible services.

Signature Programs

New Jersey Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Equity (NJBIDE) Pilot Program
(broadband deployment)

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD)
(broadband deployment and non-deployment)

Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program
(broadband non-deployment)

Through two federally funded programs, ConnectNJ is awarding more than $300M to support deployment of high-speed broadband

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

New Jersey Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Equity (NJBIDE) Pilot Program	• Applications open November 18th, 2024 • Projects to be substantively complete no later than **December 2026** • Prioritizing investment in **six counties** with lower access to reliable and affordable high-speed broadband service (Atlantic, Burlington, Cumberland, Essex, Salem, and Warren) and communities experiencing social vulnerability	**$52.7M** **in funding**

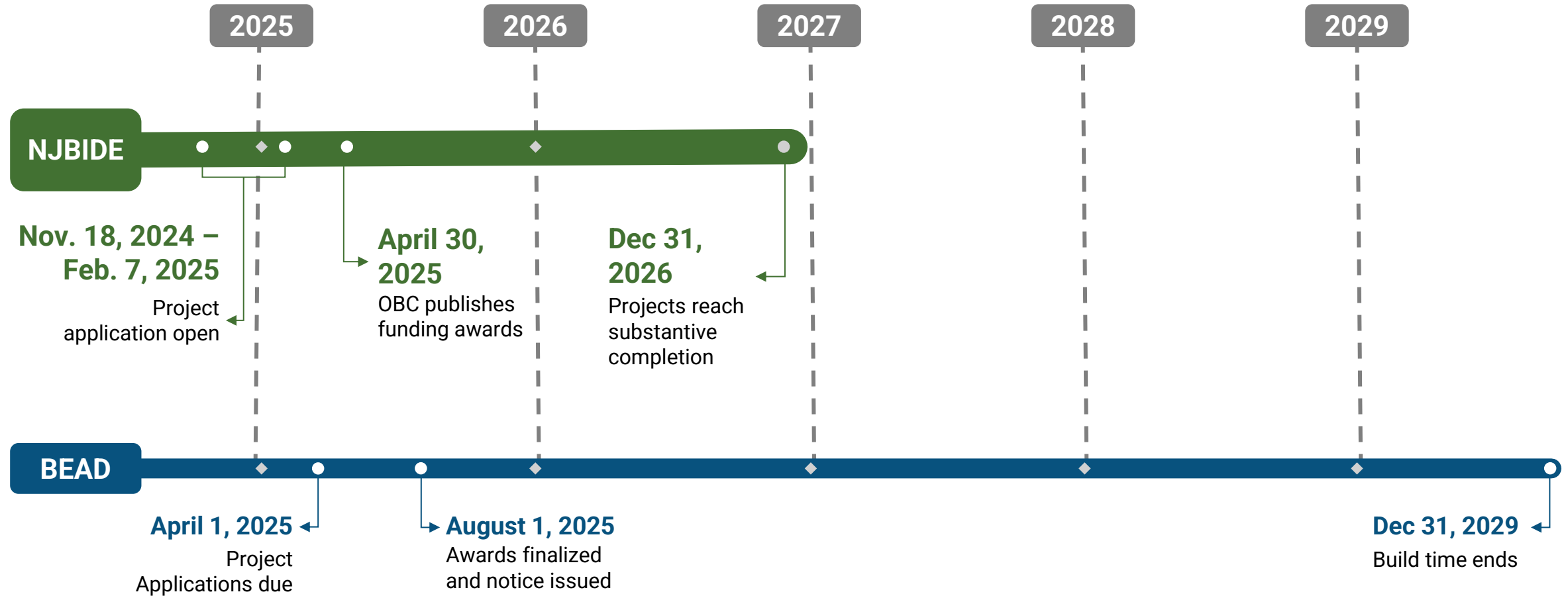## *The Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act (IIJA)*

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD)	• Applications to open after NJBIDE applications close • Project implementation to be completed by **December 2029** • Prioritizing investment in connecting **all unserved and underserved locations statewide** that are not covered by NJBIDE	**$263.7M** **in funding**

