

Arkansas BEAD | Weekly Webinar

Arkansas BEAD Program

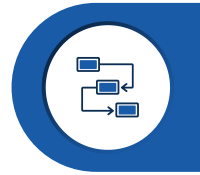
SEPTEMBER 4, 2024



Agenda



Overview of the Arkansas BEAD journey and key steps



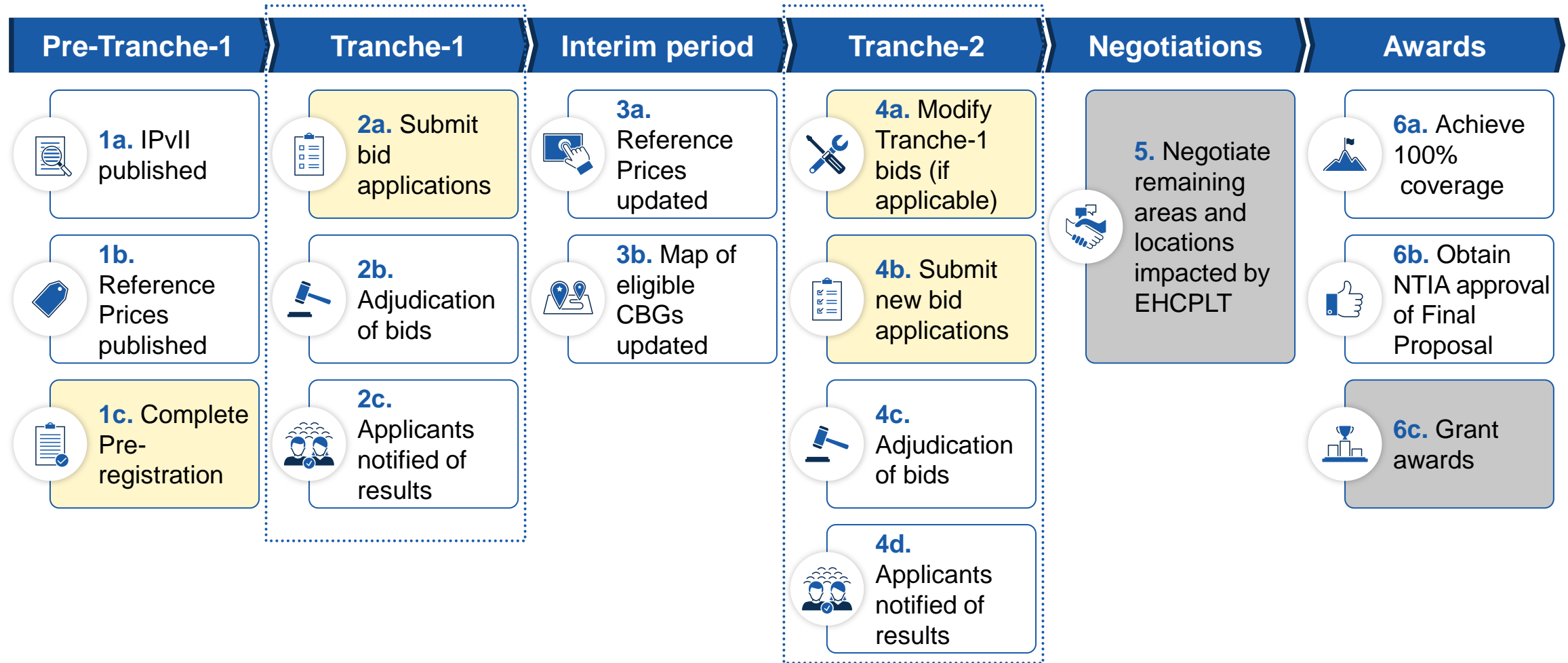
Deep-dive: Select Tranche-1 and Tranche-2 steps



