



# ARConnect

The Arkansas State Broadband Office

**Arkansas BEAD Program**

# Applicant Primer

*Updated as of December 10, 2024*

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## Section 1: Overview

The Arkansas BEAD (Broadband Equity Access and Deployment) program aims to connect approximately 83,000 Eligible locations, including community anchor institutions (CAIs), with high-speed internet access. Since its establishment in 2019, the Arkansas State Broadband Office (ARConnect) has worked to support the deployment of fast, reliable, and affordable internet for all Arkansans. These efforts have brought internet access to nearly 130,000 homes and businesses already.

The purpose of the Applicant Primer is to provide detailed rules, guidelines, application materials, and data for prospective subgrantees. This document is designed to support applicants in preparing their bids and serve as a supplemental resource during the application process. The information provided in the Applicant Primer does not supersede any information included in the Initial Proposal Volume II (IPVII), which is pending final approval at this time. Once IPVII is approved and published, ARConnect may issue modifications or changes to the Applicant Primer if necessary.

ARConnect has also published a step-by-step guide for applicants to use when completing their pre-registration application in the Grantor Portal, which is where applicants will submit their pre-registration and bidding applications. Applicants should access this portal to receive application updates and notifications of adjudication results.

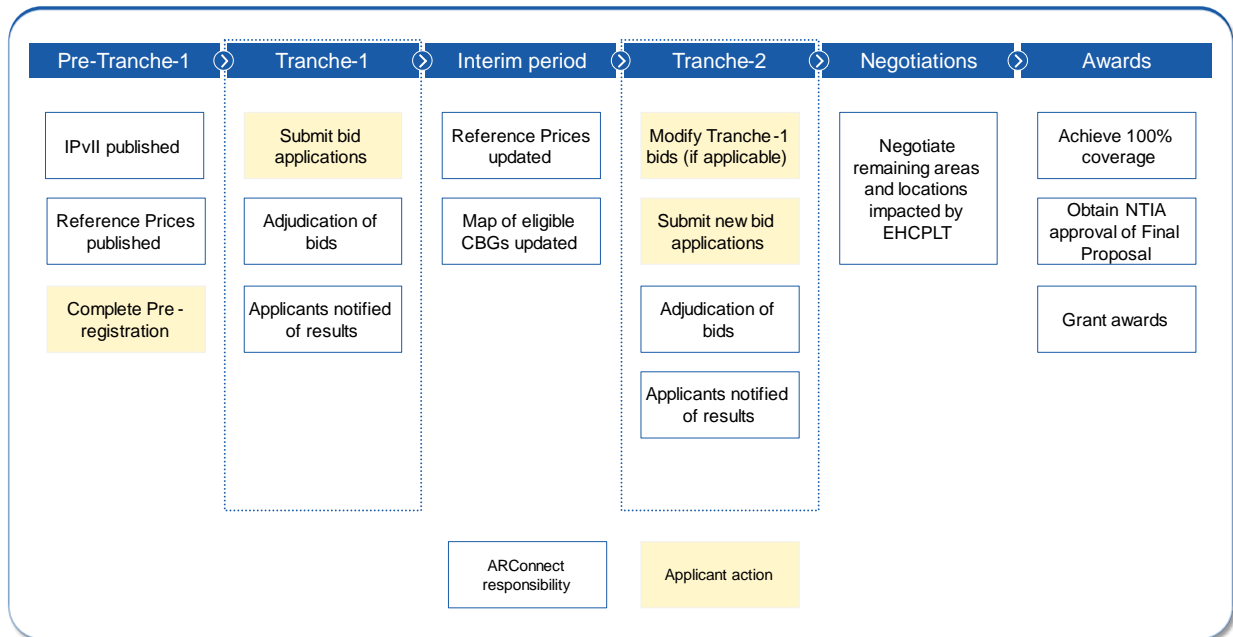
The Grantor Portal and user manual can be accessed at the following link: <https://register.broadband.arkansas.gov/register/bead>

ARConnect's overall BEAD subgrantee implementation timeline is set at 52 weeks from the date of IPVII approval. ARConnect will publish the Tranche-1 opening date and detailed timelines after IPVII approval.

## Section 2: The Application Process

The Arkansas BEAD application process consists of two tranches, each with a bidding and adjudication process, followed by a negotiations phase if necessary to achieve the 100% coverage objective of the program. Tranche-1 rules are designed to award best-offer bids which advance ARConnect’s goal to achieve 100% fiber connectivity. The remaining bids will be carried into Tranche-2. In Tranche-2, applicants will have the opportunity to modify their bids in an effort to increase their scores or submit entirely new bids. After Tranche-2 bidding is over, ARConnect will negotiate with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) on the remaining Census Block Groups (CBGs) with Eligible locations, if necessary. Also, after Tranche-2, ARConnect will assess whether it is necessary to apply the Extremely High Cost Per Location Threshold (EHCPLT) and to reconsider potential subgrant awards where fiber deployment is no longer cost effective given the state’s fixed budget for the BEAD program. After 100% coverage has been achieved, ARConnect will make the final determination of awards, subject to NTIA approving the Final Proposal.