NJ is currently kicking off last-mile deployment programs with NJBIDE, focusing on shovel-ready projects in prioritized counties

AS OF JANUARY 17, 2025

2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029

NJBIDE

Nov. 18, 2024 – Feb. 7, 2025
Project application open

April 30, 2025
OBC publishes funding awards

Dec 31, 2026
Projects reach substantive completion

BEAD

April 1, 2025
Project Applications due

August 1, 2025
Awards finalized and notice issued

Dec 31, 2029
Build time ends

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New Jersey Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Equity (NJBIDE) Pilot Program

New Jersey Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Equity (NJBIDE) Pilot Program

$40M in funding for projects that can be implemented by December 2026

Agenda

Path to NJBIDE

NJBIDE timeline

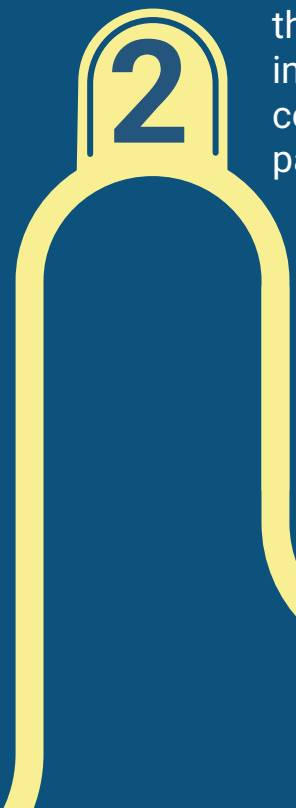**Priorities, requirements & eligibility**

Scoring

Supporting documents

Next Steps

As part of the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the Capital Project Fund (CPF) allocated $10 billion to invest in high-quality, modern infrastructure to support communities' critical needs as they recover from the pandemic.
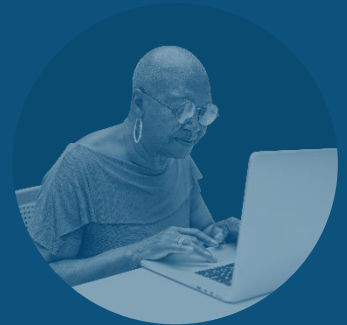
The COVID-19 public health emergency highlighted the nationwide digital divide, emphasizing the need for investment in connectivity.
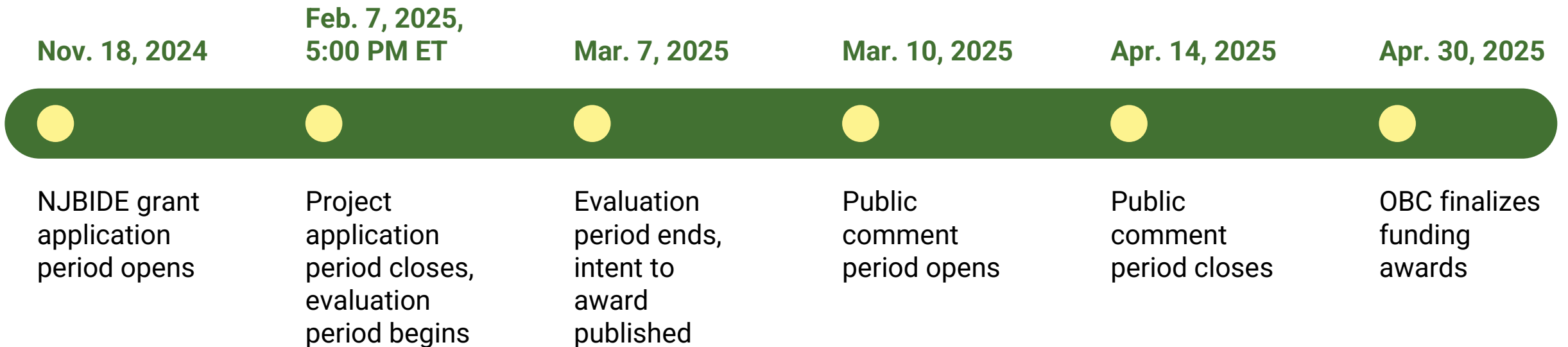
New Jersey launched the NJBIDE Pilot Program, allocating $40 million of CPF funding for broadband infrastructure projects. This competitive grant program aims to deliver internet service with speeds of 100/100 Mbps upon project completion in economically disadvantaged areas across the state.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury approved New Jersey's plan to invest $52.7 million in CPF funding for broadband projects.

