NC Broadband Matters *Tech Topics*

What is BEAD & Can it Work for You?

December 20, 2022
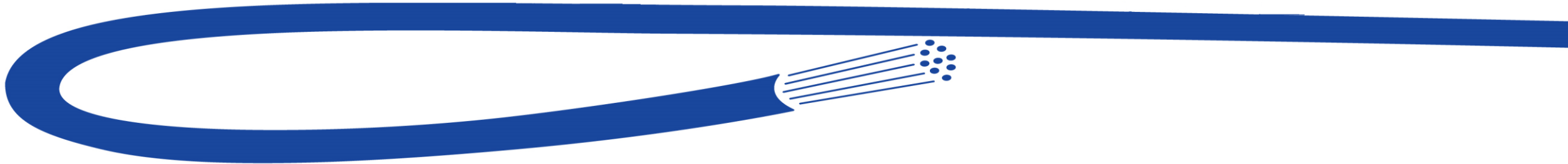
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What is BEAD?

- Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program.
- Created by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.
- $42.45 billion in broadband infrastructure grants.
- Administered at the federal level by the NTIA.
- State grants awarded by state broadband grant offices (in NC is the NCDIT's Broadband Infrastructure Office).

Some Basics

- States get at least $100 million. Average state amount over $700 million.
- Congressional rules are complicated. NTIA then added and embellished and made the rules more complex.
- Grants must be used for unserved first, then underserved, then anchor institutions, and then other uses.
- Deployed technology must deliver at least 100/20 Mbps.
- NTIA has stated a clear preference for fiber.
- Will consider wireless technology using licensed spectrum.
- Each state must file its own broadband grant plan.

Slow Timeline

- IIJA passed November 15, 2021
- States had to apply to be in BEAD
- States must add staff
- Clean FCC maps needed to determine funding by state
- States must propose a detailed grant plan
- States must reach out to all stakeholders
- NTIA must approve initial plan - can flow 20% of funding
- Challenge process for eligible areas
- NTIA must approve final plan – flows 80%

Costly for ISPs

- Grant application incredibly complicated.
- Two rounds of irrevocable letters of credit.
- Projects over $5 M must pay prevailing wages.
- Contractors must have apprenticeship programs.
- Environmental and historical preservation studies.
- Build America rules.

Complicated Grant Rules

- NTIA prefers applicants to provide matching.
- Must line up subcontractors before applying.
- Cybersecurity plan
- Special high-cost area rules.
- Supply chain risk management plan.
- Must utilize ACP low-cost plan.
- Middle-class affordability plan.
- Workforce continuity plan if not using union labor.
- Complicated ongoing reporting.

Why Communities Should Care

- There is hope that this is enough money to bring good broadband everywhere.

- But an ISP will need to step up for every unserved and underserved place if the solutions are going to come.

- All of the stakeholders in the state have a formal opportunity to impact the rules and the outcome.

How Can You Help?

- Challenge the FCC maps.

- Stakeholder engagement with the grant process.

- Take the State Broadband Survey

  - https://www.ncbroadband.gov/north-carolina-broadband-survey

FCC Mapping Example

FCC Map Fabric Challenge

- The FCC published a new mapping fabric that will be used to allocate BEAD to states.

- The State will benefit if the map identifies all unserved and underserved locations.

- Many communities reporting errors in the fabric.

- Cities, counties, tribes, or the state can file bulk challenges by January 13, 2023, to influence funding – states are asking for more time. The bulk challenge will involve using local GIS and other mapping data to make sure that all locations are counted.

- Individuals and communities can continue to file challenges forever.

More on the Map Challenge

- What can be challenged:
  - Missing location
  - Misidentified location
  - Incorrect address
  - Wrong place on the map
- FCC Map Challenge at
  https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/home

FCC Coverage Challenge Process

- The challenge is filed.

- ISP has 60 days to respond. If no response, assumed the challenge was correct.

- If ISP rebuts the challenge, it has 60 days to work with the challenger to resolve.

- If it can't be resolved, FCC to resolve the challenge in 90 days.

Influencing Grant Rules

- States must talk to every interested stakeholder.

- State must address each concerns in writing, and submit to NTIA.

- Items Specifically Required by Congress are Likely Not Negotiable.

- Extra Rules Added by NTIA Can be Challenged.

- I Recommend Groups Like yours to Create A Wish List for Everybody to Use.

What to Tell The State

- What's the local state of broadband? What areas need help?

- Are the FCC maps correct?

- What do your ISPs Want?
  - Are there issues that would stop and ISP from participating in BEAD?
  - Are there any BEAD requirements you particularly like or dislike?
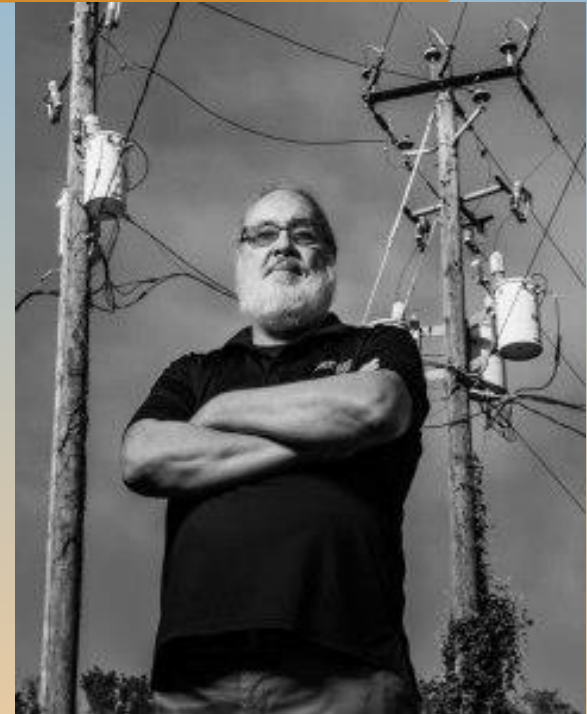
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