



Missouri Department of  
Economic Development

## NTIA BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FAQs

*These FAQs contain information specific to Missouri's covered partnership application as well as three sets of FAQs provided by NTIA in May and June. DED highly encourages broadband providers to read all of the Missouri-specific and general NTIA FAQs. Visit [NTIA's website](#) to see the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), FAQs, and additional announcements.*

### Missouri's Covered Partnership

**1. Will the State be providing resources towards the Non-Federal Cost-Share?**

No.

**2. When will fixed broadband providers be notified of the State's determination of projects to be included within the NTIA Application?**

DED will notify fixed broadband providers on or before August 16, 2021, of its decision.

**3. Will the State make the final decision on the NTIA grant process?**

No. NTIA makes the final decision. Although DED is conducting its own evaluation process to ensure a satisfactory application submission to NTIA, NTIA will perform its own review process with merit reviewers and will determine eligible service areas, approvals, and funding levels for the grantees it selects.

**4. Will our organization be required to sign an agreement before or after the grant award?**

After, if selected. If a fixed broadband provider were selected by NTIA, DED would enter into a program agreement after the grant award was made. The program agreement for selected providers will outline subrecipient responsibilities described in the NOFO and any additional requirements set forth by NTIA and DED respectively.

**5. It appears the scoring process for the State is similar to NTIA's process, is that correct?**

Yes. DED is replicating the NTIA scoring and evaluation process to help determine applications to be included in Missouri's covered partnership. Closely aligning the State's process to NTIA's will provide a stronger opportunity for approvals of Missouri's submitted projects. The Missouri covered partnership guidelines outline each section with core aspects reflected in the NOFO and include the scoring rubric Missouri's reviewers will use to assess each application.

**6. Will DED open up a challenge process for submitted projects in Missouri?**

No. NTIA has clearly outlined its challenge process within the [NOFO](#), see page 42 following the header “Announcement of Proposed Service Areas.”

**7. NTIA is providing an opportunity to covered partnerships to request an extension of the period of performance beyond one year as stipulated in the NOFO. Will the State make that request?**

Yes. As advised on the June 9, 2021, NTIA webinar, covered partnerships were encouraged to submit the extension request with the State’s application. The State will determine how long of an extension to request post project review of the construction timelines submitted by ‘qualified’ applications.

**8. Because NTIA allows for middle-mile and backhaul-only projects to be submitted, will Missouri’s covered partnership consider those projects as a part of Missouri’s evaluation?**

Yes. Providers submitting a middle-mile or backhaul-only project must conform to the stipulations put forth within the NOFO. See middle-mile references on page 23, 30, and 38 of the NOFO.

**9. Which member of the Missouri covered partnership would retain ownership of the infrastructure or associated assets funded by this grant program?**

The subrecipient may retain ownership of the funded covered project’s infrastructure and associated assets. Title would vest in accordance with state law, the terms and conditions of this program, and the Property Standards set forth in [2 CFR. §§ 200.310-200.316](#).

Missouri’s Covered Partnership- Questions asked during 06/30/21 webinar:

**10. Will the State sponsor a grant application for areas that are already receiving federal ACAM funding? Will these be considered lower-priority projects?**

See Question 40, Page 6 and Question 105, Page 23 of the DED NTIA FAQs.

**11. Is DED giving preference to projects with contiguous, versus non-contiguous, areas?**

As stated in the Missouri Covered Partnership Guidelines, DED requires each non-contiguous covered broadband project to be located within a maximum of four contiguous counties. Among projects meeting that requirement, no preference will be given based on contiguity.

**12. Are Rural Digital Opportunity Fund areas eligible to be submitted?**

See Question 103, Page 23 of DED NTIA FAQs.

**13. Will the State's application be chosen or funded in whole or will NTIA grant some portions and deny others?**

Either is possible. NTIA will determine the funded projects and award amounts based on its three-stage

review process, see Question 58, Page 12 of DED NTIA FAQ. It is possible some or all of the projects within the State's application may or may not be funded.

**14. Is the Global Information System (GIS) data available for download or only available through the map viewer?**

GIS data is only available through the map viewer.

**15. The State is the lead applicant, but who will own the assets after completion? The State or the provider?**

See Question 9, Page 2 of the DED NTIA FAQs.

**16. Can a covered partnership go for a project in an area that was previously awarded federal funds if they are not providing 25/3 speeds?**

See Question 105, Page 23 of the DED NTIA FAQ.

**17. Will the NTIA program provide priority to projects that offer higher speeds than 25/3?**

The scoring rubric within the Project Purpose & Benefits section provides more points to applicants proposing greater number of connections along with higher speeds. See page 7 of the Guidelines for reference. NTIA has included in its priority list projects designed to provide broadband service with a speed of 100 Mbps download/20 Mbps upload. See Question 57, Page 12, and Question 88, Page 20 of the DED NTIA FAQs.

**18. We are applying for RUS loans to provide fiber on our electric system infrastructure. We plan to lease this to a company that has received RDOF funding. Would our utility be eligible for funding?**

See Question 103, Page 23 and Question 133, Page 30 of the DED NTIA FAQs.

**19. If there is a grant project existing that does not provide qualifying broadband (10/1), is that area considered eligible?**

See Question 105, Page 23 of the DED NTIA FAQs.

**20. Do I have to apply for funding to be able to challenge an area for funding?**

No. See Question 6, Page 2 of the DED NTIA FAQs that addresses the NTIA process.

**21. Will DED require additional regulatory reporting from the funded covered broadband projects - for example, project completed in a year will speed or subscriber reporting for the area be required in later years?**

The NOFO outlines the reporting requirements, which will be included in program agreements with DED, as will any additional reporting requirements required by DED and those in the grant agreement DED enters into with NTIA.

**22. While NTIA does not require more than a 10% match, because the State has a cap of \$10 million it can apply for, how will this impact the way the State will determine matches within the applications?**

Matching are only factored within the Project Budget & Sustainability Criteria when 5 points are available to applicants committing to at least 10% match. Applicants presenting a smaller percentage or no match will not receive the 5 points (or partial points). The provider determines how many projects they wish to submit for evaluation and total grants request must be below the \$10 million cap.

**23. We are wanting to submit an application on an area that indicates as "served" but in reality is not. Locations are only able to get speeds less than 25/3. How will this application be reviewed or challenged?**

See Questions 89 & 90, Page 20 of DED NTIA FAQs.

**24. Do surrounding ineligible areas factor into "level of impact"?**

No. Applicants are requested to specifically articulate impact within the proposed project area.

**25. Is the State planning to submit an application close to the \$30 million mark or some smaller total amount?**

The State will submit those qualified projects that have also cleared a due diligence review within its application, and the total requested may be within the recommended range or slightly higher. The total request amount is contingent on the number of qualified projects and dollar amounts requested.

**26. Is there a minimum amount of funding that each provider can ask for?**

No. There is not a minimum grant request for providers.

Missouri's Covered Partnership- Questions asked during 07/16/21 webinar:

**27. On the tax clearance form (Form 943), do we submit the form itself with our application, or do we go ahead and send that in to the Missouri Department of Revenue (DOR)?**

DED recommends that applicants send the form into the Missouri DOR. The applicant will either need to submit the Certificate of Tax Clearance or evidence of the submission of Form 943 to DOR.

**28. Can items listed in the Submissions / Attachments Checklist be submitted early if a provider plans to submit multiple proposed projects?**

No. DED will accept attachments for potential applications. Please submit the applications and corresponding materials all at once. If you are submitting multiple project areas, the attachments need to be submitted for each application and they will be independently reviewed on or before the July 26, 2021 deadline.

**29. Is the \$10 million provider cap referenced related to the provider or the individual project(s)?**

The \$10 million cap is the total grant cap request per provider. The provider may submit one or more

projects to be evaluated under this cap.

**30. Can DED review the definition / meaning of non-contiguous?**

No. DED does not intend to change its definition. “Non-contiguous” for purposes of Missouri’s Covered Partnership means a project proposed by the applicant that is not contained within a single, continuous, and all-encompassing area. NTIA will consider projects that are non-contiguous, but Missouri’s Covered Partnership process requires that the proposed project be contained within four contiguous counties.

**31. How should we think about the Missouri Broadband map versus the NTIA Indicators of Broadband Need? How should we present this data within our applications?**

The Missouri and NTIA maps are provided as enhanced resources to the public and providers in understanding the current broadband coverage and funding occurring within Missouri. The NTIA Indicators of Broadband Need are as-is datasets as articulated on the July 14, 2021, NTIA webinar by Tim Moyer. The Indicators map is published to show additional needs on the various data points collected by the U.S. Census Bureau, the Federal Communications Commission, and proprietary datasets made accessible to NTIA.

## NTIA Broadband Infrastructure Program

First Set of Frequently Asked Questions published by NTIA on May 24, 2021

*The below FAQs are for informational purposes only and are intended solely to assist potential applicants in better understanding the NTIA Broadband Infrastructure Program and the application requirements set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for this program. The FAQs do not and are not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, or the specific application requirements set forth in the NOFO. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the NOFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in the below FAQs.*

### Program Overview

**32. What is the NTIA Broadband Infrastructure Program?**

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Division N, Title IX, Section 905, Pub. L. No. 116-260, 134 Stat. 1182 (Dec. 27, 2020) (Act), provides new sources of broadband funding, including the Broadband Infrastructure Program, to support bridging the digital divide in unserved areas. The Act authorized NTIA to administer grants to “covered partnerships” for “covered broadband projects,” defined as competitively and technologically neutral projects for the deployment of fixed broadband service that provides qualifying broadband service in an eligible service area.