NJBIDE opens for applications on November 18, 2024.

Path to NJBIDE

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The NJBIDE application timeline

Nov. 18, 2024

Feb. 7, 2025, 5:00 PM ET

Mar. 7, 2025

Mar. 10, 2025

Apr. 14, 2025

Apr. 30, 2025

NJBIDE grant application period opens

Project application period closes, evaluation period begins

Evaluation period ends, intent to award published

Public comment period opens

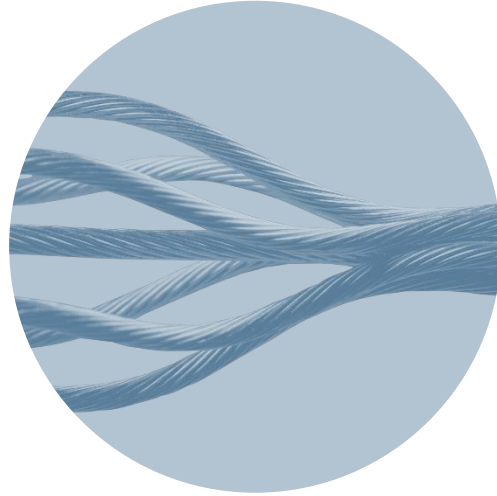Public comment period closes

OBC finalizes funding awards

NJBIDE projects should aim to ensure reliable internet for communities in project areas

Achieve last-mile connections

Bringing high-speed internet directly to homes, businesses, and community institutions

Prioritize fiber-optic infrastructure

Investing in future-proof technology where feasible

Foster public-private partnerships

Actively promote collaborations between local governments, cooperatives, utilities, non-profits, and companies to develop community-supported broadband projects

Address affordability

Ensuring that cost is not a barrier to full internet use by including at least one low-cost service option with sufficient speeds for multiple users to simultaneously telework and engage in remote learning
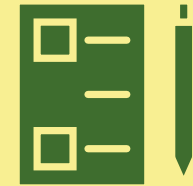
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NJBIDE project requirements

Projects must....

Design infrastructure that delivers, upon project completion, service that reliably meets or exceeds symmetrical download and upload speeds of 100 Mbps[1]

Reach substantial completion before December 31, 2026

Meet all reporting, transparency, and compliance requirements

Eligible applicants

Levels or units of government (e.g., municipalities or counties)

