Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

(Revised December 20, 2023)

General Questions

Q: In Scoring Criteria G: Broadband Provider Experience Based on Years Provider Has Been Providing Tier 2 Service, is the score based on Tier 2 service provided anywhere or just in Ohio?

A: Applicants will receive points based on the amount of time they have provided 100/20 or greater in any location, not just Ohio.

Q: Is the FCC's process for getting eligible addresses (purchasing a license from CostQuest) the only way to get this info for ORBEG grants?

A: Yes, all addresses applied for must be on the FCC Broadband Availability map and will require applicants to provide the address's FCC location ID along with the FCC ID number given to the provider by the FCC. The FCC Broadband Availability Map can be found here

Q: When the scoring matrix uses the term 1 Gig, does it mean a true 1 Gbps, or the 950ish Mbps that many ISPs provide as their "1 Gig" offering?

A: The speeds provided in the application must be true speeds reachable in the network. Providers upon completion of their projects must be able to prove that the network can provide the speeds in the application. If you say you are offering speeds of 1 Gbps, then you must offer that speed.

Q: What is the deadline for when construction must be completed and service available?

A: All projects must be completed by Dec. 31, 2026. At this time, there will be no extensions given.

Q: It is stated that "All funds must be spent, and all projects must be operational by Dec. 31, 2026." Why is that?

A: Per U.S. Department of Treasury Capital Projects, all projects must be operational by Dec. 31, 2026. You can find more information on this requirement [here](#).

Q: Will there be a more detailed map or list of addresses that will be covered by new broadband projects?

A: The map being used to identify addresses in need is the FCC Broadband Availability map. The FCC Broadband Availability Map can be found [here.](#)

Q: What is the additional point criterion as it relates to project narrative?

A: If the project narrative provides clarification of another section of the application, it may result in additional points in the other section. The project narrative by itself will not result in additional points.

Q: What is an affordable flat fixed monthly rate for broadband service?

A: The affordability scoring is broken down below:

15 points: Offers at least 100/100 at $30 or less
10 points: Offers at least 100/100 at $31-60
5 points: Offers at least 100/100 at $61-90
0 points: Offers at least 100/100 at $91+

Reminder: Applicant offers end user speeds of 100/100 or greater at a flat fixed monthly rate. These monthly rates will have to be provided every year for the duration of the reporting period. Applicants should provide the fixed monthly rate for the duration of the reporting period and can increase by the rate of the consumer price index for that reporting year. These rates need to be a flat rate and cannot be an introductory rate.

Q: What is the new definition of Tier 2 Broadband service?

A: For the purposes of ORBEG Round 2, Tier 2 Broadband Service will be considered 100/20 Mbps. However, eligible projects must provide speeds of 100/100 Mbps to comport with the federal CPF requirements.

Q: In scoring criteria G, does an ISP become a tier 2 provider when they begin providing

100/20 Mbps?

A: Yes, an ISP becomes a Tier 2 service provider on the date at which service speeds of 100/20 Mbps to end users. If an ISP began providing 100/20 to subscribers on May 1, 2018, they would receive 20 for scoring criteria G, for 5 years of providing Tier 2 service.

Q: Is there a minimum or maximum amount to be awarded?

A: No there is no minimum or maximum amount to be awarded.

Q: Is there a required minimum match required for applicants?

A: No there is no minimum match required, however you will be awarded points based on your match.

Q: When it comes to customer package/price offerings, what fees are to be included in the price as it relates to surcharges, ONT fees, taxes, etc.?

A: Any fee that the ISP charges as part of the subscription that is not required by law (e.g. equipment fees) must be included. Any tax, or other fee that is required by law need not be included.

Q: When will the challenge process open?

A: Not later than 20 days after all applications have been accepted as complete.

Q: When will proposed projects be posted on BroadbandOhio's website?

A: Not later than 5 days after all applications have been accepted as complete.

Q: How long must a provider offer the low-cost plan?

A: Through the reporting period, four years after the completion of the project.

Q: Does BroadbandOhio have clearly defined target areas of need with address-level data?

A: No, BroadbandOhio has the goal of universal coverage to all unserved and underserved locations.

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Q: If a company does not meet the requirements after the project is complete by increasing the fees too much or not matching the speeds required, what are the penalties and how will they be held accountable?

A: If a company fails to meet any of the requirements of the grant agreement, the Broadband Expansion Program Authority has the ability to impose penalties on the provider up to the amount of the grant.

