

Idaho Broadband Advisory Board: Request for Proposals for Broadband Projects & Planning Grants

A. DESCRIPTION

The Idaho Broadband Advisory Board is committed to improving access to broadband infrastructure for Idahoans, and recognizes that affordable, accessible, and reliable high-speed broadband is one of the most critical infrastructure challenges facing its citizens. To address this digital divide, the Board is requesting proposals from entities for broadband projects in Idaho, including middle mile, last mile, and planning grant proposals for unserved and underserved locations.

B. DEFINITIONS

- a. **Mbps.** Mbps is the abbreviation for megabytes per second, a data transfer rate generally used when referring to upload and download speeds for broadband service.
- b. **Middle Mile Infrastructure.** Middle Mile Infrastructure links a broadband service provider's core network infrastructure to last-mile infrastructure.
- c. **Last Mile Infrastructure.** Last Mile Infrastructure serves as the final leg connecting the broadband service provider's network to the end-user's on-premises telecommunications equipment.
- d. **Planning Grant Proposal.** Planning grant proposals are requests from eligible entities to request planning funds to be approved by the Idaho Broadband Advisory Board for broadband planning purposes.
- e. **Underserved Locations.** Underserved locations are locations without access to reliable broadband service of 100/20 Mbps.
- f. **Unserved Locations.** Unserved locations are locations without access to reliable broadband service of 25/3 Mbps.
- g. **Broadband.** High-speed reliable Internet delivered via multiple technologies including fiber, fixed wireless, digital subscriber line (DSL), Hybrid Fiber Coaxial, cable modem, or low orbit satellite.
- h. **Broadband Infrastructure.** Networks of deployed telecommunications equipment, conduit, and technologies necessary to provide broadband and other advanced telecommunications services to wholesalers or end users, including but not limited to private homes, businesses, commercial establishments, schools, or public institutions.
- i. **BEAD Funding.** The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, established by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), appropriates \$42.45 billion for States, Territories, and the District of Columbia (DC) to utilize for broadband deployment, mapping, and adoption projects.
- j. **Capital Projects Funds.** The American Rescue Plan provides \$10 billion for payments to eligible governments to carry out critical capital projects that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring, including remote options, in response to the public health emergency.
- k. **State funds.** State of Idaho appropriated funds approved by the Legislature and Governor for broadband deployment.

C. ELIGIBLE PROPOSALS

Proposals shall meet the following eligibility criteria:

- i. Expanding and extending middle mile or last mile infrastructure to connect unserved or underserved areas to the internet to improve access to telehealth, remote work, distance learning opportunities, or increasing public safety infrastructure, and or;
- ii. Planning proposals detailing how planning funds will be used for local planning purposes to improve access to telehealth, remote work, distance learning opportunities, or increasing public safety infrastructure.

Eligible costs in proposals include, but are not limited to:

- Construction and materials.
- New and rehabilitative construction contracts.
- Architect, engineering, and legal services
- Permitting fees.
- Validation of service expenses.
- Equipment related to broadband infrastructure.
- Installation of equipment related to broadband infrastructure.
- Administration costs not to exceed one percent (1%) of proposed funding
- Local broadband planning, including contractor costs.

Ineligible costs in proposals include, but are not limited to:

- Expenses related to providing broadband services.
- Ongoing overhead, operating costs, or staff costs.
- Political activities or lobbying.

D. ELIGIBLE PROPOSAL CANDIDATES

Entities that are eligible to submit proposals are limited to broadband service providers that are incorporated businesses or partnerships, Idaho nonprofit organizations, limited liability companies, cooperative entities, Idaho local or tribal governments, and political subdivisions.

E. TIMELINE

- i. Proposals must be submitted by **11:59pm (MT) on Monday, January 2, 2023**, to be considered for review by the Idaho Broadband Advisory Board.
- ii. Submitted proposals will be posted online for public comment prior to the award of funds. The comment period will run from noon (MT) on Wednesday, January 4, 2023, until noon (MT) on Friday, January 6, 2023. Any party wishing to comment in favor or against a proposal may submit comments during the open comment period. Comments may not be used by a proposer to amend their proposal. Interested parties are cautioned that the Board may take no testimony or may limit comments at the Board meeting. Interested parties are encouraged to submit comments during the comment period.