**33. What type of assistance is available in the Broadband Infrastructure Program?**

The Broadband Infrastructure Program is a competitive grant program. NTIA will make up to \$288M available for Federal assistance.

**34. What is the target size of grant awards for projects?**

NTIA expects to make awards under this program within the following funding range: \$5M to \$30M. This range is not a required minimum or maximum, but covered partnerships requesting amounts for projects outside of this range must provide a reasonable explanation for the variance in their project size.

Eligibility

**35. Who can apply for funding under the Broadband Infrastructure Program?**

Eligible applicants for this program are “covered partnerships,” which means a partnership between: (A) a State, or one or more political subdivisions of a State; and (B) a provider of fixed broadband service. A covered partnership may include more than one provider of fixed broadband service as part of its application.

**36. Can U.S. territories and/or the District of Columbia apply for funding under the Broadband Infrastructure Program?**

Yes, the program’s definition of “State” includes any State of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the United States Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, and any other territory or possession of the United States. Any of these entities may apply for a grant.

**37. What kind of fixed broadband service providers are eligible to be part of covered partnerships?**

Commercial/for-profit, municipal, non-profit, or cooperative broadband service providers are eligible fixed broadband service providers that can be part of a covered partnership.

**38. Can a fixed broadband service provider be part of multiple covered partnerships?**

Yes.

**39. Is the fixed broadband service provider required to be an eligible telecommunications carrier pursuant to section 214(e) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 214(e))?**

No.

**40. Who must be the “lead” applicant for the grant funding?**

The governmental entity (either a State or a political subdivision of a State that must be included in a covered partnership) must serve as the lead applicant for the covered partnership. The lead applicant would enter into the grant agreement with NTIA and assume primary operational and financial responsibility for completing the project should an award be made.

**41. What are eligible projects under the Broadband Infrastructure Program?**

Per the Act, “covered broadband projects” are eligible for Broadband Infrastructure Program funding. The term “covered broadband project” means a competitively and technologically neutral project for the deployment of fixed broadband service that provides qualifying broadband service in an eligible service area. The term “qualifying broadband service” means broadband service with: (A)

a download speed of not less than 25 megabits per second; (B) an upload speed of not less than 3 megabits per second; and (C) a latency sufficient to support real time, interactive applications.

**42. What areas are “eligible service areas” in the Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program?**

The term “eligible service area” means a census block in which broadband service is not available at one or more households or businesses in the census block, as determined by the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information (the Assistant Secretary), on the basis of information and maps provided by the Federal Communications Commission, or other information available to the Assistant Secretary.

**43. How does the Broadband Infrastructure Program define unserved?**

Unserved is defined in Section 905(a)(14) of the Act as: (A) the household lacks access to qualifying broadband service; and (B) no broadband provider has been selected to receive, or is otherwise receiving, Federal or State funding subject to enforceable build out commitments to deploy qualifying broadband service in the specific area where the household is located by dates certain, even if such service is not yet available, provided that the Federal or State agency providing the funding has not deemed the service provider to be in default of its buildout obligations under the applicable Federal or State program.

**44. Is there a limit on the number of applications an entity may submit?**

Yes, a covered partnership may only submit one application. For example, a State or one or more political subdivisions of a State may only submit one application. However, a fixed broadband service provider may be a member of more than one covered partnership.

**45. If the fixed broadband service provider is already receiving State or Federal funding for broadband deployment in the proposed service area, is the service area still eligible for grant funding under this program?**

The Act requires the applicant to disclose any other Federal or State support that the broadband service provider that is part of the covered partnership has received to deploy broadband service in the proposed service area. NTIA will factor such information as it considers applications for grant awards, but the receipt of other Federal or State funds does not necessarily preclude the covered partnership from receiving a grant under the Broadband Infrastructure Program.

**46. Do I need to coordinate with my State before submitting a grant application?**

NTIA encourages political subdivisions of a State that are contemplating forming a covered partnership with one or more providers of fixed broadband service to coordinate and consult with the State’s Broadband Office or other coordinating body to ensure that the proposal is consistent with a State’s broadband plan or priorities. Such coordination enables the State to evaluate the proposed covered broadband projects presented for consideration and ensure the submission of top priority projects for funding under the Broadband Infrastructure Program. Additionally, the applicant must identify on Line 19 of the SF-424 application form whether the application is subject to State review pursuant to Executive Order 12372 and whether the application was selected for review by the State.

#### **47. Is there a matching requirement for the Broadband Infrastructure Program?**

The Act authorizing the establishment of the Broadband Infrastructure Program does not contain a statutory cost sharing or matching funds requirement for this grant program. NTIA will not require a covered partnership applying for a grant under the Broadband Infrastructure Program to provide a cost match; however, NTIA will favorably consider applications that propose to contribute a non-Federal cost share of at least 10 percent of the total eligible costs of a project. Applicants proposing a cost share amount must document their capacity to provide matching funds in their applications. Matching funds may be in the form of either cash or in-kind contributions consistent with the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200.

Non-Federal cost share committed to an award by a covered partnership will be treated as voluntary committed cost sharing and will be a binding commitment under the award. The failure of a covered partnership to meet its voluntary committed cost share may result in a decrease in and/or a recovery of Federal grant funds.

#### **48. What are eligible uses of Broadband Infrastructure Program funds?**

Grant recipients may only use Federal award funds and any non-Federal cost share committed to an award to pay for allowable costs under the Broadband Infrastructure Program. Allowable costs are determined in accordance with the cost principles identified in 2 C.F.R. Part 200, including Subpart E of such regulations for States and non-profit organizations, and in 48 C.F.R. Part 31 for commercial organizations, as well as in the grant program's authorizing legislation.

Based on the scope of the Broadband Infrastructure Program, below are non-exclusive examples of how a covered partnership may generally leverage grant funds:

- Fund the costs of construction, improvement, and/or acquisition of facilities and telecommunications equipment required to provide qualifying broadband service, including infrastructure for backhaul, middle and last mile networks.
- Fund the cost of long-term leases (for terms greater than one year) of facilities required to provide qualifying broadband service, including indefeasible right-of-use (IRU) agreements.
- Fund the costs of engineering design, permitting and work related to environmental, historical and cultural reviews.
- Fund personnel costs, including salaries and fringe benefits for staff and consultants required for the implementation of the Broadband Infrastructure Program (such as project managers, program directors, subject matter experts, grant administrators, financial analysts, accountants, and attorneys).
- Fund reasonable pre-application expenses in an amount not to exceed \$50,000. Pre-application expenses, which include expenses related to preparing an application, may be reimbursed if they are incurred after the publication date of the NOFO and prior to the date of issuance of the grant award from NTIA, except that lobbying costs and contingency fees are not reimbursable from grant funds. Pre-application costs should be clearly identified in the proposed project budget. Additionally, pre-application costs are incurred at the sole risk of the applicant and will not be reimbursed by NTIA if the proposed project does not receive an award pursuant to this program.
- Fund other allowable costs necessary to carrying out programmatic activities of an award, not

to include ineligible costs described in Section IV.J.2 of the NOFO.

#### **49. What are ineligible uses of Broadband Infrastructure Program funds?**

Ineligible costs include those costs that are unallowable under the applicable Federal cost principles. Please note that costs ineligible for the Broadband Infrastructure Program may not be paid for with non-Federal cost share committed to an award. These cost prohibitions apply to all members of a covered partnership. Additional ineligible costs are listed below:

- **Prohibition On Use of Grant Funds For Covered Communications Equipment Or Services.**—A covered partnership may not use grant funds received under the Broadband Infrastructure Program to purchase or support any covered communications equipment or service (as defined in section 9 of the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act of 2019 (47 U.S.C. 1608)).
- **Prohibition on Profit and Fees.**—A profit, fee, or other incremental charge above actual cost is not an allowable cost under this program.
- **Prohibition on Use of Grant Funds to Support or Oppose Collective Bargaining.**—A covered partnership may not use grant funds, whether directly or indirectly as an offset for other funds, to support or oppose collective bargaining.
- **Provider of Broadband Services** – The following cost prohibitions apply to a provider of broadband services that is a member of a covered partnership. As a condition of receiving a grant under the Broadband Infrastructure Program, a provider of broadband service that is part of a covered partnership receiving the grant is prohibited:
  - From using the grant amounts to repay, or make any other payment relating to, a loan made by any public or private lender.
  - From using grant amounts as collateral for a loan made by any public or private lender.
  - From using more than \$50,000 of the grant amounts to pay for the preparation of the grant.
  - From using grant funds to pay for previously incurred administrative costs or previously purchased equipment or construction activities undertaken prior to the award.
  - From using grant funds to pay for the costs of providing broadband service to any locations that are used to meet an FCC Universal Service Fund (USF) deployment obligation.

### How to Apply

#### **50. When does the application period open, and when is the deadline to apply?**

NTIA is accepting applications for the Broadband Infrastructure Program from the date of the release of the NOFO through Tuesday, August 17, 2021. Complete applications must be received by [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on **August 17, 2021**. The 90-day application window is a statutory requirement and NTIA cannot grant any extensions of the August 17 deadline.

#### **51. What do I need to apply?**

Applicants must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number, active System for Award Management (SAM) registration, and Grants.gov account to apply for grants.