Next steps and key resources

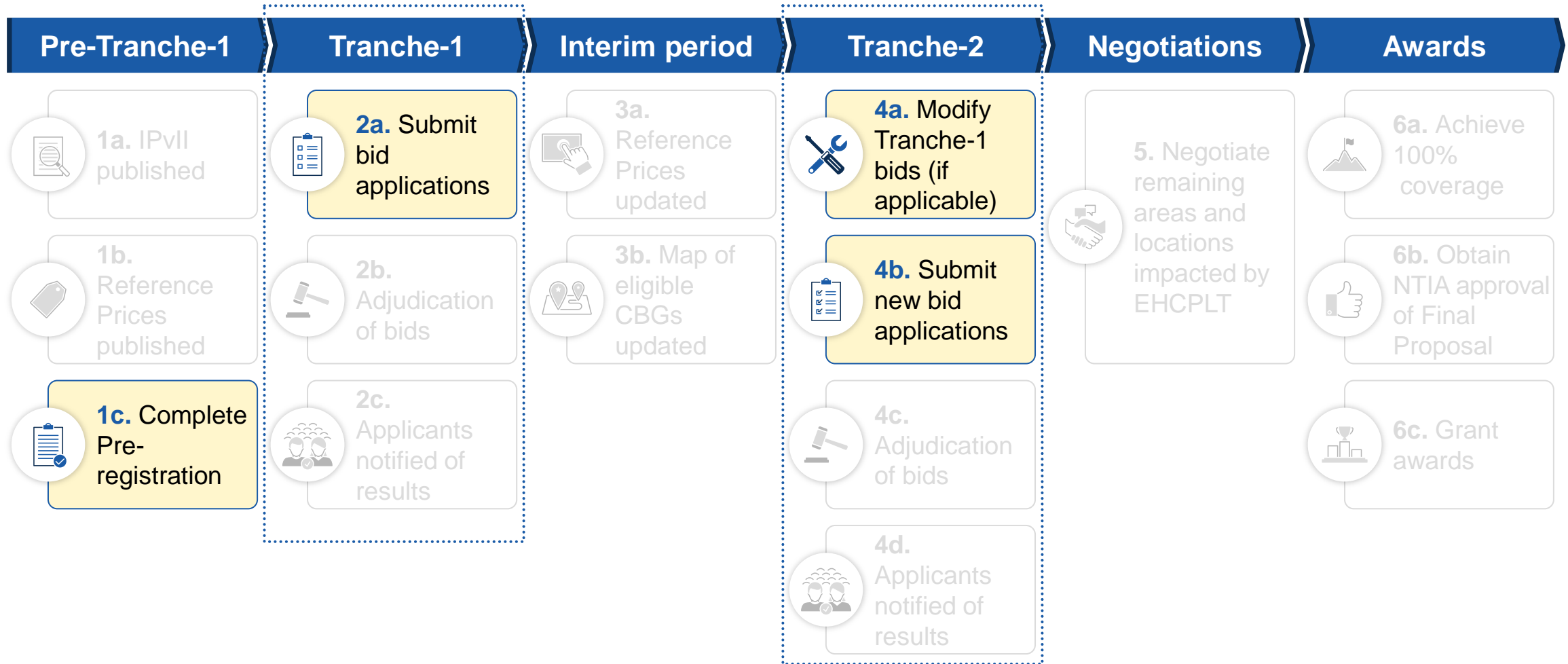
Overview of the Arkansas BEAD journey and key steps

Context: High-level overview of Arkansas BEAD process



Text ARConnect actions
 Text Applicant / ISP actions
 Text Joint actions

4 key steps for Applicant actions across Tranche-1 & Tranche-2



Text ARConnect actions
 Text Applicant / ISP actions
 Text Joint actions

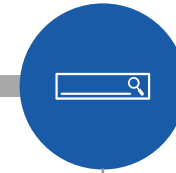
Pre-Tranche-1



What: The pre-registration application establishes eligibility for an award



When: It is advised to complete prior to the start of Tranche-1 bidding



How: Visit the Arkansas Broadband Grantor Portal to complete application

Portal Link: <https://register.broadband.arkansas.gov/register/bead>

Arkansas Broadband Grantor Portal

Introduction

Welcome to the Arkansas Broadband Grantor Portal registration page. This platform is designed for broadband providers looking to participate in the broadband grants offered by the state of Arkansas.

