



Department of
Development

BroadbandOhio

DRAFT

**State of Ohio
Final Proposal
Broadband Equity, Access,
and Deployment (BEAD)
Program**

August 2025



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Introduction

BroadbandOhio has drafted the following document to meet the requirements for the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Final Proposal:

- Requirement 1 Subgrantee Selection Process Outcomes
- Requirement 3 Timeline for Implementation
- Requirement 4 Oversight and Accountability Processes
- Requirement 5 Local Coordination
- Requirement 6 Challenge Process Results
- Requirement 7 Unserved and Underserved Locations
- Requirement 8 Non-Deployment Uses
- Requirement 9 Non-Deployment Subgrantee Selection Outcomes
- Requirement 10 Participation of Non-Traditional Broadband Providers
- Requirement 11 Implementations Status of Plans
- Requirement 12 Substantiation of Priority Broadband Projects
- Requirement 13 Subgrantee Selection Certification
- Requirement 14 Environmental and Historic Preservation Documentation
- Requirement 15 Consent from Tribal Entities
- Requirement 16 Prohibition on Excluding Provider Types

Subgrantee Selection Process Outcomes (Requirement 1)

(Req 1.1) Describe how the Eligible Entity's deployment Subgrantee Selection Process undertaken is consistent with that approved by NTIA in Volume II of the Initial Proposal as modified by the BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice.

Since the release of NTIA's June 6, 2025 *Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment: Restructuring Policy Notice (Restructuring Policy Notice)*, BroadbandOhio (BBOH), a division within the Ohio Department of Development, has revised and conducted its BEAD application process and evaluated all pre-application and project application submissions. BBOH has submitted to NTIA its list of 22 provisional sub-awardees that will provide universal broadband connectivity across the State of Ohio, connecting 72,375 locations using \$227 million of Ohio's \$793 million total BEAD funding allocation.

Along with the announcement of provisional winners, the release of this draft Final Proposal document for public comment marks one of the final steps in BBOH's efforts to complete all necessary BEAD subgrantee selection process revisions and steps within 90 days of the *Restructuring Policy Notice's* release and more than a month before the original Final Proposal due date. Alongside BBOH, a significant majority of broadband service providers in Ohio all rose to the occasion, quickly adapting to program changes and submitting well-designed deployment plans to achieve the BEAD program's challenging goal of universal coverage. This section will first review the key changes implemented to comply with the *Restructuring Policy Notice*, then present the timeline and explanations of key activities BBOH completed to select Ohio's BEAD program provisional sub-awardees.

BBOH Subgrantee Selection Process Design Revisions to comply with the *Restructuring Policy Notice*

BBOH took multiple steps to bring the approved Initial Proposal – Volume 2 (IPV2) subgrantee selection process in line with the revised notice released on June 6, 2025. The planned three-round BEAD grant application process approved in Ohio's IPV2 was condensed into a single application round. This single round incorporated all required changes to the program's scoring

and technology evaluation rules and removed several application requirements as required by the *Restructuring Policy Notice*. The BEAD and Benefit of the Bargain (BoB) Round Program Guidance and Application Overview

(https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/broadband.ohio.gov/BroadbandOhio_BEAD_BoB_Guidance_7.28.25.pdf) explains all subgrantee selection process rules, including the following key changes discussed in greater detail below:

- A revised single-round BEAD grant application process
- A focus on technology neutrality
- A revised “\$1 Bid” process approved in Ohio’s IPv2 to reduce funding demand for locations already served or about to be served by broadband service providers’ networks
- A “Reason Code 5” submission process in compliance with the rules explained in the June 2025 *BEAD Final Proposal Guide for Eligible Entities*, pp. 12-14, 21, and 47-54
- A revised scoring method in compliance with the *Restructuring Policy Notice*
- Revised deconfliction process

Single-Round BEAD Grant Application Process: The BEAD subgrantee selection plan explained in Ohio’s IPv2 utilized up to four separate application periods, including a pre-qualification application process and a possible three application submission periods, each separated by a submission evaluation period. The first submission period would have been centered around “\$1 Bids,” which would have been considered grants without a subsidy. This opportunity gave internet service providers with nearly completed deployment projects and any other providers willing to accept no funding to connect eligible locations a means to commit to or validate services at selected locations before other applicants requiring BEAD funding could submit their bids. This first submission period would remove eligible locations from the Ohio BEAD BSL eligibility list without expending BEAD funding, thereby ensuring more BEAD financial resources were available for the remaining locations and allowing applicants to focus their project proposal development efforts on them.

The second application period planned in Ohio’s IPv2 would have served as the primary application window and accepted priority broadband projects, with applicants submitting their best project proposals for the remaining eligible locations. Once those submissions were evaluated, BBOH was to determine if a third application period would be a more effective

strategy to select organizations to connect remaining eligible locations at competitive grant award amounts than simply progressing to the negotiations stage. Finally, BBOH was to conduct open negotiations to select ISPs to connect the remaining eligible locations.

Due to the time constraints delineated in the *Restructuring Policy Notice*, BBOH condensed its multi-round application process into a single application period by conducting its pre-qualification and primary application submission processes simultaneously. BBOH allowed applicants to complete these two applications in any order, so long as both were completed by their respective deadlines. Failure to submit a pre-qualification application would disqualify any associated main applications submitted by the applicant.¹ The pre-qualification process required applicant organizations to submit information about their managerial and financial capacity, alongside other basic eligibility information, and ended on August 13, 2025, two days before the project application deadline, to provide reviewers more time to evaluate them before turning to project application reviews.

The single project application round was revised significantly to improve the level of competitive pressure toward lower project bids while still preserving some of the mechanisms explained in Ohio's IPv2. The \$1 Bid process (now labelled as a \$0 Bid process) was revised to account for a larger time frame between the end of the Ohio BEAD challenge process and the application period and incorporated new rules found in the June 2025 version of NTIA's *BEAD Final Proposal Guidance for Eligible Entities*. The scoring process was simplified significantly and is described below.

BBOH also provided applicants with individual reference costs (greenfield NPV per passing costs provided by CostQuest Associates) for all eligible BSLs via email, and posted to the BBOH website, on the third day of the application window. BBOH also released updated information about whether any applicant had bid below this price every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday throughout the application period. This bidding information served several purposes. First, applicants were able to identify which BSLs had either not received bids or had received bids with funding requests higher than the reference prices, encouraging them to bid on these locations. Second, after seeing that bids under the reference prices had been offered, organizations with a strong interest in certain groups of locations were given a stronger incentive to reduce their funding requests per location to compete with at least one other bidder for those locations. Third, these reference prices provided organizations with notice of the liquidated

¹ Note, however, that Reason Code 5 applications were all investigated regardless of whether the applicant complete the pre-qualification process.

damages amounts they may face if they successfully were awarded project areas but ultimately did not complete those projects.