**Figure 2a: Simplified Overview of the Application Process and Key Elements**



## Application terminology:

BEAD-eligible location: Any unserved or underserved location in which fixed broadband internet can be installed.

Competitive bids: Bids which have overlapping project areas for at least one common CBG.

Noncompetitive bid: A bid which does not overlap with any other bid.

Zero-Bid CBGs: CBGs which received zero qualifying bids as well as CBGs where a sole or losing bid did not meet “Buy It Now” qualifications. At the end of Tranche-2, any CBGs abandoned by applicants will also be considered Zero-Bid.

Minimum Point Threshold (MPT): 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.

Buy It Now (BIN) bids: “Buy It Now” is a bid classification for a winning bid at the end of Tranche-1. A bid needs to meet three criteria to be classified as a Buy It Now (BIN) bid:

1. Criteria 1: The bid is a Priority (i.e. fiber) bid
2. Criteria 2: The bid’s requested subsidy is lower than the sum of the included CBGs’ Reference Prices for the bid’s project area, AND
3. Criteria 3:
  - a. If it is a Noncompetitive bid, a BIN bid must score equal to or higher than the Minimum Point Threshold (MPT)
  - b. If a Competitive bid, a BIN bid must score ten points or 15% higher than the next-highest scoring bid

BIN eligible bid applicants will be notified of their award at their Tranche-1 requested subsidy and for their proposed project area.

Carried Forward bids: These bids did not overlap with any awarded bids in Tranche-1. These bids have some restrictions in Tranche-2.

Extremely High Cost Per Location Threshold (EHCPLT): The BEAD subsidy cost per location above which an Eligible Entity (in this case, ARConnect) may decline to select a proposal if use of an alternative technology meeting the BEAD Program’s technical requirements would be less expensive.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/BEAD%20NOFO.pdf>

## What to expect during the BEAD process

### **1. Preparing for Tranche-1**

**Applicants must complete the pre-registration application to establish eligibility and to be considered for an award during the bidding process.** The pre-registration application opened on July 8, 2024. It is highly advised that all pre-registration applications be submitted prior to the start of Tranche-1 bidding.

The pre-registration application can be accessed through the Grantor Portal at the following link: <https://register.broadband.arkansas.gov/register/bead>

Fiber, non-fiber, and alternative technologies will be allowed to bid in Tranche-1. However, only fiber bids may qualify as a “Buy It Now” bid.

### Defining the project area

The application process uses Census Block Groups (CBGs) as the basic geographic unit to define project areas for broadband deployment. This allows applicants to apply for subgrants covering specific, manageable areas, ensuring precise targeting of unserved and underserved locations.

### Project area rules

- 1. Applicants will submit bids for project areas comprising one or more CBGs, and bids must include all eligible locations within a selected CBG.** In other words, applicants are not permitted to bid on partial or bisected CBGs. Therefore, if an applicant bids to provide broadband to any locations within a CBG, the bid must account for all BEAD-eligible locations within that CBG.
- 2. An applicant may include the same CBG in a maximum of three bids in Tranche-1.**
- 3. Project areas must be contiguous, which is defined as sharing any amount of border, including a single point or corner.** The Grantor Portal which hosts the application is designed so that an applicant will build the application project area by selecting which contiguous CBGs they would like to include in their bid. In addition, if two or more CBGs containing eligible locations do not border each other but both share a border with a third CBG that does not contain any eligible locations, the set of CBGs is considered contiguous. In Tranche-2, applicants may add non-contiguous Zero-Bid CBGs to their project areas for additional points.

**4. When a CBG sits within the boundaries of another CBG, the applicant must include both CBGs in its project area if bidding for either.**