To begin, new users must complete the registration process on this page. Your registration will be reviewed by the Arkansas State Broadband Office. Once approved, you will receive an email providing access to the Arkansas Broadband Grantor Portal.

This portal will serve as your central hub for all interactions with ARConnect, including broadband grant applications, progress reporting, and post-award reimbursements.

Register

Returning users:

Login

Applicants must complete their Pre-registrations



Tranche-1

Key questions as Applicants prepare for Tranche-1



How do we select project areas? What are the different rules to consider while selecting project areas?



What are all the requirements to complete a Tranche-1 Application?



How are Applicants' bids scored? What are the different elements of the scoring rubric?



What is the minimum point threshold? How does it impact Applicants' bids?



What are reference prices? How do they impact bids scores and adjudication?

Key questions as Applicants prepare for Tranche-1



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Selecting Project Areas: CBGs are the building blocks of Applications



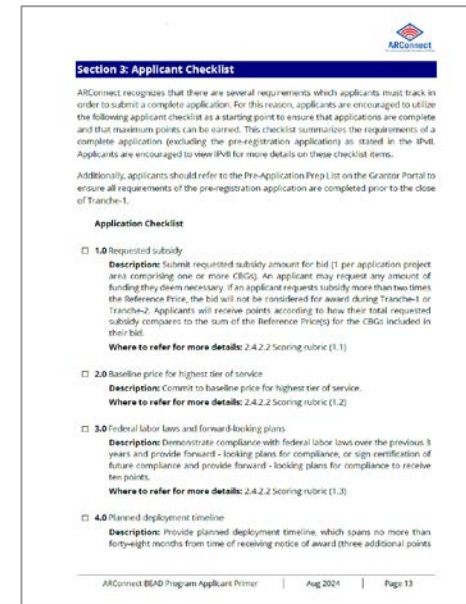
Design the project area using the following **project area rules**

- 1 **CBGs as building blocks:** Project areas are comprised of one or more CBGs, and bids must include all eligible locations within a selected CBG.
- 2 **CBG limitations:** An applicant may include the same CBG in a maximum of three bids in Tranche-1.
- 3 **Contiguity:** Project areas must be contiguous (sharing any amount of border, including a single point or corner).
- 4 **Contained CBGs:** When a CBG sits fully inside the boundaries of another CBG, the applicant must include both CBGs in its project area if bidding for either.



Prepare application details using the **Applicant Checklist**

Utilize Section 3 of the Applicant Primer to track all elements required by the application



Key questions as Applicants prepare for Tranche-1



1 How do we select project areas? What are the different rules to consider while selecting project areas?



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3 How are Applicants' bids scored? What are the different elements of the scoring rubric?



4 What is the minimum point threshold? How does it impact Applicants' bids?



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Checklist for Application requirements (1/3)



Checklist item	Description	Where to find more information in the IPvII
Requested subsidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required per application project area • Applicants may request any amount of funding they deem necessary • If an applicant requests subsidy more than two times the Reference Price, the bid will not be considered for award during Tranche-1 or Tranche-2 • Applicants will receive points according to how their total requested subsidy compares to the sum of the Reference Price(s) for the CBGs included in their bid 	2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (1.1)
Baseline price for highest tier of service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to baseline price for highest tier of service 	2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (1.2)
Federal labor laws and forward-looking plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with federal labor laws over the previous 3 years, or sign certification of future compliance • Provide forward-looking plans for compliance 	2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (1.3)
Planned deployment timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants certify their planned deployment timelines and acknowledge potential financial penalties if their project extends beyond the planned timeline without a formal extension having been submitted to and approved by ARConnect 	2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (2.1)

Checklist for Application requirements (2/3)