Co-operatives

Nonprofits

Other entities that build or operate broadband networks, including networks that are owned, operated by, or affiliated with local governments
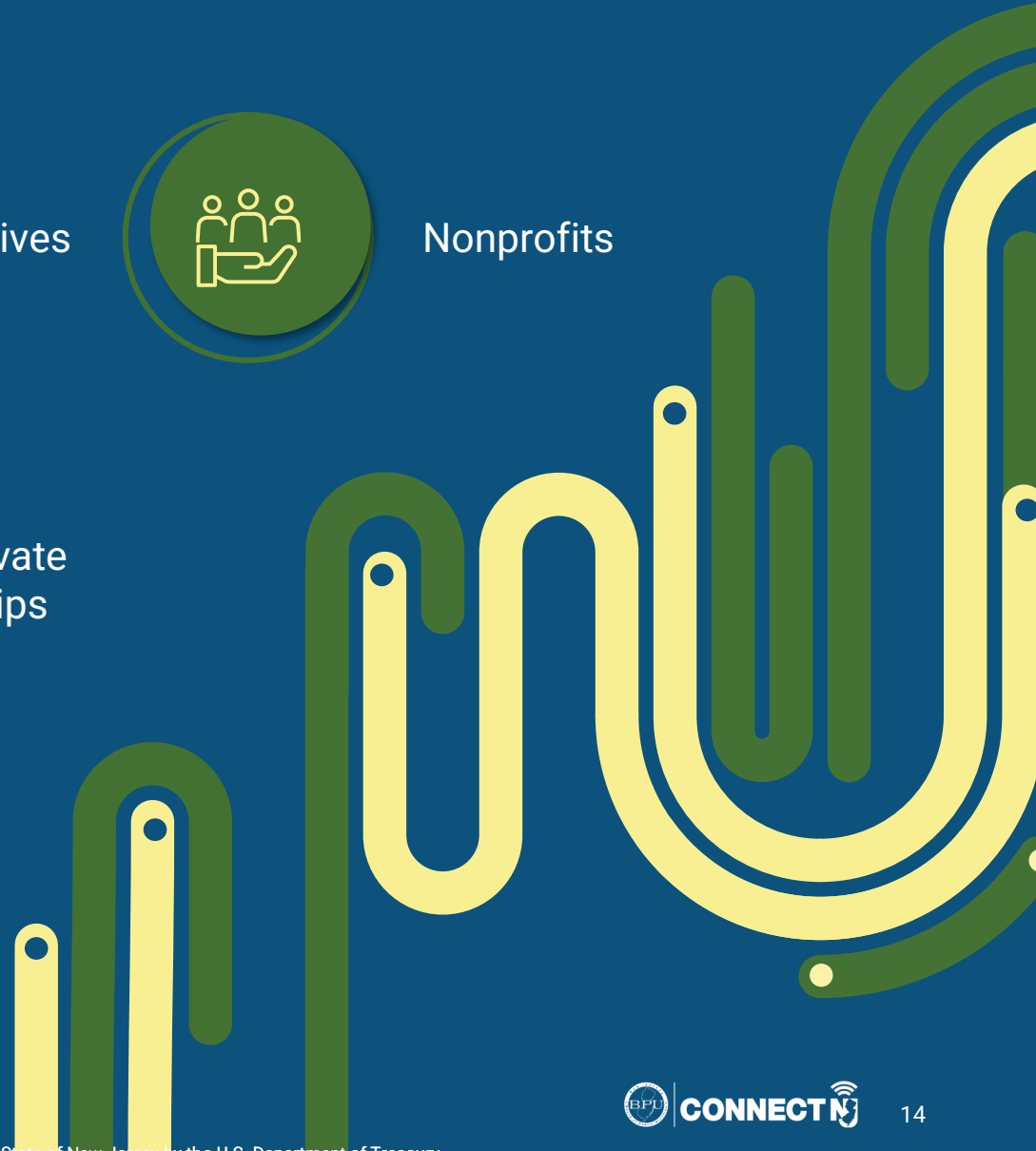
Public-private partnerships

**Private entities**

Electric utilities

NJBIDE project area requirements

A **project area** is comprised of at least one Census Block Group. Project areas may comprise multiple municipalities and/or counties, provided that the project area remains contiguous.

Applicants must agree to serve all unserved and underserved locations and community anchor institutions in their proposed project area.

