New Jersey

Office of Broadband Connectivity

Capital Projects Fund
Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Equity
Pilot Grant Program
NJBIDE

Frequently Asked Questions

and Answers (FAQs)

Note

The U.S. Treasury's Capital Projects Fund (CPF) allocates payments to states, territories, freely associated states, and Tribal Governments to execute essential capital projects that directly facilitate work, education, and health monitoring, including remote options, in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The CPF supports investments in high-quality broadband infrastructure, as well as other connectivity infrastructure, devices, and equipment.

One of New Jersey's CPF-funded initiatives is the New Jersey Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Equity (NJBIDE) program. This program, through a competitive grant process, will finance the construction and deployment of broadband infrastructure projects. These projects are expected to reliably deliver symmetrical download and upload speeds of at least 100 Mbps upon completion.

This FAQ document offers general information and guidance about the NJBIDE 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 New Jersey Office of Broadband Connectivity or the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Statutory and regulatory mandates, as well as the requirements detailed in New Jersey's Notice of Fund Availability (NOFA) and Application Instructions, will take precedence over any inconsistencies in the following FAQs.

This FAQ document is dynamic and will be updated regularly with new questions and answers as they are received. Please check frequently for the latest information on the Capital Projects Fund (CPF) website: https://www.nj.gov/connect/grants/cpf/. For further information or clarification, please contact the Office of Broadband Connectivity at broadband@bpu.nj.gov.

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1   General

1.1   Will information provided in the Intent to Apply form and the NJBIDE application, including any Geographic Information System (GIS) maps of proposed project areas, be treated as confidential by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU)?

As described in Section 5.3.C of the Application Instructions, all materials filed with the Board are public documents and are therefore subject to the New Jersey Open Public Records Act ("OPRA"). N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq. The Board intends to make public versions of submitted Applications available to the general public following completion of the award process. Therefore, if an applicant seeks confidential treatment of portions of its application, for example, as proprietary commercial or financial information, an applicant may file a claim of confidentiality pursuant to the Board's Rules of Practice and Procedure governing submission of confidential materials, N.J.A.C. 14:1-12.1, et seq. Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 14:1-12.4 and N.J.A.C. 14:1-12.8., any submission of confidential information should be accompanied by a substantiation of confidentiality supported by an affidavit and identify a designee for receiving notices from the Board's Records Custodian. The substantiation of confidentiality must identify each type of data or materials that the Applicant asserts are exempt from public disclosure under OPRA and/or the common law, and explain the basis for the proposed redaction. Assertions that the entire Application is exempt from public disclosure under OPRA, the common law, or the U.S. Copyright Act are overbroad and will not be honored by the Board. If staff of the Board determines that an Application is excessively redacted, it may request that the Applicant submit a revised public version of one or more documents.

2   Application Timeline

2.1   When are applications for NJBIDE due?

Completed applications are due by February 7, 2025, at 5:00 PM ET. Please note that this is a revision to the application deadline.

2.2   When will applications for NJBIDE become available? What grant materials have been and will be released? How do eligible entities submit their applications?

The NJBIDE Application Intake Form is currently available on the NJBIDE website, alongside the NJBIDE Notice of Fund Availability (NOFA), Application Instructions, and supporting material such as a list of eligible locations and CAIs. The NJBIDE website is accessible at https://www.nj.gov/connect/grants/cpf/.

Applicants should submit their NJBIDE application materials through BPU's e-Filing system ("BPU External Access" or "Infoshare") instead of the SAGE/IGX portal. Applicants were previously instructed to submit their shapefiles via the e-Filing system and to complete the rest of their application in SAGE/IGX. To simplify the application process and to address technical issues with the SAGE/IGX portal, applicants now only need to submit their application materials in the e-Filing system and do not need to complete an application in SAGE/IGX at this time. Once required files are submitted to BPU through the e-Filing system, an application will be considered submitted.

2.3   I have registered in the e-Filing system but have not received an authorization code.

Applicants should allow up to two business days to receive an authorization code after registering for the e-Filing system. If you haven't received your code within this timeframe, please contact the BPU IT Help Desk at ITHELPDESK@bpu.nj.gov, providing your MyNJ ID, email, and company name. Be sure to copy our broadband office at Broadband@bpu.nj.gov on the email.

2.4   I saw that there was an NJBIDE Intent to Apply Form. Is this required?

No, applicants are not required to submit an Intent to Apply to be eligible for NJBIDE. The Intent to Apply is neither the actual application nor a prequalification application; it is intended to gauge potential applicant interest and project scope. Applicants are not bound by any materials submitted in their Intent to Apply form.