**2. Evaluation of Tranche-1 bids**

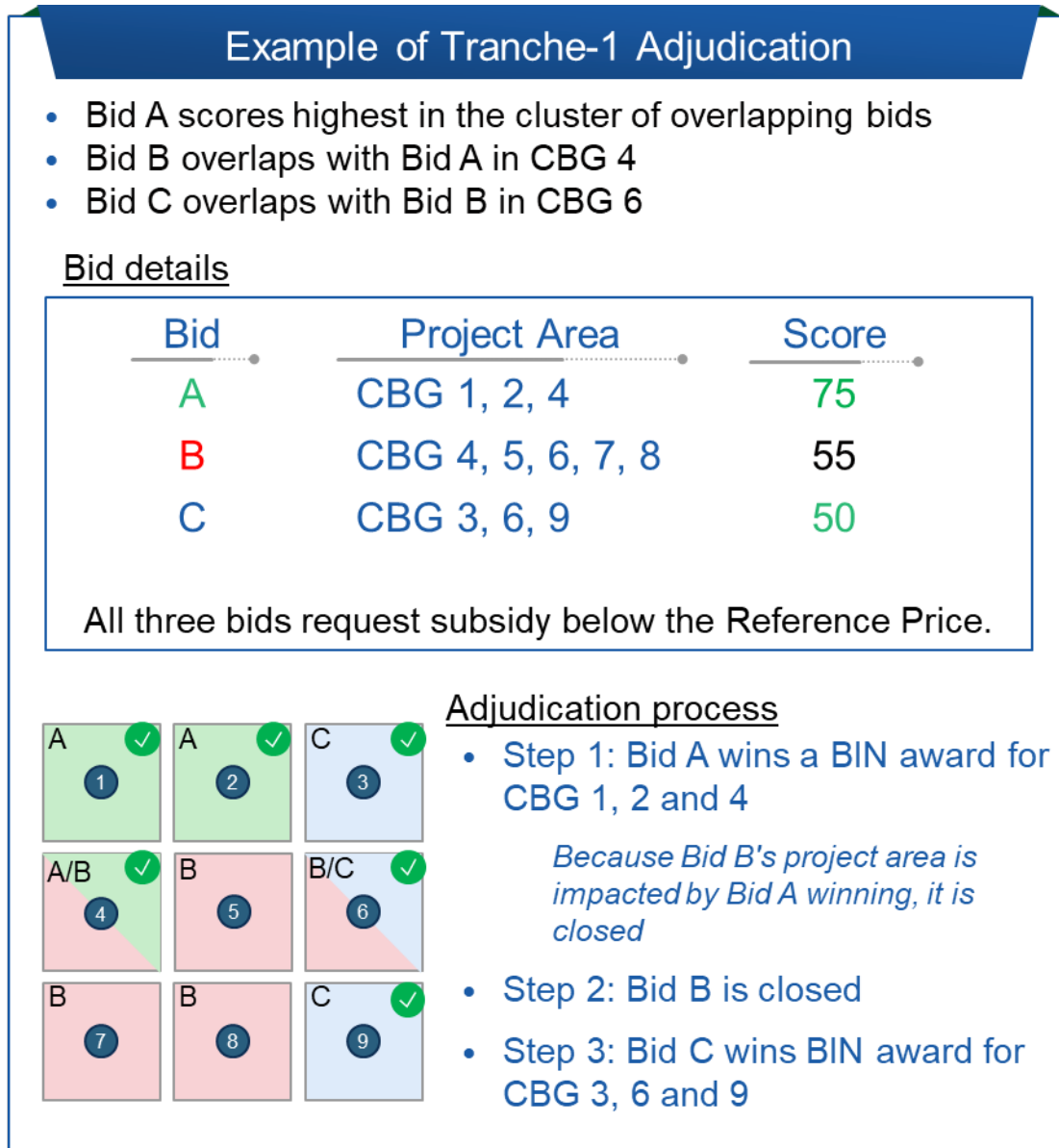
During Tranche-1, priority (fiber) and non-priority (non-fiber) bids will be scored according to the Scoring Rubric. Winning bids will be determined through an adjudication process, which has the following rules:

- Priority bids will only be compared to other priority bids and are adjudicated first. Competitive non-priority bids will only be deconflicted once all priority bids have been adjudicated.
- Adjudication begins by identifying the highest scoring bid and determining its status. All the Competitive bids that are impacted by the highest scoring bid are closed. This process is repeated for all overlapping project areas.
- Winning bids are bids that meet BIN criteria. These bids are awarded their entire project areas.
- Bids that overlap with BIN bids are closed, because part(s) of the project area has been lost to the BIN bid. Since a bid is the unit of adjudication in Tranche-1 and cannot be broken into smaller parts, this bid cannot continue and is eliminated from the adjudication process.
- All other bids that do not meet BIN criteria and do not overlap with BIN bids are Carried Forward to Tranche-2 and cannot be withdrawn.
- Non-priority bids and alternative technologies will not be awarded in Tranche-1.
- Bids which request subsidy more than two times the Reference Price will not be considered for an award during Tranche-1 and Tranche-2.

Applicants in Tranche-1 will be notified of their results once adjudication is complete, and a new map of eligible CBGs will be published prior to Tranche-2.

There will be several scenarios which emerge that will require deconfliction. The following figure provides a visual example of deconfliction for one scenario.

**Figure 2a: Adjudication of priority bids in Tranche-1 (Example Scenario)**



### 3. Preparing for Tranche-2

Updated Reference Prices will be published prior to Tranche-2 bidding, where ARConnect may increase Reference Prices in Zero-Bid CBGs. Tranche-2 bids will be scored against the updated Reference Prices.

A new map will also be published by ARConnect which displays the following areas:



1. Awarded CBGs: These CBGs are part of a BIN bid from Tranche-1 and, therefore, are not eligible for bidding in Tranche-2.
2. Zero-bid CBGs: These CBGs are considered Zero-Bid CBGs by definition and are eligible for bidding in Tranche-2. An additional half point will be added for each Zero-Bid CBG added to the project area (not to exceed five additional points).
3. The remaining available CBGs displayed on the map received Competitive bids in Tranche-1, but no winner was determined. These CBGs are eligible for bidding in Tranche-2.

