

Broadband Infrastructure Program

Seventh Round of Frequently Asked Questions (August 13, 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

Is there a cap on the period of performance for long-term leases, which are listed as eligible use of funds in the NOFO?

There is no specific cap on the length of time for long-term leases so long as the cost and terms are reasonable, eligible under the NOFO, and the grantee makes full payment 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 budget narrative and detailed budget justification, including the length of the proposed lease and the applicant's rationale for entering into such long-term lease.

Eligibility

What are ineligible costs under this program? Is telecommunications equipment inclusive of the purchase of computer workstations?

The purpose of this grant program is to fund covered broadband projects that deploy fixed broadband service providing qualifying broadband service in eligible service areas. The purchase of computer workstations are not eligible costs under this program.

Other Broadband Funding Programs and Eligible Service Areas

Are areas covered under RDOF considered served and therefore ineligible? If RDOF is considered served, can the project run through an RDOF area to reach other areas considered unserved?

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 descoped or projects are no longer eligible for Federal funding.

Additionally, 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.

How to Apply

What information is required in the pro forma financial information and analyses?

If the covered partnership submits pro forma financial information and analyses specifically pertaining to the proposed project, that information should validate the sustainability of the project by including subscriber estimates related to all proposed service offerings; annual financial projections with balance sheets, income statements, and cash flow statements; supporting assumptions for a five-year forecast period and a depreciation schedule for existing facilities, those facilities funded with federal assistance, matching funds, and other funds. Generally, the financial information should show that the covered partnership is financially viable, stable, and able to take on and complete the project.

What entities from the covered partnership are required to submit a letter of commitment, and to whom should the letter be addressed?

Each application must include a Letter of Commitment from an authorized representative of each member of the covered partnership. The Letter of Commitment will discuss the scope of work to be undertaken by the member of the covered partnership and its relevance to the covered broadband project.

The Letters of Commitment should be addressed to the following individual and should reference NTIA-Broadband-Infrastructure-Program-2021:

Evelyn Remaley
Acting Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room 4898
Washington, DC 20230

If a formal agreement (beyond the Letter of Commitment) exists between the members of the covered partnership, should the agreement be submitted with the application instead of the Letter of Commitment?

No. Notwithstanding the existence of a formal partnership agreement, all members of the covered partnership must submit the required Letters of Commitment. An applicant may also submit a formal agreement among the members of the covered partnership, which should: (1) detail the role of each member of the covered partnership in the proposed project; (2) detail each member's commitment to fulfilling the intent of the proposed project, and (3) be signed by an authorized representative of each member of the covered partnership.

Are attachments permitted to more efficiently include the information required in the project narrative, such as the list of the census blocks to be served? Are there instructions for uploading documents in Grants.gov?

An applicant may submit an attachment(s) that lists the census blocks to be served. Grants.gov provides searchable FAQs. The database includes instructions on how to add attachments into Workspace. The URL is https://gditshared.servicenowservices.com/hhs_grants?pt=Grants.

What do "funded" and "unfunded" mean with regards to the Table of Funded Project Participants and Unfunded Collaborators?

A funded participant will receive NTIA grant funds to perform approved activities associated with implementing the proposed project. Informal collaborators are those that may have a role in the project but will not receive grant funds for the activities they perform.

Does the "proposed funding amount" in the Table of Funded Project Participants and Unfunded Informal Collaborators of the Project Narrative refer to the amount that the organization will provide towards the project or the amount of funding the applicant is requesting?

For the Table of Funded Participants, the proposed funding amount refers to the NTIA grant funds being requested. It is up to the members of the covered partnership to determine how the grant funding would be allocated among them based on the activities they will undertake to complete the project.

If a member of a covered partnership that is not the lead applicant has a DUNS number, can that DUNS number be used in the application?

No. The lead applicant must have a DUNS Number. Please visit grants.gov and follow the guidelines provided in the Applicant Resources, Step 1, Obtain a DUNS Number. <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>.

What level of detail is required in our application? For example, should the application identify the fiber routes the project will be using?

In NOFO Section IV, the required forms and submissions include maps of the proposed broadband project service areas (preferably in shapefiles, .kmz, or .kml formats), network diagram(s) and system design(s), as well as a description of the project which includes the technology to be used, service tiers to be offered and a financial analysis explaining costs and planned pricing and a description of the area which will include the census blocks to be served and the percentage of unserved households to be

accounted for with the project. Fiber routes would typically be reflected in the map or network diagram. Please also see NOFO Section V, Application Review Information, for further details on how NTIA will review and evaluate submitted applications.

Assuming the applicant is seeking a 12-month extension, what time period should the budget cover? And should the program income be calculated with or without the 12-month extension factored in?

Standard Form 424-C (SF 424-C) should describe the costs and activities required in order to deploy the proposed broadband project within the extended period of performance that the applicant proposes, if the applicant submits the petition for extension with its application submission. The application must describe the total proposed period of performance in this scenario. If a covered partnership receives a grant and requests an extension later on (i.e., not later than 90 calendar days before the end of the award period), the covered partnership must submit a revised budget form with its request to describe the costs and activities required to complete the project within the extended award period of performance.

Application Process

Does the signer of the SF-424 need to be included as an AOR if they are only signing the forms and have no other programmatic role?

Only an AOR is authorized to sign and submit an application on behalf of an applicant organization.

How many years of operational costs should be included in the budgeted cost of the project?

In general, any costs for the grant program will have to be incurred or expended during the period of performance.

Do ineligible costs listed in the NOFO apply just to the initial deployment cost or also to the post-deployment operations cost?

Ineligible costs listed in the NOFO apply to the entire period of performance, and to use of grant funds (including costs pre-paid with grant funds), but not to activities conducted outside the period of performance or with the recipient's own funds not otherwise treated as non-federal share under an NTIA award.

Can cost matches be prorated over the course of the year-long grant or must they be provided upfront?

The match should be contributed proportionally with the drawdown of NTIA award funds, but in all cases must be met by the end of the period of performance. As a reminder, the program does not require a matching funds commitment.

Grant Award and Reporting Requirements

If an award is made, can it be declined at the discretion of any member of the covered partnership?

Yes. If an applicant organization wishes to, for any reason, withdraw a submitted application from consideration at any time prior to award notification, the AOR must submit a notice of withdrawal to the

programmatic and technical contact and grant rules and regulations contact listed in Section VII of the NOFO. In this regard, if any member of the covered partnership no longer wishes to proceed with the application or grant, should one be awarded, the applicant/grantee must inform NTIA immediately, as this material change may affect the ability to receive or retain grant funds.