



OVERVIEW OF THE BEAD CHALLENGE PROCESS AND PREQUALIFICATION

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INTRODUCTIONS



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IIJA BROADBAND PROJECT OVERVIEW

- Under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Montana will receive funding to implement two programs to improve access to high-speed internet within the state.
 - BEAD: The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program is designed to expand high-speed internet access by funding the planning, infrastructure deployment, and adoption programs across the country. The State of Montana's goal with BEAD is to connect all unserved locations in the state with reliable and affordable broadband.
 - Digital Opportunity Program: To narrow the digital divide in support of Montana's economic, workforce, health, and educational goals by ensuring reliable, affordable internet access for all Montanans
- The State of Montana is working diligently to seamlessly expand broadband connectivity throughout all unserved locations in the state.



BEAD PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program is designed to expand high-speed internet access by funding planning, infrastructure deployment, and adoption programs across the country.
- The State of Montana's goal with the \$628 million in BEAD funding is to connect all unserved locations in the state with reliable and affordable broadband.
- Montana Broadband Office is currently preparing to execute the subgrantee selection process. This process consists of three phases:
 - Map Challenge Process: Nonprofits, ISPs and local governments can submit challenges to the broadband map
 - Prequalification: Applicants will submit materials for prequalification to determine that they meet the BEAD minimum eligibility requirements
 - Main Round Application: Applicants who qualify via prequalification will be invited to submit proposals for projects as part of the main round



2024 PROGRAM TIMELINE

Digital Opportunity Plan Due

Prequalification Opens

Prequalification Closes

Main Round Opens

Main Round Closes

Jan 24

Feb 24

Mar 24

Apr 24

May 24

June 24

Jul 24

Aug 24

Sep 24

Oct 24

Nov 24

Dec 24

Rebuttal Process Begins

Prequalification Approval

Selection of Subrecipients

Map Challenge Process Begins

Map Challenge Adjudication Completes



CHALLENGE PROCESS OVERVIEW

- The goal of the BEAD challenge process is to ensure Eligible Entities (Local Government, Tribal Governments, Non-Profits, and Telecom Companies) identify the full universe of locations that are eligible for BEAD funding.
- The Montana Broadband Office (MBO) will use the National Broadband Map as a starting point to identify the list of BEAD-eligible locations within their jurisdiction.
- MBO will review and potentially modify the designation of a location as served, underserved or unserved on the National Broadband Map through a challenge process.
- The challenge process will include four phases:
 - Publication of Eligible Locations
 - Challenge Phase
 - Rebuttal Phase
 - Final Determination Phase



CHALLENGE PROCESS PHASES

- Publication of Eligible Locations:
 - Prior to beginning the challenge phase, the broadband office will publish the set of locations eligible for BEAD funding.
- Challenge Phase:
 - During the challenge phase, the challenger will submit the challenge through the broadband office challenge portal. This challenge will be visible to the service provider whose service availability and performance is being contested.
- Rebuttal Phase:
 - Only the challenged service provider may rebut the reclassification of a location or area with evidence, causing the location or locations to enter the “disputed” state. If a challenge that meets the minimum level of evidence is not rebutted, the challenge is sustained.
- Final Determination Phase:
 - During the Final Determination phase, the broadband office will make the final determination of the classification of the location, either declaring the challenge “sustained” or “rejected.”



WHAT IS A CHALLENGE?

- If there is a perceived discrepancy in the broadband service and or capacity of a specific area, an eligible challenger (Local Government, Tribal Governments, Non-Profits, and Telecom Companies) can submit a challenge of that area.
- A challenge consists of submitting required documentation through the challenge portal that the reported service offering is not accurate in a specific area.
- Examples of Valid Challenges:
 - Availability, Speed, Latency, Data Cap, Technology, Business Service Only, Enforceable Commitment, Planned Service, Not part of enforceable commitment, Location is a CAI, Location is not a CAI.



