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**2024 Round 10 (FY 2025) Minnesota Broadband Grant Instructions and Application Guide**

**$50 million available**

**Border-to-Border grant maximum per project: $10 million**

**Low-Density grant maximum per project: $10 million**

**Application period opens: March 12, 2024**

**Submission deadline: March 2, 2023 4:00 p.m. Central Time**

* **Prepare your grant application starting now**
* **Read this entire application instructions document carefully**
* **Complete project analysis and gather all documentation**
* **Correctly name all application attachment files**
* **All attachment files MUST be saved with file names using the number indicated, followed by the Applicant Name-Project Name of 50 characters or less.** ***Abbreviate if necessary.*** If confidential information is being submitted, abbreviate as necessary to ensure “Confidential” is included in the file name.

The grant application for the 2024 round will be available on March 12, 2024. The Grant Instructions and Application Guide can be found on DEED’s website <https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/grant-program/> and under the “2024 Application Process” tab.

All applications must be submitted to DEED on or before the application deadline of

May 10, 2024, no later than 1:30 p.m. Central Time

## Application Information Sessions

OBD is hosting an online webinar on Thursday March 21, 2024 at 11:00 a.m. via TEAMS. Registration will be required, register here: [Webinar Registration](https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/1f81c49f-9363-48f0-9448-1aed3890c32b%40eb14b046-24c4-4519-8f26-b89c2159828c)

In the webinar, staff will provide background on the Broadband Infrastructure Development grant programs, walk through the application requirements, and give an overview of the application process utilizing DEED’s Grants Management System. At the end of the session, there will be time for questions. While not required, prospective applicants are encouraged to participate in the information session. A recording of the session along with questions and answers from the webinar will be posted under the Applicant Resources tab of the OBD webpage. [https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/grant-program](https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/grant-program%20)

**Important Deadlines**

* **March 12, 2024** – DEED’s Grant Management System opens to applicants
* **March 21, 2024** –Broadband Grant Round 10 Webinar
* **March 29, 2024**– last day to notify existing providers of applicant’s intent to file an application [required by Minn. Stat. 116J.395, subd. 5(9)]
* **April 23, 2024**– first day an applicant may submit a completed application in DEED’s Grant Management System based on when they completed their pre-application notification
* **May 10, 2024** – window closes so completed applications must be submitted in DEED’s Grant Management System by **1:30 p.m. Central Time**
* **May 15, 2024** – challenge process begins
* **June 14, 2024** – challenge process ends at 4:00 pm Central Time
* **Summer 2024** – awards are anticipated to be announced
* **December 31, 2026** – projects need to be competed (contract end date)

**Contact Information**

For more information and Grant Instructions and Application Guide, consult our website, under Broadband Grant Program – 2024 Application Process tab. Questions should be submitted to deed.broadband@state.mn.us and will be included in the FAQs posted on the website. Questions may be asked until the submission deadline of 1:30 p.m. central time on May 10, 2024.

For technical assistance for the Grants Management System, contact: Grants System Administrator Email: GMS.DEED@state.mn.us.

Individuals with disabilities who need alternative formats can contact DEED at 651-259-7578 for assistance.

* **Any questions?**

**Call or email our team at 651-259-7610 or** **deed.broadband@state.mn.us**

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# GRANT PROGRAM: GENERAL INFORMATION AND SPECIFICS

## Introduction

In order to continue to promote broadband infrastructure expansion for areas of Minnesota that remain unserved or underserved, public sector investment is necessary. The Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program was initially established by the 2014 legislature to assist with costly deployment projects that might not occur without public financial assistance. The Low-Density Population Pilot Program was created by the legislature in 2022 and made a continuing program by the legislature in 2023. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §§116J.394-116J.398, the State of Minnesota, Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) has the authority to award grants to assist broadband providers with eligible infrastructure installation costs.

## Funding Availability for 2024 (FY-Round 10)

The funding available to be awarded to selected Grantees will be approximately $50 million for fiscal year 2025. As designated in the 2023 legislative session, $50 million has been appropriated from the State General Revenue Fund for each of FY 2024 and FY 2025. The legislature designated the distribution of funds of $30 million for the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program, and $20 million for the Low-Density Population Broadband Development Grant Program.

For the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program, the funding available to be awarded to selected Grantees will be approximately $30 million and the maximum individual grant amount is $10 million. This was increased from $5 million by the legislature in 2023. The maximum grant funding award cannot exceed 50% of the eligible total project costs. Priority consideration will be given to projects that leverage funding from other community, private and public sources.

For the Low-Density Population Broadband Development Grant Program, the funding available to be awarded to selected Grantees will be approximately $20 million and the maximum individual grant amount is $10 million, and the grant funding award cannot exceed 75% of the eligible total project costs. Priority consideration will be given to projects that leverage funding from other community, private and public sources.

## Eligible Applicants

Eligible Applicants must be one of the following:

* Incorporated business or partnership
* A political subdivision
* An Indian tribe
* A Minnesota nonprofit organization organized under chapter 317A,
* A Minnesota cooperative association organized under chapter 308A
* A Minnesota cooperative association organized under chapter 308B
* A Minnesota limited liability corporation organized under chapter 322C for the purpose of expanding broadband access

## Eligible Project Areas

Broadband development projects located in unserved or underserved areas are eligible. An unserved area is an area of Minnesota in which households or businesses lack access to wire-line broadband service at speeds that meet the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) threshold of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 3 megabits per second (Mbps) upload. An underserved area is an area of Minnesota in which households or businesses do receive service at or above the FCC threshold of 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up but lack access to wire-line broadband service at speeds of 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload.