### Tranche-2 eligibility rules

Applicants who do not bid in Tranche-1 will not be allowed to bid in Tranche-2. Applicants who submitted bids in Tranche-1 will be allowed to submit new bids in Tranche-2.

### Tranche-2 bidding rules

Similar to Tranche-1, an applicant may bid on a given CBG in a maximum of three bids per Tranche. However, if an applicant has any Carried Forward bids from Tranche-1, the applicant may not include any CBGs which are part of their Carried Forward project area(s) in any new bids. There are two types of bids in Tranche-2, subject to different rules. See the following rules for applicants below:

#### Type 1: Carried Forward bids:

Who does this apply to: This scenario applies to applicants who did not meet BIN criteria in Tranche-1, but their entire project area is still available and eligible for bidding in Tranche-2 (meaning the bid did not overlap anywhere with a BIN bid). Applicants will be notified if they have a Carried Forward bid going into Tranche-2.

Rule: Carried Forward bids cannot be abandoned and will automatically be resubmitted in Tranche-2. **This means these bids will automatically appear in the Tranche-2 bidding adjudication process, even if the applicant takes no action.** Applicants may modify their Carried Forward bids by either:

- Adding Competitive CBGs that are contiguous to the Carried Forward project area
- Adding any Zero-Bid CBGs to the project area (Zero-Bid CBGs do not need to be contiguous to Carried Forward project area)

If an applicant does not modify their project area by increasing the number of CBGs, the requested subsidy amount must either decrease or remain the same. Bids which request subsidy more than two times the Reference Price will not be considered for an award in Tranche-2, which applies to modified bids.

Type 2: All new Tranche-2 bids:

Who does this apply to: All applicants who submitted a bid in Tranche-1.

Rule: All bidders that participated in Tranche-1 can submit entirely new bids in Tranche-2. A new Tranche-2 bid can include both Competitive CBGs and Zero-Bid CBGs from Tranche-1. The new project area must follow contiguity rules for Competitive CBGs (except for Zero-Bid CBGs, which can be non-contiguous). However, a bidder cannot submit a new bid which includes CBGs that are part of the Carried Forward bid project area. Bids which request more than two times the Reference Price will not be considered for an award in Tranche-2.

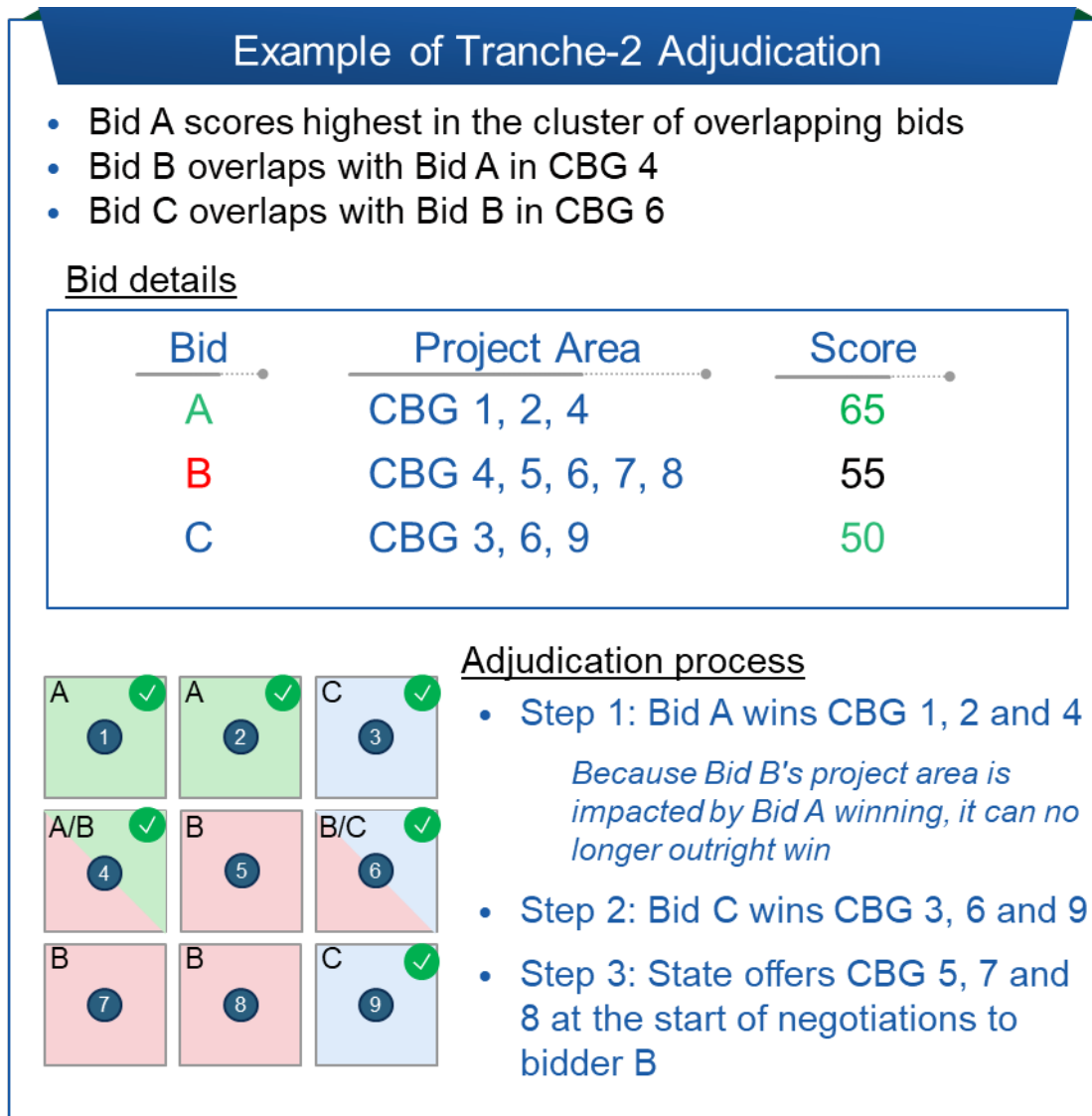
#### **4. Evaluation of Tranche-2 bids**

