The Arkansas BEAD Program

Technical Assistance | BB Round Guidance

JUNE 25, 2025
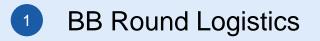
ARConnect
The Arkansas State Broadband Office

Agenda for today's session

1 BB Round Logistics

2 Optimizing BEAD Locations

3 Project Areas

4 Application Updates

5 Technology Neutrality + Priority Broadband Projects

6 Subgrantee Selection

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Restarting the Arkansas BEAD Program

- On June 6th, 2025, NTIA published the BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice (PN)

- This PN outlined new requirements for Eligible Entities to follow when implementing the BEAD Program

- The Arkansas State Broadband Office (ARConnect) will comply with this PN

- As required by the PN, ARConnect rescinds all preliminary selections under its previous subgrantee selection process

- ARConnect will conduct at least one additional subgrantee selection round for every BEAD-eligible location - the "Benefit of the Bargain" (BB) Round

BB Round Logistics | Major milestones and key dates

Activity/Milestone	Target Date(s)
Project Area Footprints (PAFs) Released	Jun. 30
BB Round Portal Demo	Jul. 2
Credential Registration for New Participants	Jul. 6
BB Round Pre-Registration	Jul. 7 – Jul. 14
BB Round Application Window	Jul. 7 – Jul. 14
Publication of high-level BB Round Results	Jul. 28
Negotiations (if needed)	Jul. 29 – Aug. 1
Final Proposal Public Comment Window	Aug. 11 – Aug. 25
Submission of Final Proposal to NTIA	Aug. 29

Note | All target dates are tentative and subject to change

BB Round Application Window
The Arkansas BEAD Program's Benefit of the Bargain (BB) round is tentatively scheduled to open for 7 calendar days, from Monday, July 7 to Monday, July 14

Pre-registration
Pre-registration will be reopened to all interested applicants and will run concurrently with the BB application window

Pre-registration is required only for new applicants who have not yet successfully pre-registered for the Arkansas BEAD Program

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Optimizing BEAD Locations | No changes to list of BEAD eligible locations prior to the opening of the BB round

BEAD eligible locations

ARConnect is not required to re-rerun the challenge process

All BEAD-eligible locations are available for bidding in the BB round

There will be no changes to the list of BEAD eligible locations prior to the opening of the BB round; the same 83,845 BEAD eligible locations will be available for bidding

5 processes to optimize BEAD locations

Include newly eligible locations
Change the BEAD eligibility status of locations no longer served due to a default or change in service area on a Federal enforceable commitment

Revise locations serviced by unlicensed fixed wireless
Account for locations with access to existing ULFW networks that meet BEAD technical requirements

Update per FCC Fabric v6
Remove locations that are no longer in FCC Location Fabric, are covered by an enforceable commitment, or are already served by qualifying non-subsidized broadband

Remove CAIs that don't meet IIJA statutory definition
Revise list of eligible CAIs to ensure their designations conform with the statutory definition of a CAI as established by the IIJA

Applicant true up process
Confirm location exclusions that should not have broadband connection, or do not need broadband

Completed, no impact to BEAD eligible locations   To be completed after BB round and prior to Final Proposal submission

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Project Areas | Project areas will consist of discrete Project Area Footprints (PAFs)

Project Area Footprints (PAFs)

Project areas will be distinct "Project Area Footprints" (PAFs) consisting of groupings of CBGs.