## **52. How do I get a DUNS number?**

All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a DUNS Number from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). Applicants must enter the DUNS Number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational DUNS" on the SF-424 form. For more detailed instructions for obtaining a DUNS Number, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>. Applicants can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or via the Internet at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.

## **53. How do I register in SAM?**

All applicants must register in SAM before submitting a complete application packet. Additionally, the applicant must maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. SAM registration must be renewed annually. For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>. Applicants can register for the SAM at <https://www.sam.gov/>. Note that the free annual registration process in SAM.gov generally takes between three (3) and five (5) business days, but can take more than three weeks. Please note that a Federal assistance award cannot be issued if the designated recipient's registration in SAM.gov is not current at the time of the award.

## **54. How do I create a Grants.gov account?**

Applicants can register an account with Grants.gov by following the on-screen instructions or refer to the detailed instructions here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html>.

In addition, see the NOFO section IV.L.1.4-6 for additional information on navigating Grants.gov, including how to add a profile to a Grants.gov account, organization roles authorization and designation of the grant Authorized Organization Representative (AOR), how to track role requests, and AOR signature process (which is required for a complete application and is an often missed step).

## **55. Can applicants use the Grants.gov Workspace to submit an application?**

Yes. Grants.gov applicants can apply online using Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. Below is an overview of using Workspace when applying for Federal grants on Grants.gov. For access to complete instructions on how to apply for opportunities, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>

In addition, see Section IV.L.2 of the NOFO for additional information on using Workspace to submit your application.

## **56. How do I access the application?**

Application forms and instructions are available on the Grants.gov website ([www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)). To access these materials, go to <http://www.grants.gov>, select "How to Apply for Grants," and then select "Search for Opportunity Package." Enter the CFDA number (11.031) and/or the funding opportunity number (NTIA-Broadband-Infrastructure-Program-2021). Select "Grant Opportunity

Package,” and then follow the prompts. To download the instructions, go to “Preview Opportunity Package” and select “Download Instructions.”

NTIA recommends that applicants visit Grants.gov prior to filing their applications so that they fully understand the process and requirements. Applications are accepted until the deadline and are processed as received. Late or incomplete applications and applications submitted by mail, courier, or by facsimile will not be accepted.

#### **57. What information is required in the application?**

Please see NOFO section IV.B -- Content and Form of Applications for a detailed list of Standard Forms (SF) and related documentation required for submission. Items in Section IV.B.1 through IV.B.5 of the NOFO are part of the standard application package in Grants.gov and can be completed through the download application process.

Items in Section IV.B.6 through IV.B.12 of the NOFO must be completed and attached by clicking on “Add Attachments” found in item 15 of the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance. This will create a zip file that allows for transmittal of the documents electronically via Grants.gov.

Applicants should carefully follow specific Grants.gov instructions at [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) to ensure the attachments will be accepted by the Grants.gov system. A receipt from Grants.gov indicates only that an application was transferred to a system. It does not provide details concerning whether all attachments (or how many attachments) transferred successfully. Applicants will receive a series of e-mail messages over a period of up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency’s electronic system has received its application.

#### **58. Are there any additional application format restrictions or requirements?**

Yes. Additional application instructions include:

- Applications only will be accepted electronically through Grants.gov. Paper, email and facsimile submissions will not be accepted.
- Any figures, graphs, images, and pictures should be of a size that is easily readable or viewable and may be landscape orientation.
- All documents must have an easy to read font (10-point minimum), however smaller type may be used in figures and tables but must be clearly legible.
- Applicants may use single spacing or double spacing and margins should be at least one inch top, bottom, left, and right.
- Application documents should be portrait orientation except for figures, graphs, images, and pictures.
- Paragraphs are to be clearly separated from each other by double spacing, paragraph formatting or equivalent.
- Page Limits:
  - The Project Narrative is limited to 20 pages single spaced (40 pages double spaced), noting the limit of two (2) pages for the Executive Summary.
  - Resumes and environmental and historic preservation review documentation are not included in the page count of the Proposal Narrative.
  - If resumes are included, resumes must be a maximum of one (1) page each.

- Ensure all pages are numbered sequentially.
- Application page size must be 8½ inches by 11 inches.
- Applications must be submitted in English.
- All applications, including forms, must be typed.

**59. How will I know if I successfully submitted my application in Grants.gov?**

Applicants will receive e-mail notifications from Grants.gov over a period of up to two (2) business days as the application moves through intermediate systems before the applicant learns via a validation or rejection notification whether a Federal agency’s electronic system has received the application. (See [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov) for full information on application and notification through Grants.gov). This email notification interval should be taken into consideration in the grant application timeline.

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant with the AOR role who submitted the application will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. This applicant with the AOR role will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When NTIA successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role who submitted the application. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by NTIA.

Applicants using a slow Internet connection, such as dial-up, should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Again, Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role attempting to submit the application. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

**60. Will NTIA provide the opportunity to cure applications if there are issues in the application?**

Yes, as set forth in Section V.B. of the NOFO, NTIA will provide applicants with the opportunity to cure application deficiencies during the application review process. Only applications submitted by the application deadline will be provided with an opportunity to cure deficiencies. Applications submitted after the deadline or by an ineligible entity will not be accepted by NTIA.

**61. Will NTIA offer trainings or other resources to help with the application?**

NTIA is providing [webinars](#) for the three grant programs, including the Broadband Infrastructure program. [Sign up for BroadbandUSA updates](#) for the most up-to-date information.

Evaluation of Applications

## **62. What are the funding priorities for the Broadband Infrastructure Program?**

The Assistant Secretary will give priority to applications for covered broadband projects as follows, in decreasing order of priority, as set forth in Section 905(d)(4) of the Act:

- (1) Covered broadband projects designed to provide broadband service to the greatest number of households in an eligible service area;
- (2) Covered broadband projects designed to provide broadband service in an eligible service area that is wholly within any area other than:
  - (i) a county, city, or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants; and
  - (ii) the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town of more than 50,000 inhabitants;
- (3) Covered broadband projects that are the most cost-effective, prioritizing such projects in areas that are the most rural;
- (4) Covered broadband projects designed to provide broadband service with a download speed of not less than 100 megabits per second and an upload speed of not less than 20 megabits per second; and
- (5) Any other covered broadband project that meets the requirements of this NOFO.

NTIA is interested in ensuring that any broadband infrastructure deployed under this grant program will have the ability to evolve, sustain, and scale for future advanced services that will also be important to the U.S. economy. In the years ahead, emerging technologies such as cloud technologies, artificial intelligence, health IoT and telemedicine, smart grid, and 5G, will all require broadband networks capable of delivering much faster speeds, lower latency, and higher reliability than those now codified by various Federal agencies. Thus, NTIA encourages the submission of project proposals that deploy future-proof infrastructure, e.g., fiber.

NTIA will sequence all applications that address priority one and propose a covered broadband project designed to provide broadband service to the greatest number of (unserved) households in an eligible service area and evaluate them against the objective criteria set forth in Section V.A of the NOFO to determine their eligibility for award. To the extent that funding remains available after NTIA completes its review of priority one applications, NTIA will then sequence applications that address priority two. NTIA will continue this priority sequencing process until it has awarded all available funding.

## **63. How will applications be reviewed/evaluated?**

The review process will be divided into three stages: (1) Initial Administrative and Eligibility Review of complete application packets; (2) Merit Review; and (3) Programmatic Review. Not all applications will necessarily proceed through all three review stages depending on the results of the review process.

## **64. What is the process for the Administrative and Eligibility Review?**

NTIA will perform an initial Administrative and Eligibility Review of applications received on time through Grants.gov to determine eligibility, completeness and responsiveness to the programmatic

requirements of the Broadband Infrastructure Program, including a review of the project narrative and budget justification. Applications submitted by other than an eligible applicant will be eliminated from further review. NTIA may continue the initial administrative review process for an application that is timely submitted by an eligible applicant, but that is missing certain information or documentation required by the NOFO and will request missing or incomplete information from the applicant as needed. The applicant will have seven (7) calendar days to submit materials responsive to the feedback provided by NTIA, unless this period is extended by NTIA. Pursuant to Section 905(e)(2)(B) of the Act, an eligible applicant's failure to remedy deficiencies in a timely manner may result in NTIA's denial of the application.

**65. If my application passes the initial Administrative and Eligibility Review, will my application will go through the Merit Review process?**

Given the limited amount of funding available for broadband infrastructure deployment awards and the potentially large number of covered partnerships that may submit applications for this grant program, NTIA will review applications based on the priorities enumerated in Section 905(d)(4) of the Act (and set forth in Section I.A of the NOFO) in their statutory order of priority. NTIA will first sequence all applications for Merit Review that address priority one by proposing a covered broadband project designed to provide broadband service to the greatest number of households in an eligible service area and evaluate them against the objective criteria set forth in Section V.A of the NOFO to determine their eligibility for award. To the extent that funding remains available after NTIA completes its review of priority one applications, NTIA will then review applications that address priority two. NTIA will continue this priority sequencing process until it has awarded all available funding.

**66. What is the Merit Review process?**

Applications satisfying the Initial Administrative and Eligibility Review will be evaluated by at least two objective reviewers who have demonstrated expertise in the programmatic aspects of the Broadband Infrastructure Program. They may be Federal employees or non-Federal persons. During the review process, the reviewers may discuss the applications with each other, but scores will be determined on an individual basis.