During Tranche-2, priority (fiber) and non-priority (non-fiber) bids will be scored according to the Scoring Rubric, and bids will receive a new Tranche-2 score. Winning bids will be determined through an adjudication process, which has the following rules:

- Priority bids will only be compared to other priority bids and are adjudicated first. Competitive non-priority bids will only be deconflicted once all priority bids have been adjudicated.
- Adjudication begins by identifying the highest scoring bid in a group of overlapping bids. The highest scoring bid will win its entire project area.
- Noncompetitive bids which do not have any overlap will win their entire project area.
- Bids which overlapped with a winning bid will be eligible for Partial Awards in remaining CBGs where they are the sole bidder or highest scoring bidder.
- If an applicant rejects the project area offered in a Partial Award at the end of Tranche-2, the state may solicit bids from and negotiate with other ISPs during negotiations.
- All CBGs which did not receive any bids in Tranche-2 are classified as Zero-Bid CBGs and are available during negotiations.
- Bids which request subsidy more than two times the Reference Price will not be considered for an award in Tranche-2.
- Alternative technologies will not be awarded during Tranche-2.

There will be several scenarios which emerge that will require deconfliction. The following figure provides a visual example of the deconfliction process for one scenario.

**Figure 2b: Adjudication in Tranche-2 (Example Scenario)**



### 5. Negotiating remaining CBGs

After awards are determined following Tranche-2 adjudication, ARConnect will enter a negotiations phase, where ARConnect will directly solicit bids for any remaining unawarded CBGs.

After Tranche-2, ARConnect may also apply the EHCPLT to ensure BEAD funds are sufficient to deploy broadband to all unserved and underserved locations and that all per-location subsidy amounts are reasonable. Therefore, ARConnect may also be required to negotiate on areas where the per-location cost to serve is over the EHCPLT. In these areas, ARConnect will allow applicants to propose alternative technologies, including hybrid mixes, or to

propose and justify locations that should be carved out due to extremely unfavorable economics for terrestrial-based service.

## **6. Maintaining compliance (for award recipients)**

Once selected, award recipients will be expected to maintain compliance according to the certifications provided during the application phase.

ARConnect will provide supplemental guidance for the requirements and procedures for funding disbursement and other aspects of subgrant compliance as part of provider technical assistance prior to Tranche-1.

Failure to sign a grant agreement for projects awarded through this application process may result in the organization being excluded from future ARConnect grant programs.

## Section 3: Applicant Checklist

ARConnect recognizes that there are several requirements which applicants must track in order to submit a complete application. For this reason, applicants are encouraged to utilize the following applicant checklist as a starting point to ensure that applications are complete and that maximum points can be earned. This checklist summarizes the requirements of a complete application (excluding the pre-registration application) as stated in the IPvII. Applicants are encouraged to view IPvII for more details on these checklist items.

Additionally, applicants should refer to the Pre-Application Prep List on the Grantor Portal to ensure all requirements of the pre-registration application are completed prior to the close of Tranche-1.

### Application Checklist

**1.0** Requested subsidy

**Description:** Submit requested subsidy amount for bid (1 per application project area comprising one or more CBGs). An applicant 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.

**Where to refer for more details:** 2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (1.1)

**2.0** Baseline price for highest tier of service

**Description:** Commit to baseline price for highest tier of service.

**Where to refer for more details:** 2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (1.2)

**3.0** Federal labor laws and forward-looking plans

**Description:** Demonstrate compliance with federal labor laws over the previous 3 years and provide forward - looking plans for compliance, or sign certification of future compliance and provide forward - looking plans for compliance to receive ten points.