Immediately following the close of the project application period, the “Close the Gap” period (August 15 to 18) allowed any applicants not offering the lowest bid to each Broadband-Serviceable Location (BSL) to agree to lower its bid to be within 15% of the current reported lowest application cost. No additional actions were permitted during this period. This mechanism allowed applicants with different project areas to reduce their per-BSL bid prices on the most highly competitive (and therefore overlapping) clusters of locations, without unduly penalizing applicants that had included more remote and expensive-to-connect locations in their project areas. Without this mechanism, applicants would have faced a greater incentive to bid only on more tightly clustered areas with lower per-BSL costs and exclude BSLs in less dense areas. This “Close the Gap” process enabled these applicants to compete on clustered areas while encouraging applicants to include as many less dense areas in a 24-mile radius as possible. This step was necessary as Ohio did not create project area units and instead allowed each applicant to identify the project areas they were applying to serve. Note that the multiple application rounds contemplated in Ohio’s IPV2 would have performed a similar function, allowing competition to occur for those less dense areas in a later application round if applicants had focused on the denser clusters in an earlier round, so this solution was seen as necessary to facilitate a successful single application round.

Technology Neutrality: All applicants were invited to request that BBOH treat its application as a Priority Broadband Project, regardless of the technology used. Applicants were required to provide supporting evidence that their proposed networks would meet the Priority Broadband Project performance criteria explained in the *Restructuring Policy Notice*. Projects offering fiber-optic technology, cable modem/hybrid fiber-coaxial technology, Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite services, and terrestrial fixed wireless technology were all considered and consistently evaluated based on submitted explanations and evidence by applicants of their proposed projects network technical capabilities. This topic is discussed more below in Section 12.1.

Revised Scoring Method: The State of Ohio’s BEAD subgrantee selection process followed the process approved by NTIA in Ohio’s IPV2, as modified by *Restructuring Policy Notice*. After screening for eligibility and completeness, all applications submitted during the primary application period were evaluated based on the Minimal BEAD Program Outlay. The primary scoring and deconfliction processes automatically selected low-cost Priority Broadband Projects as defined in the *Restructuring Policy Notice* and 47 U.S.C. §1702(a)(2)(I). Secondary factors were only considered if there were additional overlapping project applications that offered per-

location bids within 15 percent of each included location's lowest bid offer. In this situation, the secondary scoring factors evaluated network speed and technical capabilities and speed to deployment, using evaluation standards and weights explained in Section 13.1 below.

From the IPv2's "\$1 Bid" process to the "\$0 Bid" process used by BBOH: In the Ohio IPv2, BBOH described a \$1 Bid process that would allow applicants to demonstrate that they can deliver BEAD-compliant broadband service without requiring any grant funds. This process was created before NTIA provided the opportunity to update the eligibility status of certain locations through the use of the No_BEAD_Locations.csv file and related explanations, but it was also designed to enable ISPs with nearly finished projects to ensure that the locations soon to be connected would not be covered by other BEAD-funded projects. By providing a way for ISPs to identify served or nearly served locations, the \$1 Bid process was designed to minimize BEAD outlay by accounting for any ongoing deployment efforts by providers that would have been completed for eligible locations without the existence of BEAD funding, thereby saving funds for those areas with no existing deployment efforts.

In compliance with the *Restructuring Policy Notice*, BBOH revised this approved \$1 Bid process. Applicants were still required to demonstrate that they can deliver BEAD-compliant service without the use of any grant funds, but the following changes were made:

- **Amount revision:** The \$1 Bid was changed to a \$0 Bid to avoid any confusion between projects that requested funding from those specifically utilizing this unique process.
- **Nearly Completed Projects Bids (explained in the *Application Guidance* as one of two types of "\$0 Bids"):** Projects that have already begun but that would not yet be completed at the close of the application window were encouraged to submit \$0 Bids to identify sets of locations that will be connected soon via a nearly completed project. If the technical review verified that a \$0 Bid project was on-going and would meet the minimum performance criteria of a BEAD Priority Broadband Project, then the applicant will be invited to sign an agreement to ensure that the project will be completed and that the sub-awardee will comply with all other BEAD requirements. This agreement includes a liquidated damages clause equal to the greenfield NPV per passing cost calculated by CostQuest at the time of application or at the time of the failure to build, whichever is higher, as specified in the corresponding \$1 Bid rules in the Ohio Initial Proposal – Volume 2, p. 63. An application containing a "Reason Code 5" submission could not also include BSLs within nearly completed project, and projects including either of these options could not include any BSLs that would require funding support to connect.

“Reason Code 5” Submissions (explained in the *Application Guidance* as one of two types of “\$0 Bids”): After the extended time between the conclusion of the challenge process and the start of the BEAD application window, BBOH allowed applicants to submit sets of locations that already receive service in compliance with the rules established in the Final Proposal’s “No_BEAD_Locations” rules and the “Reason Code 5” evidentiary requirements. Due to the short 90-day BEAD process window, these submissions needed to be made during the same application window as actual project area submissions but nevertheless fulfilled one of the original reasons behind the \$1 Bid, to provide ISPs with an opportunity to identify served locations after the conclusion of the challenge process. This submission process was available to any ISP, regardless of whether it submitted a prequalification application, to encourage broader use of the map update opportunity. While these submissions were referred to as “\$0 Bids complying with Reason Code 5” or “\$0 Bids” in some of the grant application guidance materials, they were not actual bids for BEAD funding. This explanation choice was adopted to minimize confusion and draw parallels to the process described in IPv2.

Qualified Network and Wireless Engineers reviewed these submissions to validate whether they met the technical evidentiary requirements established by the program. If the included locations were not already claimed as served in the FCC’s BDC V6 data set, applicants were also required to provide proof that they have submitted the included locations to the FCC’s most recent BDC filing period.

Deconfliction: To support the state’s deconfliction process, BBOH established a Deconfliction Margin (DM) of 10%, representing the portion of BSLs within the applicant’s proposed project area that could be removed from a project area without additional negotiations with the applicant. This margin allowed BBOH to resolve project areas conflicts between applications while preserving the applicant’s core project scope and economic viability. As part of the application, applicants acknowledged that their proposed BSLs within a project area could be reduced by up to the Deconfliction Margin. The *BBOH BEAD Program Guidance* explained that “By submitting an application, applicants acknowledge that their proposed BSLs within a project area may be reduced by up to the Deconfliction Margin” (p. 5).

BEAD Subgrantee Selection Process Timeline and Key Events: For every key process and event noted below, BroadbandOhio has engaged with stakeholders, via email to the BroadbandOhio Alliance, which is an email listserv of over 600 people including internet service providers,

vendors, non-profits, and local leaders. BBOH also posted all documentation on BroadbandOhio's website. These communications took place after the release of the *Restructuring Policy Notice* was published. Since the release of the *Restructuring Policy Notice*, BBOH has completed the following key activities:

- **June 13, 2025, to June 27, 2025:** BBOH conducted its Unlicensed Fixed Wireless (ULFW) Review Process, notifying newly eligible ULFW providers of the opportunity to demonstrate that their networks were capable of providing broadband services that meet the performance standards set out in the *Restructuring Policy Notice*. This notice was provided via email to the BroadbandOhio Alliance listserv and on the BBOH website, along with instructions about the process. These service providers were given the requisite 7-day window to notify BBOH of their intent to submit evidence demonstrating their technical specifications. Providers that had given notice by the end of this window were provided with an additional 7 days to submit this evidence.
- **July 10, 2025:** BBOH released the list of BEAD-eligible locations across Ohio to provide applicants with as much time as possible to prepare for BBOH's first and only BEAD application round. Before this release, BBOH reviewed all federal and state enforceable commitments announced since the conclusion of the Ohio BEAD Challenge Process to ensure this list was up to date. This list also incorporated the findings resulting from the technical review of ULFW submissions and the removal of any CAIs as directed by the *Restructuring Policy Notice*. More details are available in Section 6.2.
- **July 28, 2025:** After revising certain program rules and processes discussed below to comply with the Restructuring Policy Notice, BroadbandOhio Office (BBOH) issued its *BEAD and Benefit of the Bargain (BoB) Round Program Guidance and Application Overview (BBOH BEAD Program Guidance)*, which explained the program's eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria, submission requirements, and the elimination of certain regulatory requirements. On the same day, BBOH opened both the BEAD pre-qualification submission window and "Benefit of the Bargain" (BoB) subgrantee selection process application windows.
- **July 28 to August 15, 2025:** Ohio's BEAD Benefit of the Bargain grant application submission period occurred. Throughout these three weeks, BBOH provided updates about the bid activity to each eligible BSL to encourage applications covering unbid locations and more competitive bid amounts for locations that had already received bids. BBOH accepted email questions and answered them in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document that was updated each Wednesday throughout the three-week

application window. BBOH also provided two technical assistance webinars, reviewing the program's rules, answering questions, and explaining answers to questions it had received via email. BBOH also provided other support and assistance, explained below in Section 1.2.

- **August 15, 2025 to August 18, 2025:** During the "Close the Gap" process, applicants had the opportunity to lower their bid for BSLs to within 15% of the lowest bid on an individual, per location basis. This process occurred at the BSL level because an individual application may overlap with multiple other projects. The lowest bid may vary across intersected projects, so the reduction in the bid was proportionally scaled by the number of locations in that overlap.
- **August 11 to August 26, 2025:** BBOH performed Pre-Application and Project Application Reviews as they were received, when possible. Qualified and specialized reviewers performed the financial, technical, and managerial/operational reviews, which are discussed in greater detail in Section 1.2. Review of each applicant's financial statements resulted in a risk level outcome that could influence a potential provisional sub-awardee's letter of credit requirement to ensure organizations with high financial risk would have access to sufficient funding to complete their projects. Final evaluation of proposed projects was conducted by BBOH and based on the totality of evidence submitted for each application.
- **August 25 to August 28, 2025:** BBOH received Reason Code 5 applications for over 35,000 locations, which dramatically changed the eligible locations list. As a result, the deconfliction process needed to take into account the impacts of these changes to a sizable portion of the roughly 1,075 project area submissions, while continuing to use cost as a driving factor. This process was completed and ultimately established a grant awards map with universal coverage.

BBOH only engaged in provider-specific outreach after its one round of applications were submitted and reviewed. BBOH negotiated up until the time when the Final Proposal was due and will continue negotiations until all subaward agreements have incorporated these changes and all eligible locations are included in BEAD projects. BBOH is engaging with applicants to adjust proposals that were competitive and under consideration but may require alterations to the proposed service area due to Reason Code 5 changes and overlaps with other proposals. The negotiated round also includes other discussions necessary to finalize award agreements if projects altered through deconfliction were selected for an award, such as funding request revisions necessary to add or remove

locations. This negotiation round is necessary to achieve universal broadband availability in Ohio and ensured more efficient use of funds before the Final Proposal is submitted.

BBOH has also identified all remaining 350 unbid locations and will reach out to the provisional sub-awardee(s) whose project areas either surround or are adjacent to each individual unbid location or cluster to identify whether those provisional sub-awardees would add these locations to their project areas.

(Req 1.2) Describe the steps that the Eligible Entity took to ensure a fair, open, and competitive process, including processes in place to ensure training, qualifications, and objectiveness of reviewer.

To ensure a fair, open, and competitive application process, the BBOH implemented an outreach and support framework specifically tailored to applicants of all sizes and technology types. Applicants, including both small and large internet service providers (ISPs), and those using fiber, hybrid fiber coaxial, fixed wireless, and low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite technologies—were supported through the use of multiple technical assistance resources available to all applicants. BBOH provided information about these resources and ongoing updates broadly and openly, distributing them on its website and through the Broadband Ohio Alliance listserv. Combined with the verification methods integrated into the application platform, this support and predictability allowed applicants to prepare strong, complete applications.

The application process itself was designed to achieve fairness and promote competition. From the use of objective scoring without need for reviewer evaluations to the transparent cost-based bidding process, applicants faced clear competitive pressure to submit project bids as low as they could feasibly complete them.

Efforts to ensure the subgrantee award process was *open*.

BBOH's BEAD program prioritized ensuring that the application process was as open and transparent as possible. The BEAD application was designed to encourage broad participation from organizations of all types and sizes. Information about the program was distributed broadly and publicly, and BBOH took several steps to ensure that each organization had significant access to information and technical assistance that would allow it to develop and submit BEAD project applications that fit its individual deployment opportunities.

- **Open, public access to process information:** Information regarding the subgrantee selection application and evaluation process was made publicly available on the BroadbandOhio website and included all required information about subgrantee prequalification

requirements, scoring information, and timeline for the subgrantee selection process. This information was provided across several documents, including:

- The *BBOH BEAD Program Guidance* document (linked above in Section 1.1),
 - Submission platform guidance documents for both the prequalification and project application processes
(https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/broadband.ohio.gov/BBOH_BEAD_BoB_Grant_Prequal_Platform_User_Guide_V2.0.pdf;
https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/broadband.ohio.gov/BBOH_BEAD_BoB_Grant_Application_Platform_User_Guide_V2.0.pdf),
 - A frequently asked questions (FAQs) document that was updated thrice to ensure applicants had access to the most recent clarifiers every week
(https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/broadband.ohio.gov/BBOH_BEAD_FAQ_Public_Document_Final.pdf), and
 - All required application submission templates.
- **Broad access to technical support:** BBOH provided two technical assistance webinars, and questions asked at the webinars were added to the FAQ document. BBOH also offered an application platform “Help Desk” to provide technical assistance, answer applicants’ questions about submission platform details, and resolve any issues encountered by applicants.
 - **Broad BEAD program outreach:** For many years BroadbandOhio has built a network of ISPs, vendors, and local leaders known as the BroadbandOhio Alliance. Membership is voluntary and free. BroadbandOhio uses the Alliance as one of the primary ways to send out information. The Alliance has over 500 members and meets in person quarterly to discuss current events in Ohio's broadband expansion. Throughout the BEAD subgrantee selection process, BBOH made significant use of the BroadbandOhio Alliance listserv, sending frequent updates about each step and other information about process details. BroadbandOhio also conducted outreach through the Ohio Telecom Association, the Ohio Cable Telecom Association, and the Wireless Internet Service Provider Association, as well as through an internal working group of state agencies that also sent out information to their own networks. If not yet a member of the Alliance, anyone interested in the BEAD program was also encouraged to BroadbandOhio at broadbandohio@development.ohio.gov to join the listserv. More specific BEAD program application information was distributed via email directly to organizations that had completed their BBOH BEAD platform registration.