**67. How will the Merit Review evaluators score my application?**

Reviewers will evaluate applications according to the evaluation criteria provided in Section V.A of the NOFO and independently score each application based on a scale of 0-100. The evaluation criteria that will be used by the Merit Reviewers to review and analyze Broadband Infrastructure Program applications are grouped into three categories: (1) Project Purpose and Benefits (30 points); (2) Project Viability (40 points); and (3) Project Budget and Sustainability (30 points). Each application will be evaluated against objective criteria. See Section V.A of the NOFO for a detailed description of the evaluation criteria that reviewers will apply under each category.

**68. What if NTIA or Merit Review evaluators have questions about my application?**

NTIA and reviewers may request additional clarifying information or corroborating documentation from an applicant during the course of the Merit Review and may suggest revisions be made to an application to resolve perceived material programmatic or financial weaknesses or deficiencies and may factor such additional materials into their assigned scores for an application. In such cases, NTIA

will review the feedback from the Merit Reviewers, and will contact the applicant and provide the applicant with an opportunity to respond to the Merit Review feedback. The applicant will have ten (10) calendar days to respond to the reviewer feedback, unless this time period is extended by NTIA. NTIA may use its sole discretion to terminate the Merit Review revision process for an applicant if, after multiple opportunities to respond to Merit Review feedback, NTIA determines that the applicant is not sufficiently responding to requests for additional information or remedying application deficiencies.

**69. What applications will pass onto the Programmatic Review part of the application review process?**

Based on an average of the reviewers' scores, applications will be assigned adjectival ratings for each priority group in accordance with the following scale:

- Qualified for Funding – (70-100 points)
- Unqualified for Funding – (0-69 points)

**70. What is evaluated in the Programmatic Review of applications?**

NTIA Program Staff will review applications determined to be qualified for funding during the Merit Review process for conformity with programmatic objectives, requirements and priorities as a part of the Programmatic Review. NTIA Program Staff will prioritize applications for Programmatic Review based on the priorities for the Broadband Infrastructure Program set forth in Section 905(d)(4) of the Act (*see* Section I.A of the NOFO).

During Programmatic Review, NTIA may ask applicants to submit additional information to clarify or to further substantiate the representations made in their applications. NTIA Program Staff will review the supplemental information, along with all information submitted with the application, to confirm eligibility and evaluate the applications with respect to the requirements and priorities of the Broadband Infrastructure Program.

**71. How will NTIA evaluate and validate proposed service areas?**

NTIA Program Staff will use available data from the FCC, as required in the Act, to validate eligible service areas. The FCC Form 477 data is a data layer in NTIA's National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM), and NTIA will rely on the FCC's data, along with other datasets contained in the NBAM and other available information, to validate applicants' proposed service areas as meeting the Act's definition of eligible service area. Further, NTIA also will use data submitted by service providers in response to pending grant application proposed service areas, as detailed in NOFO section VIII.B. "Announcement of Proposed Service Areas."

**72. Will there be a challenge process for the proposed service area?**

Yes, please see section VIII.B of the NOFO, which describes the process for existing broadband service providers to challenge the funding eligibility of the proposed service areas designated by covered partnerships in their covered broadband projects.

**73. Can NTIA ask for changes in my application in the review process?**

NTIA reserves the right at any time during the Merit and Programmatic Review processes to negotiate with the applicant relative to specific modifications to the application, including but not limited to the resolution of any differences that may exist between the applicant's original request and NTIA's

determination of eligible service areas, eligible costs, and Broadband Infrastructure Program funding priorities.

**74. How are final awards decided in the Broadband Infrastructure Program?**

At the conclusion of the Programmatic Review, NTIA Program Staff will summarize their analysis for each application reviewed. The Associate Administrator for NTIA's Office of Telecommunications and Information Applications (OTIA Associate Administrator) will prepare a rank order of applications within a particular priority grouping and present a package or packages of recommended grant awards to the Selecting Official for review and approval. The OTIA Associate Administrator's recommendations to the Selecting Official will consider the following selection factors:

1. The scores and technical comments of the objective expert reviewers during Merit Review.
2. The analysis of NTIA Program Staff during Programmatic Review.
3. Satisfaction of the Broadband Infrastructure Program priorities set forth in Section 905(d)(4) of the Act.
4. The extent to which the applicant proposes to contribute non-Federal cost share to fund a portion of the total eligible costs of the project.
5. The equitable geographic distribution of the proposed grant awards.
6. The extent to which the infrastructure investment is necessary to provide qualifying broadband service in the proposed service area and is unlikely to be made using private sources of funds.
7. Whether, and the extent to which, the applicant proposes to incorporate strong labor protections into the performance of the construction project, including paying prevailing wages.
8. Avoidance of duplication with the initiatives of other Federal agencies, including Department of Agriculture loan and grant programs for broadband services, applicable universal service programs authorized by the Federal Communications Commission.
9. The availability of funds.

The Assistant Secretary, or their designee, will serve as the Selecting Official for the Broadband Infrastructure Program. The Assistant Secretary will generally select and recommend applications for funding based on the rank order within each priority grouping prepared by the OTIA Associate Administrator. The Selecting Official retains discretion to select and recommend an application for funding that was not recommended by the OTIA Associate Administrator based on one or more of the selection factors listed in Section V.C. of the NOFO, or not to select an application that was recommended for funding by the OTIA Associate Administrator. The Assistant Secretary will submit the applications recommended for funding, along with the bases for the selection decisions, to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Grants Officer, who serves as the Grants Officer for the Broadband Infrastructure Program. The final approval of selected applications and the issuance of awards will be made by the NIST Grants Officer. The award decisions of the NIST Grants Officer are final.

**75. How will I be notified if my application is selected for an award?**

A grants officer from the NIST Grants Office will serve as the Grants Officer for awards issued pursuant to this NOFO. Applicants will be notified in writing by the NIST Grants Officer if their application is selected for an award. (Unsuccessful applicants will also be notified in writing.) If the application is selected for funding, the NIST Grants Officer will issue the grant award (Form CD-450), which is the authorizing financial assistance award document. By signing the Form CD-450, the recipient agrees to comply with all award provisions, terms, and conditions.

[Grant Award and Reporting Requirements](#)

**76. What rules or requirements will the grant award be subject to?**

Grant recipients will comply with applicable statutes and regulations, including but not limited to the provisions listed in section VI.D of the NOFO. These provisions include the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements (2 C.F.R. part 200), Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, Pre-Award Notification Requirements, Environmental and National Historical Preservation Requirements, Property Trust Relationship and Public Notice Filings for Grant-Acquired Property, Open Network Requirements, Domestic Preference for Procurements (Buy American), and Contracting with Small and Minority Businesses, Women's Business Enterprises, and Labor Surplus Area Firms.

**77. What are the reporting requirements for awarded projects?**

Grant awardees will be required to submit financial and programmatic/technical reports on their project semi-annually. Grant awardees will be required to submit an annual report and specific project data, as specified in section VI.E.2 of the NOFO, to NTIA. Section VI.E of the NOFO provides additional details on grant awardee reporting requirements.

**78. What is the grant award period of performance and by when must awarded grant funds be expended?**

The Act requires covered partnerships to complete their covered broadband projects within one year of their initial receipt of grant funds.

**79. Will NTIA allow grant period of performance extensions?**

Yes, the Assistant Secretary may grant an extension for broadband construction projects. To be considered for an extension, the covered partnership must certify that it has a plan for use of the funds; the construction project is underway; or extenuating circumstances require an extension to ensure project completion.

**80. How are grant period of performance extensions granted?**

The applicant/covered partnership may submit a request for an extension of the one-year award period with its application or not later than ninety (90) calendar days before the end of the award period.

**81. What happens if the covered partnership does not expend all of its funds at the end of its grant period of performance?**

NTIA will make any grant funds not expended by a covered partnership by the end of the one-year award period set forth in the Act available to other covered partnerships for the purposes provided in the Broadband Infrastructure Program, unless the Assistant Secretary has granted the covered partnership an extension of time to complete its project. NTIA retains discretion to make supplemental awards to a covered partnership to the extent that another covered partnership does not expend some or all of its grant funds during the other covered partnership's period of performance.

## NTIA Broadband Infrastructure Program

Second Set of Frequently Asked Questions published by NTIA on June 10, 2021.

*The below FAQs are for informational purposes only and are intended solely to assist potential applicants in better understanding the NTIA Broadband Infrastructure Program and the application requirements set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for this program. The FAQs do not and are not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, or the specific application requirements set forth in the NOFO. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the NOFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in the below FAQs.*

### Eligibility

**82. Can multiple counties or towns submit an application with a fixed broadband service provider?**

Multiple political subdivisions may join together to collaborate with a fixed broadband service provider(s) as a covered partnership to propose a covered broadband project.

**83. What entities qualify as political subdivisions of a state?**

Neither the Act nor the NOFO explicitly define the term "political subdivision." In general, political subdivisions are created by a State to fulfill governmental functions and are expressly defined in State statutes. Such entities may typically include, but are not limited to, counties, cities, towns, municipalities, or parishes. In the Project Narrative section of its application under the description of the covered partnership, an entity should provide a citation to the specific State law that authorizes or establishes it as a political subdivision of the State to qualify to submit an application under this grant program. See Section IV.B.6.b of the NOFO. For example, if a State statute authorizes local economic development councils as political subdivisions, then that entity could qualify as the public/State member of the covered partnership.