2.5   When do NJBIDE projects need to be completed?

Per the U.S. Treasury CPF Guidance, all funds must be expended by December 31, 2026, which is the end of the period of performance for CPF funds and the date by which all NJBIDE projects must reach substantial completion. The U.S. Treasury defines substantial completion as the date when a project can perform its primary operations and deliver services to end-users. At this point, service operations and management systems infrastructure must be operational. The Treasury may, at its discretion, grant extensions to the period of performance upon request from New Jersey.

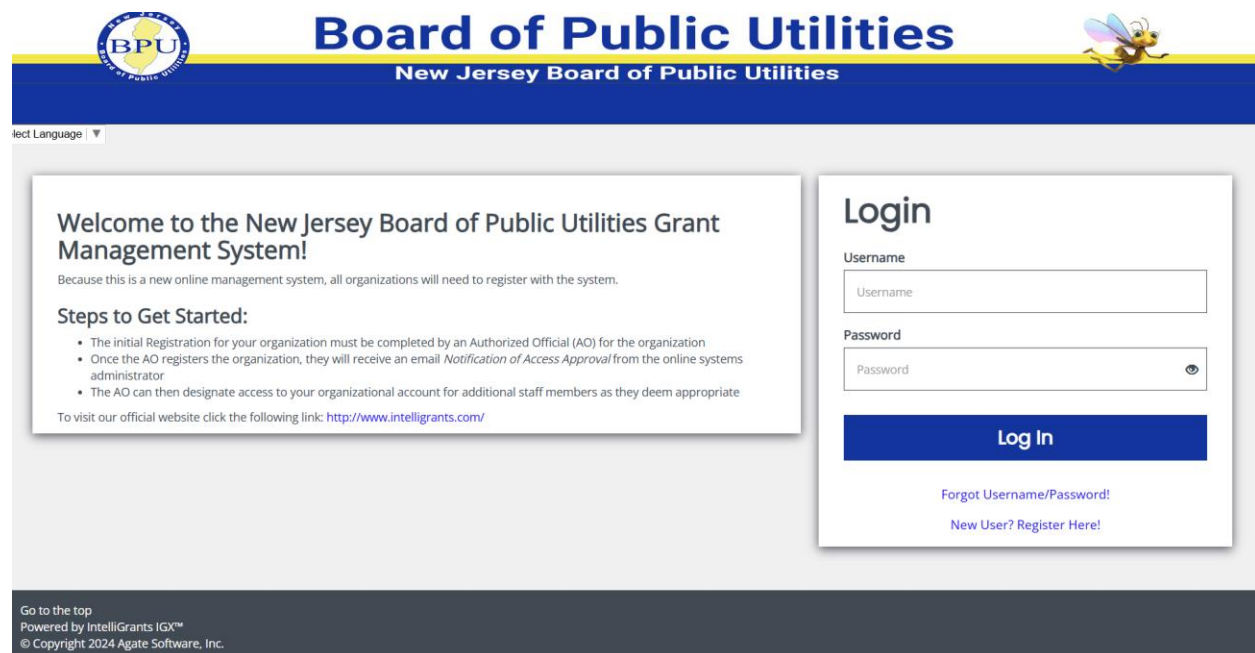### 2.6   What is the timeline for the challenge process?

The BEAD Challenge Process gives service providers, local governments, tribal governments, and non-profit organizations an opportunity to provide input on the list of eligible locations for BEAD deployment. There are multiple distinct phases for the Challenge Process in New Jersey, as outlined on OBC's website: https://www.nj.gov/connect/grants/bead/challenge-process/.

Please note the Challenge Process is required by NTIA for BEAD, but it is not a required process by U.S. Treasury for NJBIDE.

2.7   I registered for through the IGX/SAGE portal but have yet to get access.

Starting on January 17, 2025, applicants no longer need to register in the SAGE/IGX portal to submit their applications. OBC will use the SAGE/IGX Portal once awardees are selected. Selected applicants will enter their application details into the SAGE/IGX portal to move forward with grant agreement negotiations. The following information is provided for future reference.

The BPU SAGE system can be accessed at https://njbpu.intelligrants.com (screenshot of page below). Please note that this system is different from SAGE portals used by other state agencies, such as DCA.

Clicking on "New User? Register Here!" will open a pop-up window, prompting applicants to submit their registration information (screenshot below).

New User Registration

Page instructions for the registration modal

First Name	Middle Name

Last Name	Prefix	Suffix

Title	Preferred Language
	English (Without Translation Options)

SAM	FEIN
[Search]	

Organization

Address — Not Validated ✖ — Validate   **Address 2**

City   **State** — New Jersey

Zip Code   **County**

[Register]

Please note that only one individual can register with BPU in the grant management system on behalf of an organization; that individual is assigned as the agency's administrator, who must assign all other individuals associated with their organization. Please check with your organization's administrator if you are encountering access issues, and please notify OBC at broadband@bpu.nj.gov if issues persist.