Q: Can applicants use speed test analysis to identify unserved households that may be shown as served by the FCC?

A: No.

Q: Will pole issues be addressed at the contract level?

A: Pole issues will be addressed as they arise.

Q: Due to pole make-ready delays, the 12/31/26 project completion deadline may be not possible. What then?

A: At this time the US Department of Treasury is not allowing extensions past 12/31/26. BroadbandOhio will continue to communicate with every grantee throughout the implementation period to determine the ability of the provider to meet the deadlines. BroadbandOhio will work with the providers to eliminate any obstacles to project completion.

Q: If the FCC releases updated BSL data before the end of the application period, do we continue to use the June 2023 maps?

A: Use the most up to date version of the map available at the time of application submission.

Q: Does BroadbandOhio have a list of fabric IDs that are eligible?

A: There is a CSV file of eligible locations on our website.

Q: Are businesses or Community Anchor Institutions along project routes eligible locations?

A: No.

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Q: How are you dealing with grant money that has been allocated but not yet built by local, state, or national funds?

A: For ORBEG Round 1 recipients, the addresses that were awarded to grantees or were committed to be built in 2 years are not eligible for funding. Other projects that will be completed within 2 years are able to challenge grant applications that cover the same addresses.

Q: If I have 100 addresses that qualify for state grant funding, and 25 of them also qualify for BEAD, should I split them up into different applications?

A: BroadbandOhio encourages participation in both ORBEG Round 2 and the BEAD process. Companies will need to evaluate their strategies for when to apply.

Q: Where can I find the GPS coordinates of all Round 1 awarded addresses?

A: BroadbandOhio has posted all location data on its website.

Q: Where can I find the FCC Location IDs for awarded or challenged addresses for Round 1?
A: BroadbandOhio has posted all location data on its website.

Q: Will a letter of credit be required for ORBEG Round 2?

A: The Broadband Expansion Program Authority will determine whether a grantee needs to provide a letter of credit.

Eligibility Questions

Q: What entities are eligible to apply for funding?

A: Broadband providers are eligible to apply for funding. A broadband provider means one of the following:

- A video service provider as defined in section 1332.21 of the Revised Code;
- A provider that can provide tier two broadband service and is one of the following:
    - A wireline telecommunications service provider;
    - A wireless service provider as defined in section 4927.01 of the Revised Code on the condition that they are applying for an Extremely High Cost Per Location Threshold area.

Q: Are rural electric cooperatives eligible to apply?

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A: Yes, so long as they are a communications provider.

Q: What is the "Extremely High Cost Per Location Area Threshold"?

A: $13,500. The Extremely High Cost Per Location Area Threshold was approved by the Broadband Expansion Program Authority using a methodology that can be found under the ORBEG Round 2 tab on our website.

Q: Are municipalities or municipal electric systems eligible to apply?

A: No, neither municipalities nor municipal electric systems are eligible to apply. "Broadband provider" does not include a governmental or quasi-governmental entity.

Q: What does "eligible project" mean?

A: "Eligible project" means a project to provide broadband service access of a minimum of 100/100 Mbps to residences in an unserved area or underserved area of a municipal corporation or township that is eligible for funding under sections 122.4013 to 122.4046 of the Revised Code.

Q: What can be used as evidence in finding eligible service areas?

A: Only the FCC Broadband Availability Map which can be found here will be accepted as evidence for ORBEG Round 2.

Q: Are areas currently served by satellite and/or wireless service considered as eligible in the program if those entities state they provide service above 100/100 Mbps?

A: Areas covered by Satellite alone are not considered served under ORBEG. Areas covered by fixed wireless alone are only considered served when the service location falls under the Extremely High Cost Per Location Threshold.

Q: Are areas that are unserved or underserved that have been awarded federal funds (RDOF, etc.) eligible for project funding?

A: Areas that have been awarded RDOF funds are eligible if they do not have 100/20 service by the date of your application. Please note: The RDOF winner may challenge that area if they can

show that they were awarded the RDOF funding for that area and can provide the service within two years.

Q: A county interested in expanding broadband can't apply. Do they need to find a provider to apply?

A: A county will need to work with a provider to apply for this grant funding.

Q: Is there a standard time frame to be used when determining the funding gap? For example, anticipated return in 12 months? 24 months? 3 years?

A: There is not a set time frame to be used when determining the funding gap. The internet service provider may determine the time frame.

Q: Do existing local government, cooperative, and non-profit broadband network providers qualify for these grant funds?

