

Via Email

Glen E. Howie
State Broadband Director
The Arkansas State Broadband Office
Arkansas Department of Commerce
1 Commerce Way
Little Rock, Arkansas 72202

January 6, 2025

Statement from the State Broadband Director

concerning

Good-Faith Efforts in Arkansas' BEAD Program

Pre-Registered Internet Service Provider:

The Arkansas State Broadband Office (ARConnect) thanks you for pre-registering to participate in Arkansas' Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program. Our team looks forward to the launch of Tranche-1 on Tuesday, January 7, 2025.

When developing this program, ARConnect focused on creating one of the most business friendly and investment-attractive BEAD programs in the country, and early indicators are positive. As of the close of pre-registration last Friday, January 3, 47 internet service providers (ISPs) and one partnership completed the pre-registration process. This number is a positive, early indicator of high interest in Arkansas' BEAD Program, indicating that ISPs and investors have been receptive to Arkansas' competitive, free-market program design, with a focus on reducing the bureaucratic and administrative burden throughout the entirety of the process, on both ARConnect and potential ISP applicants.

However, while this positive reception is encouraging, the State of Arkansas must do all it can to ensure good-faith efforts on behalf of program participants and that, ultimately, the program and its design is not harmed by intentional bad-faith efforts resulting in fraud, waste, and/or abuse. Good-faith efforts on behalf of program participants are critical to maintaining the integrity of the program, as well as fulfilling the requirement placed on Arkansas by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to operate a fair, open, transparent, and competitive grant application process.

ARConnect fully expects that program participants will fulfill their commitments, as outlined in the application process.

Throughout the entirety of Arkansas' BEAD Program, from pre-registration through to project completion (and monitoring during the federal interest period), should ARConnect suspect that an intentional bad-faith effort has occurred resulting in fraud, waste, and/or abuse, the office reserves the right to conduct an internal review of the matter. Should an internal review by ARConnect find cause to

Naturally connected.

suspect that an intentional bad-faith effort has, in fact, occurred resulting in fraud, waste, and/or abuse, the matter could be referred to the proper federal and/or state investigative authority.

Examples of intentional bad-faith efforts resulting in fraud, waste, and/or abuse on behalf of program participants could include, but would not be limited to, the following:

- Intentionally omitting or otherwise providing false or misleading information, or intentionally acting in a manner inconsistent with federal and/or state program requirements during any process or phase of the program, including but not limited to, the pre-registration, application, negotiation, grant agreement execution, construction, and/or reporting processes and phases (including the federal interest period)

The intentional actions outlined above, as well as others not listed, could be interpreted as acting in bad faith and potentially result in fraud, waste, and/or abuse – and strike at the heart of Arkansas’ competitive, free-market program design.

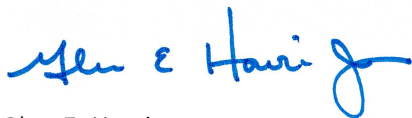
Throughout the life of the Arkansas BEAD Program, should you suspect that intentional bad-faith efforts resulting in fraud, waste, and/or abuse have occurred or are likely to occur on behalf of program participants, ARConnect encourages you to report it to our office. In such a case, please email us at broadbandconcerns@arkansas.gov. You may also contact the Arkansas Department of Inspector General and/or the U.S. Department of Commerce – Office of Inspector General.

ARConnect in no way expects intentional bad-faith efforts resulting in fraud, waste, and/or abuse on behalf of program participants. To the contrary, our team expects the Arkansas BEAD Program to be one of the most successful programs in the country, in large part to your commitment to participate in this process and put forth good-faith efforts.

We thank you for your open collaboration as we have prepared for the launch of this program and look forward to opening the Tranche-1 application window tomorrow afternoon.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this statement, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Kindest regards,



Glen E. Howie
State Broadband Director