Checklist item	Description	Where to find more information in the IPvII
<p>Technical specifications for technologies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical specifications for technologies • Explanation of how the applicant will add capacity as new customers are added 	<p>2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (2.2)</p>
<p>Workforce support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans to commit to additional workforce support and set of measures that applicants will take to foster and recruit a qualified workforce for their projects 	<p>2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (3.1)</p>
<p>Scale of geographic coverage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants will score additional points, up to a maximum of five points, for proposing project areas that cover a larger number of locations (BSLs and CAIs) within a given county. Any applicant serving 100% of locations within any county in their bid will receive five points 	<p>2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (3.2)</p>
<p>Letters of support from local governments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicit and file letters of support from local governments (Applicants score half a point per letter; max of two and half points). 	<p>2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (3.4)</p>

Checklist for Application requirements (3/3)



Checklist item	Description	Where to find more information in the IPvII
Contiguous project areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define a contiguous application project area using Census Block Groups 	2.4.6
Weather resiliency plans and certifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on this, applicants will receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One point for achieving 85% or higher as share of fiber that is buried One point for a weather mitigation plan (including network redundancy planning) Half a point for committing to attend municipality emergency management meetings on an ongoing basis 	2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (3.5), 2.11.1D
Certify future Letter of commitment from eligible bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants will be asked to certify their ability to obtain a Letter of Credit from an eligible bank during the application or certify that they will meet the conditions required to waive the Letter of Credit requirement in section 2.4.11C of IPvII 	2.4.11B, C

Key questions as Applicants prepare for Tranche-1



1 How do we select project areas? What are the different rules to consider while selecting project areas?



2 What are all the requirements to complete a Tranche-1 Application?



3 How are Applicants' bids scored? What are the different elements of the scoring rubric?





4 What is the minimum point threshold? How does it impact Applicants' bids?





5 What are reference prices? How do they impact bids scores and adjudication?

Applications are scored and adjudicated after applicants have submitted them

-  Applicants submit bids in Tranche-1

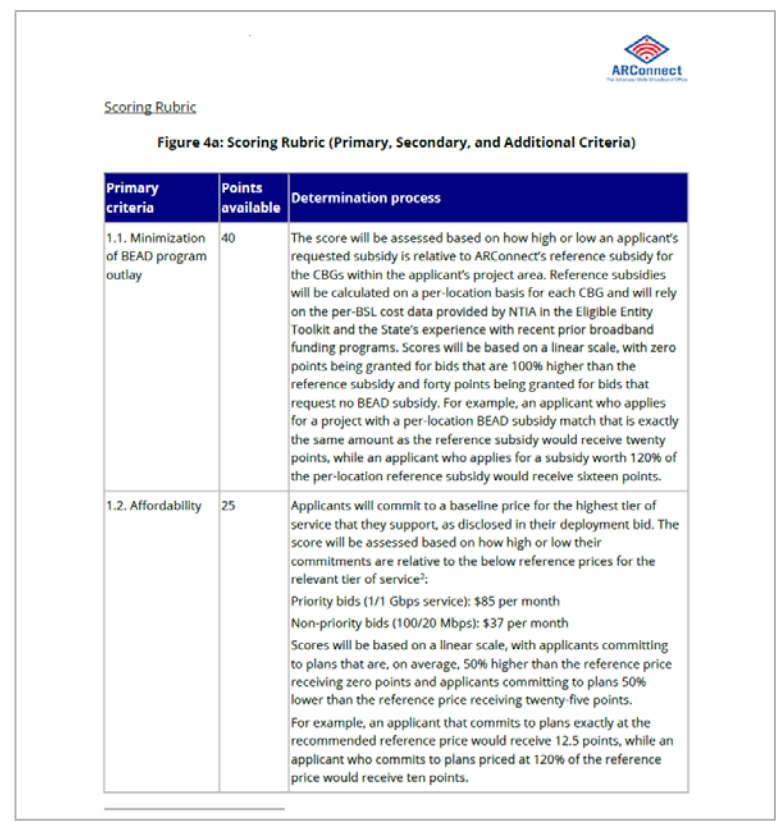
-  ARConnect scores bids according to the Scoring Rubric (Applicant Primer Section 4)


-  ARConnect completes adjudication according to the Tranche-1 rules specified in the Applicant Primer (Section 2)