Locations with existing enforceable federal or state funding commitments for reliable wireline service at speeds of at least 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload are *only* eligible for NJBIDE funding if the project associated with that existing commitment is expected to be completed *before* December 31, 2026.
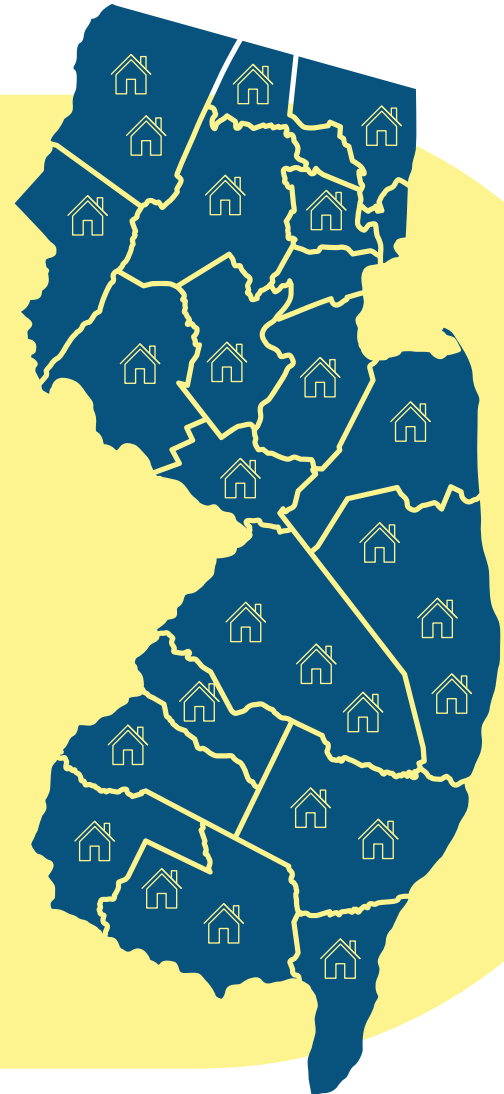
Resources for project area definition

To assist applicants in identifying eligible project areas, the OBC has created a map of underserved and unserved locations across the State, using data from the Broadband Data Maps. It can serve as a valuable resource for applicants to delineate the geographic scope of their broadband infrastructure projects; applicants are encouraged to use this map on the OBC's website as an initial step in identifying project areas.

The New Jersey CPF map is available at www.nj.gov/connect/grants/cpf.

By selecting the "County" layer, users can view underserved and unserved broadband serviceable locations.
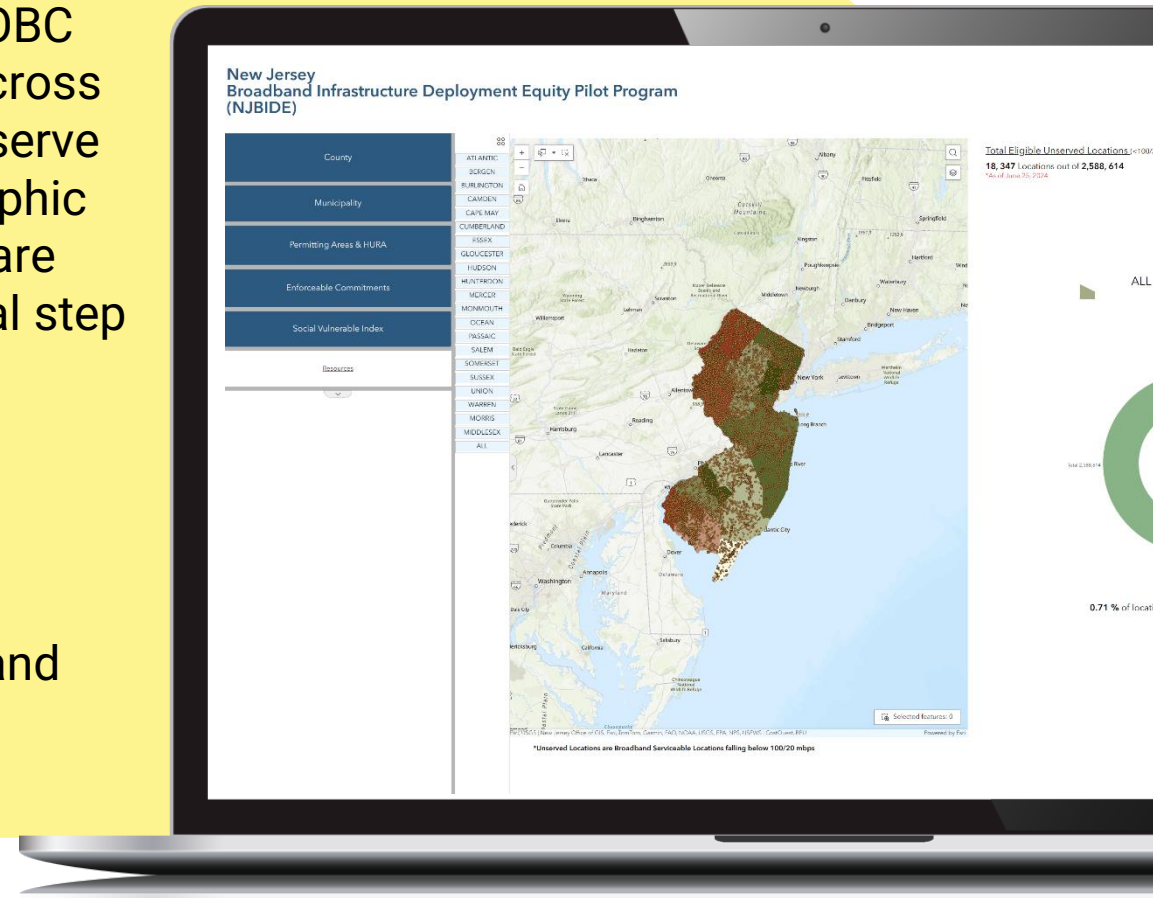
NJBIDE priority counties

