# 2024 Border-to-Border and Low-Density Program

# Broadband 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 applications are eligible for a maximum 120 reviewer scoring points; Low-Density Program applications are eligible for a maximum 140 reviewer scoring points.

**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 |

### Explanation of 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 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.