An applicant can submit multiple project applications, but the same project may not be submitted to both the Border-to-Border program and the Lower-Density Population program. For example, an applicant can submit Project A and Project B to Border-to-Border and submit Project C to Lower-Population Density. Applications for the same project submitted to both programs will be ineligible.

## Eligible Program Costs

The Broadband Development Grant Program can pay up to 50% of the total costs for a qualifying project. The Low-Density Population Broadband Development Grant Program can pay up to 75% of the total costs for a qualifying project. Eligible costs refer to the costs associated with the acquisition and installation of middle mile and/or last mile infrastructure that can support broadband service to speeds of at least 100 Mbps down and 20 Mbps up, scalable to 100 Mbps down and 100 Mbps up.

Last mile infrastructure is broadband infrastructure that serves as the final leg connecting the broadband service provider’s network to the end-user customer’s on-premises telecommunications equipment. Middle mile infrastructure is broadband infrastructure that links a broadband service provider’s core network infrastructure to last mile infrastructure.

Construction of broadband infrastructure may include the following: project planning; obtaining construction permits; construction of facilities – including construction of both middle mile and last mile infrastructure; equipment; and installation and testing of the broadband service.

## Matching Funds Requirement

To obtain a broadband development grant, the applicant must provide for the funding not covered by the grant with matching funds. The match can come from any private and/or public sources available to the applicant. The state grant funding period begins after the grant application is received, evaluated, and officially approved by the DEED Commissioner with an award letter and executed contract. For the Border-to-Border Grant Program an application will receive additional points if the applicant and funding partner matching funds are 55% or more of the total eligible project costs. For the Low-Density Grant Program, the minimum match is 25% as the legislature established this program for those situations where a 50% match is not adequate to make the business case. An applicant cannot apply for both programs for the same project area.

Documentation to validate the availability of matching funds is required as part of the application. Some examples of appropriate documentation include: a letter of credit, letter confirming funds from a bank, board resolution committing funding, or loan documentation. If the application will have additional financial partners contributing to the matching funds, the application must also identify the financial partner(s) and documentation of the amount and availability of each partner’s financial match. Priority consideration will be given to projects that have secured community partners who have contributed to the matching funds.

**Note: If matching funds are federally-sourced wholly or in-part from funding such as ARPA–Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, CARES Act, etc., applicant will need to identify the program name and specific amount of those funds.**

Eligible project expenses are those that are incurred starting with the 2024 grant award contract execution date and ending at the conclusion of the grant project, or grant project contractual term of December 31, 2026, (whichever is earlier). The state grant funding period begins after the grant application is received, evaluated, and officially approved with an award letter and executed contract.

## Application Filing Window and Deadlines for 2024

The Minnesota Broadband Grant Program is a competitive grant award cycle for funds appropriated by the 2023 legislature. The grant application for the 2024 round will be available on March 12, 2024. The Grant Instructions and Application Guide can be found on DEED’s website <https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/grant-program/> and under the “2024 Application Process” tab.

All applications must be submitted to DEED on or before the application deadline of

May 10, 2024, no later than 1:30 p.m. Central Time

Applications MUST be COMPLETED and SUBMITTED via [DEED’s Grants Management System](https://mndeedgrants.mn.gov/) on or prior to 1:30 p.m. Central Time on May 10, 2024, to be deemed eligible for funding. The Grants Management System will require an Organization Representative who has contract signing authority for grant contracts with the State of Minnesota to register themselves and their organization in the online Grants Management System as a new user. Once the registration has been approved by DEED, the registrant will have access to log into the Grants Management System and apply for the grant opportunity. Grant opportunities are listed under My Opportunities on the user’s dashboard once they are logged in. The window for registering new users and completing applications begins on March 12, 2024. To comply with Pre-Application Outreach requirement, the window to *submit* your completed application will begin April 23, 2024. The instructions to accessing and completing and submitting your application via the DEED’s Grants Management System will be located on the same Office of Broadband Development (OBD) web page as above: <https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/grant-program/>

Announcement of awards is anticipated in Summer 2024, and awards will have contract end dates of December 31, 2026.

# GUIDE TO PREPARING A GRANT APPLICATION

**Applications must be entered and submitted in DEED’s Grants Management System. When using DEED’s Grants Management System, the applicant will choose the “opportunity” they wish to apply for, Border-to-Border or Low-Density, and complete all required components in that module. The guide is to help you prepare an application for entry.**

**Applicants cannot submit the same project for both the Border-to-Border and Low-Density Programs and must choose one.**

* **Border-to-Border Applications are covered by Sections 1-11**
* **Low-Density Applications are covered by Sections 1-11, with two additional questions in Section 1.**

**In all application sections, provide concise and complete responses to all information requested. Accurate and comprehensive responses are required to receive the best possible scoring. The final application must provide necessary information to fully describe and document the broadband application proposal. Questions on the application should be addressed to** deed.broadband@state.mn.us

Questions regarding DEED’s Grants Management System can be address GMS.DEED@state.mn.us. Additionally, the Grants Management System Quick Start Guide can be found on the Applicant Resources tab on the [broadband grants website](https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/grant-program/).

