



The Ultimate Guide to Broadband Funding

How to Win Funds for Your
Broadband Business

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Forge Your Legacy. Connect Communities With This Once-In-A-Generation Funding Opportunity.

Broadband brings vital services to your community in countless ways—and funding has never been more available than now. With broadband connectivity, you will boost your local economy, improve quality of life, and ensure that everyone is positioned to succeed in the digital age. This is your opportunity to create a legacy like none before—but funding is only available for a limited time.

Obtaining the necessary funding can be difficult to navigate on your own. With so many programs and sources, it can be challenging to understand the landscape, determine if you qualify, work through the application process, and then manage your award. This eBook outlines the most up-to-date funding sources for broadband projects in the United States, their qualification criteria, and how to get started.

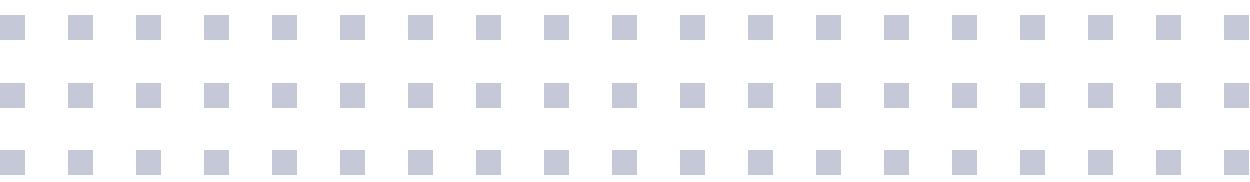
Why Now?

It’s now or never. Becoming a broadband service provider (BSP) requires a lot of upfront capital. Until recently, traditional BSPs have had a stronghold on the market—deciding if and when to dip into their profits to expand or build new networks. The demand for digital equity has never been greater. This has opened the door to new funding opportunities that enable municipalities, tribal communities, and others to meet the soaring demand for broadband connectivity themselves.

Today, more than 600 communities directly offer broadband services to some degree. This number is expected to rise exponentially thanks to state and federal funding programs that will award \$120 billion between now and 2028 for new broadband infrastructure projects. This unprecedented level of available funding, coupled with private investment, has made it easier than ever for you to fund new broadband services.

More than **600** communities offer broadband

\$120 billion
in state and federal funding
between now and 2028



The Broadband Industry: Past, Present, and Future

Anyone working in the telecommunications industry can tell you that broadband access was a problem before 2020. Unserved, underserved, and underrepresented regions and territories have long struggled to keep pace with the digital evolution of larger cities. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it soared to a crisis of epic proportions. The broadband gap became impossible to ignore.

Lack of high-speed broadband may have previously been considered a mere inconvenience—frustration would mount if you couldn't game online or stream a movie, for example. But, suddenly, it shot to the top of the priority list across the country. Reliable and affordable broadband access is critical to remote work, learning, telehealth, and entertainment. These are permanent fixtures in our post-pandemic world.

To capitalize on these new opportunities, we must bridge the digital divide between those that are served, underserved, and unserved. Equitable access to affordable and reliable high-speed internet can eliminate some of the socioeconomic disparities that threaten the long-term viability of our communities.

**RELIABLE AND AFFORDABLE BROADBAND ACCESS IS
CRITICAL TO REMOTE WORK, LEARNING, TELEHEALTH,
AND ENTERTAINMENT.**





How Communities Benefit From Broadband



Attract New Business

Broadband is a key decision factor for startups and companies that are relocating or expanding into new communities.



Enable Remote Work

48 percent of employers are embracing some form of remote work.



Democratize Education and Training

Access to open education platforms, courses, and resources help people upskill.



Create New, High-Paying Jobs

Broadband helps to create additional, high-paying job opportunities in the community.



Increase Home Values

The availability of fiber adds 3.1 percent to the value of a home.



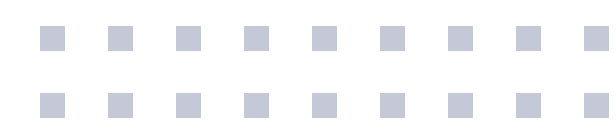
Deliver Health Equity

Telehealth improves quality of care regardless of proximity to major health centers.



Foster Social Support

Connectivity offsets social isolation by helping people develop and maintain relationships.