- **Open application process:** The Application Process was open to all organizations that could successfully deploy BEAD-funded networks in accordance with the program's criteria: The BBOH did not place any restrictions on the types of providers that could participate. The required qualifications for subgrantees were widely published so that all potential applicants could review them and consider applying for funds if they met the requirements. These requirements were also subject to public comment, before being revised in compliance with the BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice. BBOH also welcomed organizations that did not currently operate in Ohio.
- **Applicants designed their own project areas to fit their economic situations:** Within certain broad limits, applicants were able to design their own project areas to ensure that each applicant, regardless of size or technology used, could select the most economically viable project size and location options, without facing the restrictions of pre-defined service area units. There was no limit placed on the number of locations that could be included in a project area. However, project areas were limited to a diameter of 24 miles, to reduce the complexity of deconfliction issues and ensure each project's network design and technical details could be appropriately evaluated. Further, applicants were only allowed to apply for a specific BSL in a single application, to ensure that applications were not deconflicted against the same applicant. This encouraged applicants to provide the lowest possible cost for each project area unit.
- **Strategically sensitive business information was classified as confidential when appropriate:** Providers were invited to label documents as proprietary or trade secret. As standard practice, the state does not share financial or technical documents marked appropriately. Legal counsel reviews submissions and redacts sensitive content when required by statute (Ohio Revised Code Section 1333.61(D)). These policies ensure that all organizations, regardless of the sensitivity of their financial and technical materials, were able to participate.
- **Applicants justified their priority broadband project status:** All applicants were encouraged to justify that they were a priority broadband project. BroadbandOhio evaluated each claim for each application and did not exclude any technology type.
 - Efforts to ensure the subgrantee award process was *competitive*: \$0 Bid option to reduce number of locations needing BEAD support: The \$0 Bid option allowed companies to identify BSLs that did not require BEAD subsidies to become connected, giving providers the best opportunity to present a minimal BEAD outlay.

- **Clear scoring to promote competition:** The BBOH BEAD program used transparent and objective scoring criteria explained in the grant program guidance in compliance with *Restructuring Policy Notice*. Application scoring method was a direct translation of quantitative information and dates into scoring outcomes. As a result, applicants could easily understand and evaluate the potential scoring outcomes of their project proposals, relative to other potential project bids.
- **Broad participation by organizational type and technology offered:** The open application process resulted in the participation of a wide range of organizations, including fiber-optic broadband providers, hybrid fiber coaxial broadband providers, fixed wireless providers, and LEO satellite operators, and ISPs both large and small ultimately were among provisional subawardees
- **Selective cost information to push project bids lower:** To facilitate competitive bidding on projects' grant funding requests, BBOH provided applicants with per-BSL reference costs and information about whether at least one other bidder had submitted a project application offering an amount below that reference price for each BSL.
- **An opportunity to reduce bids even lower:** The Close the Gap round was held immediately following the main bidding phase. Once the main application window closed, Broadband Ohio posted the lowest bid for each BSL and reopened the portal briefly. Applicants then had the opportunity to confirm whether they were willing to reduce their bids to within 15% of the lowest bid for each location they had applied for. No other changes were permitted during this period, and the lowest bid was locked so that it could not be lowered any further. This created the benchmark for each BSL

Efforts to ensure the subgrantee award process was *fair*:

The BBOH implemented procedures to prohibit collusion or bias and maintain the integrity of the subgrantee selection process.

- **Compliance with procurement rules:** The BBOH BEAD program complied with all applicable Ohio-specific procurement and broadband grant program regulations, including those specified in Ohio Revised Code Sections 122.40-122.4077, except to the extent that the federal BEAD program rules conflicted with Ohio's Residential Broadband Expansion Program (see ORC Section 122.4017). Under state statute, the federal rules controlled wherever they were in conflict with any state requirements.

- **Required anti-collusion attestation:** In alignment with the Ohio Initial Proposal – Volume 2, BroadbandOhio required all prospective subgrantees to sign an Authorized Representative Declaration Form, which included attestations that the prospective subgrantee has not colluded with any entities or persons, neither through public statements nor private communications and that all provided information is correct, using the following form:
- **Objective scoring process:** The BEAD subgrantee selection scoring process used entirely objective, quantitative scoring criteria that required no reviewer judgement. Multiple reviewers evaluated each application to ensure consistency across reviews. This scoring method ensured complete consistency and avoided any potential for scoring bias, conflicts of interest, and arbitrary decision-making to impact scoring outcomes.

Secondary scoring was entirely quantitative and occurred only if more than one project was within 15% of the lowest bid. The financial, technical, and managerial reviews were conducted by qualified external contractors in coordination with BBOH staff. All external reviewers were bound by contract terms that required contractors to ensure they do not have any conflicts of interest that could introduce bias into the process.

The employed evaluation methods provided a fair, open, and competitive process independent of subjective reviewer judgments. BroadbandOhio ensured that application reviewers were qualified, trained, and objective and applied consistent review methods and standards across all applications. Review methods were based on those employed for other broadband grant review processes, including BEAD programs in other states, and were adapted to fit the specific requirements of the Ohio BEAD program, as modified to comply with the *Restructuring Policy Notice*. All reviewers possessed specialized experience reviewing broadband deployment grant applications to assess the technical, financial, and operational qualifications of each applicant, following several criteria specified in Ohio’s approved Initial Proposal in accordance with BEAD and June 6th *Restructuring Policy Notice* requirements. Training and standardized review materials were provided for all reviewers before and during the review process to promote consistency. Reviewers with specialized skills matching each specialized review topic evaluated those topic-specific sections for all applications, rather than reviewing entire applications, which helped to ensure consistent evaluations of technical, financial, and operational sections.

All review methods and outcomes were vetted and approved by BBOH leadership. Only clear and unusual omissions of requested prequalification materials resulted in disqualification. Financial and programmatic reviews were used to assign risk categories rather than to exclude applicants,

ensuring that no project was disqualified as a result of prequalification evaluation factors outside of completion.

(Req 1.3) Affirm that, when no application was initially received, the Eligible Entity followed a procedure consistent with the process approved in the Initial Proposal.

BBOH affirms that it applied a procedure to connect any remaining eligible locations after the conclusion of the application review process that was consistent with the process in the approved Initial Proposal Volume 2, as revised by the *Restructuring Policy Notice*. The negotiation process heavily favors organizations that could add locations to provisionally awarded projects at a low cost.

(Req 1.4) If applicable, describe the Eligible Entity's methodology for revising its eligible CAI list to conform with Section 4 of the BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice.

NTIA provided notice of CAIs for removal, and BBOH complied with this request.

(Req 1.5) Y/N Certify that the Eligible Entity will retain all subgrantee records in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.334 at all times, including retaining subgrantee records for a period of at least 3 years from the date of submission of the subgrant's final expenditure report. This should include all subgrantee network designs, diagrams, project costs, build-out timelines and milestones for project implementation, and capital investment schedules submitted as a part of the application process.

Yes, BBOH will retain all subgrantee records in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.334, including retaining subgrantee records for a period of at least 3 years after receiving subgrantees' final expenditure report submissions. BBOH understands this to include all subgrantee network designs, diagrams, project costs, build-out timelines and milestones for project implementation, and capital investment schedules submitted as a part of the application process.