2.8   Are there any limits on word or character count for text in the SAGE/IGX portal?

No, there are no limits on word or character count for written answers in the SAGE/IGX portal.

3 Eligible Applicants

3.1 Are county government entities eligible to apply?

Yes, eligible applicants include levels or units of government (e.g., municipalities or counties), non-profits, and private entities, and may include co-operatives, electric utilities, and other entities that build or operate broadband networks, including networks that are owned, operated by, or affiliated with local governments.

3.2 If an applicant is a county or local government, is the applicant required to design, implement or manage infrastructure?

No, eligible applicants may include units of government, but to build and operate their broadband network, the applicant may partner with any of the following: a local government unit, non-profit, electric utility, cooperative, or internet service provider.

3.3 What are the criteria for public-private partnerships for the purposes of NJBIDE? What documentation would OBC need to see as evidence for a public-private partnership?

Section 5.4.g of the Application Instructions provide guidance on the criteria for public-private partnerships. Applicants will need to identify any partners or affiliates if the applicant is proposing a project for which the applicant affirms that a formalized agreement or letter of support exists between broadband service provider and one or more unaffiliated partners where the partner is one of the following:

> 1) A separate privately-owned broadband service provider, requiring a formalized agreement; or

> 2) A nonprofit or not-for-profit, or a for-profit subsidiary of either, and the applicant is being allowed access and use of the partner's infrastructure, on special terms and conditions designed to facilitate the provision of broadband services in unserved areas, and/or utilizing a matching financial and/or in-kind contribution provided by one or more partners. In both cases, a formalized agreement is required.

A municipality, parish, or school board or any instrumentality thereof, may qualify as a non-profit for the purpose of NJBIDE grant program. Letters of support by a municipality, parish or school board or any instrumentality thereof, supporting an application may be submitted as part of the application. A letter of support does not require a formalized agreement.

Additionally, the State of New Jersey has definitions for public-private projects listed under Title 40A 11-52: https://lis.njleg.state.nj.us/nxt/gateway.dll/statutes/1/37435/38357.

4 Project Eligibility and Project Areas

4.1 Which counties are eligible to apply for NJBIDE?

All counties in New Jersey are eligible to apply for NJBIDE funding, as noted in FAQ 3.1. Designated priority areas are described in Section 8.4 Merit Criteria of the NJBIDE Application Instructions.

4.2 What technologies are eligible for NJBIDE?

NJBIDE requires that the proposed service reliably meets or exceeds symmetrical download and upload speeds of 100 Mbps. If it would be impracticable, because of geography, topography, or excessive cost, for a NJBIDE-funded project to be designed to deliver services at such a speed, the project must be designed so that it reliably meets or exceeds 100 Mbps download speeds and between 20 Mbps and 100 Mbps upload speeds and be scalable to a minimum of 100 Mbps symmetrical for download and upload speeds.

With respect to specific technologies, the OBC prioritizes fiber-optic technology for broadband infrastructure deployment, but allows applicants to propose hybrid solutions as an alternative to wired infrastructure. Hybrid solutions are those that combine fiber with other technologies for last-mile delivery. Examples include fiber-to-the-node or fiber-to-the-curb with coaxial cable or DSL for the final connection. While fixed wireless or satellite may be components of a hybrid solution, they will not be funded as standalone last-mile solutions unless proven impracticable due to geography, topography, or excessive cost, as outlined in the program guidelines.

4.3 The smallest geographic boundary for project areas specified by the state is Census Block Groups (CBG) (4.2.A). The requirement is for all Unserved in the CBG to be covered (4.2.B). This would impact the CBGs already partially covered by other funded areas by forcing a duplication of efforts in the design phase (4.2.C). In addition, this could mean going after an Unserved BSL at the CBG edge that would make for an inefficient design. Will the state allow partial coverage of a CBG if another grant/federal funding is already covering part of the CBG? Will the state make exceptions if not all unserved BSL are included in a particular CBG for economic reasons? If so, how does the state want this to be "presented?"

The NJBIDE program requires applicants to agree to serve all unserved and underserved locations and community anchor institutions within their proposed project area. However, 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 not eligible for NJBIDE funding.

Eligibility for NJBIDE is determined at the location level. Locations lacking an enforceable commitment are eligible for NJBIDE, even if some locations within the same Census Block Group (CBGs) have such commitments. Applicants will be able to specify the list of location IDs that their projects will serve and attest that, to the best of their knowledge, none of the locations has an enforceable commitment.