Once-in-a-Generation Funding Opportunities

Unprecedented levels of funding have made it easier than ever for you to transform your community and bridge the digital divide. Here are some of the major funding programs available. We'll take a deeper dive into each of these programs later in the eBook. Feel free to click on each program to get there faster.

Federal Funding

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD): Administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), BEAD is a \$42.45 billion program aimed at getting all Americans online by funding broadband network infrastructure builds and user enablement.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): As part of ARPA, the U.S. Department of the Treasury has a Capital Project Fund (CPF) that enables recipients to build and deploy broadband infrastructure. It also has a State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) to expand access to broadband internet. Many states have used their allocated ARPA dollars to date, though others still have funds available.

ReConnect Loan and Grant Program: Under the Farm Bill, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) manages ReConnect, which provides loans, grants, and loan-grant combinations to recipients to invest in rural broadband infrastructure that will deliver high-speed internet service to underserved communities.

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP): This program aims to improve the quality of life in Native American communities by expanding broadband access and providing digital training and inclusion programs. The program began awarding funds to tribal governments in late 2021 with an initial round of funding. A second round of funding will be awarded starting in 2024.

Community Connect: Community Connect is a USDA program that grants funds for broadband network builds in unserved rural, economically challenged areas that private sector providers deem economically unviable to deliver services.

Did You Know?

Federal funding is not the only option. Additional funding options are available, such as:

State Funding

Many states allocate capital funds to finance broadband infrastructure projects, in addition to tapping federal funding programs such as ARPA and the BEAD program.

Municipal Bonds

Communities can issue municipal bonds, which are exempt from federal taxes, to fund capital expenditures such as broadband infrastructure projects.

Private Funding

You may have access to private investment vehicles such as venture capital, private equity, and private debt, which provide investors with low-risk, long-term value.

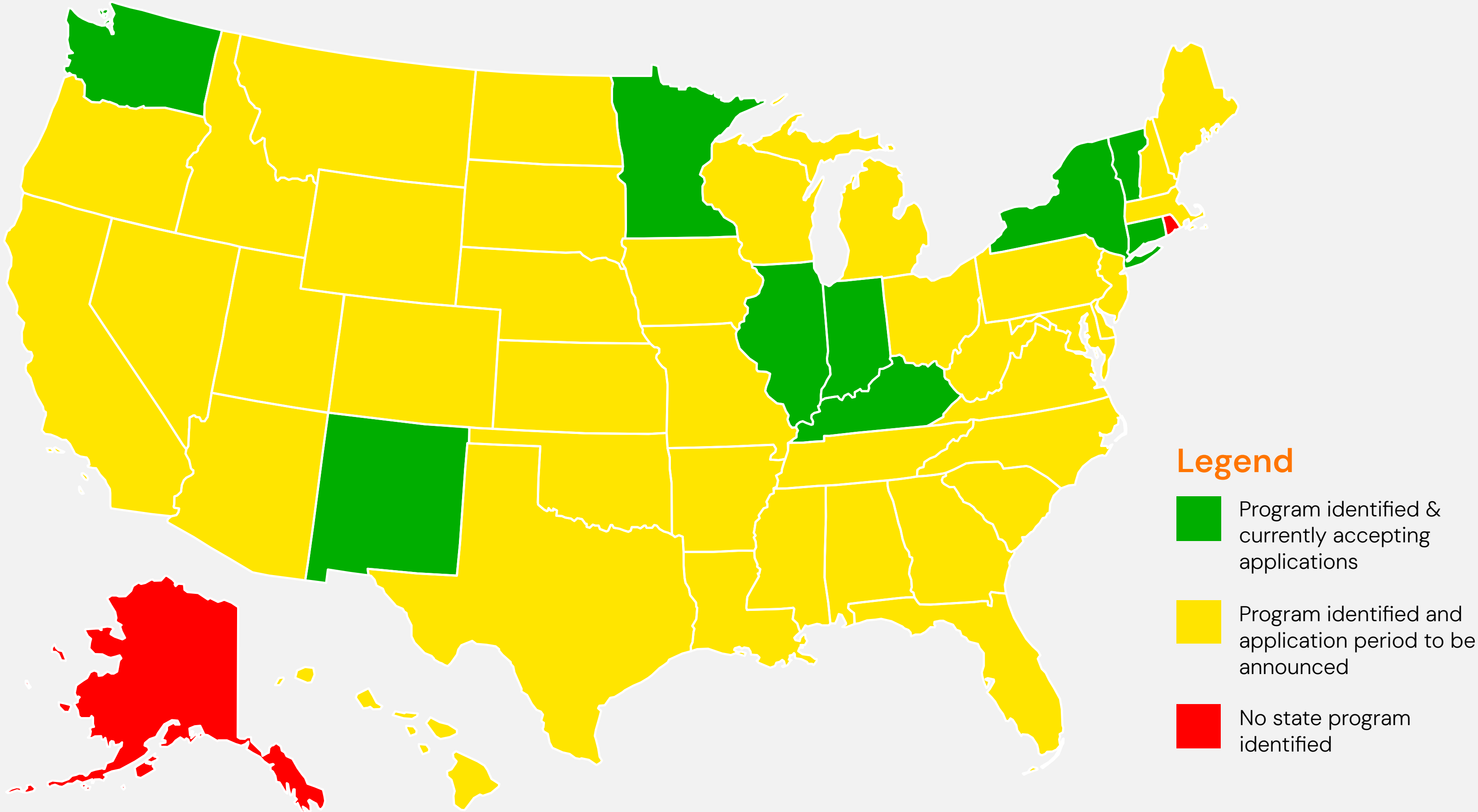
Learn more about your state's funding options.