## 1. Applicant Information

Complete all the key applicant data

**Provide Name, Title, Phone Number and Email Address for each of the following key individuals listed.**

* **Primary Contact** will be responsible for negotiation and execution of the grant contract if the project is awarded funding.
* **Project Manager** will be the contact for grant administration details through the term of the grant if the project is awarded funding.
* **Application Author** is the contact for questions regarding the grant application document and supporting documentation.
* **Financial Contact** to confirm reimbursement and payment account information if the project is awarded funding.

**Technical Expertise Statement** Provide a narrative statement detailing all the relevant technical expertise of the applicant and the applicant’s specific prior experience in providing broadband services in Minnesota (and in other states, if applicable).

**Technical Expertise Statement- (***Text box provided of 4000 characters)*

**Organizational Capacity** Demonstrate the overall organization strength of the applicant to build, manage, and effectively operate the proposed broadband project, if approved. Documentation should identify key officers and management personnel with corresponding brief resumes. Organizational structure charts may also be submitted. It is important to provide a detailed description of how organizational strength pertains to level of broadband service delivery and service maintenance.

**1.A Organizational Capacity** File name for this upload should start with “1A” and include project identifying information. If file is confidential, “confidential” must appear in the file name. Unless otherwise noted, all file module uploads will only accept one file. If uploading multiple files, you must combine them in a zip file or PDF so that you are only uploading one file.

**Audited Financial Statements** Demonstrate the overall financial viability of the applicant by providing the most recent audited financial statements. (Audited by a certified public accountant.) The financial statements may be identified and filed as “Confidential” and must be appropriately marked as confidential when submitted. Any confidential information should be identified as such following the attachment naming convention.

If applicant does not have audited financial statements, results from an independent audit may also be provided as supplemental detail, as well as the applicant’s most recent year’s federal tax return. If provided these documents should also be submitted and marked as confidential.

**1.B Audited Financial Statements** File name for this upload should start with “1B” and include project identifying information. If file is confidential, “confidential” must appear in the file name. Unless otherwise noted, all file module uploads will only accept one file. If uploading multiple files, you must combine them in a zip file or PDF so that you are only uploading one file.

**Applicant Affidavit** The primary applicant must provide a signed, dated, and witnessed affidavit or resolution that shows official applicant support for, and approval of, the application as well as a commitment to provide the applicant’s matching funding, commitment to offer service for at least five years and commitment and capacity to ensure adequate project administration and comply with all the contract terms.

A sample template for Round 9 grants is provided on the Applicant Resources tab of the [Broadband Grants Website.](https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/grant-program/) Please note that the applicant may choose to reformat the sample template but must ensure that all statements appear in the signed, final version. **DO NOT USE PRIOR GRANT ROUND AFFIDAVIT TEMPLATES**

**1.C Applicant Affidavit** File name for this upload should start with “1C” and include project identifying information. If file is confidential, “confidential” must appear in the file name. Unless otherwise noted, all file module uploads will only accept one file. If uploading multiple files, you must combine them in a zip file or PDF so that you are only uploading one file.

If you are in the Low-Density application, the next two questions will be available and will only apply for the Low-Density (LD) Program.

**Demonstrate the Need for Low-Density Pilot Program Grant**

Explain and demonstrate the need to have the application considered under the Low-Density Pilot Program. Factors that the applicant may want to consider addressing include higher costs associated with construction to the lower-population project area, cost per passing, the demand for service from homes and businesses in the project area that will guarantee a high take rate, and why this project should be funded over other applications submitted to the Low-Density Pilot Program. *(Text box provided of 2000 characters)*

**Low-Density Fiber Route Map**Low-Density Population Program applicants must include a map of the fiber route they intend to serve in PDF and Digital Geospatial file (.shp, .kml, .kmz)

**1.D Low-Density Fiber Route Map** (Save file name as: “1D Provider Name - Project Name” and upload)

Low-Density ONLY questions end. Remaining questions apply to both B2B and LD.

## 2. Executive Summary

*Complete the Executive Summary (text box provided of 8000 characters)*

Provide a brief executive summary narrative that incorporates a concise but comprehensive grant rationale for official reviewers of the overall project proposal including each of the following:

* Summary of project
* Narrative description of the geography and location of the project coverage. Include the proposed broadband passings and speed improvements anticipated in the event of project funding.
* Describe the applicant’s prior involvement in broadband technology implementation and how the applicant (and/or partners) intend to manage and sustain the project.
* Describe how broadband improvements at the proposed location will advance the quality of life, address critical needs, and strengthen economic development opportunity in proposed project communities.
* Describe why this project should be awarded a state broadband development grant.

## 3. Project Area Information

**Description of Project Area**

Provide a short narrative paragraph describing the geographic coverage of the proposed project (a few sentences in length). If non-contiguous areas make up the proposed project area, indicate how many distinct areas there are*.* *(text box provided of 4000 characters)*

**Maps of the Project Area**

**Include a PDF and Digital Geospatial Map of the Project Area**

A PDF and digital geospatial map (.shp, .kmz, or .kml file types) of a last mile project should include the service area boundaries and also include place names, boundaries, buildings/passing locations, road/street names or other features that clearly identify the project coverage area. For middle mile projects, the map should indicate the location of the middle mile facilities that will be placed.