**Where to refer for more details:** 2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (1.3)

**4.0** Planned deployment timeline

**Description:** Provide planned deployment timeline, which spans no more than forty-eight months from time of receiving notice of award (three additional points)

for timelines less than twenty-four months). Applicants will certify their planned deployment timeline 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.

**Where to refer for more details:** 2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (2.1)

**5.0** Technical specifications for technologies

**Description:** Provide technical specifications for technologies along with an explanation of how the applicant will add capacity as new customers are added.

**Where to refer for more details:** 2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (2.2)

**6.0** Workforce support

**Description:** Submit plans to commit to additional workforce support. Responses should describe the set of measures that applicants will take to foster and recruit a qualified workforce for their projects.

**Where to refer for more details:** 2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (3.1)

**7.0** Scale of geographic coverage

**Description:** 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.

**Where to refer for more details:** 2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (3.2)

**8.0** Letters of support from local governments

**Description:** Solicit and file letters of support from local governments (half a point per letter; max of two and half points).

**Where to refer for more details:** 2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (3.4)

**9.0** Contiguous project areas

**Description:** Define a contiguous application project area using Census Block Groups.

**Where to refer for more details:** 2.4.6

**10.0** Weather resiliency plans and certifications

**Description:** Applicants will receive up to two and a half points for deployment plans that include recommended weather resiliency measures, including one point for achieving 85% or higher as share of fiber that is buried (vs aerial), one point for

a weather mitigation plan (including network redundancy planning), and half a point for committing to attend municipality emergency management meetings on an ongoing basis.

**Where to refer for more details:** 2.4.2.2 Scoring rubric (3.5), 2.11.1D

□ **11.0** Certify future Letter of commitment from eligible bank

**Description:** 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.

**Where to refer for more details:** 2.4.11B, C

## Section 4: Additional Resources and Scoring Rubric

The Grantor Portal hosts additional digital resources, such as the Tranche-1 Reference Prices for each CBG and the unserved, underserved and CAI datasets. Please see below for an explanation of these files.

### Draft Reference Prices

This file contains the Reference Prices for all CBGs, along with the number of Eligible locations in each CBG. Note, these numbers are not finalized, but they can be used by applicants for early-stage bid preparation. The final Reference Prices will be updated when the list of Eligible locations is finalized at the conclusion of the Challenge Process and before Tranche-1 opens. The Reference Prices are based off the build cost data provided by CostQuest, 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. Scores will be assigned according to the Scoring Rubric, and the rules of adjudication, outlined in Section 2, will apply.

### List of Location IDs (Unserved, Underserved, Served (Part 1 and 2))

These four files include all location IDs of the unserved, underserved, and served locations. The list of served locations was split into two parts, due to the large number of rows. Note, the list of Eligible locations will be finalized at the conclusion of the Challenge Process. These lists reflect Eligible locations as of 08/20/24, while the Challenge Process results are pending approval by NTIA.

Next to the location ID, applicants will see a number (0, 1 or 2). This number identifies the classification of the location as served, underserved, or unserved.

Key: 2 = served; 1 = underserved; 0 = unserved.

### Additional publications and clarifications

ARConnect will publish additional supplemental materials and dates prior to the opening of Tranche-1, so applicants are encouraged to stay engaged on the ARConnect website as they prepare for bidding. Please expect additional clarifications and updates to the Applicant Primer after approval of IPvII.



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	<p>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.</p>
1.2. Affordability	25	<p>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<sup>2</sup>:</p> <p>Priority bids (1/1 Gbps service): \$85 per month</p> <p>Non-priority bids (100/20 Mbps): \$37 per month</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

<sup>2</sup> The price for a 1 Gbps plan is guided by applying 2% of household income to internet service, based on U.S. Census Bureau data on Arkansas median income; the step-down of prices for lower-tier service follows prevailing relative prices in Little Rock, as of September 2023.

Primary criteria	Points available	Determination process
		Applicants will be permitted to adjust their plan costs annually based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' annual Consumer Price Index. Affordable plan commitments will last per the term of Federal interest, as determined by the NTIA.
1.3. Fair labor practices	10	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 to be in compliance.

Secondary criteria	Points available	Determination process
2.1. Speed to deployment	3	Applicants will provide their planned deployment timeline as part of their bid. Timelines should span no more than 48 months from the date of the applicant receiving notice of their final award. Any timeline that is shorter than 24 months will receive three additional points on the scoring rubric. 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	<p>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:</p> <p>1000/500 Mbps: one point 400/200 Mbps: 0.5 points</p> <p>Technology with more than 100 milliseconds of latency will be awarded zero points.</p> <p>Applications must also include a reasonable explanation of how they will add incremental capacity as new customers are added.</p>

Secondary criteria	Points available	Determination process
		ARConnect retains the right to review and request modifications to these plans prior to awarding points for this criterion.