Book a funding consult today

U.S. State Broadband Funding Map

\$42.45 billion in BEAD funding has been distributed among the states to expand internet access by funding planning, infrastructure deployment, and adoption projects. Each state was awarded funding based on its number of unserved and underserved locations. These funds will be distributed through programs established by each state’s local State Broadband Office (SBO).

Using the map here, you can keep track of all the active and pending funding programs in each state. Keep in mind that states are continuing to use ARPA money to fund other broadband programs, and some are still accepting applications.



Partnerships Make Powerhouses

Consider Working With a Partner to Streamline Your Funding Process

Partners can be incredible resources as you embark on your broadband journey—especially when bringing connectivity to unserved or underserved areas. By combining forces, you can lean on experts for their knowledge and experience while still serving the specific needs of your area. Potential benefits include:

- ✓ Assistance with identifying funding opportunities (both state and federal), filling out applications, and meeting critical deadlines
- ✓ Help planning your feasibility study and conducting the necessary research
- ✓ Network design know-how that you can trust during the build portion of your project
- ✓ Insights and even personnel to manage the network after it's built
- ✓ Easier navigation with government agencies and regulators to meet ongoing compliance requirements

[Learn more about the Calix partner ecosystem](#)



A Deep Dive Into Funding Opportunities

Let’s dig deeper into the nuts and bolts of each funding program to help you determine what’s best for your community.

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program

BEAD is a federal grant program funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that aims to get all Americans online. By funding partnerships between states or territories, communities, and stakeholders, BEAD invests in infrastructure where it’s most needed to increase access to and adoption of high-speed internet.

The funds can be used for several eligible activities. These include research and training, deploying or upgrading internet access in unserved or underserved areas, installing service in multi-unit residences, launching digital equity programs, and more.

Due to the importance of this program, we will examine BEAD in greater detail in the next chapter.

★ Purpose

To expand high-speed internet access by funding planning, infrastructure deployment, and adoption programs in all states and territories.

\$ Total Value

- \$42.5 billion (\$62.5 billion including matching funds)

✔ Project Criteria

- Service an area that is completely unserved or has access speeds of under 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream
- Service an underserved location that has access speeds of under 100 Mbps downstream and 20 Mbps upstream

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

As part of ARPA, the U.S. Department of the Treasury has a Capital Project Fund (CPF) that enables recipients to build and deploy broadband infrastructure. It also has a SLFRF to expand access to broadband internet.

These federal funds are allocated to the states for distribution to entities with eligible broadband expansion projects. Together, these two funds will help states, territories, and tribal governments deliver affordable, reliable, high-speed internet infrastructure, as well as other connectivity projects.

★ Purpose

To address challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic in rural, tribal, and low-to-moderate-income communities by providing citizens with broadband access that enables use of critical services.