Timeline for Implementation (Requirement 3)

(Req 3.1) Has the Eligible Entity taken measures to: (a) ensure that each subgrantee will begin providing services to each customer that desires broadband service within the project area not later than four years after the date on which the subgrantee receives the subgrant; (b) ensure that all BEAD subgrant activities are completed at least 120 days prior to the end of the Eligible Entity's period of performance, in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.344; and (c) ensure that all programmatic BEAD grant activities undertaken by the Eligible Entity are completed by the end of the period of performance for its award, in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.344.

Yes, BBOH has adopted a number of measures to ensure that all funded projects will be completed within four years after subgrantee awards are finalized, which will provide enough time for BBOH to complete all programmatic BEAD grant activities by the end of the period of performance. As a result, BBOH affirms that it will ensure that:

- Each BEAD subgrantee will begin to provide services to customers that desire broadband service within the project area not later than four years after the date on which the subgrantee receives the subgrant,

- All BEAD-funded subgrant activities are completed at least 120 days prior to the end of the Eligible Entity's period of performance;²
- Each subgrantee reaches key milestones in their submitted proposals/documentation,
- All BEAD activities will be completed within the mandated timeframes.

The Office of Broadband ensured applicants seeking to deploy network facilities are vetted to meet the minimum qualifications for financial and managerial capacity, technical and operational capability, and other requirements outlined in the 47 U.S.C. § 1702(g)(2)(A), the BEAD NOFO, Ohio's BEAD approved IPv2, and supplementary NTIA guidance. Further, the Office required that all applicants submit documentation that outlines their technical and operational capabilities to provide broadband service to any customer within the project area no later than 120 days prior to four years after the date on which the subgrantee executes the contract.

BBOH imposes the following measures to ensure timely completion of BEAD program requirements: (a) service initiation within four years of award; (b) completion of subgrant activities at least 120 days before the end of the performance period; and (c) completion of all programmatic BEAD activities by the end of the performance period.

BBOH requires each subgrantee, as a condition of the Grant Agreement, to provide broadband service to all customers in the project area who request service within four years of the award date (*Draft Award Agreement*, §2(a)–(d), §3). BBOH enforces this obligation by tracking milestones in Salesforce, OCEAN, or equivalent systems (*Draft Monitoring Plan*, §4.2.2, §4.2.8) and by conducting kickoff meetings to set clear expectations for timelines, milestones, and project-specific conditions.

² “can satisfy this requirement by explaining its monitoring process, highlighting its speed to deployment commitments in its Subgrantee Selection Process, or creating binding agreements with its subgrantees”

BBOH also compels subgrantees to meet strict reporting requirements. Under Grant Agreement §7(a)–(c) and Exhibits V–VII (referenced in the *Draft Monitoring Plan*, §4.2.7), subgrantees must submit quarterly and closeout reports. To facilitate compliance, BBOH imposes a \$500 per month liquidated damages penalty for late submissions. BBOH ties disbursements to documentation, requiring contracts, invoices, and receipts before releasing funds, and withholds or recoups payments if subgrantees fail to meet milestones or compliance obligations (§2–3). BBOH will meet with each subgrantee monthly to discuss progress, address any barriers to completion, and assist with any stakeholder outreach to make sure each project remains on schedule.

At the program level, BBOH conducts risk-based monitoring, audits, and financial reviews to confirm compliance with federal requirements and program goals (*Draft Monitoring Plan*, §4.2.4, §4.2.6, §4.2.9, §4.2.10). BBOH adjusts the level of oversight through annual risk reassessments, imposing more frequent monitoring on higher risk subgrantees (§4.2.3). By actively enforcing these requirements, BBOH ensures that all work is completed at least 120 days before the end of the performance period, as mandated by 2 C.F.R. §200.344.

Oversight and Accountability Processes (Requirement 4)

(Req 4.1) Does the Eligible Entity have a public waste, fraud, and abuse hotline, and a plan to publicize the contact information for this hotline?

Yes, anyone with information regarding waste, fraud, or abuse related to the BBOH BEAD program, please contact the Ohio Inspector General's Office.

- **Online Submissions:** <https://watchdog.ohio.gov/file-a-complaint>
- **Phone:** 866-Fraud-OH, 800-686-1525, or 614-644-9110
- **Address:** 30 E. Broad Street, Suite 2940, Columbus, Ohio 43215

(Req 4.2) Upload the following two required documents:

- (1) BEAD program monitoring plan;
- (2) Agency policy documentation which includes the following practices:
 - a. Distribution of funding to subgrantees for, at a minimum, all deployment projects on a reimbursable basis (which would allow the Eligible Entity to withhold funds if the subgrantee fails to take the actions the funds are meant to subsidize) or on a

basis determined by the terms and conditions of a fixed amount subaward agreement; and

b. Timely subgrantee (to Eligible Entity) reporting mandates.

(1) See BroadbandOhio's draft Monitoring Plan, available at [link](#).

(2) BBOH will disburse funds under fixed-amount subawards only on a reimbursable basis, and only after subgrantees present sufficient evidence of eligible expenditures. See General Terms and Conditions for the NTIA BEAD Program, Section 23 (Ensuring Subgrantee Accountability), and §51.A (Exceptions to 2 C.F.R. Part 200 Fixed Amount Subgrant Requirements, including §§200.333 and 200.201(b)(2)), both included in the Draft Grant Agreement as Exhibit IV.

BBOH requires subgrantees to submit timely reporting throughout the period of performance. Under Grant Agreement §7(a)–(c), subgrantees must provide quarterly and closeout reports, including all documentation outlined in Grant Agreement Exhibits V–VII.

To enforce compliance, BBOH may impose liquidated damages of \$500 for each month or partial month a report is late. Repeated or significant delays may trigger increased monitoring requirements or a reassessment of the subgrantee's risk profile. Pursuant to the Grant Agreement §2(a)–(d)(v), BBOH may also withhold disbursements if a subgrantee fails to meet agreed-upon milestones.

If expenditures are deemed unallowable, or if project commitments are not satisfied, BBOH may recoup previously disbursed funds and pursue other remedies. In addition, if grant funds are not expended in accordance with applicable law, the requirements of the Act, or the terms of the Grant Agreement within the prescribed period, the award shall terminate the agreement, and BBOH will have no further obligation to disburse funds. See Grant Agreement, §3 (Grant Funds Not Expended).

(Req 4.3) Certify that the subgrant agreements will include, at a minimum, the following conditions:

- a. Compliance with Section VII.E of the BEAD NOFO, as modified by the BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice, including timely subgrantee reporting mandates, including at least semiannual reporting, for the duration of the subgrant to track the effectiveness of the use of funds provided;
- b. Compliance with obligations set forth in 2 C.F.R. Part 200 and the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions;
- c. Compliance with all relevant obligations in the Eligible Entity's approved Initial and Final Proposals, including the BEAD General Terms and Conditions and the Specific Award Conditions incorporated into the Eligible Entity's BEAD award;
- d. Subgrantee accountability practices that include distribution of funding to subgrantees for, at a minimum, all deployment projects on a reimbursable basis;
- e. Subgrantee accountability practices that include the use of clawback provisions between the Eligible Entity and any subgrantee (i.e., provisions allowing recoupment of funds previously disbursed);
- f. Mandate for subgrantees to publicize telephone numbers and email addresses for the Eligible Entity's Office of Inspector General (or comparable entity) and/or subgrantees' internal ethics office (or comparable entity) for the purpose of reporting waste, fraud or abuse in the Program. This includes an acknowledge of the responsibility to produce copies of materials used for such purposes upon request of the Federal Program Officer; and

g. Mechanisms to provide effective oversight, such as subgrantee accountability procedures and practices in use during subgrantee performance, financial management, compliance, and program performance at regular intervals to ensure that subgrantee performance is consistently assessed and tracked over time.