-  ARConnect notifies applicants of adjudication results through Grantor Portal

 Applicant action  ARConnect action

Sample screenshot of Scoring Rubric from Applicant Primer Section 3





Scoring Rubric




Figure 4a: Scoring Rubric (Primary, Secondary, and Additional Criteria)

Primary criteria	Points available	Determination process
1.1. Minimization of BEAD program outlay	40	The score will be assessed based on how high or low an applicant's requested subsidy is relative to ARConnect's reference subsidy for the CBGs within the applicant's project area. Reference subsidies will be calculated on a per-location basis for each CBG and will rely on the per-BSL cost data provided by NTIA in the Eligible Entity Toolkit and the State's experience with recent prior broadband funding programs. Scores will be based on a linear scale, with zero points being granted for bids that are 100% higher than the reference subsidy and forty points being granted for bids that request no BEAD subsidy. For example, an applicant who applies for a project with a per-location BEAD subsidy match that is exactly the same amount as the reference subsidy would receive twenty points, while an applicant who applies for a subsidy worth 120% of the per-location reference subsidy would receive sixteen points.
1.2. Affordability	25	Applicants will commit to a baseline price for the highest tier of service that they support, as disclosed in their deployment bid. The score will be assessed based on how high or low their commitments are relative to the below reference prices for the relevant tier of service: Priority bids (1/1 Gbps service): \$85 per month Non-priority bids (100/20 Mbps): \$37 per month Scores will be based on a linear scale, with applicants committing to plans that are, on average, 50% higher than the reference price receiving zero points and applicants committing to plans 50% lower than the reference price receiving twenty-five points. For example, an applicant that commits to plans exactly at the recommended reference price would receive 12.5 points, while an applicant who commits to plans priced at 120% of the reference price would receive ten points.

Total Tranche-1
points: 95

Total Tranche-2
points: 100

How scoring is done: Scoring Rubric deep-dive (1/4)

Primary criteria	Points available	Determination process
 <p>1.1. Minimization of BEAD program outlay</p>	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed based on how high or low an applicant's requested subsidy is relative to ARConnect's reference subsidy for the CBGs within the applicant's project area Scores will be based on a linear scale, with zero points being granted for bids that are 100% higher than the reference subsidy and forty points being granted for bids that request no BEAD subsidy
 <p>1.2. Affordability</p>	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Score will be assessed based on Applicants baseline price for the highest tier of service commitments are relative to the reference prices for the relevant tier of service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority bids (1/1 Gbps service): \$85 per month Non-priority bids (100/20 Mbps): \$37 per month Scores will be based on a linear scale, with applicants committing to plans that are, on average, 50% higher than the reference price receiving zero points and applicants committing to plans 50% lower than the reference price receiving twenty-five points Applicants will be permitted to adjust their plan costs annually based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' annual Consumer Price Index¹
 <p>1.3. Fair labor practices</p>	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants will receive ten points for demonstrated compliance with federal labor laws over the last three years and providing forward-looking plans to comply, as described in Section 2.7.1 of IPvII Applicants without three years of operational experience can receive ten points by signing a certification of future compliance and providing forward-looking plans for compliance

¹ Affordable plan commitments will last per the term of Federal interest, as determined by the NTIA.

How scoring is done: Scoring Rubric deep-dive (2/4)

Secondary criteria	Points available	Determination process
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2.1. Speed to deployment

3

- Timelines should span no more than 48 months from the date of the applicant receiving notice of their final award; Timeline that is shorter than 24 months will receive 3 additional points
- Applicants will certify their planned deployment timeline and acknowledge potential financial penalties if their projects extend beyond planned timeline without a formal extension having been submitted to and approved by ARConnect



2.2. Speed, latency, and other technical capabilities

2

- Applicants will provide technical specifications for all planned technologies. Any bid to deploy XGS-PON fiber technology will receive the full two points. Bids to deploy non-XGS-PON fiber will receive 1.5 points. Bids to deploy non-fiber technology will receive points as follows:
 - 1000/500 Mbps: one point
 - 400/200 Mbps: 0.5 points
- Technology with more than 100 milliseconds of latency will be awarded zero points
- Applications must also include a reasonable explanation of how they will add incremental capacity as new customers are added¹