4.4   Do prospective applicants have to serve ONLY unserved and underserved locations within a Census Block or can they service other customers? If those other customers require infrastructure builds, can those expenses be included in the proposed budget?

No, while applicants must agree to serve all unserved and underserved locations and community anchor institutions in their proposed project area, they are welcome to service other customers and to include the associated costs in their proposed project budget, provided those locations do not have an enforceable federal or state commitment as described in the Application Instructions.

4.5   Can prospective applicants service business addresses or only residential?

As stated in the Application Instructions and the FCC's National Broadband Map, the terms "location" and "broadband serviceable location" mean "a business or residential location in the United States at which fixed broadband Internet access service is, or can be, installed."

Prospective applicants are required to serve all unserved and underserved locations in their proposed project area, including business and residential locations. See the Application Instructions for additional information.

4.6   Do prospective applicants need to have customers lined up (e.g., confirmation from the location ID / address / customer that they would like better broadband service)?

No, it is not necessary for prospective applicants to have customers secured beforehand. However, as part of their application, applicants are required to submit a community engagement plan. The community engagement plan should explaining what applicants have done or what applicants will do to engage the communities in their project area to ensure active community involvement and transparency throughout the project lifecycle, from the initial stages through post-deployment. The plan must be submitted as a separate PDF. Additional information regarding the community engagement plan is available under the "Resources for NJBIDE Applicants" webpage on the OBC website: https://www.nj.gov/connect/grants/cpf/resources/.

4.7   How will OBC run the application deconfliction process to reduce potential for competitors to engage in discussions that could implicate antitrust laws and regulations? When will the deconfliction process begin and end?

OBC is committed to ensuring that the application deconfliction process is conducted in full compliance with antitrust laws and regulations. As of January 13, 2025, OBC has revised its deconfliction process to clarify that OBC will handle deconfliction efforts internally and work directly with applicants on an individual basis to make necessary project modifications. This approach eliminates the need for competitors to engage in discussions that could potentially implicate antitrust concerns.

OBC will conduct its scoring and selection process, as described in Section 8.1 of the Application Instructions, and then identify if there are overlaps among likely awardees. In the case of an overlap, the higher-scoring application will retain its project area intact, while OBC will directly negotiate with the remaining likely awardee(s) to revise their project areas to exclude any locations that have been awarded to higher-scoring applications. The deconfliction process will begin immediately following the scoring and selection phase and will continue until all necessary project modifications have been finalized.

Section 8.2 of the Application Instructions has been revised accordingly, and an updated version of the Application Instructions will be released to applicants via the NJBIDE website.

4.8   What is considered a "broadband serviceable location (BSL)" for the purposes of NJBIDE?

The terms "location" and "broadband serviceable location" mean "a business or residential location in the United States at which fixed broadband Internet access service is, or can be, installed," as represented by the FCC National Broadband Map. Additional information can be found in Section 1.2 of the Application Instructions.

4.9   Are applications restricted to the six pilot counties / priority areas?

No, applications are not restricted to the designated priority areas.

4.10 Does the state require CAIs receive 1Gig symmetrical speeds for NJBIDE like the requirement for BEAD?

Yes. As mentioned in Section 7.2 of the Application Instructions, proposed projects must deliver speeds of at least 1 Gbps symmetrical to Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs), such as schools, libraries, and hospitals, and achieve latency of 100 milliseconds or less round-trip time for at least 95% of measurements during testing windows.

5   Applications

5.1   Will OBC provide a list of eligible BSLs for NJBIDE / is there a way to download the location IDs of these locations?

Yes, the list of unserved and underserved BSLs for NJBIDE are available for download on the OBC's NJBIDE homepage: https://www.nj.gov/connect/grants/cpf/. Please navigate to the Application and Applicant Resources page and select "Download Unserved/Underserved BSLs." The ZIP file contains a list of location IDs and the county in which they are located.

5.2   How is the list of unserved and underserved BSLs different from the location IDs posted in the Initial Proposal Volume I or NJBIDE?

Since the publication of Initial Proposal Volume I, two changes have occurred to the list of eligible locations for BEAD and NJBIDE. First, the FCC released an updated version of its Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric data, which influences the State's identification of eligible locations. Second, following the NTIA's approval of New Jersey's Initial Proposal Volume I, New Jersey applied additional approved modifications to the National Broadband Availability Map data. This led to the classification of some BSLs as underserved or unserved if they meet specific criteria, which are detailed in IP Vol 1.

5.3   Are projects required to be located in one of these locations to be eligible?

Applicants are not required to be in one of the NJBIDE-eligible locations to be eligible, but proposed projects must plan to serve locations included in the list of NJBIDE-eligible locations.

