Arkansas BEAD Program

Frequently Asked Questions Document 3

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Low-Cost Plan Questions

1. At what point in the process can we submit a waiver for filing the low-cost rate?
   BEAD applicants may request waivers to the baseline low-cost plan rate based on evidence of financial non-viability. ARConnect expects that an applicant would request this waiver after the applicant is selected provisionally, at which time the applicant would prepare to share the project's financials (including the benefits of the BEAD subaward) with ARConnect.

   Please see section 2.12.1 in Initial Proposal Volume II for more details.

2. Is the monthly low-cost plan inclusive of the USF contribution and other taxes and fees?
   In accordance with the BEAD NOFO requirements, subgrantees are required to offer this low-cost plan – inclusive of all taxes, fees, and charges billed to the customer, including upfront and ongoing fees. Applicants will be permitted to increase the baseline rate for their low-cost plans annually, based on increases to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index for the calendar year.

   See section 2.12.1 in Initial Proposal Volume II for more information.

3. How does a customer qualify for the low-cost plan?
   Any household meeting the requirements used for the Affordable Connectivity Program is eligible for the low-cost plan in Arkansas.

   See NTIA BEAD NOFO section I.C.(j).

Eligible Location Questions

4. To prepare my bid application and project area, should I use CostQuest's fabric data release 5 or the list of eligible broadband serviceable locations (BSLs) from the ARConnect website?
   Use the datafiles that are posted on the ARConnect website.

5. If two CBGs with BEAD-eligible locations are separated by a CBG with zero eligible locations, are they considered contiguous?
   Yes, and the applicant should include all three when defining the project area in the portal.

Allowable Cost Questions

6. Is there an NTIA or Arkansas document that provides guidance on what expenses are allowable as part of the project's budget?
   Arkansas will release supplemental guidance on the Fixed Amount Subaward reimbursement policy which will include guidance on allowable expenses. For general guidance, please see 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E – Cost Principles (https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E) for federal guidance on allowable expenses under federal awards.

CBG Questions

7. How many eligible CBGs in Arkansas are there?
   Currently, based on the **draft list of eligible locations and CAIs,** there are 1,428 eligible CBGs. This number is subject to change as we finalize the location data from the Challenge Process.

Application Questions

8. Can letters of support from government officials be signed digitally, or must they be printed and signed in ink?
   Please obtain a printed signature from the official.

9. Do we have to use the letter of support template provided by ARConnect, or can we use our own format?
   You must use the provided template. Otherwise, ARConnect will not accept or award points for the letter of support.

10. After Tranche-1 opens, are applications due two weeks later?
    Yes, the window to submit your application will be two weeks. For this reason, ARConnect is publishing materials and resources ahead of Tranche-1 opening.

Reference Price Questions

11. If a CBG receives only a non-priority bid in Tranche-1, will ARConnect consider raising the reference price in that CBG to encourage fiber bids?
    If the *sole bidder* for a CBG does not meet Buy It Now criteria in Tranche-1, the CBG will be considered a Zero-Bid CBG. ARConnect will have the right to increase the reference prices for Zero-Bid CBGs before Tranche-2.

Pre-Registration Questions

12. Regarding question 20, if we intend to ask for a low-cost plan waiver in one of our applications (not all of them), how should we respond to question 20?
You will still need to certify your commitment to offer a low-cost plan.

13. Regarding question 41, can you please clarify whether the pending or completed enforcement action, civil litigation, or matter related to non-compliance / alleged non-compliance specifically refers to broadband deployment projects?
This question refers to broadband-related activities only.

Other Questions

14. If Arkansas has leftover funds after awards are made, where will the funds go?
Arkansas' top priority is to achieve 100% coverage in the state. If, after 100% coverage is achieved, there are leftover funds under the BEAD grant, ARConnect will look to advance additional priority broadband projects across socioeconomic sectors, including education, healthcare, small business, and agriculture, with a focus on innovative solutions.

15. Will ARConnect revise any procedures for alternative technology due to the NTIA's proposed guidance and imminent final guidance for alternative technology?
ARConnect will implement any final NTIA Policy Notice requirements for alternative technologies but will not otherwise make any changes to the subgrantee selection process. Based on the draft Policy Notice as of August 26, 2024, ARConnect would simply implement the required process concurrently with the "Direct Negotiations" phase that will follow Tranche-2.

16. Is NTIA going to leverage USAC's National Verifier for Lifeline?
NTIA has indicated that it intends to make available to Eligible Entities and BEAD subgrantees a national verification system for determining low-cost plan eligibility of a given subscriber but has not yet provided further details.

Where to Find Materials

17. Can we watch recordings of previous sessions?
No, the TA sessions are not recorded. However, the materials are posted online at the below link, under Arkansas State Broadband Office Resources > Technical Assistance (TA): https://broadband.arkansas.gov/bead/.

18. Where can I find a map of the CBGs in Arkansas?
Refer to this link: https://gis.arkansas.gov/product/block-groups-2020-census/.