\$ Total Value

- \$10 billion for CPF
- \$8 billion for SLFRF

✔ Project Criteria

- Deliver symmetrical speeds of 100/100 when possible (100/20 is acceptable when 100/100 is not possible)
- Connect unserved (<25/3 Mbps) and underserved (<100/20 Mbps) areas of the state

ReConnect Loan and Grant Program

Under the Farm Bill, the USDA manages ReConnect, which provides loans, grants, and loan-grant combinations to recipients to invest in rural broadband infrastructure that will deliver high-speed internet service to underserved communities.

There are five different funding categories with various eligibility criteria and funding minimums and maximums. Funds can be applied to the costs of construction, to improve or acquire facilities, or to purchase equipment.

★ Purpose

To foster private sector investments in broadband infrastructure by deploying high-speed internet service to rural homes, businesses, and essential community facilities that support public safety, health care, schools, libraries, business and industry, and agricultural operations.

💰 Total Value

- \$1.8 billion distributed in Round 4
- 100 percent grant (Native corporations, tribal governments, persistent poverty areas, and socially vulnerable communities) up to \$150 million
- 100 percent loan up to \$200 million
- Combined funds of up to \$200 million
 - 50 percent loan/50 percent grant with up to \$100 million available for each
 - The maximum requested amount is \$25 million for the loan and \$25 million for the grant.
- 100 percent grant up to \$150 million

✓ Project Criteria

- Service an area where at least 90 percent of households lack sufficient access to broadband
- Service all premises located in the proposed funded service area
- Deliver symmetrical speeds of 100 Mbps or faster

*For more information, visit the Service Area Eligibility Requirements page from the USDA.

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP)

The Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP) is a \$3 billion program that awards grants to tribal governments for broadband deployment on tribal lands. Funds can also be used for telehealth programs, distance learning initiatives, broadband affordability programs, and digital inclusion efforts.

Eligible applicants include tribal governments, tribal colleges or universities, tribal organizations, Alaska Native Corporations, and the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands on behalf of the Native Hawaiian Community. Awards are made on a rolling basis, and there have been two notice of funding opportunities (NOFOs) for this program to date.

★ Purpose

To improve the quality of life, spur economic development, and create opportunities for remote employment, online entrepreneurship, remote learning, and telehealth in tribal communities.

💰 Total Value

- \$3 billion total
- \$980 million available from the most recent NOFO

✓ Project Criteria

- Broadband infrastructure projects must connect unserved households or locations lacking a minimum of 25/3 Mbps connection speeds
- Broadband use and adoption projects should address the digital divide on tribal lands via initiatives such as digital inclusion efforts, staff/tribal community member training, and technical assistance programs
- Projects must be completed within four years of the receipt of grant funds

Community Connect

Another USDA program, Community Connect grants fund broadband network builds in unserved rural, economically challenged areas that private sector providers deem economically unviable to deliver services.

Recipients can use funds to construct, acquire, or lease facilities, spectrum, land, or buildings to deploy broadband service to all residential and business customers within the proposed service area. They must also deliver service free of charge for two years to essential community facilities such as schools, fire stations, libraries, and public safety stations. Up to 10 percent of the grant can be used to improve, expand, build, or buy a community center that provides online access to the public.

★ Purpose

To provide financial assistance to eligible applicants that will provide broadband service that fosters economic growth and delivers enhanced educational, health care, and public safety benefits in rural communities.

💰 Total Value

- \$79 million

✓ Project Criteria

- Service a rural area that lacks broadband speed of at least 10 Mbps downstream and 1 Mbps upstream

Municipal Bonds

Providers can also take advantage of the municipal bond network by entering into a public/private partnership with their local municipality to issue a bond. These bonds are exempt from federal taxes when funding capital expenditures such as broadband infrastructure projects. They can cover 100 percent of broadband construction costs.

Many municipalities fund their broadband projects through municipal bonds. Bonds are issued to private investors and repaid over many years with revenue from the network. With a default rate of less than 2 percent, they are a very viable way to bring community broadband infrastructure projects to fruition.

★ Purpose

To buy, build, or renovate new broadband infrastructure or facilities that will facilitate the delivery of broadband services to connect communities.

💰 Total Value

- Varies depending on the municipality

✓ Project Criteria

- Any net-new network builds or projects that will revitalize and accelerate existing fiber networks

State Funding

In addition to tapping federal funding programs such as ARPA and BEAD, many states allocate capital funds to finance broadband infrastructure projects. Examples include the Border-to-Border Fund program in Minnesota and the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) program in North Carolina.