5.4   What parameters will guide design and implementation? What inspection or measures of verification other than typical to authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs) will be required?

Applications will be evaluated in alignment with the Criteria Chart and Scoring metrics published in the NJBIDE Application Instructions. Applicants must commit to participating in any federal programs that support broadband affordability and to work with relevant agencies for permitting.

5.5   Does every location need 100/100 Mbps guaranteed, at all times (i.e. 100 customers would need 10g/10g service?). Or is the 100/100 guarantee based on industry standards (e.g. 100/100 under reasonable network load expectations?)

Regardless of the chosen technology, all funded projects must deliver a minimum speed of 100/100 Mbps symmetrical upon completion, or 100/20 Mbps scalable to 100/100 Mbps, and demonstrate a commitment to providing affordable broadband service.

5.6   Per the NJBIDE document and the sample budget, please confirm grant applicants are delivering (designing) and budgeting for last mile fiber including infrastructure inside customer premises (e.g. ONT and drops to the BSL).

NJBIDE will prioritize projects which support last-mile fiber infrastructure. Additional information on eligible and ineligible costs is available in Section 6 of the NJBIDE Application Instructions. Eligible costs include materials, supplies, equipment, and construction of infrastructure for backhaul, middle, and "last mile" network expenses.

5.7   The 'fiber' scoring rubric is worth 10 points. 6 points for "exclusively utilizes fiber-optic technology for broadband infrastructure deployment", and then 4 points for "incorporating fiber-optic infrastructure as a core component but may also utilize other technologies in specific areas to extend reach or address particular geographic challenges." Are projects that utilize end-to-end fiber penalized four points? How does an applicant get the full ten points here?

End-to-end fiber projects will receive the full 10 points. Hybrid projects which incorporate fiber and other technologies will receive 4 points.

5.8   Are the Broadband Speed and Pricing Template, Broadband Location Data, Project Template, Subrecipient Template, Hybrid Budget Template, and Fiber Budget Template all found on the CPF homepage, required to be submitted with the application? Does the Intake Form contain all information required to complete an application?

The NJBIDE Application Intake Form, available on the NJBIDE homepage, documents all supporting materials that are required from NJBIDE applicants. These include the Broadband Speed and Pricing Template, Broadband Location Data, Project Template, and Subrecipient Template as documented on the OBC website; applicants do not need to separately submit these documents, as they will be part of the Application Intake Form (e.g., the questions on the budget tab of the Intake Form are considered the budget narrative). The Hybrid Budget Template and Fiber Budget Template are not required and have been archived from the OBC website.

5.9   I do not see a formal "Broadband Location Data Template" or "Census Block Groups Template" as mentioned in the Application Instructions (Section 5.5 b. ii). Where can I find these templates?

The Broadband Location Data Template is a Treasury requirement specific to CPF recipients. Should an applicant proceed through the awarding process, completion of this template will be necessary. In the meantime, an applicant can access detailed information about Recipient Compliance and Reporting Responsibilities on the Treasury's website

(https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/capital-projects-fund/recipient-compliance-and-reporting-responsibilities).

At the application stage, OBC will collect data on locations and Census Block Groups through shapefiles and intake forms. For shapefiles, OBC asks applicants to ensure location IDs and coordinates are included to denote all unserved and underserved locations within the applicant's project areas, as well as the applicant's proposed network diagram. For intake forms, OBC asks applicants to include the GEOIDs of all Census Block Groups within your project area in the "Project Area" tab and specify the offering details related to the project area in the "Offering Details" tab. The intake form template and walkthrough are available under "Resources for NJBIDE Applicants" on the NJBIDE website.

5.10 Is there a way to export the data for our project area directly from the NJBIDE map?

While there is not a way to export the data solely for the proposed project areas, the list of unserved and underserved BSLs and CAIs are available on the OBC's NJBIDE homepage: https://www.nj.gov/connect/grants/cpf/. Please navigate to the Application and Applicant Resources page and select "Download Unserved/Underserved BSLs." The ZIP file contains a list of location IDs and the county in which they are located.

5.11 Can OBC provide links to the "Resources" that are listed on the map to ensure that applicants are using the exact same dataset? The current Resource links do not direct a user to the raw data sources.

Applicants should refer to the NJBIDE map of underserved and unserved locations. This map is based on Version 4 of the Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric (Fabric), which is a dataset of all locations in the United States and its Territories where fixed broadband internet access service is or could be installed. However, as mentioned in the response to Question 5.2, this map includes additional modifications made by the OBC. Guidance on how to access the underlying Fabric data was provided during the technical assistance webinar held on January 8th. A recording of the webinar and a copy of the presentation can be accessed on the " Application and Applicant Resources" page at https://www.nj.gov/connect/grants/cpf/resources/.