**3.A PDF Map of Project Area** File name for this upload should start with “3A” and include project identifying information. If file is confidential, “confidential” must appear in the file name. Unless otherwise noted, all file module uploads will only accept one file. If uploading multiple files, you must combine them in a zip file or PDF where appropriate, so that you are only uploading one file.

**3.B Digital Geospatial**(.shp, .kmz or .kml) Map of the Project Area. File name(s) for this upload should start with “3B” and include project identifying information. If file is confidential, “confidential” must appear in the file name. Unless otherwise noted, all file module uploads will only accept one file. If uploading multiple files, you must combine them in a zip file so that you are only uploading one file.

**Include Evidence of Eligibility Map/Map for the Challenge Process**

The proposed project area should be the result of reviewing locations eligible (unserved and underserved) for the grant program and ensuring that the project passings are within geographic boundaries eligible for grant funding.

Demonstrate this by overlaying your proposed project area onto the 2024 Border-to-Border/Low-Density Grant Eligibility Map on the DEED website at [http:// map.connectmn.org/](http://map.connectmn.org/), and then select “B2B” on the middle left panel of the page, click the “Access” tab, and scroll down to check the box of the “2024 Border-to-Border/Low-Density Potential Grant Eligibility”. A video tutorial on how to do this can be found on the Applicant Resources on our website at: <https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/grant-program/index.jsp>. Applicants may also submit clarifying supplemental data regarding the unserved and/or underserved nature of the proposed project location. Any supplemental data will be compared to the maps prepared by Minnesota’s designated mapping entity and any discrepancies that are identified will be resolved by the Office of Broadband Development (OBD) on a case-by-case basis. Applicants should not wait until the application deadline to work with OBD Staff to clarify details of the 2024 Grant Eligibility Map. The maps provided in this section are required and used for grant applicant review and rating. Another purpose of the Eligibility Map is for posting online for the grant application Challenge Process. For more information on the challenge process, see Applicant Resources on our website at: <https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/grant-program/index.jsp>.

**3.C Eligibility Map: Evidence that locations in the project area are unserved and underserved.** File name(s) for this upload should start with “3C” and include project identifying information. Eligibility Maps cannot be marked as Confidential as they are used for the Challenge Process and published on the Office of Broadband Development Website. Unless otherwise noted, all file module uploads will only accept one file. If uploading multiple files, you must combine them in a zip file or PDF where appropriate, so that you are only uploading one file.

**3.D Digital Geospatial**(.shp, .kmz or .kml) Map: This digital map will be public, used for the Challenge process and posted on the Office of Broadband Development Website map for the application area. File name for this upload should start with “3D” and include project identifying information. Eligibility Maps cannot be marked as Confidential as they are used for the Challenge Process and published on the Office of Broadband Development Website. Unless otherwise noted, all file module uploads will only accept one file. If uploading multiple files, you must combine them in a zip file or PDF where appropriate, so that you are only uploading one file.

**Location Data** Using the [Location Data Sheet Template](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/location-data-sheet-template_tcm1045-613333.xlsx), provide a complete listing of the addresses/locations you intend to serve with the proposed project

**3.E Location Data** File name for this upload should start with “3E” and include project identifying information. If file is confidential, “confidential” must appear in the file name. Unless otherwise noted, all file module uploads will only accept one file. If uploading multiple files, you must combine them in a zip file so that you are only uploading one file.

**Are recognized tribal lands included in the proposed project area?**

Recognized Tribal Lands Yes or No

**If Yes**, and the applicant plans to deploy broadband that include any locations on Tribal Lands, the applicant must submit proof of the Tribal Government’s consent to such deployment in the form of a legally binding agreement, which includes a Tribal Government Resolution, between the Tribal Government of the Tribal Lands encompassing the location, or its authorized agent, and the service provider offering qualifying broadband service to that location.

**3.F Legally Binding Tribal Government Agreement**File name for this upload should start with “3F” and include project identifying information. If file is confidential, “confidential” must appear in the file name. Unless otherwise noted, all file module uploads will only accept one file. If uploading multiple files, you must combine them in a zip file or PDF where appropriate, so that you are only uploading one file.

**Has the applicant submitted or intends to submit the same project, or any overlapping portion, to any other federal or state broadband funding program?** Yes or No

**If Yes**, attach a map and list of addresses identifying the overlapped and type of funding applied for.

**3.G Project Overlap Info** File name for this upload should start with “3G” and include project identifying information. If file is confidential, “confidential” must appear in the file name. Unless otherwise noted, all file module uploads will only accept one file. If uploading multiple files, you must combine them in a zip file or PDF where appropriate, so that you are only uploading one file.

**Full and Partial Areas Served by Project**

**List all the Counties/Townships & Cities/Towns that the proposed project covers and specify whether they are entirely or partially covered**

**Counties/Townships** *(text box provided of 4000 characters)*

 **Cities/Towns***(text box provided of 4000 characters)*

**Identify the Minnesota Legislative District(s) in which the proposed project area(s) reside. (#A, #B):** *(text box provided of 100 characters)*

**Identify the US Congressional District(s) in which the proposed project area(s) reside (#, #):** *(text box provided of 100 characters)*

## 4. Anticipated Broadband Improvements

Using the following definitions, provide the number of households, businesses, farms, and community anchor institutions (passings), that will be able to receive improved broadband services because of the proposed project.