While their overarching goal is similar, state grant programs can differ. Variables such as funding amounts, minimum speeds, eligibility, and other goals depend on individual states. Some states have specific requirements while others offer greater flexibility.

☆ Purpose

To increase the availability and adoption of broadband deployments in communities that lack sufficient access.

\$ Total Value

- Varies depending on the state and the program

✓ Project Criteria

- Specifics vary, but projects typically involve servicing unserved and underserved areas

Private Funding

In addition to public funding programs, broadband providers can leverage private funding options. The primary purpose of private funding options is to close public funding gaps while allowing providers to scale significantly faster and accelerate growth. Many public funding programs are reimbursements, which means BSPs will need a significant amount of capital to get their projects started. Almost all programs require matching funds—and as you may expect, the greater the match, the greater the chance an application is successful.

There are numerous private investment vehicles available including private equity, private debt, and venture capital. These vehicles are low risk, deliver long-term value, and give providers access to an abundance of investor expertise and best practices.

The important thing to remember is that there is no need to choose between government and private funding—both can be featured in a provider’s funding tool belt. Most investors actually encourage providers to pursue public funding sources in addition to private ones. The goal is to enable smaller BSPs without access to sufficient capital to become competitive in public funding programs and win funding over larger companies with deeper pockets.

☆ Purpose

To supplement government funding and accelerate the growth of rural broadband infrastructure. This option offers providers a low-risk, strategic partnership that yields excellent long-term value.

\$ Total Value

- Unlimited

✓ Project Criteria

- Ample opportunity for growth
- Private equity and venture capital firms require providers to give up equity

More About the BEAD Program

As discussed previously, the BEAD program stands to have a significant impact on expanding internet access in unserved and underserved areas. The following expands on information provided in the previous chapter to help you get the most out of the program.

Why Is the BEAD Program Important?

High-speed internet access is no longer a luxury. It's needed to fully engage in the economy, and it helps ensure public safety and the health of our nation. Unfortunately, too many Americans lack access to affordable, reliable high-speed internet. The BEAD program aims to address this problem by providing \$42.45 billion from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to expand high-speed internet access—accompanied with an expected \$20 billion in matching funds. These funds can be used for funding planning, infrastructure deployment, and adoption programs.

The program, which is managed by the NTIA, is being deployed across all 50 states, Washington D.C., and all five U.S. territories. The ultimate goal is to provide connectivity for all Americans.

BEAD's principal focus is on deploying broadband service to unserved and underserved locations.

- Unserved locations are defined as locations with either no broadband service or with access speeds below 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream.
- Underserved locations have access speeds greater than 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream, but less than 100 Mbps downstream and 20 Mbps upstream.





Who Are Eligible Entities and Sub-Grantees?

Every U.S. state and territory is an eligible entity under the BEAD program. Once eligible entities receive funding, they are responsible for distributing it to eligible sub-grantees, which include:

- Cooperatives and non-profits
- Public/private partnerships
- Private companies
- Utilities and public utility districts
- Local governments

Eligible sub-grantees that demonstrate they can provide service to all unserved and underserved locations can propose plans for other approved uses that support the program's goals. However, the NTIA has made it clear that it strongly prefers eligible entities to use these "extra" funds to provide gigabit connections to community anchor institutions such as libraries and community centers.

What Are the Program's Priorities and Requirements?

The BEAD program prioritizes projects designed to provide fiber connectivity directly to the end user. The program requirements are as follows:

- All projects must provide a low-cost option to eligible subscribers
- States must have plans to address middle-class affordability
- Applicants must provide a minimum 25 percent funding match supported by a letter of credit (LOC) or a performance bond equal to 100 percent of the BEAD sub-award amount (although there is flexibility to reduce the amount obligation if certain milestones are met)
- Applicants must participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and adhere to specific labor and wage requirements
- Applicants must abide by various post-award requirements related to reporting and compliance
- Award recipients must comply with right of way (ROW) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements during the construction phase
- Applicants must adhere to workforce development and cybersecurity requirements

For more information about these requirements, [schedule a free consultation](#) with our funding experts.