A: Non-profits and electric cooperatives may qualify, as long as they are otherwise determined to be telecommunications providers. If they are telecommunications providers, they may apply for funding. Local governments are not eligible to apply for the grant.

Q: Please clarify whether providers in areas that have received funding in the past (RDOF for example) can apply for Ohio funds or are only able to challenge an application for Ohio funds by another provider.

A: Providers can do both. If the applicant has received RDOF funds for a specific area, they can challenge the other applicant. Providers that have received federal funding are also allowed to apply for state funds as well in areas where they do not already have an obligation to build.

Q: What does unserved area mean?

A: An area without access to speeds of 25/3 broadband service.
- Tier Two Broadband Service Area: Means a retail wireline broadband service capable of delivering internet access at speeds of at least 100 megabits per second downstream and at least 20 megabits per second upstream.

Q: Can county commissioners request the Department of Development find applications on their behalf for eligible projects in their county?

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A: Yes. There is a form and template resolution on the website that county commissioners can use to request the Department of Development to solicit applications from broadband providers for program grants for eligible projects in the municipal corporations and townships of the county. It can be found [here](#).

Q: Are senior living centers, assisted living centers, dormitories, domestic violence shelters, and other types of long-term residential settings included on the grant application?

A: Senior living centers and assisted living centers, dorms and shelters can be included in the project applications.

Q: Are business MDUs, such as strip malls, eligible?

A: No. Business MDUs, such as strip malls, are not eligible.

Q: Can multiple users gain access to an existing application?

A: Yes. Whoever creates the application (the record owner) can simply add additional users by scrolling to the bottom of the page in Salesforce and clicking "Add User." You then should be able to add additional users by inputting their name and email address.

Q: Should all units in multi-dwelling units be counted as a household?

A: Yes. For example, if there are 50 apartments in a complex that is underserved or unserved, 50 households can be included in the household count. The purpose of the grant is to pass as many addresses as possible with broadband connectivity. We encourage providers and applicants to include as much information as it can to any residential addresses that are known and will be passed.

Q: Should mixed-use addresses where a business and residence occupy the same building be counted as a residential household?

A: The residences can be counted, but not the business.

Q: Understanding that access to the MDU premise requires landlord, tenant, and government ROW access and may be difficult, is there a requirement to gain that access to count the households?

A: No. All units would be considered as a home passed regardless of the difficulty or cost of

gaining access to the customer's premises.

Q: Should all lots/spaces in a trailer park be considered as a residential household passed even though the street address for all lots/space is identical?

A: Yes. If there are 50 lots/spaces in a trailer park, 50 households are passed and include in the households counts for the Grant Application.

Q: Do the project locations need to be contiguous?

A: No.

Q: If you are a wireless ISP providing 50/10 Mbps in a certain area, can you overbuild yourself with Fiber?

A: Yes

Q: If I overbuild my wireless customer, does that count as a new passing?

A: Yes.

Q: Do fixed wireless claims count as served locations?

A: No, unless the fixed wireless customer is located within and extremely high cost area and the fixed wireless provider can claim speeds of at least 100/20.

Q: Please explain scoring criteria C.

A: To calculate this score broadband Ohio will first take all applications throughout the state and rank them into cost percentiles. We will then take that percentile and multiply it by 75 points. As an example, an application in the 50th percentile would get half of 75 points, or 38 points total rounded up. The second calculation is based upon the amount of match an applicant can provide. To determine the points, BroadbandOhio will take the percentage of funds that an application has compared to the grant request, divide that number in half, and then provide a maximum of 75 points. As an example; if the total project cost is $1 million, and an applicant requests $500,000 and has a match from other sources of $500,000, then the match compared to the grant request is 100%. As a result, BroadbandOhio will halve the 100% to 50, which would be the points received by the applicant. Similarly, if the project cost is $1 million, and an applicant has a match of $750,000, then the match compared to the grant request would be 150%. BroadbandOhio would then halve that number to 75, and the application would receive the full

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75 points. Again, 75 points is the cap, so any match beyond 150% will not result in any additional points.

Q: It seems that more points will be awarded to projects with a higher number of eligible addresses?

A: Correct, however there are multiple scoring criteria in the application, and project size is a single component of the overall score.

Funding Questions

Q: What is the per application/provider dollar amount available for this round of funding?

A: There is no limit on the amount of funding that a provider/project can ask for.

Q: What is the dollar amount available overall for funding?

A: Currently, there is up to $77 million in funding for the grants.

Q: What is the term length considered in calculating the funding gap?