Additional criteria	Points available	Determination process
3.1. Workforce support	5	<p>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. An optional question regarding workforce support plans will be included in the application; responses should describe the set of measures that applicants will take to foster and recruit a qualified workforce for their projects. ARConnect reserves the right to review workforce support plans for feasibility and send comments back to applicants for revisions, should the workforce support plans prove insufficient.</p> <p>Applicants can receive points for any combination of the below measures, which together present a comprehensive plan for meeting their workforce needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration with apprenticeship programs offering support services such as project management resources, computing services, and back-end administration.</li> <li>• Commitment to hiring a local workforce, with particular focus on rural and high poverty areas.</li> <li>• Financial support from sub-grantee for statewide centers providing wraparound services, including childcare, transportation, and mentorship for employees on BEAD-related projects.</li> <li>• Provision of training programs for software, radio frequency, and field engineers through scholarships and student stipends at community colleges</li> <li>• Implementation of in-house training and certification programs covering areas such as fiber optics, cybersecurity, and other telecommunications and broadband digital skills</li> <li>• Facilitation of guaranteed letters of commitment with state technical colleges, demonstrating good-faith efforts through letters of intent to hire Arkansan graduates.</li> </ul>

Additional criteria	Points available	Determination process												
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposals to identify new sources of workforce, such as recent graduates and ex-convict populations.</li> </ul>												
3.2 Scale of geographic coverage	5	<p>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. Applicants will indicate which counties are included in their bids. ARConnect will identify the county with the largest number of locations served by the applicant's bid <i>or</i> identify any county within a bid where 100% of eligible locations are served by the bid. Any applicant serving 100% of locations within <i>any</i> 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 follows:</p> <p>Points available for the number of locations served by the proposed bid.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="591 877 1182 1360"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="591 877 1049 989">No. of locations within a county with the most coverage</th> <th data-bbox="1049 877 1182 989">Points</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="591 989 1049 1062">3,000</td> <td data-bbox="1049 989 1182 1062">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="591 1062 1049 1136">2,000</td> <td data-bbox="1049 1062 1182 1136">4</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="591 1136 1049 1209">1,500</td> <td data-bbox="1049 1136 1182 1209">3</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="591 1209 1049 1283">1,000</td> <td data-bbox="1049 1209 1182 1283">2</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="591 1283 1049 1360">500</td> <td data-bbox="1049 1283 1182 1360">1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	No. of locations within a county with the most coverage	Points	3,000	5	2,000	4	1,500	3	1,000	2	500	1
No. of locations within a county with the most coverage	Points													
3,000	5													
2,000	4													
1,500	3													
1,000	2													
500	1													
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	<p>Applicants are encouraged to solicit letters of support from a list of local governments. Eligible local government officials could include the following individuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State: State Representative; State Senator</li> <li>County: County Judge; Justice of the Peace</li> <li>Municipality: Mayor; Member of City Council</li> <li>School District: Member of the School Board</li> </ul> <p>Applicants will receive an additional half point, up to a maximum of 2.5 points, for each letter of support filed.</p>												

Additional criteria	Points available	Determination process
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, including 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. See Section 2.11.1 of IPvII for additional information on weather resiliency.

## Section 5: Application Questions

Applicants are encouraged to review the list of draft application questions below to prepare for the opening of Tranche-1. Note, these questions are subject to change. ARConnect will release a full Grantor Portal User Guide that will provide additional information on application questions and portal functionality.

### Section 1 – Select Locations

Select one or more census block groups to define your proposed project area. Users may select census block groups by clicking directly on a map, entering census block group IDs into a searchable list, or uploading a list in csv/xlsx format.

Project areas must comprise contiguous census block groups and applicants must service all eligible locations within its boundary.

Note, a CBG upload file template will be available in the application portal.

### Section 2 – Project Technical Details

1. Will you be serving all eligible locations in your project area with one technology type or multiple technology types?

- *Answer Format: Single-value Selection*

1a. Please select your technology type for this bid

- *Answer Format: Dropdown Menu Selection (XGS-PON fiber technology, non-XGS-PON fiber technology, non-fiber technology 1000/500 Mbps, non-fiber technology 400/200 Mbps, Other Reliable, or Other Alternative)*

1.b. Please disclose the latency (in milliseconds) of the broadband service to be provided for this bid for [selected technology type(s)] (as measured and/or reported under the applicable rules).

- *Answer Format: Textbox*

1c. Please commit to a baseline price (per month) for the highest tier of service that you will offer in this bid's project area (this will determine your Affordability score in accordance with Section 1.2 of the Scoring Rubric). The reference price for non-priority technology (100/20 Mbps) is \$37/month. The reference price for priority technology (1/1 Gbps) is \$85/month. In accordance with IPvII, applicants will be permitted to adjust their plan costs annually based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor

Statistics' annual Consumer Price Index. Affordable plan commitments will last per the term of Federal interest, as determined by the NTIA.

- *Answer Format: Textbox*

2. What are your procedures for adding incremental capacity to your network as new customers are added to the project area (300 words maximum)?

- *Answer Format: Textbox*

3. Please acknowledge that ARConnect retains the right to further review and request modifications to these plans at the provisional selectee stage.