What Is the Program Timeline?

Here is a breakdown of key BEAD program milestones:

June 30, 2023

Eligible entities were allocated BEAD funds based on the number of unserved and underserved locations within their territories. [See how much money](#) was allocated to each entity.

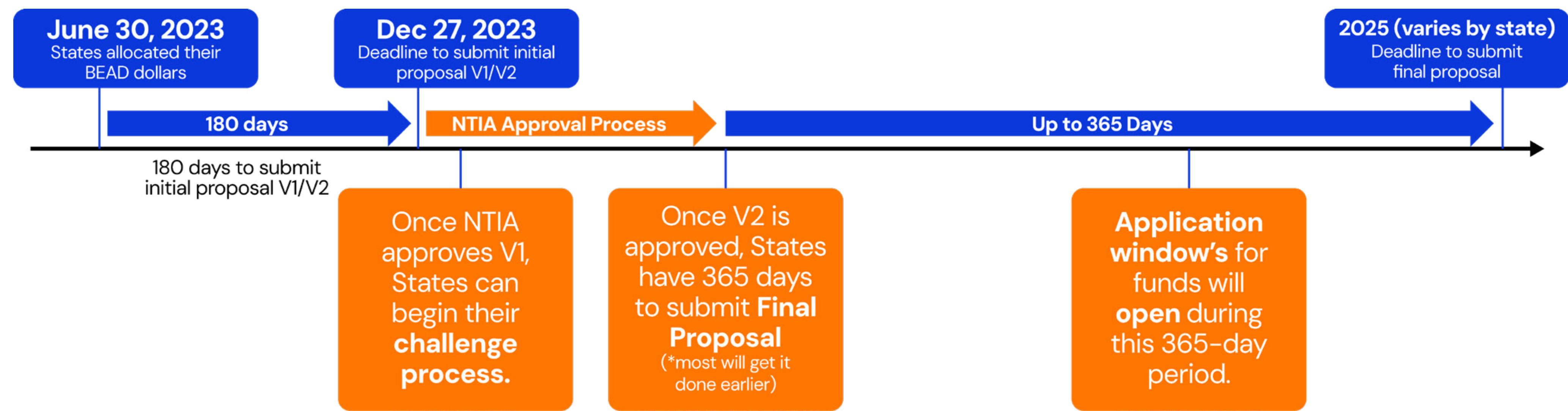
December 27, 2023

Deadline for eligible entities to submit initial proposal volumes 1 and 2.

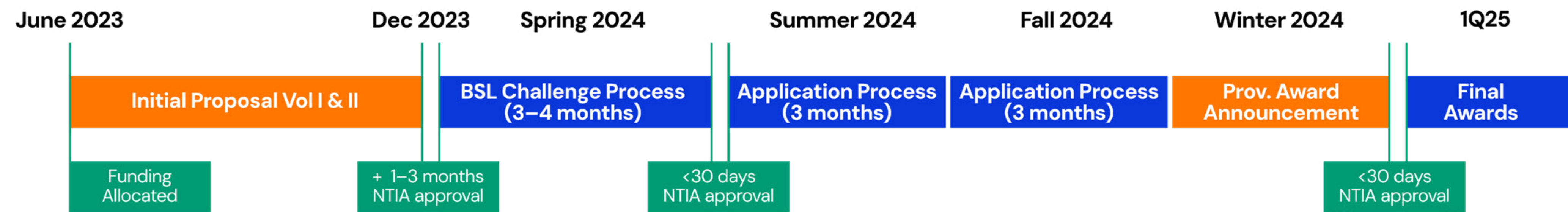
- Volume 1 describes how each state or territory's challenge process will work. This process, which typically lasts 90 days, is used to determine which locations are truly unserved or underserved. The NTIA must approve the results of the challenge process before states can move forward.
- Volume 2 explains the guidelines of the application phase. Once the NTIA approves volume 2, the state has 365 days to submit a final proposal. It's during this period that we will see the states open their application windows. The time it takes to secure approval varies by state; [view this dashboard](#) to assess current progress.



BEAD Program Timeline



V2 Open their Application Windows



How Does the Challenge Process Work?

Sub-grantees can participate in their local challenge process. Participants must acquire a free [CostQuest Tier D license](#) to be eligible for participation.