* **Households**:  includes all residential dwellings
* **Businesses**:  includes all business types; and – to the extent possible – home-based businesses and telecommuter use of broadband.
* **Farms**:  includes crop, dairy, other livestock farming or agricultural use operations.
* **Community Anchor Institutions**: includes school, library, health center, hospital or other medical provider, public safety entity, institution of higher education, public housing organization, or community support organization that facilitates greater use of broadband service by vulnerable populations.

**Using the table provided, identify number of passings by the speed ranges currently available for each type of location, and enter highest speed available to ALL passings that will be offered if the project is awarded grant funding.**

**Number of Passings by type UNSERVED Currently below 25/3 Mbps**

**Number of Passings by type UNDERSERVED Currently at least 25/3 but less than 100/20 Mbps**

**Highest speed available to all passing upon project completion (down/up) Mbps**

**Upon project completion is this project designed to deliver service that reliably meets or exceeds speeds of at least 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload (100/20) and is scalable to a minimum of 100Mbps symmetrical (100/100)?** Yes or No (**if No**, this project is not eligible for funding)

**As part of this project are you proposing to build drops:**

* Build drops to every location
* Build Drops Access to Customer Build drops only to locations that give you access to the property regardless of if they subscribe
* Build Drops Only to Customers Build drops only to locations that subscribe to service
	+ Please explain drops policy. (Example, if a drop is not placed now, is there a subscriber cost to place a drop later?) *(text box provided of 1000 characters)*

## 5. Broadband Infrastructure TypeProposed Broadband Construction/Technology Type

**Indicate the type of broadband infrastructure to be deployed in the project area:** (Choose one):

Fiber to the Premises/Fiber to the Home

Cable

Hybrid fiber-coax

Fixed Wireless

 **If Fixed Wireless**, is spectrum Licensed or Unlicensed

Other or Combination

 **If Other or Combination**, describe: *(text box provided of 2000 characters)*

**Project Components in This Application Include: (Choose one):**

* Last Mile Components Only – infrastructure that serves as the final leg connecting the broadband service provider’s network to the end-user customer’s on-premise telecommunications equipment.
* Middle Mile Components Only – broadband infrastructure that links a broadband service provider’s core network infrastructure to the last mile infrastructure. **Note:** For projects with Middle Mile components: Minnesota Prevailing Wage Requirements are applicable to proposed grant projects of $200,000 or more, that include middle mile components. If this fits your project, correct prevailing wage rates must be identified and used in calculating eligible labor costs for the proposed project budget.
* Both Last Mile and Middle Mile Components. **Note:** For projects with Middle Mile components: Minnesota Prevailing Wage Requirements are applicable to proposed grant projects of $200,000 or more, that include middle mile components. If this fits your project, correct prevailing wage rates must be identified and used in calculating eligible labor costs for the proposed project budget.
	+ **If the proposed project is a middle mile broadband facilities project, or includes a middle mile facilities component, describe why new construction is necessary.** *(text box provided of 2000 chracters )*

**Number of last mile fiber miles to be built?***(text box provided)*

## 6. Project Readiness

**Engineering Design** Attach all budgetary engineering designs, diagrams and maps that demonstrate the viability of the proposed project including certification that the technology type is scalable to at least 100/100 if the project does not have service initially available at those speeds upon completion.

Design documents must clearly document the applicant’s comprehensive understanding of the project requirements and helps justify the project’s costs. This information must be certified by a registered Professional Engineer. Scalability documentation must be certified by either the manufacturer of the equipment to be utilized or by a registered Professional Engineer.

**6.A Comprehensive Engineering Design and Diagram/Plan** File name for this upload should start with “6A” and include project identifying information. If file is confidential, “confidential” must appear in the file name. Unless otherwise noted, all file module uploads will only accept one file. If uploading multiple files, you must combine them in a zip file or PDF where appropriate, so that you are only uploading one file.

**Itemize all required municipal/city/township/county/state approvals that will be needed prior to project construction.** Please also indicate the corresponding entity such as planning commission/zoning authority/road authority/railroad crossing entity, etc. and provide a brief description of the process required to obtain approval. Include the permitting process as a step in the Project Schedule. *(text box provided of 2000 characters)*

**Identify all applicable state environmental review requirements necessary for this project to begin construction and describe the process to obtain required approvals. Include the process in the Project Schedule.** *(text box provided of 2000 characters)*

**Due to its location, will the proposed project potentially impact local/state/federal historic architectural or archeological resources?** If yes, describe the process to obtain required approvals and include the process in the Project Schedule below. If awarded, you will need to contact the Minnesota State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) with project review prior to construction. <https://mn.gov/admin/shpo/> *(text box provided of 2000 characters)*

**Project Schedule** Provide a proposed project schedule which must reflect all key planning, procurement, construction, installation, testing, and service activation milestones. The applicant may use the sample form below to detail the significant task categories for all broadband deployment milestones necessary to complete the proposed project in a comprehensive and timely manner. Each necessary milestone should be identified with an associated anticipated start date and completion date (month and year) for that milestone. The last task on the project schedule should reflect the date upon which the service to the last location will be turned up and the project will be complete. *(Complete the Project Schedule Table provided)*