5.12 The Application Instructions state affordable broadband service should be $65 per month for at least 100/20 Mbps service with a lower rate for low-income households. If an applicant proposes a project in an area with no residents and only businesses, does the $65 per month option stand or are there different affordability measures for businesses?

Yes, the same affordability measures apply for all unserved and underserved locations to be served by NJBIDE. Full points will be awarded for projects with a Broadband Service subscription of less than $65 per month for at least 100/20 Mbps service and that offer eligible low-income

households service for less than $30 per month after federal subsidy programs. The NJBIDE program does not make affordability distinctions between residential or business locations.

5.13 What information is required of applicants regarding affordable broadband service?

Applicants are required to submit a plan for broadband affordability as a separate PDF in their application. The plan should explain how an applicant has considered affordability in their proposed service offerings or how they will consider affordability if awarded NJBIDE funding. The plan may include data used from surveys, community engagement, existing studies, or other data to determine affordable broadband service. Additional information is available on the "Application and Applicant Resources" webpage: https://www.nj.gov/connect/grants/cpf/resources/.

5.14 Do we have existing data to identify potential target areas or we will have to do this survey/ discovery before the application process

The list of unserved and underserved BSLs for NJBIDE are available for download on the OBC's NJBIDE homepage: https://www.nj.gov/connect/grants/cpf/. Please navigate to the Application and Applicant Resources page and select "Download Unserved/Underserved BSLs." The ZIP file contains a list of location IDs and the county in which they are located.

5.15 Can you clarify the affordability requirements? Is the $65 per month per rate for any potential subscriber, regardless of income? For the low income rate- it calls out less than $30 per month after federal subsidy programs. Which federal programs are the state referring to? Can you explain the low income requirement since the ACP program is no longer in operation? Is there a cost adjustment allowance such as CPI for the low income and/or $65 rate requirement? And does the term of these rates sunset at the end federal interest period?

Applicants may earn up to 10 points based on the affordability of their service, as described in section 8.4. As mentioned in FAQ Question 5.11, for the purposes of scoring, the same affordability measures apply for all unserved and underserved locations to be served by NJBIDE. Full points will be awarded for projects with a Broadband Service subscription of less than $65 per month for at least 100/20 Mbps service and that offer eligible low-income households service for less than $30 per month after federal subsidy programs. The NJBIDE program does not make affordability distinctions between residential or business locations.

To re-iterate, this section describes one of the merit criteria by which applicants may earn points and is not a requirement of NJBIDE projects. Applicants may submit applications with proposed service offerings that exceed the $65 per month amount.

There are, however, other requirements that impact affordability, which applicants *must* meet to be eligible to apply for NJBIDE funding. The Guidance for the Coronavirus Capital Project Fund from the U.S. Department of the Treasury requires that a "service provider for a completed Capital Projects Fund-funded Broadband Infrastructure Project participate in federal programs that provide low-income consumers with subsidies on broadband internet access services." As part of the NJBIDE attestations, applicants will be required to attest to "participating in all applicable federal programs that help low-income consumers afford internet access, such as the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) *or any future program* designated by the Treasury Department" (emphasis added).

As described in Section 11.1 of the Application Instructions, "Grant recipients with a track record of serving at least 1,000 consumers for five or more consecutive years must offer broadband service at prices consistent with their offerings in other parts of the state. Other broadband service providers must ensure that their broadband service pricing doesn't exceed the cost rate specified in their project application throughout the ten-year service agreement. Grantees can annually adjust the cost rate in line with the previous year's percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index."

5.16 The Required Documents tab asks for a copy of the 'current audit'. Do you want to see the most recent? 2023? 2024 would not be ready. If 2024 audited financials are not ready to share, will that cause a company not to be in compliance for NJBIDE?

A copy of the most recent available audit is sufficient to comply with the application requirements.

5.17 Are the questions on the Budget tab on the application intake form considered the budget narrative?

Yes, these questions constitute the required budget narrative.

5.18 When responding to the questions in the Qualifications and Partnerships tab of the application intake form, should we interpret these are pertaining to our qualifications/experience or speak about our provider's experience?

When addressing the questions in the "Qualification and Partnerships" section, please interpret them as pertaining to your own broadband experience, rather than that of your provider, Comcast. If you are partnering with your provider, please note that subsequent questions in this section are designed to specifically address partnership-related inquiries. This includes, but is not limited to, questions such as:

- "Have you or any of your partners, including any subsidiaries, affiliates, or holding companies of you or your partners, ever been adjudicated for penalties or involved in litigation related to previous broadband infrastructure projects?"
- "Are you proposing a project with partners or affiliates?"
- "If you're proposing a project with partners or affiliates, please identify them."