1. ARConnect retains the right to review and request modifications to these plans prior to awarding points for this criterion

How scoring is done: Scoring Rubric deep-dive (3/4)

Additional criteria

Points available

Determination process



3.1. Workforce support

5

Five points will be granted to applicants that provide plans to commit to additional workforce support, as described in Section 2.8.2 of IPvII. Applicants can receive points for any combination of the below measures:

- Collaboration with apprenticeship programs offering support services
- Commitment to hiring a local workforce, with particular focus on rural and high poverty areas
- Financial support from sub-grantee for statewide centers providing wraparound services, including childcare, transportation, and mentorship for employees on BEAD-related projects
- Provision of training programs for software, radio frequency, and field engineers through scholarships and student stipends at community colleges
- Implementation of in-house training and certification programs covering areas such as fiber optics, cybersecurity, and other telecommunications and broadband digital skills
- Facilitation of guaranteed letters of commitment with state technical colleges, demonstrating good-faith efforts through letters of intent to hire Arkansan graduates
- Proposals to identify new sources of workforce, such as recent graduates and ex-convict populations



3.2 Scale of geographic coverage

5

Applicants will score additional points, up to a maximum of five points, for proposing project areas that cover a larger number of locations (BSLs and CAls) within a given county

- Any applicant serving 100% of locations within any county in their bid will receive five points
- Any applicants serving less than 100% of locations in their covered counties will be awarded points as per table provided in IPvII (and Applicant Primer)

How scoring is done: Scoring Rubric deep-dive (4/4)

Additional criteria	Points available	Determination process
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3.3. Inclusion of zero-bid CBGs

5

Applicants will receive points based on the number of zero-bid CBGs they include in their tranche two bid. Each zero-bid CBG will be worth one-half point.



3.4. Local coordination

2.5

Applicants are encouraged to solicit letters of support from a list of local governments. Eligible local government officials could include the following individuals

- State: State Representative; State Senator
- County: County Judge; Justice of the Peace
- Municipality: Mayor; Member of City Council
- School District: Member of the School Board

Applicants will receive an additional half point, up to a maximum of 2.5 points, for each letter of support filed.



3.5. Weather-resilient broadband infrastructure

2.5

Applicants will receive up to 2.5 points for deployment plans that include recommended weather resiliency measures:

- 1 point for achieving 85% or higher as share of fiber that is buried (vs aerial)
- 1 point for a weather mitigation plan (including network redundancy planning), and
- 0.5 points for committing to attend municipality emergency management meetings on an ongoing basis to coordinate timely restoration of service in the case of outages

Key questions as Applicants prepare for Tranche-1



1 How do we select project areas? What are the different rules to consider while selecting project areas?



2 What are all the requirements to complete a Tranche-1 Application?



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4 What is the minimum point threshold? How does it impact Applicants' bids?



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Deep-dive:

Minimum Point Threshold (MPT)



1 What is it:

- The minimum number of points which a noncompetitive bid must score in Tranche-1 to be considered a “Buy It Now” bid.
- The MPT is 47.5 points, which is 50% of the ninety-five scorable points in Tranche-1. ARConnect reserves the right to modify this number based on approval of IPvII.



2 How does it impact bids:

- MPT impacts only non-competitive bids (i.e., bids that do not overlap with any other bids); there is no impact on competitive bids
- A non-competitive bid must score equal to or higher than the MPT to be considered a Buy It Now bid (bid must also meet the other criteria that are required for Buy It Now bids)
- If a non-competitive bid scores less than the MPT, the bid will be Carried Forward to Tranche-2

Key questions as Applicants prepare for Tranche-1



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Deep-dive:

Reference Prices



1 What is it:

- Numbers published for each CBG with Eligible locations which are used for scoring Applicants' bids. The Reference Prices are based off the build cost data provided by Cost Quest, with a minimum Reference Price of \$50,000 per CBG
- Applicants' requested subsidies are not limited to the Reference Price numbers. They may request any amount of subsidy they deem necessary for their project area