**84. Are municipally-owned networks, by themselves, considered "covered partnerships" since they are both broadband providers and part of a government entity?**

The intent of the statute is to award funds to a "covered partnership" in which at least two parties are involved. The definition of covered partnership set forth in the Consolidated Appropriations Act,

2021, Division N, Title IX, Section 905(a)(5) (the Act) includes two components, one for each entity that makes up one half of the partnership: (1) a State or 1 or more political subdivisions of a State, and (2) a provider of fixed broadband service. A covered partnership can include multiple entities in either category (*e.g.*, a covered partnership consisting of two political subdivisions of a State and one provider). But at the very least, a covered partnership needs to consist of: (1) one State or political subdivision, and (2) one provider of fixed broadband. A municipally-owned network could serve as either the State or political subdivision of a State or as a service provider in the covered partnership, but could not serve as both (*i.e.*, if the municipal broadband provider applies as a political subdivision, the application includes a separate provider of fixed broadband service, if it applies as a provider of fixed broadband service, the application includes a separate State or political subdivision of a State). If a cooperative or service provider applies to this program, must they establish a formal partnership with a state/local organization or can they simply include letters of support from the city/county government, etc.?

The Broadband Infrastructure Program, per the Act, states that eligible applicants must be a “covered partnership” which is defined as a partnership between: (A) a State, or one or more political subdivisions of a State; and (B) a provider of fixed broadband. Therefore, a cooperative or service provider would not be eligible applying on their own, even with letters of support from the State or political subdivision(s) they intend to serve. They would need to partner with the State or political subdivision(s) of a State they intend to serve, with the State or political subdivision serving as the lead applicant.

**85. Are States only allowed one application each?**

A State as a part of the covered partnership, may only submit one application proposing a covered broadband project in accordance with Section 905(e)(2)(C) of the Act, which limits covered partnerships to a single application. Political subdivisions of a State are also limited to one application for program funding.

**86. Will NTIA award only one application per State?**

Not necessarily. NTIA may award more than one covered broadband project in a State, depending on the number of competitive applications received from eligible applicants within a State and the available funding. However, equitable geographic distribution of proposed grant awards is a selection factor listed in Section V.C of the NOFO. Further, NTIA will only award one application per State or political subdivision applicant.

**87. Does the State have to be involved in the covered partnership?**

A State does not have to be a part of the covered partnership, provided that one or more political subdivisions of that state are included. NTIA encourages applicants to consult and/or coordinate project proposals with the State's broadband office.

**88. How do I coordinate with the State on my covered project application?**

Applicants can reach out to their State’s broadband office to coordinate their application to this grant program. For more information on State broadband offices, see <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/states>. Additionally, the applicant must identify on Line 19 of the SF-424 application form whether the application is subject to State review pursuant to

Executive Order 12372 and whether the application was selected for review by the State.

**89. Do the members of the covered partnership need to have a formal partnership agreement in place before applying?**

The partnership does not need to be documented in a formal legal agreement at the time of application submission but should be expressed in the application as a general intent to cooperate in implementing the covered broadband project proposed for an award. NTIA requires that letters of commitment from the covered partnership participants and any other significant partners in the proposed project be submitted as a part of the application. See Sections III.A.1 and IV.B.9 of the NOFO.

**90. Are projects that have already commenced, including costs expended already for planning, permitting, and/or construction, eligible for funding?**

Yes, projects already underway are eligible for funding under this program. However, Federal and non-federal funds committed to an award under this program may only be used to cover allowable costs incurred during the period of performance. So no project costs incurred before the period of performance would be allowable under this program. Further, a grant recipient cannot receive duplicate funding from NTIA for costs that are already paid for from another source. Applicants, if awarded grants, are allowed to use up to \$50,000 in awarded funds towards the reasonable pre-application costs of preparing applications for this grant program.

**91. Will projects that are currently underway, in which funds have been expended, be eligible for retroactive funding if a part of a larger project?**

Grant funds may not be applied to retroactive project costs. Federal and non-federal funds committed to an award under this program may only be used to cover allowable costs incurred during the period of performance. Applicants, if awarded grants, are allowed to use up to \$50,000 in awarded funds towards the reasonable pre-application costs of preparing applications for this grant program.

**92. Given the scoring priority and criteria, is NTIA prioritizing large-scale projects that propose to serve the largest number of unserved locations prioritized over a smaller project serving a single political subdivision with a service provider?**

Not necessarily. While projects designed to provide broadband service to the greatest number of households in an eligible service area are the highest priority, the NOFO lists other priorities that NTIA may consider and assess as well, including projects designed to provide broadband service in an eligible service area that is wholly within any area other than a county, city, or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants and the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town of more than 50,000 inhabitants, projects that are the most cost-effective, prioritizing such projects in areas that are the most rural, projects designed to provide broadband service with speed of 100 Mbps download/20 Mbps upload, and other broadband projects that meets the requirements of the NOFO.

**93. Will NTIA use the FCC's National Broadband Map for determining if a census block is eligible for funding under this program?**

NTIA will use the FCC's National Broadband Map data, which is incorporated in NTIA's National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM), to assess the eligibility of the proposed service areas. NTIA's NBAM includes multiple data sets on broadband services, including data sets from the FCC, U.S. Census Bureau, Universal Service Administrative Company, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of the Treasury, Ookla, Measurement Lab, BroadbandNow, White Star, and state governments. NTIA will also use applicant provided data (e.g., State broadband data, speed test data) to assess the eligibility of the proposed service area.

**94. Will NTIA fund a project in census blocks that are shown as served by the FCC's National Broadband Map but one or more locations in that census block are not served by qualifying broadband service?**

Yes. NTIA will consider the applicant's submission of data and information used to substantiate the position that not all locations in the census block are served by qualifying broadband service (25/3 with low latency) and will also rely on data sets found in NTIA's NBAM to assess eligibility. NTIA will only fund the portions of that census block that are currently unserved (i.e., lack access to qualifying broadband service as defined in Section 2.B.i of the NOFO).

**95. If according to the FCC's National Broadband Map a census block has fixed broadband service, however that service for that census block or part of that census block is less than 25/3 (with low latency), is that service area eligible for funding under this program**

Yes. NTIA will consider the applicant's submission of data and information used to substantiate the position that not all locations in the census block are served by qualifying broadband service (25/3 with low latency) and will also use data sets found in NTIA's NBAM to assess eligibility. NTIA will only fund the portions of that census block that are currently unserved (i.e., not receiving 25/3 broadband service with low latency).

**96. Are projects that propose to serve only a portion of a political subdivision be eligible for funding? For example, there is already fiber in one part of the political subdivision, but not in the entire political subdivision?**

Yes. Data and maps provided by the application should clearly demonstrate where the project aims to deploy infrastructure and why it is not be proposing to serve the entire census tract or political subdivision, e.g., qualifying broadband service/infrastructure already exists in those locations, or these locations are already funded by other Federal or state programs supporting broadband investments.

**97. How should an applicant measure how rural an area is?**

The NOFO does not define rural for purposes of this program, however, Section 905(d)(4) of the Act includes, among its priorities, service to areas that are wholly within any area other than a county, city, or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants and the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town of more than 50,000 inhabitants.

**98. Can a community that exceeds the population threshold of more than 50,000 residents but otherwise qualifies under the other priorities apply for this grant program?**

Yes. Per the Act and the NOFO, the population threshold is a priority factor (second of five), not an eligibility requirement. NTIA will first review applications addressing the first statutory priority (service to greatest number of households). If funding remains after review of these applications, NTIA will review applications addressing the second statutory priority, and so on, until it has awarded all available funding. Satisfaction of multiple statutory priorities is a selection factor listed in Section V.C of the NOFO.

**99. What does NTIA mean by 'competitively and technologically neutral'?**

Competitively and technologically neutral means that, for the purposes of this program, NTIA will consider funding different fixed broadband service providers and technology modalities of fixed broadband service, *e.g.*, fixed wireless, fiber, cable, satellite.

**100. Does “fixed” broadband include “fixed” wireless broadband or just fiber/wireline based services?**

Yes, fixed wireless broadband service is eligible under this program.

**101. Where is there map-based data on broadband service coverage to help determine eligibility of a proposed service area?**

NTIA’s BroadbandUSA website has resources that applicants can use as input to determine and demonstrate eligibility of a proposed service area. Two recent resources include:

- February 2021 webinar and PowerPoint on Data as the Foundation of Broadband Planning: <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/events/latest-events/february-2021-webinar-data-foundation-broadband-planning>.
- April 2021 webinar and PowerPoint on Broadband Infrastructure Program, includes overview of data sets to help assess broadband services in areas: <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/events/latest-events/ntia-grant-program-broadband- infrastructure-webinar-session-1a>.

Applicants are also encouraged to work with their State Broadband offices to access any broadband mapping data they may have, including access to NTIA’s National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM).

**102. How do applicants get access to the NTIA’s National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM)?**

The NBAM is a secure cloud-based GIS platform designed for use by state and federal broadband policymakers. The tool includes a variety of federal, state, and commercially-sourced data sets which can be geospatially analyzed to support broadband policymaking, planning, and investment decision- making. Because the NBAM contains a mix of public and non-public data, which may be business sensitive or have licensing restrictions, access to the NBAM and its data are not generally available to the public.