- iii. There will be an open, public comment period on any funding decisions made at the January 11, 2023, Board meeting. If funding actions are taken, the comment period will run from January 12, 2023, through January 19, 2023.

F. PROJECT PROPOSAL SCOPE

- a. Applicant's contact information:
 - i. Name
 - ii. Title/Position
 - iii. Mailing address
 - iv. Email address
 - v. Phone number

- b. Broadband project proposal outline and scope should include the following:
 - i. Description of the extent to which the project will facilitate deployment of high-speed broadband networks to areas that are currently either unserved, underserved, or both.
 - ii. Description of type(s) of technology to be used (i.e., fiber, fixed wireless, cable etc.).
 - iii. Number of unserved or underserved locations and/or households that will be served by the project and at which speeds the locations will be connected (i.e., 25/3 Mbps, 100/20 Mbps, or 100/100 Mbps).
 - iv. Project term for the proposal (anticipated time frame for project from start to finish in months).
 - v. Funding Request.
 - vi. Anticipated total project costs and financing sources.
 - vii. Project Ownership (i.e., private, public, public/private partnership, other).
 - viii. Proposed project costs (include budget overview and estimated costs).
 - ix. Explanation and demonstration of the applicant's financial ability to complete the project within the applicant's proposed budget.
 - x. Description of any proposed match. Match includes financial and in-kind contributions toward the project. In-kind contributions should be converted into monetary values for calculation.
 - xi. Description of whether (and if so, how) this project works in conjunction with the Idaho Broadband Advisory Board's Strategic Plan. This includes addressing distance learning, telehealth, public safety, economic development, business opportunities, and/or promotes dig once policies.

Broadband project proposals may be submitted with the acknowledgment that the submission in no way guarantees funding in the future. Idaho Broadband Advisory Board projects will be awarded pursuant to future grant guidelines and application criteria for Capital Project Funds, BEAD Funds, and/or State funding, and in correlation with the statewide broadband plan.

G. PLANNING GRANT PROPOSAL SCOPE

- a. Applicant's contact information:
 - vi. Name
 - vii. Title/Position
 - viii. Mailing address
 - ix. Email address
 - x. Phone number

- b. Broadband planning grant proposal outline and scope should include the following:
 - i. Description of the extent to which the planning funds will be used to facilitate deployment of high-speed broadband networks to areas that are currently either unserved, underserved, or both.
 - ii. Description or name of contractors or third party vendors to be used to facilitate a planning study or strategic plan.
 - iii. Funding Request.
 - iv. Planning proposal costs (include budget overview with estimated costs).
 - v. Project term in which the planning grant would start and be completed.
 - vi. Explanation and demonstration of the applicant's financial ability to complete the planning process within the applicant's proposed budget.
 - vii. Description of any proposed match for the planning grant. Match includes financial and in-kind contributions toward the project. In-kind contributions should be converted into monetary values for calculation.
 - viii. Description of whether (and if so, how) this planning grant would help address broadband infrastructure in Idaho in conjunction with the Idaho Broadband Advisory Board's Strategic Plan or federal fund guidelines.
 - ix. Explain how the proposed planning grant would address priorities outlined in the Board's Idaho Broadband Strategic Plan. This includes addressing distance learning, telehealth, public safety, economic development, and business opportunities, promotes dig once policies.

Broadband planning proposals may be submitted with the acknowledgment that the submission in no way guarantees funding in the future. The Board's decision to award funds is final and no challenges will be considered by the Board. The Board's consideration of these characteristics is discretionary. The Board may weigh and evaluate the characteristics in any manner determined by the Board. The Board is not obligated to spend the entirety of the approximately \$35 million in the Idaho Broadband Fund. Any and all grant awards are at the complete discretion of the Board.