5.19 My team has been reviewing the requirements for NJBIDE. For our proposed project area, there is only one location and would be untenable as a single location. The input we got from the community was that service was poor (although adequate by definition of 100/20), the service has outages etc. and thus deliver a poor experience in the community. As such, what would be great is to entice an alternative provider is a grant that would allow them to build a fiber network for the community. Could that be accomplished leveraging NJBIDE opportunity?

As mentioned in the Application Instructions, "applicants must agree to serve all unserved and underserved Broadband Serviceable Locations (BSLs) and community anchor institutions in their proposed project area." However, as mentioned in Question 4.4 in the FAQs, "while applicants must agree to serve all unserved and underserved locations and community anchor institutions in their proposed project area, they are welcome to service other customers and to include the associated costs in their proposed project budget, provided those locations do not have an enforceable federal or state commitment as described in the Application Instructions."

We encourage you to include detailed documentation and evidence of the current service conditions to strengthen your application.

5.20 I am facing some difficulties in merging the BSL file with CAI file to get the addresses of the eligible locations. I do not see any matching of location IDs.

Please be informed that the data provided by the OBC concerning CAIs already includes the addresses and locations for each CAI. Therefore, there is no need to attempt merging them with the BSL file for address matching.

If you plan to match CAI location IDs to the Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric, be aware that these are stored in a separate file called "NoBSL(s)." To identify CAIs in this file, the "BSL_flag" field will be set to "False," and the Building Code field will be "C." While not every CAI will appear in this file, when a match exists, the CAI will generally be treated as a single BSL. This means that even if the building contains multiple units or addresses, it will be represented as a single location point on the map, as the structure is considered one entity for broadband service availability purposes. Further information can be found in the [FCC Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric Methods Manual](#) from CostQuest Associates, Inc.

5.21 What naming conventions should an applicant use when submitting attachments?

All NJBIDE applicants are required to use the file naming conventions described under the "Application and Applicant Resources" section of the NJBIDE homepage. Please refer to the "NJBIDE file naming conventions" PDF for additional information.

5.22 Do the total number of passings in the Budget sheet of the Application Intake Form refer to all BSLs or just NJBIDE BSLs?

The total number of passings in the Budget sheet of the Application Intake Form refers to all BSLs.

6 Eligible and Ineligible Costs

6.1 Is NJBIDE a competitive grant program or a formula program with pre-determined allocations for applicants?

CPF is a competitive grant program. Applications shall be scored independently based on merit criteria outlined in Section 8.4 of the NJBIDE Application Instructions. Applications or project areas with the highest scores will be prioritized for grant awards.

6.2 The Application Instructions mention a maximum individual award of up to $10 million. Does this limit apply to each proposed project, or is it the total amount a single applicant can receive across multiple projects?

The $10 million maximum award applies to the total amount a single applicant can receive, regardless of the number of projects proposed. An applicant may submit multiple applications for different project areas, but the combined funding for all approved projects for that applicant cannot exceed $10 million.

6.3 Is match funding required to apply for NJBIDE?

No, matching funds are not required but are strongly recommended. If using matching funds, sources shall be identified and supported with detailed documentation. Please note applicants will be scored on their minimization of NJBIDE outlay, which may include the consideration of match funding.

6.4 What expenses qualify as eligible, reimbursable costs through NJBIDE? Is documentation required for in-kind expenses and, if so, what expenses are considered in-kind?

Eligible and ineligible costs are detailed in Section 6 of the NJBIDE Application Instructions. Eligible costs will be reimbursed for awarded applicants. In-kind costs should be included in the project budget and narrative, as described in Section 5.7 of the NJBIDE Application Instructions. If a local government provides in-kind support to any application, it should generally offer proportional support to all applications using similar technologies, serving the same unserved areas, and with a similar number of beneficiaries within its jurisdiction.

6.5 Is CPF funding available for a project already designed and not yet completed? If a company has performed engineering, due diligence, and initial work on a construction project – is it eligible to apply for CPF funding for part or all of the project?

Yes, CPF funding can go to projects that are already designed, but not yet completed and otherwise eligible. CPF grant funding cannot be used for costs that will be reimbursed by the other federal or state funding stream(s). Locations with existing enforceable federal or state funding commitments for reliable wireline service at speeds of at least 100 Mbps of download speed and 20 Mbps of upload speed are not eligible for NJBIDE funding, as described in the NJBIDE Application Instructions.