NTIA expects that derivative products (*e.g.* maps, dashboards, infographics) can and will be published and shared in the future. Due to the data confidentiality issues describe above, sharing and

summarizing data will be particularly challenging (and in some cases prohibited). NTIA is examining these issues, although it does not yet have a firm schedule for publication of any derivative works.

## Other Broadband Funding Programs and Eligible Service Areas

### **103. If a covered partnership is receiving state funds for a broadband deployment project are they precluded from receiving federal funding?**

The use of State funds for broadband projects associated with the covered project proposed in the application is not prohibited; however, a grant recipient cannot receive duplicate funding from NTIA for costs that are already paid for from another source. NTIA encourages applicants to coordinate with their State in order to maximize Federal, state, and local funding as much as possible and avoid any duplication of broadband deployment funding.

### **104. If any portion of the proposed service area has already received Federal funding for broadband service, is the whole project ineligible for award?**

NTIA intends to fund specific eligible areas for which there are no other Federal funds awarded and/or leveraged to provide a qualifying broadband service (25/3 with low latency). The definition of “unserved” in Section 905(a)(14) of the Act (and included in Section I.B.k of the NOFO) includes the conditions that: (1) the household lacks access to qualifying broadband service; and (2) no broadband service provider has been selected to receive, or is otherwise receiving, Federal or State funding subject to enforceable build out commitments to deploy qualifying broadband service in the specific area where the household is located by dates certain. NTIA may fund projects within a larger geographic area (*e.g.*, a State or county) receiving prior/current Federal funding, if the specific portions of the area described in the application to NTIA (*e.g.*, census tract, political subdivision) are not served by Federal funding and/or are not being served with a qualifying broadband service (25/3 with low latency).

If a portion of the project proposed is ineligible for funding, during the application review process NTIA may request that the applicant descope that portion of the project to continue receiving consideration (if other portions of the project are deemed eligible, meet the funding priorities outlined in the NOFO, and the proposed project scores favorably against the review criteria).

### **105. What is the timeframe for consideration of prior Federal funding for broadband services in a proposed service area?**

There is no specific timeframe that is taken in consideration for prior Federal funding, rather the focus is on avoidance of duplication with the initiatives of other federal agencies. As noted above, a grant recipient cannot receive duplicate funding from NTIA for costs that are already paid for from another source. NTIA intends to fund eligible areas for which there are no other Federal funds awarded and/or leveraged to provide a qualifying broadband service as defined in Section I.B.i of the NOFO.

### **106. Would any location that has received prior FCC Universal Service Fund (USF) funding be ineligible for funding under this program?**

NTIA intends to fund eligible areas for which there are no other Federal funds awarded and/or leveraged to provide qualifying broadband service as defined in Section I.B.i of the NOFO. NTIA may

fund projects within a larger geographic area receiving prior/current Federal funding, if the specific portions of the area described in the application to NTIA (e.g., census tract, political subdivision) are not served by Federal funding and/or are not being served with a qualifying broadband service as defined in Section I.B.i.

**107. How will NTIA, the FCC, and USDA/RUS coordinate given all of their prior, current, and on-going Federal funding investments in broadband deployment?**

NTIA, the FCC, and USDA/RUS, as well as other Federal agencies investing in broadband infrastructure projects, will continue to share information on past, current, and proposed Federal broadband infrastructure funding, including project specific details such as proposed service areas/maps, broadband speeds, etc., in order to maximize Federal investment in broadband infrastructure while avoiding duplication of funding.

**108. Are service areas that were preliminarily awarded in the FCC's RDOF program excluded as eligible service areas for this program even if the final awards are not yet decided?**

NTIA intends to fund specific eligible areas for which there are no other Federal funds awarded and/or leveraged to provide qualifying broadband service as defined in Section I.B.i of the NOFO. The definition of "unserved" in Section 905(a)(14) of the Act (and included in Section I.B.k of the NOFO) includes the conditions that: (1) the household lacks access to qualifying broadband service; and (2) no broadband service provider has been selected to receive, or is otherwise receiving, Federal or State funding subject to enforceable build out commitments to deploy qualifying broadband service in the specific area where the household is located by dates certain. Thus, NTIA may fund specific areas (e.g., census tract, political subdivision) that are not receiving funding for and/or are not being served with a qualifying broadband service as defined in Section I.B.i of the NOFO. NTIA will also coordinate with the FCC on the status of proposed RDOF projects in order to understand if areas of proposed projects are descoped or projects are no longer eligible for Federal funding.

**109. Are service areas that were awarded in the FCC's CAF II program excluded as eligible service areas for this program?**

NTIA intends to fund specific eligible areas for which there are no other Federal funds awarded and/or leveraged to provide qualifying broadband service as defined in Section I.B.i of the NOFO. The definition of "unserved" in Section 905(a)(14) of the Act (and included in Section I.B.k of the NOFO) includes the conditions that: (1) the household lacks access to qualifying broadband service; and (2) no broadband service provider has been selected to receive, or is otherwise receiving, Federal or State funding subject to enforceable build out commitments to deploy such service in the specific area where the household is located by dates certain. NTIA may fund specific areas (census tract, political subdivision) that are not receiving funding for and/or are not being served with a qualifying broadband service as defined in Section I.B.i of the NOFO.

**110. Are areas that have already received Federal funding for broadband infrastructure projects providing service less than 25/3 eligible for funding under this grant program?**

Yes.

## Application Requirements/Process

**111. Are all members of the covered partnership (the State and/or political division of a State and the service provider) required to have a DUNS number, be registered in SAM, and/or have a Grants.gov account?**

Only the lead applicant that would enter into the grant agreement with NTIA (the State or political subdivision of a State) is required to have a DUNS number, be registered in SAM, and have a Grants.gov account.

**112. Will we need to have an environmental review completed prior to submitting the application, or is it okay if the process is just initiated? With a short deadline of one year, will a NEPA document be required for new backbone construction?**

Applicants with projects containing construction and/or ground disturbing activities are required to submit all required environmental documentation with their application package or describe in their project narrative the physical project location and included photographs, and how they will comply with applicable environmental and national historical preservation requirements. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local governmental permits and approvals necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their projects so that they minimize the potential for adverse impacts on the environment. Applicants also will be required to cooperate with NTIA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposed projects. The failure to do so may be grounds for not making an award. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow agency staff to conduct a NEPA analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation can be submitted to NTIA, along with the recommendation for funding of the selected applications. If additional information is required after an application is accepted for funding, funds can be withheld by NTIA under a specific award condition requiring the awardee to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient for the agency to make an assessment of any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

Section II.B of the NOFO includes information on how and if an applicant/awardee can request an extension of the period of performance for its project, if necessary.

**113. Will projects need to be pre-permitted in order to be competitive?**

No. However, the applicant should identify in their application any permitting that may be required to complete the proposed covered project, including the status of such permits. It warrants noting that NTIA will give additional consideration for construction projects that are "shovel ready" and capable of completion within the one-year award period.

**114. How can NTIA help with the Federal permitting process for any awarded projects?**

NTIA will work with our Federal partners involved in permitting for construction to expedite the process to the extent possible. NTIA serves on the Executive Leadership Team of the American Broadband Initiative (ABI), which is focused on promoting coordination across federal agencies to better leverage public assets and resources to expand our nation's broadband capacity. NTIA actively participates in the ABI's Streamlining Federal Permitting workstream, which strives to make it easier

for network builders and service providers to access federal assets and rights-of-way, reducing the regulatory burden and simplifying the deployment of broadband networks. NTIA will leverage the ABI to assist applicants in overcoming obstacles to deploying their broadband infrastructure projects on federal property (to the extent applicable).

## Post Award Requirements

### **115. Which member of the covered partnership would retain ownership of the infrastructure or associated assets funded by this grant program? May the members of the covered partnership decide which entity would own the funded infrastructure/assets?**

The grant recipient (State or political subdivision of a State) or a subrecipient, including the service provider, may retain ownership (serve as the trustee, see below) of the funded covered project's infrastructure and associated assets. The members of the covered partnership may make that determination. Title vests subject to the terms and conditions of this program and of the Property Standards located in 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.310-200.316.

Applicants and grant recipients must be aware that in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.316, real property, equipment, and intangible property, that are acquired or improved with a Federal award must be held in trust by the recipient or subrecipient as trustee for the beneficiaries of the project or program under which the property was acquired or improved. In this connection, NTIA may require the non-Federal entity to record liens or other appropriate notices of record to indicate that personal or real property has been acquired or improved with a Federal award and that use and disposition conditions apply to the property. Awards issued pursuant to this NOFO may contain specific award conditions pertaining to the use and disposition of grant-acquired property and a requirement that the recipient or subrecipient file certain public notices (e.g., UCC-1, Covenant of Purpose, Use and Ownership, etc.) with respect to grant-acquired property.

### **116. Will projects be subject to special conditions (e.g., environmental and historic preservation clearance) that may extend the project past the intended 12 month grant period of performance?**

Yes, the NOFO provides a list of special conditions, including environmental and historic preservation (EHP) requirements, for funded projects. For EHP, applicants with projects containing construction and/or ground disturbing activities are required to submit all required environmental documentation with their application package or describe in their project narrative the physical project location and included photographs, as described above, and how they will comply with applicable environmental and national historical preservation requirements. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local governmental permits and approvals necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their projects so that they minimize the potential for adverse impacts on the environment. Applicants also will be required to cooperate with NTIA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposed projects. The failure to do so may be grounds for not making an award. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow agency staff to conduct a NEPA analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation can be submitted to NTIA, along with the recommendation for funding of the selected applications. If additional information is required after an application is accepted for funding, funds can be withheld by NTIA under a specific award condition requiring the awardee to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient for the agency to make an assessment of any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

Section II.B of the NOFO includes information on how and if an applicant/awardee can request an extension of the period of performance for its project, if necessary.