Yes.

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Local Coordination (Requirement 5)

(Req 5.1) Describe the public comment period and provide a high-level summary of the comments received by the Eligible Entity during the public comment period, including how the Eligible Entity addressed the comments. The response must demonstrate Eligible Entity met the following requirements:

- a. The public comment period was no less than 7 days; and
- b. Political subdivisions were afforded an opportunity to submit comments during the comment period.

The 7-day public comment period began on August 28, 2025 with the release of the draft copy of BBOH's Final Proposal through a public posting on their website and announcing the public comment period through various public channels. BBOH invited all interested parties, regardless of organizational type, to review the Final Proposal draft and participate in the comments process. BBOH provided links to the Final Proposal and the comments submission page on its website and sent an email about the commenting opportunity to all members of the BroadbandOhio Alliance email list, which has served as the primary email list for all BBOH updates.

BroadbandOhio will review all public comments submitted and incorporate feedback when possible. A high-level summary of the comments received will be provided upon final submission of this Final Proposal along with a description of how the Office incorporated feedback into its Final Proposal submission.

Challenge Process Results (Requirement 6)

(Req 6.1) Y/N Certify that the Eligible Entity has successfully completed the BEAD Challenge Process and received approval of the results from NTIA.

Yes

(Req 6.2) Provide a link to the website where the Eligible Entity has publicly posted the final location classifications (unserved/underserved/CAIs) and note the date that it was publicly posted.

BBOH publicly posted the final location classifications at this site on July 10, 2025:
https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/raw/upload/broadband.ohio.gov/OHIO_BEAD_BOB_Round_Eligible_Locations.xlsx

Unserved and Underserved Locations (Requirement 7)

(Req 7.1) Y/N Certify whether the Eligible Entity will ensure coverage of broadband service to all unserved locations within its jurisdiction, as identified upon conclusion of the Challenge Process required under 47 U.S.C. § 1702(h)(2).

Yes

(Req 7.2) : If the Eligible Entity does not serve an unserved location because it is either financially incapable or has determined that costs to serve the location would be unreasonably excessive, explain and include a strong showing of how the Eligible Entity made that determination.

N/A

(Req 7.3) : If applicable to support the Eligible Entity's response to Question 7.2, provide relevant files supporting the Eligible Entity's determination.

N/A

(Req 7.4) Y/N Certify whether the Eligible Entity will ensure coverage of broadband service to all underserved locations within its jurisdiction, as identified upon conclusion of the Challenge Process required under 47 U.S.C. § 1702(h)(2).

Yes

(Req 7.5) If the Eligible Entity does not serve an underserved location because it is either financially incapable or has determined that costs to serve the location would be unreasonable excessive, , explain and include a strong showing of how the Eligible Entity made that determination.

N/A

(Req 7.6) If applicable to support the Eligible Entity's response to Question 7.5, provide relevant files supporting the Eligible Entity's determination.

N/A

(Req 7.7) Y/N Certify that the Eligible Entity has utilized the provided reason codes to investigate and account for locations that do not require BEAD funding, that the Eligible Entity will utilize reason codes 1, 2, and 3 for the entire period of performance, and that the Eligible Entity will maintain documentation, following the guidelines provided by NTIA, to justify its determination if there is a reason to not serve any unserved or underserved location on the NTIA-approved Challenge Process list through a BEAD project. The documentation for each location must be relevant for the specific reason indicated by the Eligible Entity in the fp_no_BEAD_locations.csv file. The Eligible Entity shall provide the documentation for any such location for NTIA review, as requested during Final Proposal review or after the Final Proposal has been approved.

Yes

(Req 7.8) Certify that the Eligible Entity has accounted for all enforceable commitments after the submission of its challenge

results, including state enforceable commitments and federal enforceable commitments that the Eligible Entity was notified of and did not object to, and/or federally-funded awards for which the Eligible Entity has discretion over where they are spent (e.g., regional commission funding or Capital Projects Fund/State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds), in its list of proposed projects.

Yes

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Implementation Status of Plans for Cost and Barrier Reduction, Compliance with Labor Laws, Low-Cost Plans, and Network Reliability and Resilience (Requirement 11)

(Req 11.1) Provide the implementation status (Complete, In Progress, or Not Started) of plans described in the approved Initial Proposal Requirement 14 related to reducing costs and barriers to deployment.

BBOH is committed to improving broadband access and connectivity in the most efficient, cost-effective manner and outlined strategies to reduce costs and barriers to deployment in its approved IPv2. Ohio adopted the following strategies to address identified barriers:

- Investments to reduce deployment costs – *In Progress*
- Promoting the use of existing infrastructure – *Completed*

- Streamlining permitting processes – *Completed*
- Streamlining cost-effective access to poles, conduits, easements – *Completed*
- Streamlining rights of way, including the imposition of reasonable access requirements – *Completed*

Investments to Reduce Deployment Costs – Broadband Deployment Workforce

Development: As explained in the Ohio Initial Proposal – Volume 2, the unprecedented investment in deploying broadband will create jobs in broadband deployment across the state. Unfortunately, after lengthy outreach efforts with ISPs, the Communications Workers of America (CWA), and other organizations impacted by broadband construction, as well as through experience with delays in Ohio’s Residential Broadband Expansion Grant deployment due to pole attachments and permits, BBOH identified that there is a critical shortage of qualified workers necessary to complete broadband deployment projects at the scale required by the BEAD program.

In Ohio, the state is projected to need over 2,500 workers to expand broadband networks and over 26,000 workers to deploy 5G technology through 2030. The broadband and 5G installation and maintenance industries are facing an ever-widening skills gap, due to a lack of standardized training, professional degree programs, and lack of industry-academia partnerships. The high turnover rates, aging technician workforce, and constant evolution of broadband technologies are contributing to a dwindling broadband workforce with the skills currently needed to deploy and maintain cutting-edge broadband technologies. (More details of its BBOH’s problematic outreach findings are found in the Initial Proposal – Volume 2, pp. 56-59 and 92-94.)

This top barrier to broadband deployment must be addressed to ensure that the BEAD program’s goal of universal broadband service availability can be achieved and sustained. Without a strategy to increase the availability of skilled broadband workers in Ohio, this problem creates significant risk for excessive actual BEAD project costs, construction delays, and even BEAD project defaults. Perhaps worse, this shortage

could risk the long-term stability of BEAD-funded broadband networks that will finally connect chronically unserved areas across Ohio.

In coordination with the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, BroadbandOhio developed the “Strengthening Ohio's Broadband & 5G Workforce” strategy. This strategy document planned for and evaluated the existing broadband workforce and their current skillsets, that projected a labor gap regarding broadband workforce readiness in Ohio.