There are two different approaches to this process:

1. **Offensive.** This approach supports new buildouts. Providers can challenge that locations competitors have deemed to be served are truly unserved or underserved.
2. **Defensive.** This approach protects your service area. Even if you are not pursuing funds, you should participate from a defensive position to ensure that locations within your service area aren't eligible for BEAD funds. This will prevent competitors from overbuilding your network.

What Should You Do Now?

Familiarize yourself with your state's initial proposal volumes 1 and 2. These documents will be your best resource for understanding how to successfully obtain funding. You should also ensure you understand all the program requirements—and start preparing to meet them now, because the application phase will move quickly.



Am I a Good Funding Candidate?

Decision makers consider a range of factors when it comes to determining how funds will be awarded. It is important to understand specific eligibility requirements for each opportunity and strategies to help you maximize points on your application. In addition to speed levels, there may be financial feasibility and technical capability thresholds to meet, as well as standards for infrastructure resiliency. For example, as previously noted, applicants must meet specific downstream and upstream access speed requirements to qualify for BEAD funding.

Here are a few ways you can maximize your chances of securing a slice of the funding pie.



Focus on workforce development

The NTIA has directed states to prioritize BEAD applications from operators committed to advancing equitable workforce development and job quality objectives. This includes setting diversity and inclusion goals, establishing training and recruitment best practices, and enforcing workplace standards.



Tap the expertise of external partners

They are well-versed in the broadband industry and can guide you through eligibility and funding applications.



Provide speed

Focus on unserved locations lacking service of at least 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream, or underserved locations lacking service of at least 100 Mbps downstream and 20 Mbps upstream, with a network that can scale to deliver symmetrical speeds of 100 Mbps or faster.



Service an unfunded area

Funding mechanisms will not duplicate funding for locations previously funded by other state or federal programs.



 Secure financing

Programs such as BEAD require applicants to prove they have the financial capacity to build, deploy, and operate high-speed networks by providing a LOC, performance bond, or other proof of adequate funds.

 Think about match requirements

Many programs require providers to bring a match to the table, including in-kind matches and require the match to be spent before authorizing grant funds.

 Consider rurality

The USDA ReConnect program awards critical points for applicants serving the least dense population areas, and locations at least 100 miles from a city or town with a population greater than 50,000 people.

 Source project equipment domestically

The Build America, Buy America (BABA) act stipulates that a minimum of 55 percent of components of any device purchased with financial assistance program funding must be sourced in the U.S. (with some exceptions).

 Participate in the ACP

Many funding opportunities require candidates to participate in the FCC’s ACP to remove affordability barriers to broadband service.



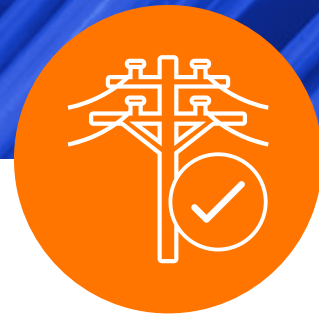
How To Start Your Once-in-a-Generation Broadband Project

Begin your broadband funding journey with a feasibility study—a thorough pre-evaluation of the project and service area. The resulting extensive report will help you determine the viability of your broadband business case. To show the value and viability of your network, you will analyze the following elements in your feasibility study.



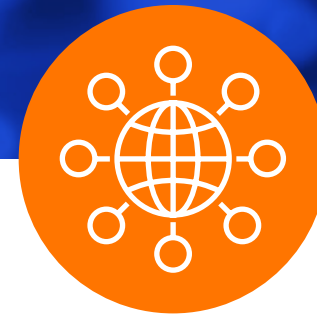
Market Research and Community Needs

Highlight the broadband options that are currently available in the area, service gaps, and outstanding needs. If you're planning to build a broadband network in an unserved or underserved area, this will be straightforward since the options will be limited, but it's still important to understand the big picture in your service area.



Existing Infrastructure Audit

Determine what communications infrastructure is already in place and/or mapped out. If an audit doesn't exist, you'll need to complete one to understand what's available in terms of physical cables, poles, and equipment, and how the infrastructure has been laid out in the area. A crucial factor to consider within this step is your right-of-way permits. Regardless of whether you will be building your own infrastructure or using someone else's, you will need valid permits to do so.