**If the proposed project leverages existing broadband networks or will be built in conjunction with other broadband infrastructure projects to expand service areas to include unserved or underserved regions of the state, please give specific examples identifying the other project and the associated leveraged funds.** Include any prior awards for CAF II, ACAM, USDA/RUS loan or ReConnect funds, ARPA, E-rate, or any other federal, state, or local broadband funding. *(text box provided of 2000 characters)*

**Five-year Proform/ROI Analysis** Attach a five-year stand-alone financial plan for the proposed project, including a description of how the costs and anticipated revenue will result in the financial viability of the project over time.

Applicant should provide a spreadsheet summarizing its financial analysis for the proposed project and should outline the return on investment of the project with and without grant funding. To assist the applicant, OBD has provided a [Proforma Financial Spreadsheet Template](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/2024-proforma-financial-spreadsheet-template_tcm1045-613371.xlsx) that the applicant may use to populate the proposed project’s pro forma financials. The pro forma financial spreadsheet must be a minimum of a five-year view, but applicant may extend the analysis for additional years if that will provide a more comprehensive financial justification.

**6.B Project Financials**File name for this upload should start with “6B” and include project identifying information. If file is confidential, “confidential” must appear in the file name. Unless otherwise noted, all file module uploads will only accept one file. Applicant should submit financial proforma in one excel spreadsheet file.

 **Describe why the proposed project would not be feasible without the award of the requested broadband grant funds.** Refer to the five-year proforma (upload above) where you demonstrated the difference in return of investment (ROI) years with and without the requested grant funding. *(text box provided of 2000 characters)*

## 7. Pricing and Affordability

**Provide proposed pricing for the broadband speeds listed.** At minimum, pricing must be offered for a service that meets or exceeds Minnesota’s 2026 speed goal of 100Mbps down and 20Mbps up (100/20). Must enter "0" if row is not applicable. *(Complete the Speed Tier table provided)*

* Provide the proposed pricing structure [by associated download and upload speeds] for all broadband services to be offered with this project. *(text box provided of 2000 characters)*

**Will any additional equipment be required – or any separately chargeable service installation elements apply – for activation or turn-up of individual customer locations?** If yes, describe any separately chargeable elements that may apply along with all associated charges, and identify as one-time or monthly. Examples: Are there excess construction charges to connect households with long driveways? Are there modem charges?*(text box provided of 2000 characters)*

**Describe what initiatives the applicant will undertake to communicate its proposed marketing plan to its prospective broadband services customer base**. The marketing plan should include activities to communicate the award of the proposed grant project, the timing and availability of constructed broadband service, and applicant plans on how to optimize broadband subscription rates once service becomes available. *(text box provided of 4000 characters)*

**Describe how the broadband service that will be offered is affordable to the target markets in the proposed service area**. *(text box provided of 4000 characters)*

**Grant recipients will be required to participate in the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program. Provide a link to your website demonstrating this program is offered.** *(text box provided of 2000 characters)*

## 8. Economic Development and Community Impact

**Provide evidence that community supports this proposal** Examples include petitions, surveys, letters endorsing the project and describing the need for broadband improvements from residents, businesses, legislators, congressional representatives, etc.

**8.A Attach evidence of community support for the project.** (Save file name as: “8A Provider Name - Project Name” and upload)

**Please note the following questions are another opportunity to establish why there is a critical need for this project.  Demonstrate the economic development and community enhancement potential of the proposed project.  Include details of how the project will provide for better business retention and expansion, attract new business, and increase jobs opportunities in the covered communities.**

**Business Impact** Provide a listing of businesses in the proposed project area that will benefit from the broadband project. Identify and briefly describe the businesses needing improved broadband in the project area, including the level of broadband improvement needed to become and/or remain competitive, expand services, etc. Describe any work-at-home or telecommuter opportunities that would be increased or improved. If possible, please attach specific statements of need from impacted businesses in your project area. *(text box provided of 6000 characters)*

**Agriculture Impact** Provide a listing of farms and agricultural use customers in the proposed project area that will benefit from the broadband project. Identify and briefly describe any farms or agricultural use customers needing improved broadband in the project area to operate their agricultural business. If possible, please attach specific statements of need from impacted agricultural users. *(text box provided of 6000 characters)*

**Community Institution Impact** Identify any community institutions that will benefit from the broadband project. Identify specific institutions to be served, and wherever possible, identify how the proposed broadband deployment will be incorporated into the community program. *(text box provided of 6000 characters)*

**Educational Impact** Identify any educational locations that will benefit from the broadband project. Identify specific institutions to be served and include the proposed impact on e-learning opportunities. *(text box provided of 6000 characters)*

**Health and Public Safety Impact** Provide specific evidence of how health and public safety locations will benefit from the broadband project. Include the proposed impact on telemedicine and electronic health records use as well as public safety broadband needs. *(text box provided of 6000 characters)*

**Distressed Area?** Is the proposed project providing broadband improvements to an economically distressed area? Provide evidence of the economically disadvantaged area as measured by unemployment, poverty, or population loss levels in covered communities that are significantly higher than the statewide average. The applicant may also utilize references to median household income, or percent of students eligible for free or reduced cost school lunches. *(text box provided of 6000 characters)*