The NJBIDE Pilot Program will prioritize project areas that include, in part or in whole, the following counties: **Atlantic County, Burlington County, Cumberland County, Essex County, Salem County, and Warren County.**

A Atlantic
B Burlington
C Cumberland
D Essex
E Salem
F Warren
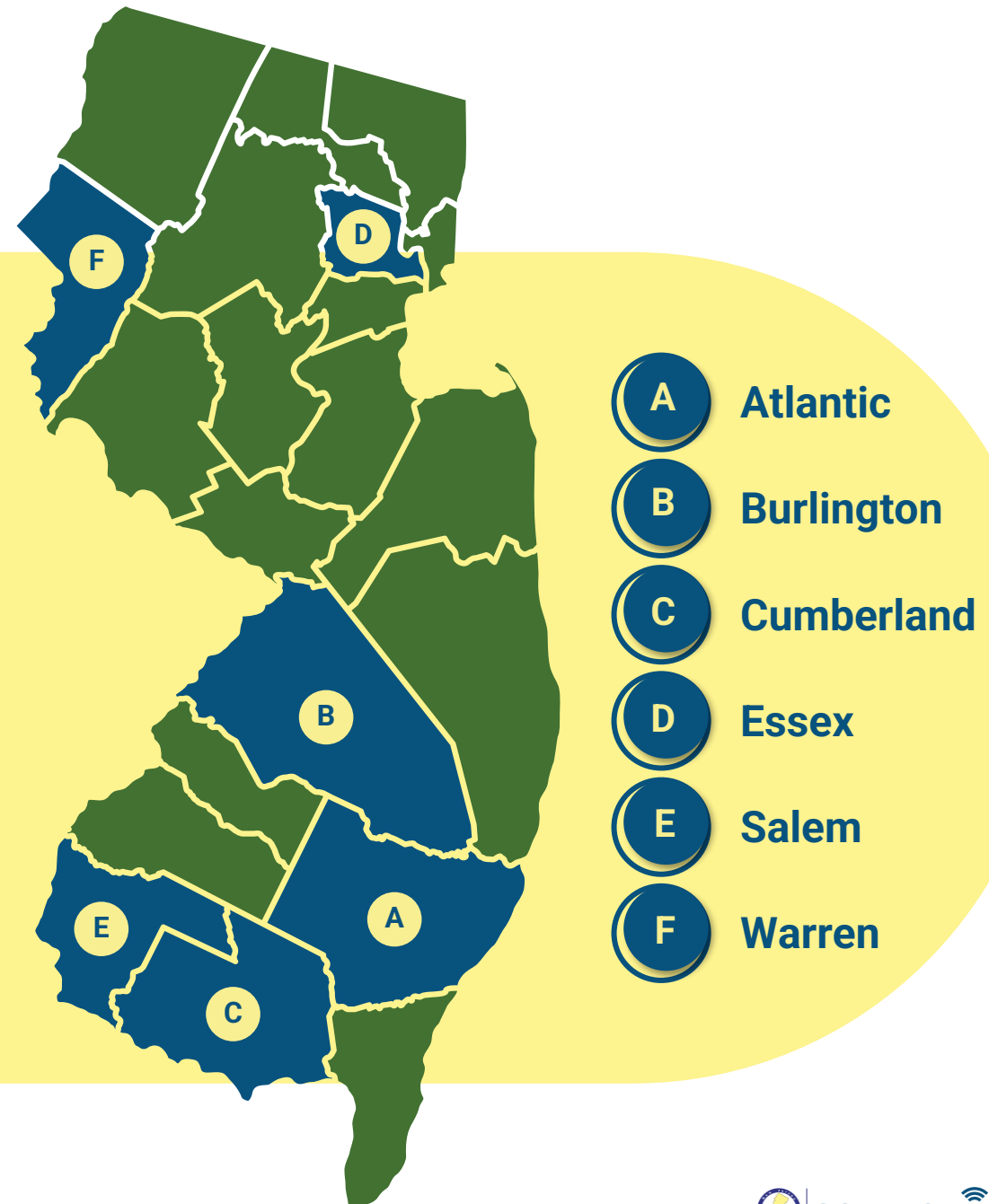
Additional project considerations

