



Pennsylvania

Broadband Development Authority

**Capital Projects Fund
Broadband Infrastructure Program (CPF BIP)**

-

Post Decisional Debrief



Pennsylvania

Broadband Development Authority

Program Overview



Program Background

- Funded by the Capital Projects Fund established through American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.
- The Broadband Infrastructure Program (Program) has been administered in accordance with U.S. Treasury guidelines and Act 96 of 2021.
- Pennsylvania received a total of \$278,793,641 million through the Capital Projects Fund, of which **\$204 million** was dedicated for this Program.





Program Background

Eligible Applicants:

- Businesses
- Non-profit organizations
- Units of local government
- Economic development organizations

Eligible Projects:

- Extensions of existing last-mile cable modem and fiber-to-the-premise broadband networks, or large-scale regional projects that can transform broadband availability across a significant portion of the Commonwealth by serving large numbers of eligible addresses.





Program Background

Projects require a **25% share** of the total project cost in **matching funds**.

While the federal Davis-Bacon Act prevailing wage requirements do not apply to projects funded through this Program, the **Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Act does apply**.

Applicants must participate in the **Affordable Connectivity Program** and will be asked to describe and document digital equity efforts.

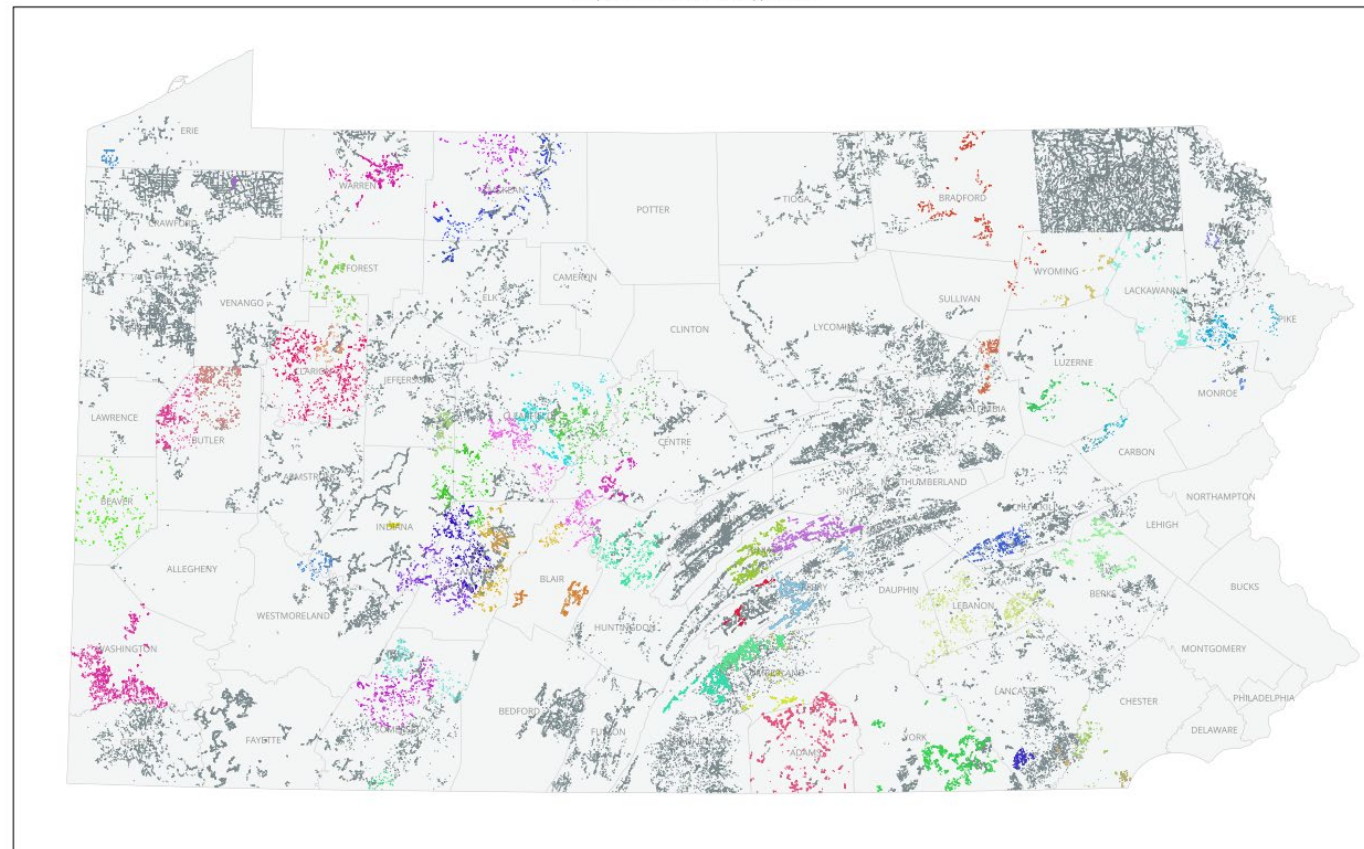


Applications Recieved

Application Breakdown:

- **Application Count:** 231 (Some withdrew)
- **Request Amount:** ~ \$1 Billion
- **Applicant Types:** 47 applicants including ISPs, Non-Profit, County, EDC

Proposed BSLs in CPF BIP Applications





Application Evaluation– Criteria

1. The size and scope of the unserved or underserved area to be deployed.
2. The experience, technical ability, and financial capability of the applicant to successfully deploy high-speed broadband service infrastructure and provide high-speed broadband service.
3. The extent to which federal, state, or local government funding support is necessary to develop and deploy high-speed broadband infrastructure in an economically feasible manner in the proposed project area.