PAFs were determined based on a variety of factors, such as contiguity, levels of competition and interest in the previous subgrantee selection process, and geographical considerations

A roster of PAFs will be published prior to opening the BB round, with a target release date of June 30, 2025

Application Rules for PAFs

Applicants may bid on exactly one PAF per bid; PAFs may not be combined

Applicants may submit a maximum of 2 bids per PAF

Due to utilization of PAFs, participating applicants must submit new bids

ARConnect will allow applicants to propose to exclude select broadband serviceable locations that the applicant determines are excessively high-cost locations from the PAF

ARConnect will solicit bids during the BB Round from other potential applicants for any such eliminated BSL

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Application Updates | Non-statutory requirements have been eliminated from the Arkansas BEAD application process

ARConnect has **eliminated** the following non-statutory requirements from BEAD application scoring, subgrantee agreements, and subgrantee reporting requirements

- Labor, Employment, and Workforce Development Requirements
- Climate Change Requirements
- Open Access/Net Neutrality
- Local Coordination and Stakeholder Engagement
- Non-Traditional Broadband Providers
- Middle Class Affordability Plan
- Low-Cost Service Option
  - Note: Applicants must still comply with the statutory provisions to offer at least one low-cost service option, but ARConnect will not be using a formula to explicitly or implicitly set a low-cost service rate a subgrantee must offer.

ARConnect will release an updated Grantor Portal User Guide further detailing application questions and requirements prior to opening the BB round

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Priority Broadband Projects | ARConnect adopts the updated definition of a Priority Broadband Project, as described in the PN

Updated Priority definition

Priority Broadband Project

A project that provides broadband service at speeds of no less than 100 megabits per second for downloads and 20 megabits per second for uploads, has a latency less than or equal to 100 milliseconds, and can easily scale speeds over time to meet the evolving connectivity needs of households and businesses and support the deployment of 5G, successor wireless technologies, and other advanced services

Impacts of updated Priority definition

ARConnect adopts a technology neutral approach for its subgrantee selection process. This means that all broadband technologies that meet the performance requirements of the IIJA and the NOFO are eligible to participate in the BEAD Program

ARConnect will not categorically exclude any given technology and will only reject treatment of an application as a Priority Broadband Project if the project could not meet the statutory definition for a specific project area

Any applicant may seek to have ARConnect treat its application as a Priority Broadband Project regardless of the technology used. Applicants will submit their request for Priority status during the application process for each bid

Applicants will be required to provide supporting documentation sufficient for ARConnect to assess the network application and determine that the proposed network architecture for each specific project area meets this standard. To assist with this determination, ARConnect will require all applicants seeking Priority status to provide a Professional Engineer certification attesting to the accuracy of the scalability claims made in its application

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Subgrantee Selection | Summary of methodology for selection

Primary Criteria

In deciding among competing applications covering the same general project area, ARConnect will choose the option with the lowest cost based on minimal BEAD Program outlay

ARConnect will select the combination of project proposals with the lowest overall cost to the Program. When comparing competing proposals, ARConnect shall assess total BEAD funding required to complete the project and the cost to the Program per location

If an application to serve the same general project area proposes a project cost within 15% of the lowest-cost proposal received for that same general project area on a per BSL basis, ARConnect will evaluate such competing applications based on secondary criteria

Secondary Criteria

Preliminary Subgrantees

1
- For locations where ARConnect has already identified preliminarily selected subgrantees, ARConnect will select those applications in the BB Round.
- To be eligible, the BB round application technology type must match that of the previous selection
- If no applicant for locations was previously preliminarily selected, ARConnect will evaluate the second criterion

Speed of Network and Other Technical Capabilities

2
- ARConnect will evaluate the speed, latency, and other technical capabilities of the technologies proposed by prospective subgrantees and select the application with the highest technical capabilities (e.g., speed of network)
- If all applications have equal capabilities, ARConnect will evaluate the third criterion

Speed of Deployment

3
- ARConnect will evaluate the prospective subgrantee's binding commitment to provision service by a date and will select the application with the fastest speed to deployment
- If all applications have equal deployment timelines, ARConnect will select the lowest-cost proposal received for that same general project area.

ARConnect will prioritize Priority Broadband Projects over non-Priority Broadband Projects. In the case where a project area receives no Priority bid OR selecting a Priority bid would incur excessive costs, ARConnect will repeat this process for non-Priority bids