## NTIA Broadband Infrastructure Program

Third Set of Frequently Asked Questions published by NTIA on June 23, 2021.

*The below FAQs are for informational purposes only and are intended solely to assist potential applicants in better understanding the NTIA Broadband Infrastructure Program and the application requirements set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for this program. The FAQs do not and are not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, or the specific application requirements set forth in the NOFO. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the NOFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in the below FAQs.*

### Program Overview

#### **117. The statute includes \$300M for the Broadband Infrastructure Program, why is only \$288M available for award in the NOFO?**

NTIA retains a small percentage of the funds allocated in the statute to fund the administration of the grant program, including pre-award and post-award processes and procedures.

### Eligibility

#### **118. Does a covered partnership have to include a State affiliated organization?**

No, a covered partnership does not have to include a State-affiliated organization or division. It must include a political subdivision, which can include a local government or other organization deemed a political subdivision by the State's specific law that authorizes or establishes it as a political subdivision of the State. In the Project Narrative section of its application under the description of the covered partnership, an entity should provide a citation to the specific State law that authorizes or establishes it as a political subdivision of the State to qualify to submit an application under this grant program.

#### **119. Does the NOFO require political subdivisions to competitively procure or select the service provider for participation in the covered partnership?**

No, the NOFO does not require political subdivisions to competitively select their service provider partner. NTIA defers to the political subdivision and its applicable State or local laws or requirements in determining or selecting a service provider for participation in the covered partnership. However, the application must name the specific provider of fixed broadband service participating in the covered partnership, and the application must include all required documentation from that service provider.

**120. Can the service provider member of a covered partnership be a new service provider that is established for the purpose of this grant program?**

Yes, if the new service provider offers fixed broadband service, and the covered partnership can meet the specific speed and latency rate requirements in the “qualifying broadband service” definition in Section I.B.i of the NOFO.

**121. Is a political subdivision agreement with an MVNO provider eligible under the grant program?**

NTIA does not require any formal relationship between the political subdivision and the service provider comprising the covered partnership. NTIA does require, however, letters of commitment from each member of the covered partnership and other significant partners participating in implementing the proposed covered broadband project. MVNOs are eligible as service providers in a covered partnership if they are able to provide fixed broadband services, and the covered partnership can meet the specific speed and latency rate requirements in the “qualifying broadband service” definition in Section I.B.i of the NOFO.

**122. Does a covered partnership that includes multiple political subdivisions require any special agreements or arrangements among the political subdivisions and/or with the service provider partner(s) to submit an application?**

No. The program does not require any formal agreement among the political subdivision(s) and/or the service provider(s) to apply for funding under this program. The program does require a single political subdivision to serve as lead applicant and any other political subdivisions and service provider(s) involved in the proposed covered broadband project would need to submit a Letter of Commitment that details their role in the proposed project and commitment to fulfilling the intent of the proposed project.

**123. Is a utility company eligible to be a service provider?**

Yes, if they can or intend to provide fixed broadband services, and the covered partnership can meet the specific speed and latency rate requirements in the “qualifying broadband service” definition in Section I.B.i of the NOFO.

**124. Does the FCC’s definition of a census block being served if one household or business has broadband service apply to the eligibility of service areas for this program?**

Not necessarily. While NTIA will consider broadband availability data provided by the FCC in the review of proposed funded service areas, NTIA encourages applicants to provide any additional data they have on the availability of broadband services in their proposed service areas that may provide additional detail and clarity on the presence of qualifying broadband service and level of need in those areas.

**125. In the definition of qualifying broadband service, specifically 25/3, is minimum broadband speed based on advertised speeds or actual speeds?**

The definition of qualifying broadband service in Section I.B.i of the NOFO is based on actual speeds,

and includes as a requirement the ability to provide 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream service simultaneously to every household in the eligible service area. NTIA encourages applicants to provide any additional information or clarifying data that can demonstrate the level of need in a proposed service area. This data can include speed test data that may indicate that a service area is not being served with 25/3 broadband speeds with low latency and therefore may be eligible for funding under the Broadband Infrastructure Program.

**126. If a proposed funded service area includes a small portion of households that are served with qualifying broadband, will the application be disqualified or be viewed negatively?**

No, however in the application review process, NTIA may request the applicant to remove portions of their proposed service area that is already served by a qualifying broadband service as defined in Section

I.B.i of the NOFO. Applications proposing to serve a higher proportion of unserved households in a service area will score more highly than those that propose to serve less. See Section V.A.1.a of the NOFO.

**127. To what extent is FCC Form 477 data and the associated map going to be used in assessing a proposed service area's level of need and eligibility under this program?**

The FCC's Form 477 data and maps are one of many inputs that NTIA will use to evaluate applications and eligibility of service areas for funding. NTIA will evaluate the applicant's data and assertions of the level of need in the proposed service areas and also use data from NTIA's National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM) and FCC Form 477 data (which is a data layer in the NBAM) to determine the eligibility of the proposed service area.

**128. What is the definition of broadband for the purpose of this NOFO?**

The relevant definition of broadband for the purposes of this grant program is the NOFO's definition of "qualifying broadband service" listed in in Section I.B.i. The term "qualifying broadband service" means broadband service with: (i) a download speed of not less than 25 megabits per second; (ii) an upload speed of not less than 3 megabits per second; and (iii) a latency sufficient to support real-time, interactive applications. For purposes of this program, NTIA will interpret the 25/3 standard to mean the ability to provide 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream simultaneously to every household in the eligible service area. NTIA will interpret latency to mean 95 percent or more of all peak period measurements of network round trip latency [i.e., the total round-trip latency between the customer premises and the closest designated Internet core peering interconnection point] are at or below 100 milliseconds.

**129. Are middle mile network upgrades eligible for funding?**

Yes, upgrades to middle mile networks are eligible costs under this program. To score highly under Section V.A.1.a of the NOFO, applications for projects deploying middle mile networks must prioritize connecting with last mile networks serving unserved households and substantiate the incremental value to the last mile connection to the middle mile network, including increased network capacity for last mile circuits, increased network performance, and lower costs that are passed onto end users, as well as identify potential or partnered last mile networks that could or would leverage the middle mile network, in the proposed service area.

**130. If applicants are proposing a middle mile network/backhaul for ISPs serving the last mile, do they need to include commitments from the ISPs?**

No, however, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate the need for the infrastructure they propose in the respective communities they intend to serve, which is an evaluation factor for this grant program. This could include partnerships or commitments from include local ISPs who require improved or more cost effective backhaul to deliver last mile qualifying broadband service to end users.

**131. Are pre-paid service costs, e.g., for 5 years, for Internet connectivity backhaul for interconnecting ISPs providing last mile broadband service eligible under this program?**

Yes, so long as the cost and terms are reasonable, eligible under the NOFO, and the grantee makes full payment for that service during the grant's period of performance. If an applicant intends to use grant funds in this way, the applicant must include a description of such proposed costs in its application, including the proposed period of service. NTIA may include a specific award condition in any such award to ensure that the funds are used appropriately, and to ensure that if the service is cancelled and/or the grantee receives a refund, any grant funds returned to the grantee are subsequently returned to the Federal government.

**132. For infrastructure equipment or supplies that have a long procurement lead time, e.g., fiber, are applicants allowed to use grant funds for items that were ordered or purchased prior to award?**

No. Grant funds may not be used for items that were ordered or purchased prior to award. Only costs borne during the award period of performance are eligible.

**133. May the covered partnership apply its grant funds towards the purchase and deployment of broadband infrastructure and equipment to any site or location in the proposed service area?**

Yes, the covered partnership may apply grant funds to eligible costs to deploy broadband infrastructure and equipment to any location, including households, businesses, community anchor institutions, and sites associated with the political subdivision, e.g., city offices, so long as the locations are not already served by a qualifying broadband service. The covered partnership should describe in its proposal the expected use of the grant funds, including the sites and locations where broadband infrastructure and equipment will be deployed.

**134. May applicants, in particular those who require undersea backhaul to provide Internet connectivity, propose projects with latency that is higher than 100ms?**

Section I.B.i of the NOFO defines the term "qualifying broadband service" to mean broadband service with: (i) a download speed of not less than 25 megabits per second; (ii) an upload speed of not less than 3 megabits per second; and (iii) a latency sufficient to support real-time, interactive applications. Specifically, the latency standard means 95 percent or more of all peak period measurements of network round trip latency [*i.e.*, the total round-trip latency between the customer premises and the closest designated Internet core peering interconnection point] are at or below 100 milliseconds. Under the terms of the NOFO, applications providing qualifying broadband service to the most unserved households will score most highly.

**135. May applicants that are closer in proximity to international peering locations and rely on undersea cabling for backhaul allowed to use an international peering location, in large part to improve latency and meet the qualifying broadband service latency requirements set forth in the NOFO?**

This will depend on the specifics of each case. A covered partnership may not use grant funds received under the Broadband Infrastructure Program to purchase or support any covered communications equipment or service (as defined in section 9 of the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act of 2019 (47 U.S.C. 1608)). A covered partnership is also subject to the prohibition on using grant funds to procure, obtain or to otherwise secure certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment described in 2 C.F.R. 200.216.