4. The proportion of the capital pledged by the applicant to finance the proposed high-speed broadband service infrastructure project.
5. The high-speed broadband service speed thresholds proposed in the application.
6. The scalability of the high-speed broadband service infrastructure proposed to be deployed to provide high-speed broadband service to households and businesses.
7. An affidavit that no grant funding shall be used in such a manner as to result in an overbuild.
8. An affidavit that the applicant will ensure that a contractor or subcontractor performing construction, reconstruction, demolition, repair, or maintenance work on a high-speed broadband service infrastructure project developed and deployed under this Program meets all PBDA requirements.





Application Evaluation– Criteria

9. Whether the Project proposes investments in fiber-optic infrastructure.
10. The Project involves broadband networks owned, operated by, or affiliated with local governments, non-profits, and cooperatives, and commitments to serving entire communities.
11. The Project achieves, or is part of a plan to achieve, universal broadband for the locality or region.
12. The Project meets affordability standards outlined in these guidelines and offers low-cost broadband alternatives.
13. The Project includes an outreach plan to ensure high adoption rates in proposed areas upon Project completion.
14. The Project includes a viable sustainability strategy beyond initial investment to maintain, repair, and upgrade networks.
15. Workforce development programs and considerations, which may include the usage of Registered Apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships, utilization of local workers, and other considerations listed in the Fair Labor Practices and Highly Skilled Workforce section of the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program.



RDOF Considerations

- RDOF awarded areas were eligible to be included in proposed projects.
 - Applications that included RDOF areas were not disqualified.
 - Some applications that included RDOF areas were awarded BIP funding.
 - Funding awarded cannot be used to duplicate service to RDOF locations.