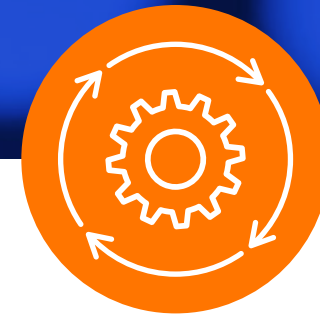
Network Design, Technology, and Costs

These should reflect the type of network you intend to build. For example, if you're planning to build a fiber-optic network, you need to explain the technology and show what the network layout could look like. At this stage, it would be more of a conceptual design versus an in-depth blueprint. The estimated costs and timelines for the build are often included here.



Financial Business Case

Provide a model that accounts for the estimated costs to build and operate the network, as well as potential revenue over time. While the financial model is an estimate that includes many assumptions, the information in the financial business case is important to understand the level of required investment and to demonstrate the viability of your plan.



Operational Wherewithal

Interested parties will need to be able to show they are capable of operating a large broadband network.

Armed with this information, you will understand the level of funding you need and be equipped to start exploring options. It can take between two and four months to complete a feasibility study depending on the size of the service area, the complexity of the environment, the services required, and the availability of geographical maps and analysis, and location-specific information.

Compiling a feasibility study is a lot of work, requiring extensive research as well as technical and financial expertise. While there is some information you can gather independently, it's likely you'll need support.

THE PROCESS CAN BE SIMPLIFIED SIGNIFICANTLY WITH CALIX'S FUNDING CONSULT PROGRAM, WHICH LEVERAGES POWERFUL TOOLS FROM READY.NET TO PLAN OUT BEAD PROJECT AREAS, STREAMLINE APPLICATION PROCESSES, AND INCREASE YOUR CHANCES FOR APPLICATION APPROVAL.

Engaging with engineering firms and consultants in this manner enables you tap into a wealth of experience and knowledge about developing fiber-based broadband networks. And of course, it's always important to involve community members to find out their specific needs through surveys and/or meetings. It's also a wonderful opportunity to educate them about the importance of broadband.

Your feasibility study will also help determine the appropriate funding programs for your broadband project. With so many options, the feasibility study can help you narrow down the options based on their criteria and the specifics of your project.

Define your funding strategy NOW

2 to 4 MONTHS
to complete a feasibility study

What funding programs will you take advantage of?
Are you ready for BSL challenge process?

ENGAGE

- ✓ Engineering firms
- ✓ Consultants
- ✓ the Community

Register for the Broadband.money tool to locate and secure grants

Register now

CONCLUSION

Everyone, regardless of where they live, deserves connectivity. It’s no longer a luxury—it’s a fundamental requirement for functioning in today’s society.

Unprecedented levels of broadband funding can help create thriving communities that will drive economic and educational opportunities, as well as well-being and social support for their citizens. Billions of dollars in federal, state, and local funding, combined with private investment, can narrow the digital divide, and reduce the socioeconomic disparities that threaten the long-term viability of all covered populations.

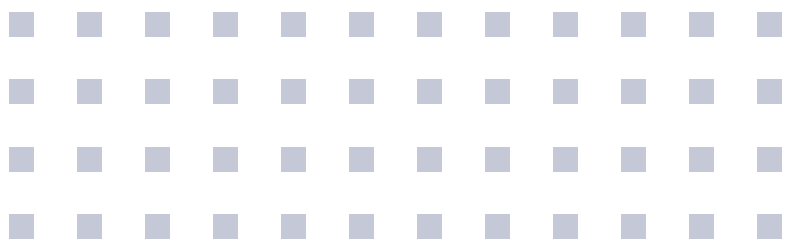
But don’t delay—it’s critical to prepare for upcoming funding waves now so you don’t miss out. With the right preparation and partnerships, you can maximize your chances for funding success.

Whether you’re looking to launch a new broadband service or expand your existing network to unserved or underserved customers, Calix can help you navigate the funding landscape—from researching opportunities and understanding eligibility requirements to meeting timelines and planning deployments.

Calix and our partners offer a portfolio of services that will help speed your time to market and return on investment as you plan and deploy new services for your community.

To help you navigate the funding landscape, [book a funding consultation](#) today.

Book now



Connectivity is no longer a luxury.
IT’S A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT.

Reduce the socioeconomic disparities that threaten the long-term viability of rural America.



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