## 9. Broadband Assistance

**Broadband Adoption** Describe any activities planned to promote the adoption of broadband services for the project footprint or communities covered by the proposed project once the services are available. Please identify any activities specific to a particular customer segment (i.e. precision farming programs for agricultural users, broadband applications for seniors, etc.) *(text box provided of 4000 characters)*

**Describe any technical support or training on broadband use for residents, businesses, farms, and community institutions that will benefit those within the project footprint.** *(text box provided of 4000 characters)*

## 10. BudgetTop of Formstructions

Grant Request limited to $10,000,000 for both Border-to-Border and Low-Density program per application.
Border-to-Border Grant Request limited to 50% of budget total (requires minimum 50% match)
Low-Density Grant Request Limited to 75% of budget total (requires minimum 25% match)

Using the budget tables provided in the grants management system, applicant will complete the following:

* **Requested Budget**
* **Budget Summary and Cost Share (Match)**
* **Funding Partner**

Excel workbook to help you prepare your budget for easy entry into the budget section can be found under the Applicant Resources tab on the [Broadband Grants website.](https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/grant-program/)

Identify budget categories and the total eligible costs per budget category for the proposed project. Use only whole numbers.

Eligible Project Costs may include project planning; obtaining construction permits; construction of facilities - including construction of both "middle mile" and "last mile" infrastructure; electronics and equipment; and installation and testing of the broadband service.

The following costs are INELIGIBLE and may NOT be used as a match and cannot be reimbursed: Grant eligible elements do not include costs for either video or voice services. These cannot be reimbursed through the state grant.

The broadband grant program cannot reimburse a grantee for any expenses incurred prior to the executed grant contract date. Any such expenses may not be included as grant eligible expenses.

Note: Sample Budget category

* Construction - Labor - Last Mile
* Construction - Labor - Middle Mile [Note: Prevailing wage law applies if total grant request is $200,000 or more]
* Construction – Material
* Electronics
* Customer Premise Installation – Labor
* Customer Premise – Equipment
* Professional Services and Engineering

**Budget Details Narrative and Procurement/Bidding Policies & Procedures**

* Referring to your budget, for each budget category, define the elements and activities that make up the category and explain how the budget figures were determined. Provide as much detail as possible including description of activities, unit costs/cost basis, known vendors that will be part of the project work plan, attachments such as price lists, working papers, quotes, etc. can also be included. *(text box provided of 8000 characters)*

Examples:

* + For Materials, provide a detailed list of materials, costs basis, and known vendors you’ve used for quotes.
	+ For Equipment required for completing the project, each category should be broken down to identify unit costs.
	+ For Labor and Engineering & Professional Services, describe major activities that make up the category and details to justify costs estimated. All labor should be broken down by job title or class, with salary or hourly rates and budgeted time as appropriate such as hours.

* Attach or describe your policies or procedures for vendor selection on this project. This should clearly explain how the applicant has established a fair and reasonable price for materials and services included in the budget/work plan. *(text box provided of 8000 characters)*

**Budget Section 5: Attachments**

**5A. Budget Workbook attachment.** Use the Budget Workbook Template found under [Applicant Resources](https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/grant-program/) on the Office of Broadband Development grant program website. File name for this upload should start with “5A” and include “budget workbook”. If the file is confidential, “confidential” must appear in the file name.

**5B. Additional budget information attachments.** Include all match documentation. File names for these uploads should start with “5B” and include a description of the attachment. If the file is confidential, “confidential” must appear in the file name.

## 11. Applicant Signature

Authorized representative will approve the application and be able to submit it. **Applications must be submitted prior to 1:30pm on Friday May 10, 2024.**

# GRANT APPLICATION SELECTION AND AWARD PROCESS

## Introduction to Scoring and Award Process

DEED will award grants to projects that provide the highest return in public benefits for the public costs incurred and that meet all of the statutory requirements. To evaluate the applications for public benefits with respect to the costs incurred, state and federal law specifies certain priorities that DEED must consider.

To fulfill this requirement of reviewing applications in an objective and fair manner, applications will be reviewed and evaluated by a team composed by DEED. This team will use the following criteria and associated point values to assist in systematically scoring grant applications. To ensure that your application receives the best possible score, please be sure to provide complete and comprehensive responses to all information requested in the application.

The Border-to-Border and Low-Density Program will use a similar application and scoring criteria. HOWEVER, the Low-Density Program will also include a Low-Density ONLY application section. For scoring the Grant Funding Request Amount will NOT apply to Low-Density, but the additional Low-Density ONLY section will be scored for up to an additional 30 points for the Low-Density Program applications.