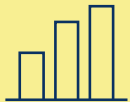The NJBIDE Pilot Program aims to prioritize projects that demonstrate investments in fiber-optic infrastructure

Middle-mile projects are eligible for grant funding if they are directly connected to last-mile projects that have existing contracts in place

Eligible costs

Under the NJBIDE Pilot Program, eligible applicants may receive up to $10 million to cover capital expenses directly related to the deployment of a qualified broadband project, including:

Pre-Project
Limited to 5% cap of grant funding

Data gathering

Feasibility studies

Engineering design

Work related to environmental historical, and cultural reviews

Permitting

Supplies, materials, equipment, and construction of infrastructure

See the Application Instructions for further information

Eligible costs (continued)

Capital expenses directly related to the deployment of a qualified broadband project, including

Performance measurement and management	Personnel Costs	Monitoring and reporting
Costs of required long term leases	Operationalization costs	Cybersecurity
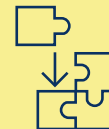
See the Application Instructions for further information

Ineligible costs

- Acquisition of spectrum licenses

- Operating expenses

- Short-term operation leases

- Satisfaction of any obligation under or pursuant to a settlement agreement, judgment, consent decree, or judicially confirmed debt restructuring plan

- Payment of interest or principal on outstanding debt instruments

- Fees associated with issuance of new debt

- Costs not directly enabling work, education, or health monitoring

- Duplicative costs covered by other federal or state funding source commitments

- Infrastructure not directly connected to service provision for an end-user in the proposed area

- Long-term capital asset purchases/leases, although cost allocation for use during the project period will be considered on a case-by-case basis

- Costs for activities that support or oppose collective bargaining

Applications will be scored using ten criteria (up to 10 points each)

1 Prioritizes open access network

2 Serves a designated priority area

3 Provides affordable service

4 Prioritizes infrastructure for last-mile connections

5 Prioritizes fiber

6 Serves the community

7 Projects project completion within 12 months

8 Subcontracts small businesses

9 Minimizes NJBIDE outlay

10 Highest need

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NJBIDE applicants are required to submit certain supporting documents with their applications

Required:

- ☐ **Application intake form (template provided)**
- ☐ **Attestations (template provided)**
- ☐ **Project information form (template provided)**
- ☐ **Project area shapefiles**
- ☐ **Network diagram**
- ☐ **Audited financial statements**
- ☐ **Proof of funding availability**
- ☐ **Evidence of community support**
- ☐ **Community engagement plan**
- ☐ **Plan to address affordability**

Conditional[1]:

- ☐ **Existing service area**
- ☐ **Disclosure of bankruptcy filings**
- ☐ **History of penalties or litigation**
- ☐ **Contractual agreement**
- ☐ **Environmental permits**
- ☐ **Workforce Plan**

1. Applicants may be required to submit these documents depending on project details

Required supporting documents

All NJBIDE applicants are <u>required</u> to submit the following items:

Item name	Description	Format
Application intake form (template provided)	The excel form that applicants use to give their responses, which includes the project budget	xlsx
Attestations (template provided)	Signed attestation of a list of items as outlined by NJBIDE Application Instructions. Applicants can print it from the application intake form	pdf
Project Information form (template provided)	General information about the applicant / the project	xlsx
Project area shapefiles	Shapefiles of the project area and the proposed locations to be served, including their location IDs	shapefiles
Network diagram	The network diagram that shows, at a minimum, proposed middle-mile and last-mile routes for wireline networks. For wireless networks, the diagram should indicate tower locations, show anticipated coverage areas for each tower, and include backhaul routes (if wireline) or indicate wireless point to point links.	pdf
Audited financial statements	One of the following items: • Last five years of audited financial statements (including balance sheet and income statement) • Audited financial statements, pro forma statements, or financial audits covering their operational period	pdf
Proof of funding availability	One of the following items: • Signed letters of funding availability or loan/grant commitment letters • Attestation of reliance on other awarded funds	pdf
Evidence of support	Evidence of support for the project from citizens, local government, businesses, and institutions in the community (e.g. letters of support or other correspondence supporting the project)	pdf
Community engagement plan	Document explaining what you have done or will you do to engage your community to ensure active community involvement and transparency throughout the project lifecycle, from the initial stages through post-deployment	pdf
Plan to address affordability	Document explaining how you have considered affordability in your proposed service offerings OR how you will consider affordability as a grant awardee. Submission may include data used from surveys, community engagement, existing studies, or other data to determine affordable broadband service.	pdf

Source: NJBIDE Application Instructions

If applicable, certain NJBIDE applicants may also need to submit these items

Condition	Item Name	Description	Format
If the applicant has any existing served locations in NJ	Existing service area	Shapefiles of the existing served locations in NJ, including their location IDs	shapefiles
If the applicant or any of its subsidiaries, affiliates, or parent companies have filed for bankruptcy	Disclosure of bankruptcy filings	Disclosure of bankruptcy filings by the applicant, subsidiary, affiliate, or holding company	pdf
If the applicant or any of its partners, including any subsidiary, affiliate, or holding company of the applicant or its partners, has a history of penalties or litigation related to previous broadband infrastructure projects	History of penalties or litigation	Supporting documentation to demonstrate the circumstances and any corrective actions taken	pdf
If the applicant requires assets owned by another entity to be used for the project for wired infrastructure deployment	Contractual agreement	A copy of the agreement between the applicant and the owner	pdf
If the applicant responds "Yes" to any of the questions on the Treasury's CPF Environmental Checklist (contained in the application intake form)	Environmental permits	Environmental permits as listed out in the Environmental Checklist	pdf
(Highly encouraged, but not required)	Workforce plan	An optional workforce plan prioritizing the hiring of local, New Jersey resident workers, to include a signed letter of intent with a post-secondary educational institution that is a member of or affiliated with the New Jersey Council of County Colleges (NJCCC), County Vocational School Districts, or Career Technical Education Partnerships of NJ (Career Tech NJ), containing an obligation upon the applicant, and contractors or subcontractors of the applicant, to put forth a good-faith effort to hire, when possible, recent graduates of broadband-related programs. At minimum, the optional workforce plan should also contain a commitment to offer wages at or above the prevailing rate and a description of the applicant's safety and training standards	pdf

Source: NJBIDE Application Instructions

Here are 5 steps you can take to get involved!

1 Submit
Intent to Apply Form

2 RSVP
for Office Hours

3 Download the
NJBIDE Application
Instructions
Manual

4 Email all
questions to
broadband@bpu.nj.gov

5 Create an
account on the
BPU e-Filing
system