7 Scoring

7.1 What are reference prices?

Reference prices are benchmarks against which an applicant's requested subsidy (i.e., the proposed grant award) will be evaluated. Reference prices do not represent the actual cost of broadband deployment nor are they equal to the actual subsidy amount which will be awarded through NJBIDE or BEAD. Rather, reference prices are intended to help the OBC compare applications against a baseline established with industry knowledge. Reference prices have been set by the OBC, using CostQuest Associates model outputs provided by National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

7.2 Will the same reference prices be used for NJBIDE and BEAD?

The reference prices for NJBIDE and BEAD may differ. The OBC may use different reference prices for BEAD based on the results from the BEAD Challenge Process, updates to the FCC's Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric data, and/or feedback from the NJBIDE application process.

8 Compliance

8.1 What reporting is required of CPF grant recipients? What will be the typical reporting or auditing timeframe for CPF?

Reporting requirements are described in Section 11.2 of the Application Instructions. Grant recipients must submit monthly reports to the OBC for each funded project, inputs for New Jersey's quarterly reporting to Treasury, and annual project status reports. The reports will include, but are not limited to, data regarding expenditures, project status, subawards, civil rights compliance, equity indicators, community engagement efforts, programmatic data, and other measures as determined by Treasury.

New Jersey will submit project and expenditure reports monthly and quarterly to Treasury, and annual performance reports which include data related to program outputs and outcomes against the stated objectives of the recipient's Grant Plan.

8.2 In the BEAD NOFO, NTIA requires BEAD applicants to demonstrate commitment to the federal Davis-Bacon Act prevailing wage rate requirements for their broadband workforce. Do prevailing wages also apply to NJBIDE?

Yes, all NJBIDE-funded projects are subject to prevailing wage requirements, per the New Jersey Prevailing Wage Act (N.J.S.A. 34:11-56.25 et seq.). The Act establishes a prevailing wage level for workers engaged in public works to safeguard the worker's efficiency and general well-being. Additional information is available on the New Jersey Department of Labor's website: https://www.nj.gov/labor/wageandhour/prevailing-rates/public-works/.

9 Awards and Funding

9.1 Will applications only be reviewed for award in totality, or do you expect to make partial awards of CBGs within an application and not award other CBGs that were applied for in the same application?

Applications will be reviewed for award in totality, however, as described in the Application Instructions, there are limited circumstances in which OBC may offer a partial award. As described in Section 8.1. if a top-ranked applicant requests NJBIDE funding that exceeds the remaining available funds, they will have the option to either accept the remaining funds and complete their project within that budget or decline the offer. In addition, as described in Section 8.2., OBC will directly negotiate with likely awardee(s) to revise their project areas to exclude any locations that have been awarded to higher-scoring applications, which may result in a partial award for the revised project area. Finally, as mentioned in Section 6.1., a maximum of $10 million will be awarded per applicant, meaning that an applicant submitting multiple applications may receive a partial award if the total awarded amount would exceed $10 million.

9.2 Let's say $39M is allocated to selected projects and $1M is left. If there are two $2M projects the OBC would like to award, would you expect to split the "leftover" balance

between multiple projects, or choose only one project who receives the full amount, which is less than their requested amount?

The process for selecting projects for funding is described in Section 8.1.B-C in the Application Instructions. As mentioned in this section, "Applications or project areas with the highest scores will be prioritized for grant awards. If the top-ranked applicant requests NJBIDE funding that exceeds the remaining available funds, they will have the option to either accept the remaining funds and complete their project within that budget or decline the offer. If the applicant declines, the OBC will offer the remaining funds to the next highest-ranked applicant. This process continues until an applicant accepts the remaining funds or all remaining applicants decline. As a means of breaking a tie for applications or project areas receiving the same score, the OBC shall give priority to the application or project area proposing the lowest NJBIDE cost per prospective broadband recipient."

9.3   Will there be an appeals process after award decisions are published on the OBC website?

Yes, there will be an appeals process for NJBIDE applicants who were denied an NJBIDE grant award. Applicants may submit an appeal on a basis that would affect the award results such as a potential scoring error. Appeals may not be based on location eligibility.

Appeals must be submitted, no later than 5 PM Eastern Time, seven (7) calendar days after results are published on the NJBIDE Pilot Program website. Appeals will be reviewed by the Director of the OBC, or their designee, and OBC staff. Applicants who file an appeal brief will have the opportunity to meet with the OBC for a hearing during the appeals process. This meeting will not be open to the public.

The OBC is committed to establishing a fair and transparent appeal process and will provide details on submission requirements, including deadlines and required documentation.

If all attempts to resolve an issue have been exhausted, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 14:1-1, an applicant who submits an appeal may file a petition for a formal hearing with the NJ Board of Public Utilities.