**Selection Criteria and Grant Scoring Categories**

**120 total points possible for Border-to-Border Applications**

**140 total points possible for Low-Density Program Applications**

### Anticipated Broadband Improvements*: 0 to 20 points possible*

**Unserved or underserved total passings potentially served by project:**

* Anticipated improvements in broadband speed offerings from pre-existing broadband service levels to proposed service levels – project must reach or exceed 2026 state speed goals (speed now vs. speed after) and federal requirements
* Number of total passings potentially served (# of passings)
* Total passings include households, businesses, farms, and community anchor institutions
* If project includes both unserved and underserved passings, each will be scored separately, and the resultant scores averaged

**Anticipated Broadband Improvements Scoring Table**

| **# of Passings** | **Speed Now:** | **<25/3** | **<25/3** | **<100/20** | **<100/20** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Speed After Build:** | **100/20** | **100/100 or greater** | **100/20** | **100/100 or greater** |
| **0-100** | **Points Awarded:** | 15 | 19 | 9 | 13 |
| **100+** |  | 16 | 20 | 10 | 14 |

### Grant Funding Request Amount: *0 to 10 points possible*

* **Percent of state grant request compared to total eligible project costs:**
* Applicant matching funds of 55% or more will result in a higher application score for this category
* Any funding partner contributions are included in Applicant matching funds for points
* *Note: This section is NOT applicable to the Low-Density Program Applications*

**Grant Funding Request Amount Scoring Table**

| **Percent of eligible project costs requested** | **Points** |
| --- | --- |
| 30% or less | 10 |
| 31 to 35% | 8 |
| 36 to 40% | 5 |
| 41 to 45% | 3 |
| 46 to 50% | 0 |

### Critical Need/Community Participation: *0 to 15 points possible*

**Additional scoring points will be awarded for the following:**

* Project applications must identify why there is a critical need for the proposed project as it relates to access, affordability, reliability and/or consistency (in addition to being a scoring factor, applicants that do not address the critical need for their project may be disqualified from consideration)
* Verified financial commitment to the project from any qualified community partner(s)
* [Community partner may be any public, private, non-profit, or philanthropic entity – this would include a business, county, township, city, tribal entity, or community coalition]
* Projects that propose to serve or partially serve federally recognized tribal lands, and the associated tribal entity has provided application documentation of project support
* Project applications that provide substantive evidence of community support for the project

### Project Readiness: *0 to 25 points possible*

**Applicant has concretely demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of – and detailed preparation for – the proposed project. Applicant has provided evidence of being fully prepared to build, implement, and operate the project:**

* All budget material is provided in detailed, yet clearly understandable manner, sources and uses of funds is realistic, all grant eligible elements are included, all funding partners are secured
* Other broadband infrastructure requirements are included – certified engineering design and diagrams, documentation of scalable equipment, and all preconstruction requirements are identified and included in the project schedule
* Project implementation requirements are provided – proposed speed tiers and service pricing, 5-year service commitment, and proposed marketing strategies
* Complete project schedule and financial requirements are provided

### Project Sustainability:  *0 to 25 points possible*

**Applicant has demonstrated strong internal capacity to effectively support and sustain its broadband infrastructure proposal:**

* Demonstration of technical expertise – specific prior experience in providing broadband services
* Organizational support evidence provided – extent of organization and how organizational strength will sustain broadband service delivery and maintenance
* Financial statements provided – most current year’s audited financial statements, and supporting documentation where applicable, to demonstrate overall financial viability

### Economic Development & Community Impact Review: *0 to 15 points possible*

**Applicant has demonstrated the economic development and community enhancement potential of the proposed project:**

* Applicant has identified businesses, farms and agricultural use customers, community anchor institutions, and educational facilities in the proposed project area
* For businesses, farms and agricultural use customers, applicant has identified how improved broadband speeds and coverage will enable the project area to become and/or remain competitively viable
* For community anchor institutions, applicant has identified how improved broadband deployment will be incorporated into specific community programs
* For educational locations, applicant has identified the proposed impact on e-learning
* For health and public safety locations, applicant has identified the proposed impact on telemedicine
* If project area is in an economically distressed area, application has demonstrated that the proposed project area has unemployment, poverty, or population loss levels significantly greater than statewide average. (Application may reference median household income or percent of students eligible for free or reduced school lunches for proposed project area)

### Broadband Adoption Assistance: *0 to 10 points possible*

**Additional scoring points will be awarded for the following:**

* Will technical support or training on broadband be offered?
* Are broadband adoption activities planned for the project?
* Describe how the broadband service that will be offered is affordable to the target markets in the proposed service area. Is there a low-income broadband assistance program offering? (At a minimum, grant recipients will be required to participate in the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program. Additional efforts by the applicant to address affordability will be awarded additional points.

# Additional Scoring for Low-Density Program: Up to 30 points possible

### Passings per mile: *0 to 10 points possible*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Passings per mile** | **Points** |
| 0-1 | 10 |
| 1-2 | 6 |
| 2-3 | 4 |
| 3-5 | 2 |
| Over 5 | 0 |

### Need for grant to cover 75% of eligible costs and/or up to $10 million: *0 to 15 points possible*

In this section, the application will be reviewed for explaining and demonstrating the need to have the application considered under the Low-Density Program. Factors that the applicant may want to consider addressing include higher costs associated with construction in the project area, cost per passing, the demand for service from homes and businesses in the project area that will guarantee a high take rate, and why this project should be funded over other applications submitted to the Low-Density Program.

### An application for this area has not been submitted in any of the prior grant rounds: *5 points possible*

OBD staff will review prior year grant submissions and award 5 points if an application for this area has not been submitted previously as that is an indication that the cap of 50% of eligible costs/$5 million per project has been a barrier to a provider in considering an application for this area.