



Measures for Broadband Affordability: A Step Towards Inclusive Connectivity

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: November 8, 2023
Contact: Alison Riley
505-795-3253

Santa Fe, NM- In a significant move towards ensuring equitable broadband access, the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program has implemented new directives focused on affordability. Under these guidelines, any broadband project funded through the BEAD program must incorporate two essential components to address affordability concerns: a middle-class affordability plan and a low-cost broadband service option.

Middle-class affordability plans are designed to guarantee that high-quality broadband services are available at reasonable prices to all middle-class families within the BEAD-funded network's service area. While the exact frameworks for these plans are not rigidly defined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), states, the District of Columbia, and territories are mandated to create innovative definitions in consultation with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Examples provided in the NOFO include subgrantees offering low-cost, high-speed plans, consumer subsidies, promoting competition through state regulatory authorities, and awarding extra points to applications demonstrating robust affordable plans and open access networks.

Additionally, the BEAD program mandates that all subgrantees offer at least one low-cost broadband service option to subscribers who qualify for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) or meet specific criteria set by the Eligible Entity. The NOFO outlines the necessary components for defining a "low-cost broadband service option" and encourages setting specific targets for each component. These affordable options must remain accessible for the duration of the BEAD-funded networks' operation.

Furthermore, Eligible Entities are obligated to ensure that services provided over any broadband network funded by the BEAD Program allow subscribers within the service area to

utilize the ACP benefit fully. This requirement not only facilitates connectivity but also ensures that the benefits of the ACP are extended comprehensively, promoting digital inclusion.

About BEAD Program

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program is dedicated to bridging the digital divide by funding projects that enhance broadband accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity across communities, ensuring equal opportunities for all.