“To the extent Recipients are considering deploying broadband to locations where there are existing enforceable federal or state funding commitments for reliable wireline service at speeds of at least 100 Mbps of download speed and 20 Mbps of upload speed, the Recipient should ensure that the Capital Projects Fund grant funding will not be used for costs that will be reimbursed by the other federal or state funding stream(s). That is, Capital Projects Fund grant funds must be used only for complementary purposes”





Overview of Awards

Award Details:

- **Awards:** 53 projects /12 awardees
- **Diverse Technologies:** FTTH, Hybrid Fiber/Coaxial, Licensed Fixed Wireless
- **Geographic Distribution:** 42 Counties and more than 40k unserved and underserved locations
- **Total Project Value:** ~ \$400 million in total investment
- **Total Award Amount:** \$204.1 million in grant awards

Awardees
Adams CATV Inc.
Alleghenies Broadband, Inc.
Armstrong Telecommunications, Inc.
Blue Ridge Communications
Claverack Communications
Comcast Cable Communications, LLC
Connect Holding II LLC d/b/a Brightspeed
Frontier Communications Parent, Inc.
Upward Broadband, LLC
Verizon North LLC/Verizon Pennsylvania LLC
Windstream Pennsylvania, LLC
Zito West Holding, LLC





Overview of Awards - Project Location Map

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Application Debrief



A Note On Data:

- **Cost Quest Data:**
 - The CPF BIP Program deployed prior to cost quest data being available for applicants.
 - The program was being designed at the same time data was being developed
 - PBDA had to standardize data to ensure that reporting, audits, and Commonwealth prepositioning for BEAD were as seamless as possible
- **BEAD will utilize the following:**
 - Cost Quest Data
 - FCC V3.2 or V4 Fabric
 - Shapefiles
 - .CSV files
 - Applicants need to be prepared to work with each of these datasets independently





Data Consistency – Formatting

- **Data Consistency:**
 - PBDA worked to standardize applicant supplied data against Cost Quest data where possible
 - Regardless of the Cost Quest data, there were deficiencies within applicant supplied data that posed challenges.
 - Incomplete Address Data
 - Address Data Not Standardized
 - Latitude and Longitude Not in Alignment with Building Footprints or Parcels





Data Consistency – Formatting Recommendation

- **Recommendation 1: Get a Cost Quest Associates License**
 - Be aware of current FCC Fabric being utilized by the PBDA (FCC V3.2)*
 - Get a Cost Quest Tier D License
 - Familiarize staff with FCC fabric, Cost Quest Data and portal, and service availability data

*Subject to change (V4)





Data Consistency – GIS Systems

- **Utilization of a GIS System:**
 - Many applicants did not use a GIS system to standardize, package, and deliver data to the PBDA
 - This was not a disqualifying factor, but it created data consistency issues across applications
 - The use of a GIS aids in consistency of data and its associated attributes



Data Consistency – GIS Systems

- **Recommendation 2: Utilize a GIS system**
 - Ability map BSL data to achieve full understating of project area
 - Enables efficient communication with the PBDA
 - PBDA Supplied project areas will be provided as Shapefiles (.shp)
 - Eligible BSLs will be supplies as .csv files
 - Applicants will need to be able to ingest these into a GIS



Provision of Materials – Incomplete

- Applicant attached no material
- Applicant provided incomplete material
- Applicant provided blank attachments citing proprietary nature
- Applicant cited they will provide material if awarded



Provision of Materials – Recommendation 1

- All materials requested are required unless noted otherwise
- All materials must be complete regardless of proprietary nature
- If materials are proprietary or subject to attorney client privilege, it should be clearly and prominently noted on/in the document.



Provision of Materials – Recommendation 2

- Materials should be word searchable; scans are highly discouraged.
- All tabular data needs to be in excel spreadsheets and not placed within a PDF or word document.
- Attachments should be named logically:
 - Avoid file names like OBAD_FINAL_1234.PDF
 - Rather use Overbuild_Affidavit_FINAL.PDF



Data Transparency – Narrative Development

- **Lacking Concise Narrative Responses:**
 - Extremely long narratives to relay basic data points
 - Unnecessarily complex descriptions of service provided
 - Overly biographical narratives
 - Data points buried within narratives



Data Transparency – Narrative Development Recommendation

- **Simplicity of narrative:**
 - Just the facts in short concise bullet point statements:
 - I.E. We utilize the most recent advances in technology to provide FTTH resulting in 1/1G speeds
- Within the BEAD app. there are items like the network diagram that will communicate details
- Awardees are held to statements made within the application





Threshold

The mix of served and under/unserved BSLs did not meet the 80/20 threshold (Per Act 96), which states projects must include at least 80% underserved or unserved BSLs.