Other Broadband Funding Programs and Eligible Service Areas

**136. If the proposed service area is already receiving State or Federal funds for broadband improvements, either through the covered partnership service provider(s) or another service provider, must it be disclosed by the applicant if known by the applicant?**

Yes, as required by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, and described in Section IV.B.6.j of the NOFO, applicants must disclose in their Project Narrative any support received by the provider of broadband service (that is part of the covered partnership) in the proposed service area, among other reporting requirements.

**137. If a proposed funded service area is receiving State or Federal funds for broadband improvements does it disqualify the application or negatively impact its score/review?**

Not necessarily. In order to maximize State and Federal investment in broadband and avoid duplication of funding, NTIA will review any State or Federal funding already committed to a proposed project. NTIA will compare the applicant’s proposed service area against those service areas that have been funded by other Federal or State programs and assess if the area is already covered by qualifying broadband services. If, during the application review process, NTIA identifies service areas with pre-existing qualifying broadband service, applicants may be requested to descope those areas in order to ensure eligibility as outlined in the NOFO.

**138. Are service areas that are to be served by non-wireline broadband services (e.g., wireless, satellite) through the recent FCC RDOF and/or CAF II funding programs eligible for this program?**

NTIA intends to fund specific eligible areas for which there are no other Federal funds awarded and/or leveraged to provide qualifying broadband service as defined in Section I.B.i of the NOFO. The definition of “unserved” in Section 905(a)(14) of the Act (and included in Section I.B.k of the NOFO) includes the conditions that: (1) the household lacks access to qualifying broadband service; and (2) no broadband service provider has been selected to receive, or is otherwise receiving, Federal or State funding subject to enforceable build out commitments to deploy qualifying broadband service in the specific area where the household is located by dates certain. Thus, NTIA may fund specific areas (e.g., census tract, political subdivision) that are not receiving funding for and/or are not being served with a qualifying broadband service as defined in Section I.B.i of the NOFO. NTIA will also coordinate with the FCC on the status of proposed RDOF and CAF II projects in order to understand if areas of

proposed projects are descope or projects are no longer eligible for Federal funding.

**139. If a proposed funded service area is already being served by a Federally funded project, can an applicant propose a different type of technology or approach for broadband? Can covered partnerships propose a project in the same service area using a different type of broadband technology?**

No, unless the previously Federally funded project is not delivering a qualifying broadband service, as defined in Section I.B.i of the NOFO. Under Section 905(a)(4) the Act, this program will fund technologically and competitively neutral projects for the deployment of fixed broadband service.

## How to Apply

**140. Is only the lead applicant of a covered partnership required to submit the Standard Form (SF) 424 on Grants.gov or must all parties of a covered partnership submit the form?**

Only the State or political subdivision that is designated as the lead applicant in a covered partnership is required to submit the SF 424 on Grants.gov.

**141. Do project partners that will be designated subrecipients in the proposed project have to have an active SAM.gov registration?**

Subrecipients do not have to complete the full SAM.gov registration. However per 2 C.F.R. 25.300 and the July 25, 2019 General Services Administration guidance, grant recipients must ensure that its subrecipients have a unique entity identifier (UEI). Subrecipients are required to provide the recipient with a UEI, which the subrecipient obtains from SAM.gov. Subrecipients must have and provide the UEI to recipients before subawards can be made and the recipient must notify any potential subrecipients as such. Note that a recipient may request subrecipients to provide a UEI sooner as part of the pre-award clearance.

**142. Are applicants required to submit audited financials as a part of their application package?**

No, audited financials are not generally required to be submitted in the application package. However, a detailed project budget and other cost details of the project, including financial analyses and revenue and expense projections, and a description of why federal financial assistance is needed to implement the covered broadband project are required. Please note that certain grantees are required to submit annual audit documentation to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse in accordance with 2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart F, and Section VI.G of the NOFO.

## Evaluation of Applications

**143. Will applications be evaluated more favorably if they propose a higher than suggested (10%) non-Federal cost share (match)?**

Per Section V.A.3.c of the NOFO, Merit Reviewers may assign 5 (non-scaled) points to applicants that propose a non-federal cost share of 10% or more. Those applicants proposing less than 10% in non-Federal cost share or no cost share will not receive any points. Additionally, at the conclusion of the

Programmatic Review, the Associate Administrator for the Office of Telecommunications and Information Applications (OTIA Associate Administrator) will prepare a rank order of applications within a particular priority grouping and present a package or packages of recommended grant awards to the Selecting Official for review and approval. The OTIA Associate Administrator's recommendations to the Selecting Official will consider nine selection factors, one of which is the extent to which the applicant proposes to contribute non-federal cost share to fund a portion of the total eligible costs of the project. Section V.C of the NOFO all of the selection factors.

**144. Should applicants propose a service area with a large number of homes to be served, although some portions may already have qualifying broadband, or should an applicant propose a service area that is smaller in which all households do not have qualifying broadband service?**

Applicants should only propose service areas for which there is no qualifying broadband service as defined in Section I.B.i of the NOFO. Service areas may be non-contiguous, as needed, to focus the application on those areas that do not have qualifying broadband service. If, during the application review process, NTIA identifies service areas with pre-existing qualifying broadband service, applicants may be requested to descope those areas in order to ensure eligibility as outlined in the NOFO.

### Grant Award and Reporting Requirements

**145. Are licensed Professional Engineers (PE) required for projects funded under this program?**

No, licensed Professional Engineers (PEs) are not required to be used in this program. However, applicants should propose and involve in their project the personnel and resources that are qualified to execute the various aspects of their proposed projects successfully.

**146. Are both last mile and middle mile networks funded under this program subject to the Open Network Requirements outlined in the NOFO?**

Only middle mile networks are subject to the Open Network Requirements outlined in the NOFO (see VI.D.6 for additional details on the Open Network Requirements).

**147. If an infrastructure project is already underway and the covered partnership wishes to fund additional infrastructure associated with the project through the grant program, should the applicant, for the purposes of the application, use an estimate of the remaining project costs to develop their proposed grant funded project costs? If the budget estimation in the grant application needs to be changed after award, is this allowed?**

An applicant should only propose costs in their budget that are to be incurred during the award period of performance. No costs incurred before the period of performance are allowable under this program, except that applicants are allowed to use up to \$50,000 for eligible application development expenses. Further, a grant recipient cannot receive duplicate funding from NTIA for costs that are already paid for from another source. If an applicant receives an award and needs to make adjustments to its budget, they may work with their NTIA Program Officer and the NIST Grants Office to seek approval for those budget modifications, however, the costs must be eligible and no more than the awarded amount.

**148. If there are supply chain issues in the procurement of needed project materials, e.g., fiber, will NTIA allow projects to extend their period of performance?**

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 requires covered partnerships to complete their covered broadband projects within one year of their receipt of grant funds. The Assistant Secretary, however, may extend the award period for broadband infrastructure construction projects if the covered partnership certifies that: (1) it has a plan for the use of the grant funds, (2) the construction project is underway, or (3) extenuating circumstances require an extension of time to allow the project to be completed. Section II.B of the NOFO includes information on how and if an applicant/grantee can request an extension of the period of performance for its project, if necessary.

## Broadband Infrastructure Program

### Fourth Set of Frequently Asked Questions (July 20, 2021)

*The below FAQs are for informational purposes only and are intended solely to assist potential applicants in better understanding the NTIA Broadband Infrastructure Program and the application requirements set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for this program. The FAQs do not and are not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, or the specific application requirements set forth in the NOFO. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the NOFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in the below FAQs.*

## Application Requirements/Process

**149. What kind of service area mapping data may applicants submit to demonstrate the proposed service area?**

Section IV.B.10 of the Broadband Infrastructure Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) asks applicants to provide maps of their proposed service areas (preferably in shapefiles, .kmz, or .kml formats). To provide further guidance to applicants on the information to be included with their applications, NTIA is interested in receiving sub-Census block geographic information on proposed service areas, including address points, address ranges, road centerlines, land-parcel identification numbers (APN), or tabular data including latitude/longitude columns and the corresponding proposed broadband service data (such as proposed service/technology type, proposed upload and download speed, etc.). For additional detail, please see the [NBAM Data Submission Guidelines document](#) for information that would be helpful to include in the mapping data for NTIA to assess the eligibility of the proposed service area.

**150. What kind of mapping files or data may applicants submit?**

NTIA prefers that applicants provide data that is in the following formats: File Geodatabase, Shapefile, Geographic JavaScript Object Notation (GeoJSON), Google Keyhole Markup Language (KML, Web Feature Service (WFS), Esri ArcGIS Online Feature Services, Spreadsheets or comma-separated data file including some form of location data is associated with the content (such as addresses, latitude/longitude, etc.). Please see “Section 3 - Data Format” in the [NBAM Data Submission Guidelines document](#) for additional information on these mapping file types.

**151. Should applicants be using the 2010 or 2020 Census data for any mapping data they provide to describe their proposed service area?**

Applicants should provide their proposed service areas in 2010 census block designations. Current data sources that NTIA will use to assess the eligibility of service areas are in Census 2010 geographic designations and although updated with recent data, e.g., FCC Form 477 data, have yet to be collected or provided to NTIA in Census 2020 geographic designations.