A: There is no set term length to be considered in calculating the funding gap. Please follow your internal business practice.

Q: What can be classified as in-kind contributions?

A: Examples of in-kind contributions include donated goods such as equipment, donated services such as consulting services and volunteer labor.

Q: For $77 million dollars total, how many applications are expected to be awarded?

A: It will depend on the number of applications we receive.

Q: Can matching funds be used to cover served areas to get to the unserved areas?

A: No, matching funds will be used for unserved and underserved areas to count as matching funds.

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Q: Can grant funds be used for payroll at the start of the grant?

A: Yes, so long as the payroll is used for employees that are working to bring broadband to the addresses in the grant application.

Q: Can a project area be applied for that received Round 1 funding if no work has begun yet?

A: No.

Application Specifics

Q: What is "Attachment 2B: County Breakdown"?

A: Applicants are required to fill out the "County" column of the ORBEG Address Template for each location contained in their application. For those applying via Salesforce, reuploading the same ORBEG Address Template will satisfy this requirement, as the county location data will be found within that document. This information is required as it will be used for Scoring Criteria H: County Median Income Percentiles.

Q: Can applicants submit address blocks lists?

A: No.

Q: What does "last mile" mean?

A: The last portion of a physical broadband network that connects an eligible project to the broader network used to provide broadband service.

Q: Should applicants submit letters of support?

A: Yes, letters of support from representatives of local political subdivisions (County Commissioners, Township Trustees, Council Members, Economic Development Directors) will contribute points to the applicant's overall score.

Q: Will there be confirmation of submission once an application is submitted via online or email?

A: Yes, confirmations of submission will be provided via email.

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Q: Is preplanning and engineering classified as the start of construction?

A: Preplanning and engineering activities are not classified as starting construction and are not counted against the applicant. We anticipate that providers will have to do preliminary work to compile information to apply for the grant. For example, putting together MOUs, engineering and construction analysis, etc., will not be classified as starting construction prior to the application.

From ORC 122:30-1-01 "Commencement of construction" includes the acquisition of existing physical assets inside a right of way, physical preparation of an installation site, and installation of last mile broadband infrastructure components. Commencement of construction does not include planning of last mile infrastructure, securing of permits, or acquisition of rights of way.

Q: How many areas can we apply for per application?

A: There are no limits on how many areas per application you can apply for. Providers can also submit multiple applications.

Q: For construction timetable, do you want a general time length for aspects of a project, or do you want approximate dates? If specific, wouldn't that be dependent upon the award timetable?

A: Be as specific as possible when completing the application. For areas where specifics cannot be given, if the information is determined by the award timetable, then generalizations should be provided.

Q: Please confirm the build time. Is it two years?

A: Build time is whatever the provider indicates the build time will be for the project, in the application. However, all projects must be completed by Dec. 31, 2026.

Q: If a provider uses the funds to deploy broadband to an unserved or underserved area, but has remaining capacity within the mainline fiber, can they use that remaining capacity to extend to customers outside of the grant area? Or can they deploy to outside of the grant area using their own funding?

A: If the provider has remaining capacity within the mainline fiber, they cannot use grant funding to deploy outside of the awarded service area. Providers may use their own money to deploy outside of the awarded service area.

Q: What is a tax ID number?

A: A tax ID number is also known as an Employer Identification Number (EIN) and is used to identify a business entity by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Q: If a challenging provider wins a challenge and the applicant takes out the successfully challenged addresses, can they add additional addresses to the application?

A: No, the scope of the application cannot be changed, and new addresses cannot be added. Only the successfully challenged addresses can be taken out of the application. There will be a chance for the provider to revise their budget based off the challenged addresses being removed, but it will be at the discretion of the applicant and is not a requirement.

Q: Where can applicants find contact information if a project requires access to railroad property?

A: A document under "2022 Application Process" on the [Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program webpage](#) offers contact information provided by the Ohio Railroad Association.

Q: Can the notarized statements/affidavits required in the Application be done in a state other than Ohio?

A: Yes, the notarized statements can be notarized outside of Ohio. They can be notarized wherever the statements are being made but must be validly notarized by someone authorized as a notary.

Q: Can we provide a URL to publicly available financial filings on our website in lieu of providing a pdf of our most recent statements? The statements are too long to include in a word document/pdf.

A: Yes. Please include the link in the appropriate PDF attachment.

Q: Can an application include served addresses, if the entire build project would include unserved and underserved addresses as well?

A: No.

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