- *Answer Format: Checkbox*

4. Please provide your planned deployment timeline in months for this bid (from the date of applicant receiving notice of their final award). Please note that timelines shall not span more than 48 months from the date of signing the Subaward Agreement.

- *Answer Format: Dropdown Menu Selection (1-48 months)*

5. Certify acknowledgement that the final agreement will include enforceable penalties for non-performance of final commitments.

- *Answer Format: Checkbox*

### Section 3 – Commercial Details

6. Please enter your requested BEAD Funding amount for this bid's project area.

- *Answer Format: Textbox*

### Section 4 – Weather Resiliency

7. Please upload your weather mitigation plan, where you describe your network redundancy planning (2 page maximum)

- *Answer Format: File Upload*

8. Please acknowledge that the state may request further information or evidence of your weather mitigation plan if provisionally selected.

- *Answer Format: Checkbox*

9. Will you achieve 85% or higher as share of fiber that is buried (as opposed to aerial) for this bid?

- *Answer Format: Yes/No*

10. Do you commit to attending municipality emergency management meetings on an ongoing basis to coordinate timely restoration of service in the case of outages for this bid's project area?

- *Answer Format: Yes/No*

#### Section 5 – Local Coordination

11. Please download the template then upload letters of support from local governments for this bid. Please note, you can upload a maximum of 5 Letters of Support.

- *Answer Format: File Upload*

Note, the Letter of Support template is available on the [ARConnect website](#).

#### Section 6 – Fair Labor Practices

12. How many years of operational experience do you have?

- *Answer Format: Single-value Selection (3+ years or Less than 3 years)*

For 3+ years:

12a. Please provide examples and brief descriptions of your historical compliance to federal labor and employment laws over the past three years. Please cite the specific federal labor and employment laws. Ensure your response remains in the context of deployment and operation of existing broadband services. (300 words max)

- *Answer Format: Textbox*

For Less than 3 years:

12a. Do you certify your future compliance to federal labor laws?

- *Answer Format: Yes/No*

12b. Please upload here any supporting documents which help demonstrate your future plans for federal labor law compliance.

- *Answer Format: File Upload*

13. Please certify that, if provisionally selected, you will provide the information specified in Initial Proposal Volume II section 2.7.1 to demonstrate your commitments to future compliance with federal labor and employment laws. This includes ensuring the future compliance of your contractors and subcontractors.

- *Answer Format: Checkbox*

#### Section 7 – Workforce Support



14. Have you collaborated with apprenticeship programs offering support services such as project management resources, computing services, and back-end administration?

- *Answer Format: Yes/No*

14a. (If yes) Please provide the name(s) and website(s) (if applicable) of the apprenticeship programs.

- *Answer Format: Textbox*

15. Are you committed to hiring a local workforce, with particular focus on rural and high-poverty areas?

- *Answer Format: Yes/No*

15a. (If yes) Please provide an explanation (200 words max).

- *Answer Format: Textbox*

16. Have you provided financial support to statewide centers providing wraparound services, including childcare, transportation, and mentorship for employees on BEAD-related projects?

- *Answer Format: Yes/No*

16a. (If yes) Please provide the name(s) and website(s) of the statewide centers.

- *Answer Format: Textbox*

17. Do you provide training for software, radio frequency, and field engineers through scholarships and student stipends at community colleges?

- *Answer Format: Yes/No*

17a. (If yes) Please describe the training provided (200 words max).

- *Answer Format: Textbox*

18. Do you offer any in-house training and certification programs covering areas such as fiber optics, cybersecurity, and other telecommunications and broadband digital skills?

- *Answer Format: Yes/No*

18a. (If yes) Please provide the names(s) and website(s) of the training or certification program(s).

- *Answer Format: Textbox*

19. Do you provide guaranteed letters of commitment with state technical colleges, demonstrating good-faith efforts through letters of intent to hire Arkansas graduates?

- *Answer Format: Yes/No*

19a. (If yes) Please provide the name(s) and website(s) of the state technical college(s).

- *Answer Format: Yes/No*

20. What steps do you take to identify new sources of workforce, such as recent graduates and ex-convict populations? Provide a brief description of 2-3 steps or initiatives set up to identify new sources of workforce.

- *Answer Format: Textbox*

### Section 8 – Letter of Credit

21. Please certify your commitment to, if provisionally selected, provide in accordance with the requirements of the BEAD NOFO at 72-73, § IV.D.2.a.ii and the BEAD Letter of Credit Waiver either (a) a Letter of Credit and bankruptcy opinion letter or (b) a performance bond by a deadline identified by ARConnect that will proceed entry into a subgrant agreement.

- *Answer Format: Checkbox*

## Final remarks

While this Applicant Primer should be used as the primary guide for applicants to understand the bidding process and rules, none of the information provided here supersedes any information in the Initial Proposal Volume II. The Applicant Primer is provided to applicants by ARConnect to help facilitate applicant success and promote the user-friendliness of the process.