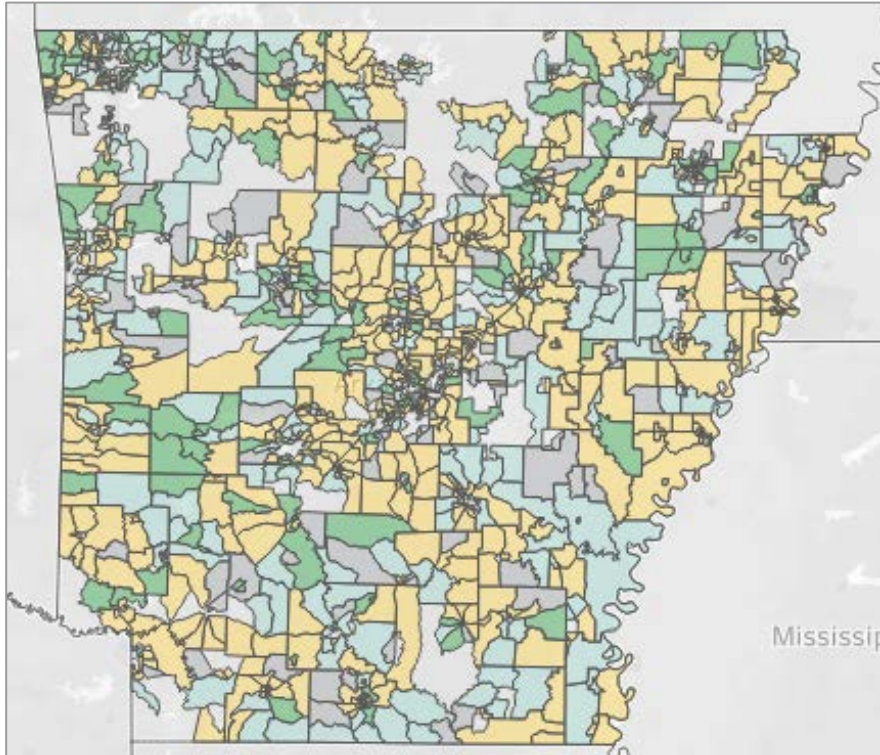
2 How does it impact bids:

- Used to score bids on a scale of 0 to 40 points (details in Scoring Rubric)
- In Tranche-1, a bid's requested subsidy must be lower than the sum of the included CBGs' Reference Prices to be considered for Buy It Now award
- Bids which request subsidy more than two times the Reference Price will not be considered for an award during Tranche-2

Interim period
(between Tranche-1 and Tranche-2)





ARConnect will publish an updated map displaying results from Tranche-1 with updated CBG statuses

Illustrative Map of Tranche-1 Results



CBG statuses after Tranche-1

- Awarded (unavailable)**
 - CBGs that were awarded in Tranche-1 and are no longer available for bidding
- Available Zero-bid**
 - Applicants will be allowed to add these areas to Carried Forward or new bids for additional points
- Available**
 - CBGs that received competitive bids in Tranche-1, but no winner was determined
- Ineligible**
 - CBGs that contain 100% served locations and are unavailable for bidding

 Awarded  Available Zero-bid  Available  Ineligible

Tranche-2

Applicants can modify their Carried Forward bids in two ways and / or submit new Tranche-2 bids

How to modify bids which receive Carried Forward status

- Increase the project area by adding CBGs and/or
- Decrease the overall subsidy request (if no CBGs are added)





How to submit new Tranche-2 bids

- Start new bid applications for Tranche-2 in the Grantor Portal
- **Note:** Applicants cannot include CBGs that are part of their Carried Forward bid(s) (if applicable)

Rules for ALL Tranche-2 bids (new and modified)

- Zero-bid CBGs do not need to be contiguous in a bid's project area
- All other project area rules from Tranche-1 apply (Section 2 in Applicant Primer)