Over the last four years, Ohio’s Broadband and 5G Sector Partnership, a collaborative effort between education, industry and government stakeholders, have implemented strategies that have been identified to ensure Ohio has a skilled and prepared broadband workforce to ensure the BEAD program is implemented in a timely and cost-effective manner. Ohio’s Broadband and 5G Sector Partnership has launched over 40 training programs throughout the state that include, but are not limited to, Certified Fiber Optic Technician, Telecommunications Tower Technicians, and 5G Readiness training and credentialing programs.

In Ohio’s approved Initial Proposal – Volume 2 (pp. 91-94; 139-140), BroadbandOhio committed to investing \$50 million of its BEAD deployment funds to broadband workforce training and education programs through Ohio’s Broadband and 5G Sector Partnership . This strategy requires the use of BEAD funding allocated by Congress to Ohio as part of the IIJA and BEAD program Division F, Title 1, Section 60102

BBOH views this workforce development initiative as a vital portion of its formal Deployment Subgrantee Selections, because these workforce development efforts are necessary to provide the provisional subgrantees with the workforce needed to complete their project commitments. This interpretation of funding support for the broadband workforce development initiative as a concurrent aspect of subgrantee project selection was already recognized in the approved Ohio Initial Proposal – Volume 2, which explained that Ohio would be prioritizing the workforce development initiative before allocating any funding to connect CAIs. Ibid, p. 91. Additionally, with

this program’s announcement and approval in the Ohio Initial Proposal – Volume 2, applicant ISPs have acted in reliance of this program.

The deployment funds for workforce will be used to continue the Industry Sector Partnership, which is the nation’s leading example of how to create a public, private partnership to address workforce shortages. Programs will include the necessary certificate training for fiber installers, 5G installers and tower climbers, but the partnership has also been working on both how to encourage young people to enter the industry as well as tackling workforce shortages in fields that are related to the broadband industry. For instance, BroadbandOhio has been working with electric utilities to discuss ways to train more pole inspectors and design technicians, so that pole replacements can be done more quickly. Similarly, BroadbandOhio is working with natural gas companies to train people in locating underground services, so that the process does not slow down the rate of deployment in Ohio.

(Req 11.2) Y/N Affirm that the Eligible Entity required subgrantees to certify compliance with existing federal labor and employment laws.

Yes

(Req 11.3) (Optional – Conditional on a ‘No’ Response to Intake Question 11.2) If the Eligible Entity does not affirm that subgrantees were required to certify compliance with federal labor and employment laws, explain why the Eligible Entity was unable to do so.

N/A

(Req 11.4) Y/N : Certify that all subgrantees selected by the Eligible Entity will be required to offer a low-cost broadband service option for the duration of the 10-year Federal interest period.

Yes

(Req 11.5) (Optional – Conditional on a ‘No’ Response to Intake Question 11.4) If the Eligible Entity does not certify that all subgrantees selected by the Eligible Entity will be required to offer a low-cost broadband service option for the duration of the 10-year Federal interest period, explain why the Eligible Entity was unable to do so.

N/A

(Req 11.6) Y/N Certify that all subgrantees have planned for the reliability and resilience of BEAD-funded networks.

Yes

(Req 11.7) (Optional – Conditional on a ‘No’ Response to Intake Question 11.6) If the Eligible Entity does not certify that subgrantees have ensured planned for the reliability and resilience of BEAD-funded networks in their network designs, explain why the Eligible Entity was unable to do so.

N/A

Substantiation of Priority Broadband Projects (Requirement 12)

(Req 12.1) Describe how the Eligible Entity applied the definition of Priority Project as defined in the Infrastructure Act and the BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice.

Ohio's BEAD subgrantee selection process adopted a technology-neutral stance that broadly encouraged all applicants, regardless of technology used, to submit evidence demonstrating that their proposed projects would satisfy the performance and scalability criteria of Priority Broadband Projects, as explained in the *Restructuring Policy Notice*. When combined with the simplified scoring and deconfliction method, this technology-neutral, minimum performance-focused approach resulted in provisionally awarded projects from fiber-optic, LEO satellite, and terrestrial fixed wireless technology providers.

To clearly state BBOH's stance, the *BBOH BEAD Program Guidance* explained that "BBOH adopts the updated definition of a Priority Broadband Project, as described in the June 6th BEAD *Restructuring Policy Notice*:

Priority Broadband Project—The term "Priority Broadband Project" means 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" (p. 5).

Technical Explanation Submission Request: Applicants were required to “provide supporting documentation sufficient for BBOH to assess the proposed network’s ability to achieve these technical standards and determine whether the proposed network architecture qualifies as a PBP” (p. 5). BBOH provided a non-exhaustive list of examples of this documentation, which included “description of the technologies to be deployed (e.g. FTTP, FWA, LEO, and associated technical standards; e.g., GPON, DOCSIS, 5G, etc.),” “Network scalability (e.g. reserved capacity, resource planning for expansion, physical upgrades, resiliency/continuity strategies),” “Expected throughput speeds,” and explanations about “how the proposed project can easily scale speeds over time to meet the evolving connectivity needs of households and businesses” and “how the proposed project can support the deployment of 5G, successor wireless technologies, and other advanced services” (p. 5).

BBOH shared the above Priority Broadband Project evidence guidance in its technical assistance webinars and FAQ document. BBOH further stated that it “would like applicants to submit enough network information to evaluate the performance and scalability of the network at each level, including enough details to understand how the network's connection to each location will achieve claimed levels of performance” (FAQ, p. 25). Applicants were encouraged to “at least submit network diagrams explaining each network layer, and other technical and GIS information can be used to supplement and refine this understanding” (FAQ, p. 25). When asked about what formats were required to be used, BBOH explained that “There is no specific format for these materials as long as they provide enough information for BBOH to understand how the proposed network can deliver service claimed in the application” (FAQ, p. 34).

Evaluating Scalability of Priority Broadband Projects

The Priority Broadband Project definition considers growth in demand from today’s baseline of 100/20 Mbps to what Ohio residents will need over the next decade to remain a place where people live, work and raise a family. This definition implicitly recognizes the steady increase in bandwidth demand over the past 10 years by considering what future speeds would be needed to support Ohio’s goals for a thriving residential and economic environment, private and public investment, building additional federal and military locations, supporting AI use, and bolstering precision

agriculture. To qualify as a Priority Broadband Project, an applicant's proposed network must demonstrate ease of scalability to meet at least conservatively projected demand for current and future users.

In areas with high concentrations of homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions, a BEAD Priority Broadband Project should demonstrate the ability to deliver at least 100/20 Mbps, minimal-latency service to all BSLs simultaneously upon deployment, while also needing to account for evolving technologies, 5G and future wireless advancements, and BSL bandwidth demand increases over time. To review a technology's ability to scale, BBOH considered the currently served speeds of 100/20 Mbps, an application's stated network capacity, the project area's number of BSLs, the project area's geographic area, current customer base (if applicable), and future demand. For example, the existing customer base should not be negatively impacted by the award of BEAD locations for a given technology to be considered scalable.

