

# The Arkansas BEAD Program

Technical Assistance | "Benefit of the Bargain" (BB) Round Guidance

JULY 2, 2025



# Agenda for today's session

- 1 When is the BB Round open?
- 2 How will applicants bid on locations during the BB round?
- 3 How will Priority bids be defined for the BB round?
- 4 How will subgrantees be selected during the BB round?
- 5 What resources are available?
- 6 Key reminders

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# 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. 18
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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# Project Areas | Project areas will consist of discrete Project Area Footprints (PAFs)



## Project Area Footprints (PAFs)

All BEAD-eligible locations are available to be included in project areas in the BB round for bidding

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



## 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



# Project Areas | ARConnect released the list of 255 PAFs on June 30, the details for which can be found on the ARConnect webpage

## PAF Resources



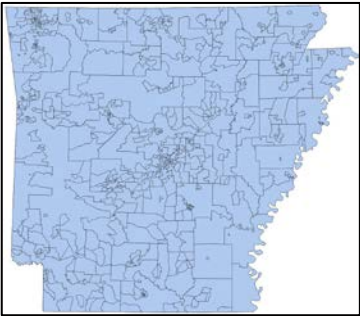
Multiple PAF resources can be found on the ARConnect webpage

## PAF Data Sets

CBG ID	PAF ID	BSLs	County
050	001	050450308003, 050450307023,	BSLs
050	002	050014803002	4
050	003	050850203022, 050850203012,	813
050	004	051250106021, 051250104072	479
050	005	051039506001	1
050	006	050134802002	1
	007	051399909001	32
	008	050310005013, 050310008061,	351
	009	051190024053, 051190024071	23

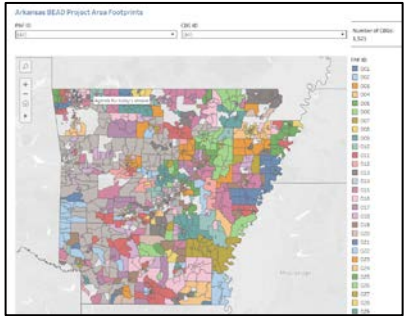
Data sets detail the CBGs, BSLs, and counties included in each PAF

## PAF Shapefiles



Shapefiles can be uploaded to visualization software

## PAF Visualizations



Visualizations allow for easy exploration of PAFs

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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

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ARConnect will only provide technical support during the BB round application window

- If you are experiencing a technical issue with the portal, please reach out to [argrants@mbakerintl.com](mailto:argrants@mbakerintl.com)
  
- If you have questions regarding the application and/or the Arkansas BEAD BB round process, we encourage you to reference the following resources housed on the [Arkansas BEAD Webpage](#):
  - [Applicant Portal User Guide](#)
  - [Guidance on the BB Round](#)
  - [BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice](#)

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# Key reminders for BB Round

1

You should submit your strongest applications, but keep in mind your service commitment if selected

2

You must **submit** within the 1-week application period. No exceptions

3

The applicant portal opens on Monday, July 7 at 12 p.m. CT and closes on Monday, July 14 at 6 p.m. CT