Either the project did not meet the threshold, or it was competing against projects that proposed a greater impact on underserved or unserved BSLs.





Threshold - Recommendation

- BEAD will be a fundamentally different application process
- CSV files of eligible BSLs will be included
- Enforceable commitments will be removed from eligibility prior to application
- Data will be based on FCC Fabric V3.2* and post PBDA BEAD challenge results.
- DO NOT add or remove BSLs from these CSVs

*Subject to change (V4)





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Lessons Learned



Lessons Learned

- **Ensuring Data Consistency:**

- Predefined project areas are critical
- Encourage the use of GIS systems
- Provide project areas as shapefiles
- Provide eligible BSLs within a CSV file

- **Application Layout:**

- Fewer narratives
- Attachment focused
- Detailed cost estimate is critical
- Network Diagram is critical
- Permitting data is needed up front where possible

It is important to note that BEAD guidelines as relayed to PBDA are much more prescriptive.

The approved Volume II is our road map.





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Questions Received



Question 1

Question: Did any small to medium size companies receive funding?

- **Answer(s):**
 - Several applications of smaller to mid-sized companies were awarded funding within an extremely competitive program, including a rural electric co-op and several regional carriers
 - Nearly 50% of applications received were submitted by 2 large companies
 - The applications submitted were evaluated using the criteria outlined in the program guidelines.





Question 2

Question: Were any small companies with a focus on units of local government and/or communities awarded funding?

Answer: Several applications of smaller to mid-sized companies were awarded funding within an extremely competitive program. Many of these had support of:

- » Supported by the local municipality
- » Supported by the local school district(s)
- » Supported by the County



Question 3

Question: Will there be any additional funding for extending broadband within local communities?

Answer: \$1.16 billion in BEAD funding will be available for application later this summer/fall and PBDA will be administering the funds.

- There are potential federal funds that may become available for direct application. PBDA does not administer these grants. Consider consulting the FCC, USDA, etc.





Question 4

Question: What scoring criteria was used to rate applications?

Answer: The 15 elements listed previously within the presentation were used to evaluate applications.



Question 5

Question: When will the list of BSLs funded by this program be released?

Answer: A list of BSLs funded will be released once contracting is completed.





Question 6

Question: Did the authority fund any projects that were not exclusively "line extensions"?

Answer: PBDA funded both line extensions and large-scale regional projects that will result in improved service levels across over 40,000 BSLs within the commonwealth.



Question 7

Question: What was the curing process?

Answer: An iterative curing process was utilized in the evaluation of applications. Applications that met threshold and other base criteria were cured and evaluated first. Not all applications required curing to be evaluated.





Question 8

Question: How many applications were disqualified due to match funding that the Authority did not approve of?

Answer: There were no applications disqualified due to ineligible match.



Other Considerations

- The \$204 million in BIP awards = 15% of the total federal funding available for broadband expansion in PA.
- 1.16 billion \$in BEAD intended to connect all unserved and underserved BSLs.
- BEAD Challenge Process currently open until May 23.
 - Rebuttals May 24 - June 24.
 - Adjudication June 25 - July 26.
- BEAD Initial Proposal Volume II has been approved by NTIA





Other Considerations

- BEAD project area definition methodology is being developed
- BEAD program guideline development is underway
- Grant application opening anticipated summer/fall 2024
- The Broadband Ready Communities Program (BBRC) is currently open
 - Please encourage your partner municipalities to participate.



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Opportunity for individual debriefs:

Contact Jesuders@pa.gov

No later than 5/24/2024