

Archived content from previous 10/16/2024 FAQs on the Challenge Process. The Challenge Process in Minnesota concluded in November, 2024.

Section I: BEAD Challenge Process

1. What is the BEAD Challenge process?

The BEAD Challenge process is part of the federally required process for the BEAD program. The BEAD Challenge process happens before the subgrantee selection process can begin as it establishes the list of locations eligible for BEAD funding. It's an opportunity for eligible challengers (which by federal requirements include local governments, Tribal governments, Broadband providers, and nonprofits), to submit "challenges" on locations identified by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as eligible or not eligible for BEAD.

NTIA defines eligibility for BEAD funding as unserved and underserved locations. In other words, if a location does not have reliable broadband service of 25/3 it is unserved, or if a location has reliable broadband service of 25/3 but not at or above 100/20 it is underserved. If a location has reliable broadband service at or above 100/20 it is served, and reliable broadband service per NTIA includes wired (cable, fiber) or licensed fixed wireless service technologies.

The Challenge Portal accepted information from individuals/residents and businesses to contest the classification of their location; if valid these were rolled up and submitted as a BEAD challenge by the nonprofit, Connected Nation. All challenges, whether submitted by a provider, local or Tribal government, or a nonprofit, were reviewed to determine if they met all federal requirements to be considered as valid BEAD Challenges. Challenges found to be credible were then eligible to be rebutted, again by a provider, local or Tribal government, or a nonprofit.

2. What are the different stages of the Challenge process?

- The BEAD Challenge process consists of 3 different stages: Challenge, Rebuttal, and Adjudication. Challenge window, July 22nd to August 21st: During this first phase, eligible challengers should have reviewed the Challenge Portal map and submitted challenges for locations.
- Rebuttal window, August 22nd to September 20th (rolling): Following a submitted Challenge, the rebuttal window was a time for eligible challengers to support or dispute challenges. Important to note, is rebuttal is due 30 days after notification, not until the end of the window itself.
- Adjudication, September 21st to October 21st: During this time, OBD will make formal decisions on the submitted challenges and rebuttals to determine eligibility of challenged locations for BEAD funding.

3. What happens after the BEAD Challenge?

After the BEAD Challenge process, the BEAD True-up (optional) and BEAD Deduplication (mandatory) occurs. Results of the BEAD Challenge process (challenges, rebuttal, adjudication), deduplication and any true-ups will be part of the list of final BEAD eligible locations provided to NTIA for its approval. Once the final list has been approved by NTIA, the subgrantee selection process can begin.

OBD anticipates there will be some type of pre-qualification process once we have implemented a new grants management system for receiving the information. This will likely be available in the January/February 2025 timeframe.

- **BEAD True-Up (Optional):** a process for using an updated version of the FCC map to reflect new information on broadband serviceable locations and service availability—occurs after the BEAD Challenge process but before submission of the BEAD Challenge process results to NTIA: Accuracy in mapping; Equitable funding allocations; and Avoid duplicating
- **BEAD Deduplication:** Required after conducting BEAD Challenge process. Avoids duplicating efforts of ongoing broadband deployment by other programs.

4. Will there be another opportunity to change the list of eligible locations after the Challenge process is completed?

No. Consistent with National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) requirements, the challenge process determination is complete, and the Office of Broadband Development will not hold another challenge process. Based on the final list of locations eligible for BEAD Funding approved by NTIA, the subgrantee selection process will be conducted. OBD will be monitoring NTIA's guidance for updates on exceptions for locations constructed with private investment between the time NTIA approves the final list of BEAD eligible locations and when Minnesota's Final Proposal is due to minimize duplication of funding to served locations. Separately, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) continues to accept location and service challenges on a rolling basis, and these are used to conduct periodic refreshes to the National Broadband Map though unlikely to affect eligibility for BEAD funding.

Section II: BEAD Challenge Portal, Map, and Technical Assistance

1. How was data for the map sourced?

This data was sourced from the FCC's data releases. If you have questions relating to the FCC data, visit the Broadband Data Collection Help Center: help.bdc.fcc.gov/hc/en-us. You can submit a question to the Broadband Data Collection Help Center here: help.bdc.fcc.gov/hc/en-us/requests/new. The digital equity indicators were sourced from US Census data. The development of accurate broadband coverage maps is an iterative process and the FCC maps will continue to be improved, updated and validated over time.

2. What was the Planned Service Date for the BEAD Challenge process?

The date for a Planned Service challenge was 6/30/24. OBD plans to be able to capture any construction completed in 2024 through the deduplication process.

3. What if my address wasn't on the map?

The addresses displayed on the map are from the Broadband Fabric prepared by the FCC and available at: broadbandmap.fcc.gov/home. Unfortunately, under NTIA's requirements, we cannot add locations to the BEAD Challenge Map. You would need to bring this to the FCC's attention. If your address is not displayed, it is possible that it is not a known Broadband Serviceable Location. In this case, you will be prompted upon searching for your address on the FCC map to flag it for review. Once your address is flagged, the FCC will have been made aware of the issue and the FCC can determine what to do for subsequent iterations of its map.

4. What are "high-cost areas"?

High-cost areas are areas designated by NTIA where broadband deployment is expected to be especially expensive. Within these areas, OBD will be able to award grant funding without requiring at least a 25 percent match from the awardee or requesting a waiver of the match requirement from NTIA.

5. What technologies can be used to deliver internet service?

Internet connections are categorized based on the underlying technology providing access to the internet. There are many types of broadband service which may be available to a particular location, such as Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), Cable, Fiber, Wireless (cellular or fixed; licensed or unlicensed), and Satellite. All these technologies have strengths and weaknesses and varying costs and availability depending on the location they are intended to serve. For more information, please visit: www.fcc.gov/general/types-broadband-connections.

6. Why did this map not show satellite providers and unlicensed fixed wireless locations?

These technologies are not considered "Reliable Broadband Service" under NTIA's BEAD guidelines and thus have been left off of this map. These technologies may be eligible for BEAD funding if fiber is too expensive, no fiber provider applies to serve specific locations, or the state must consider non-fiber alternatives to ensure that its BEAD funding gets some type of broadband to all unserved/underserved locations.

7. What does the "Funding" column mean in the Unserved and Underserved locations dataset? And what are the Pre-Challenge acronyms?

The funding column designates if a currently unserved location will have broadband service deployed under another broadband program.

The acronyms in the PreChallengeModifier column mean the following:

- Biz = Business-Only Provider Pre-Challenge Modification
- CFW= Cellular Fixed Wireless Pre-Challenge Modification
- DSL= DSL Pre-Challenge Modification
- FCC= FCC Challenge Pre-Challenge Modification