Evaluating Reliability of Priority Broadband Projects

For applications that relied on spectrum-based technologies (e.g., fixed wireless or LEO), reviewers assessed whether the proposed service areas overlapped with geographies that BBOH's analysis indicated are unlikely to support reliable coverage on a project area basis. Factors considered included limitations of available spectrum, the effects of tree canopy and geography on coverage, BSL density, the impact of 5G and other wireless backhaul requirements on end-user capacity, and the availability of vertical assets and enterprise demand drivers in the area. Findings from these technical reviews were compiled and forwarded to BroadbandOhio staff for final evaluation.

Review of Priority Broadband Claims

BBOH applied a structured review process to evaluate all Priority Broadband Project (PBP) claims. This process was designed to ensure that applicants provided sufficient documentation to demonstrate that their proposed networks met the statutory requirements and would be capable of meeting Ohio's long-term connectivity goals.

Applications were first reviewed to confirm that they included the minimum documentation necessary to substantiate a PBP claim. This step was not treated as a simple pass/fail exercise but instead informed how reviewers assessed the risk of each application, and applicants were given substantial leeway in the format and level of detail required in order to proceed in the PBP review process. Next, BBOH's independent technical reviewers completed a review of each applicant's submitted materials. Reviewers confirmed whether the applicant addressed each element in the state's guidance and documented how the submitted evidence supported the PBP claim. Where applications relied on spectrum-based technologies (such as fixed wireless or LEO), reviewers examined whether the proposed service areas overlapped with geographies that BBOH's analysis indicated may not support long-term scalability or reliability, considering factors such as spectrum availability, tree canopy and terrain, household and business density, wireless backhaul requirements, and the presence of vertical assets and enterprise demand drivers.

BBOH leadership made the final determinations on whether an application carried the burden of demonstrating that it qualified as a Priority Broadband Project. These determinations were based on the totality of the evidence submitted, including applicant submissions and BBOH's own independent knowledge of local conditions.

Subgrantee Selection Certification (Requirement 13)

(Req 13.1) Provide a narrative summary of how the Eligible Entity applied the BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice’s scoring criteria to each competitive project application and describe the weight assigned to each Secondary Criteria by the Eligible Entity Scoring criteria must be applied consistent with the prioritization framework laid out in Section 3.4 of the BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice.

The Ohio Broadband Office evaluated subgrantee applications according to the prioritization framework in Section 3.4 of the BEAD June 6th Restructuring Policy Notice. These criteria allowed the Office of Broadband to assess competing Priority Broadband Project applications (as defined in Section 12.1), as well as competing Non-Priority Broadband Project applications.

Primary Criteria — Minimal BEAD Program Outlay: In deciding among competing applications covering the same general project areas, the Office of Broadband chose the option with the lowest cost based on total minimal BEAD Program outlay. This was analyzed on a requested subsidy-per-location basis, as described in the BEAD June 6th Restructuring Policy Notice. The primary criteria allowed the Office of Broadband to prioritize the most cost-efficient and effective priority broadband projects for each location across the state.

Secondary factors were only considered if there were additional overlapping project applications that offered per-location bids within 15 percent of each included location's lowest bid offer. In this situation, the secondary scoring factors evaluated network speed and technical capabilities and speed to deployment, using the following evaluation standards and weights:

- **Network speed and technical capabilities (maximum of 95 points):** The program scored competing bids by evaluating each application's fastest symmetrical service speed to be made simultaneously available to all locations included in the proposed service area. Note that if a project's proposed services did not offer symmetrical download and upload speeds, then the lower performance value was used to determine the resulting score.
 - 95 points – 1/1 Gbps or more
 - 75 points – At least 400/400 Mbps but less than 1/1 Gbps
 - 60 points – At least 250/250 Mbps but less than 400/400 Mbps
 - 45 points – At least 100/100 Mbps but less than 250/250 Mbps
 - 0 points – Less than 100/100 Mbps
- **Network deployment (maximum of 5 points):** The program scored competing bids by prioritizing projects with shorter deployment periods, based on the deployment period input for each application, using the following standard:
 - 5 points – Any project proposed to be completed in 24 months or less
 - Linearly sliding scale to 0 points for projects with proposed deployment periods longer than 24 months and less than 48 months. Examples of score outcomes for proposed deployment periods:
 - 30 months: 3.75 points
 - 36 months: 2.5 points

- 42 months: 1.25 points
- 48 months: 0 points

BBOH notes that it had not conducted a prior round of applications, so it did not consider preliminary/provisional subgrantees from prior rounds in its secondary criteria.

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Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) Documentation (Requirement 14)

(Req 14.1) Submit a document which includes the following:

- Description of how the Eligible Entity will comply with applicable environmental and historic preservation (EHP) requirements, including a brief description of the methodology used to evaluate the Eligible Entity's subgrantee projects and project activities against NTIA's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) guidance. The methodology must reference how the Eligible Entity will use NTIA's Environmental Screening and Permitting Tracking Tool (ESAPTT) to create NEPA project records, evaluate the applicability of categorical exclusions, consider and document the presence (or absence) of Extraordinary Circumstances, and transmit information and draft NEPA documents to NTIA for review and approval.
- Description of the Eligible Entity's plan to fulfill its obligations as a joint lead agency for NEPA under 42 U.S.C. 4336a, including its obligation to prepare or to supervise the preparation of all required environmental analyses and review documents.
- Evaluation of the sufficiency of the environmental analysis for your state or territory that is contained in the relevant chapter of the

FirstNet Regional Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), available at <https://www.firstnet.gov/network/environmental-compliance/projects/regional-programmatic-environmental-impact-statements>.

- Evaluation of whether all deployment related activities anticipated for projects within your state or territory are covered by the actions described in the relevant FirstNet Regional PEIS.
- Description of the Eligible Entity’s plan for applying specific award conditions or other strategies to ensure proper procedures and approvals are in place for disbursement of funds while projects await EHP clearances.

See BroadbandOhio’s Draft Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) Documentation (Requirement 14), available at [link](#)

Consent from Tribal Entities (Requirement 15)

(Req 15.1) Provide a narrative summary of how the Eligible Entity applied the BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice’s scoring criteria to each competitive project application and describe the weight assigned to each Secondary Criteria by the Eligible Entity. Scoring criteria must be applied consistent with the prioritization framework laid out in Section 3.4 of the BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice.

The State of Ohio does not encompass any federally recognized tribal governments.

Prohibition on Excluding Provider Types (Requirement 16)

(Req 16.1) Y/N Does the Eligible Entity certify that it did not exclude cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, public-private partnerships, private companies, public or private utilities, public utility districts, or local governments from eligibility for a BEAD subgrant, consistent with the requirement at 47 U.S.C. § 1702(h)(1)(A)(iii)?.

Yes

Waivers (Requirement 17)

(Req 17.1) If any waivers are in process and/or approved as part of the BEAD Initial Proposal or at any point prior to the submission of the Final Proposal, list the applicable requirement(s) addressed by the waiver(s) and date(s) of submission. Changes to conform to the BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice should be excluded. If not applicable to the Eligible Entity, note 'Not applicable.'

N/A

(Req 17.2) If any waivers are in process and/or approved as part of the BEAD Initial Proposal or at any point prior to the submission of the Final Proposal, list the applicable requirement(s) addressed by the waiver(s) and date(s) of submission. Changes to conform to the BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice should be excluded. If not applicable to the Eligible Entity, note 'Not applicable.'

N/A