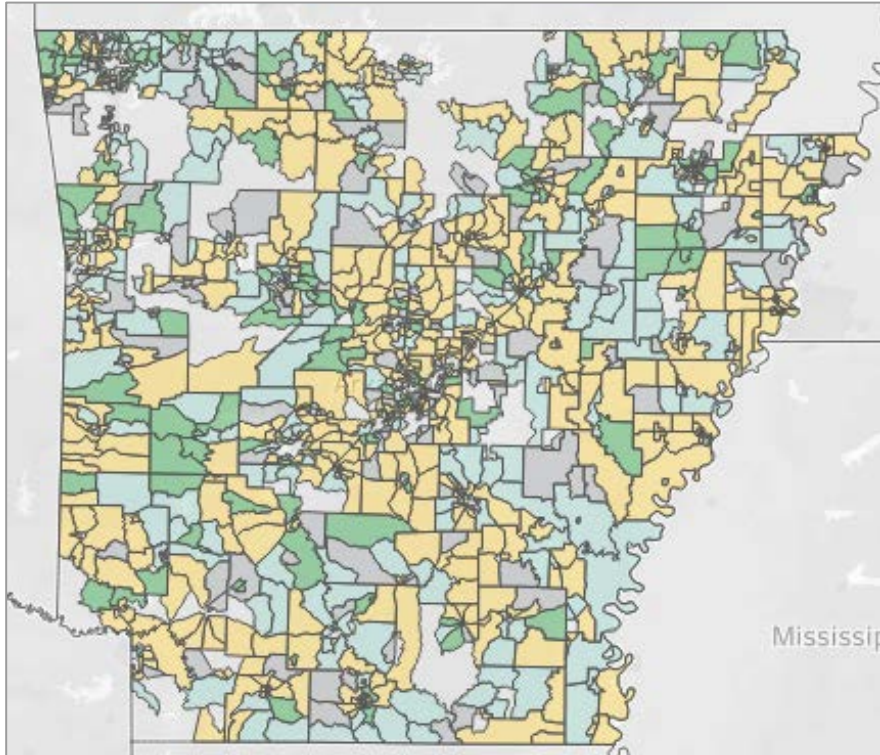
Tranche-2 bids will be scored and adjudicated by ARConnect (similar to Tranche-1) and applicants will be notified of results

-  Applicants submit new bids in Tranche-2 (or modify Carried Forward bids). Note, Carried Forward bids will automatically be submitted in Tranche-2, even if applicant takes no action.
-  ARConnect scores bids according to the Scoring Rubric (Applicant Primer Section 4)
-  ARConnect completes adjudication according to the Tranche-2 rules specified in the Applicant Primer (Section 2)
-  ARConnect notifies applicants of adjudication results through Grantor Portal

 Applicant action  ARConnect action



After Tranche-2, ARConnect will publish an updated map displaying results from Tranche-2 with updated CBG status

Illustrative Map of Tranche-2 Results



CBG statuses after Tranche-2


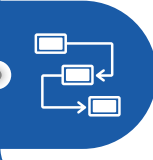


- Awarded (unavailable)**
 - CBGs that were awarded to winning bids and are no longer available for bidding or negotiations
- Available Zero-bid**
 - CBGs that received no bids. The state will proactively solicit applicants during negotiations to achieve 100% coverage
- Not Awarded**
 - CBGs that are partial award eligible. These CBGs will be discussed with partial-award eligible ISPs during negotiations
- Ineligible**
 - CBGs that contain 100% served locations and are unavailable for bidding

 Awarded  Available Zero-bid  Not Awarded  Ineligible

Next steps and key resources



Next steps
and key
resources

-  Applicants are also encouraged to download and review the latest version of the Applicant Primer from ARConnect Website (<https://broadband.arkansas.gov/bead/>)
-  ARConnect will continue to host weekly webinars on specific topics and deep-dives for the BEAD process
-  Webinars will be supplemented with
 - Weekly TA sessions on Fridays
 - FAQs document updated weekly
-  Applicants are encouraged to ask their questions across these sessions, or email them to broadband@arkansas.gov



ARConnect

The Arkansas State Broadband Office