



ARConnect

The Arkansas State Broadband Office

Arkansas BEAD Program

Frequently Asked Questions Document 38

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Benefit of the Bargain (BB) Round Questions

1. When will an updated location list for the BB Round be available?
The current list of BEAD-eligible locations will be used for the BB Round. Any changes to the locations needed to conform to the Policy Notice will be made after the BB round before Final Proposal submission.
2. How will ARConnect review the list of BEAD-eligible locations?
In accordance with the NTIA Policy Notice, ARConnect must run five processes to optimize our list of BEAD-eligible locations: including newly eligible locations, revising locations served by ULFW, updating locations based on Version 6 of the FCC Fabric, removing CAIs that do not meet the statutory definition, and conducting the true up process. The first two processes are complete with no impact to BEAD-eligible locations, and the other three will take place after the BB Round.
3. Where is the list of current BEAD-eligible locations?
The list of all BEAD-eligible locations can be found on the [Arkansas BEAD webpage](#).
4. When will the Project Area Footprints (PAFs) be available?
ARConnect tentatively plans to release PAFs on Monday, June 30.
5. How is ARConnect determining the PAFs?
PAFs were determined based on a variety of factors, such as contiguity, level of competition and interest in the previous subgrantee selection process, and geographical considerations.
6. Are applicants required to include 100% of the BEAD-eligible locations in a PAF?
No. As required by the NTIA Policy Notice, applicants may propose to exclude select locations that are deemed excessively high cost from the PAF.
7. Will reference prices be used for the BB Round?
No.
8. How will Priority Broadband Status be determined for different technologies?
The NTIA Policy Notice defines Priority Broadband Projects as the following:
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 business and support the deployment of 5G, successor wireless technologies, and other advanced services.

Therefore, any applicant may seek to have ARConnect treat its application as a Priority Broadband Project regardless of the technology used. However, the technologies employed in the project proposal must meet the technical performance requirements set forth in the statute and the NOFO and demonstrate that it meets the additional statutory criteria, including that the project can easily scale speeds over time to support evolving connectivity needs.

Applicants will be required to provide supporting documentation sufficient for ARConnect to assess the network application and determine if the proposed network architecture for each specific project area meets this standard. 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.

9. When will an updated list of pre-registered participants be published?
Pre-registration will run concurrently with the BB Round. The list of pre-registered participants will be updated in real time.
10. How is ARConnect defining excessively high-cost locations for removal from a PAF?
ARConnect will allow applicants to propose to exclude select broadband serviceable locations (BSLs) that the applicant determines are excessively high-cost locations from the project area.
11. When assessing the network speed as the secondary adjudication criteria, how will ARConnect assess the speed for hybrid technology bids?
ARConnect will evaluate this criterion based on the specific technical characteristics of each project.
12. What is the purpose of allowing applicants to submit up to two bids for a PAF?
Allowing up to two bids for a PAF is intended to provide applicants with flexibility and options as they see fit.
13. How will carved out locations impact the score of an application?
Scoring for the applications will only be based on the criteria described in NTIA's Policy Notice.
14. What is the process for requesting that an application be considered for Priority status?
Within the application, an applicant may indicate whether they would like the proposed project to be considered for Priority status. If so, applicants will be required to provide supporting documentation sufficient for ARConnect to assess the network application and determine if 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.

15. Will ARConnect set a limit for the number of high-cost locations that can be removed from a PAF?

No.

16. What is the threshold for applications for the same PAF to be considered the same general project area if there is no limit on the number of locations that can be removed?

ARConnect will determine whether applications are considered the same general project area on a PAF-by-PAF basis depending on the applications received.

17. How will Priority bids be reviewed compared to non-Priority bids?

ARConnect will prioritize Priority Broadband Projects over Non-priority Broadband Projects. In the case where a project area receives no Priority bids OR selecting a Priority bid would incur excessive costs, ARConnect will consider non-Priority projects.

18. How will ARConnect evaluate the scalability of different technologies?

ARConnect will evaluate the supporting documentation submitted by the applicant to assess the network application and determine whether the proposed network architecture for each specific project area meets the standards set forth in the statute and the NOFO.

19. Can PAFs be combined within an application?

No.

True-up Process Questions

20. Are true-up process submissions required by June 26?

No. The true-up process is suspended.

21. If an applicant is not selected for a PAF in the BB Round, will they still be allowed to submit locations within the PAF that are ineligible due to Enforceable Commitment for the true-up process?

ARConnect will release guidance on this at a later date. Please note that an applicant must provide evidence to substantiate a claim that a location will be served through an Enforceable Commitment.

22. Will locations that are removed from a PAF as part of the true-up process impact the grant amount for the preliminarily selected applicant?

ARConnect will work with preliminary selected applicants to adjust applications if location removal is required.

23. Will applicants be allowed to combine PAFs after preliminary selections?

ARConnect will provide additional guidance on this at a later date.

24. Can applicants carve out locations during the BB Round that should not have a broadband connection?

Location carve outs during the BB Round may only be used for locations deemed to be excessively high cost (or would otherwise make the project economically unviable for the technology being used). ARConnect will run a separate process after the BB Round for locations that should not have a broadband connection. If an applicant applies for a PAF that has a location the applicant believes should not have a broadband connection, then they may factor that into the subsidy request.

Letter of Credit Questions

25. Will applicants still have the option to obtain a letter of credit or performance bond worth 10% of the subaward amount under Option 2.4 of the NTIA Letter of Credit waiver?

Yes.

Permitting Questions

26. When is NEPA required?

Subgrantees will be responsible for compiling and submitting all project environmental documentation to ARConnect **during the pre-construction and permitting phase**. This packet should be compiled by a qualified environmental practitioner if possible. ARConnect and its qualified contractors will review and submit the information to NTIA via the [Environmental Screening and Permitting Tracking Tool](#) (ESAPTT). This will generate a NEPA decision document which will be relayed back to the subgrantee.

NTIA has indicated that most projects will fall under a categorical exclusion ([CATEX](#)), and a further Environmental Assessment will not be required. However, all projects must undergo the environmental review process. Categorical Exclusions are a type of NEPA review and not an exclusion or exemption from NEPA obligations. More guidance will be provided at a later date.

Please note that projects may be divided into “sub-project” areas for environmental review per NTIA.