HOW TO SUBMIT A CHALLENGE

Challengers submit challenges through the challenge portal

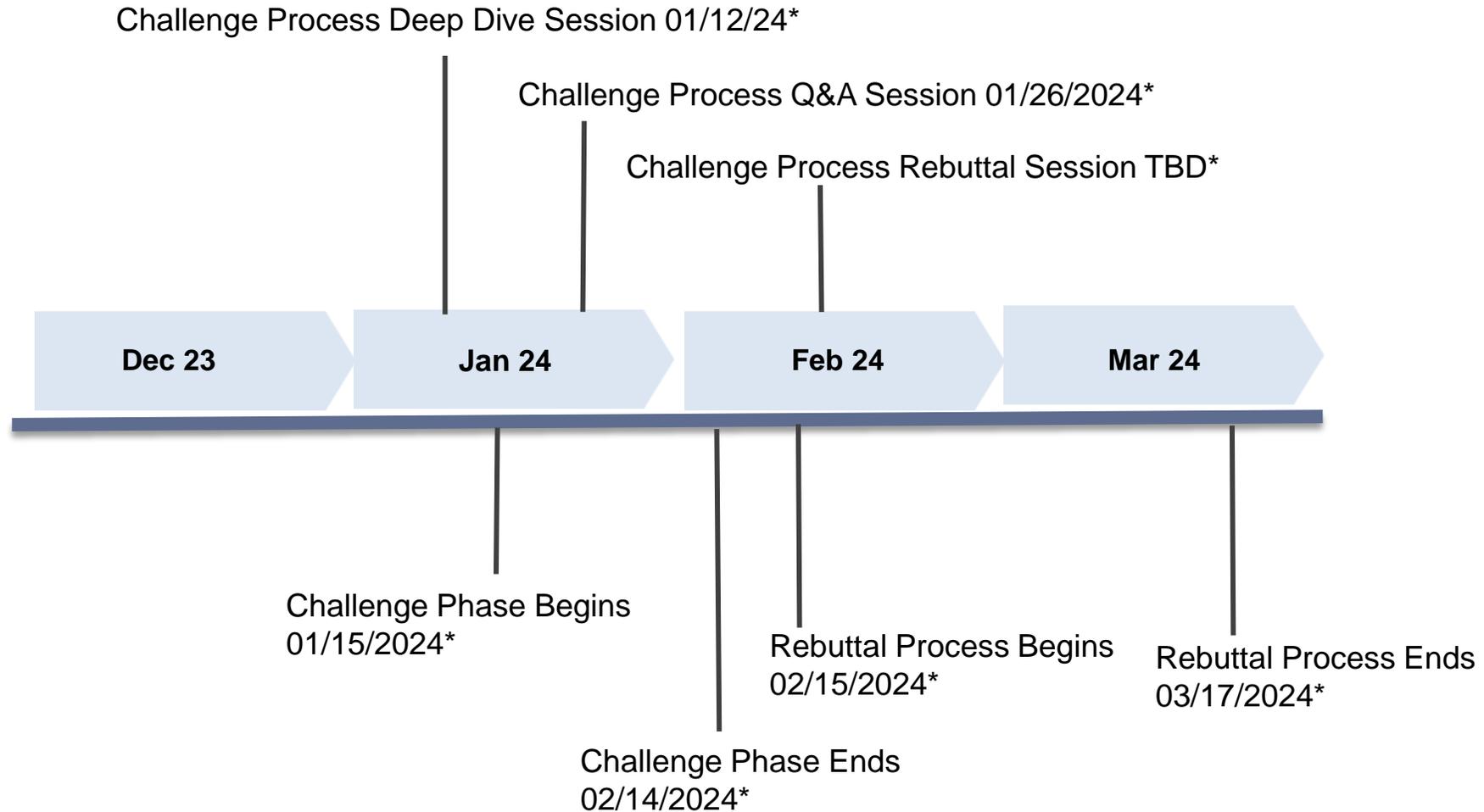
- Eligible entities who can submit challenges include nonprofits, tribal governments, local governments, and ISPs.
- These eligible entities will need to begin by registering to use the Challenge Portal.
- MBO will only approve registrations from entities who are eligible to submit challenges.
- Challenges require evidence for each location.
- The Portal provides evidence requirements and guidance for each permissible challenge type.

The screenshot displays the 'Create a Challenge' web application. The top navigation bar includes a 'Get help' button and a progress indicator with four steps: 1. Challenge Category, 2. Select locations (current step), 3. Provide evidence to support challenge, and 4. Sign a Challenge Attestation. The main area is split into a map on the left and a list of locations on the right. The map shows a street grid with several green circular markers indicating selected locations. The list on the right, titled 'Select Locations for the Enforceable Commitment Challenge', contains 16 entries, each with a location name and address, and a 'Remove All' button next to it. At the bottom of the list, it says 'Total selected locations: 16'. Navigation buttons for 'Back' and 'Next' are visible at the bottom of the interface.

Location	Remove All
211 Skyview Dr, Lewistown, 59457	🗑️
10 Skyview Dr, Lewistown, 59457	🗑️
141 Stendal Rd, Lewistown, 59457	🗑️
276 Stendal Rd, Lewistown, 59457	🗑️
1133 Upper Spring Creek Rd, Lewistown, 59457	🗑️
114 Badger Ln, Lewistown, 59457	🗑️
220 Country Club Loop, Lewistown, 59457	🗑️
72 Skyview Dr, Lewistown, 59457	🗑️
128 Country Club Loop, Lewistown, 59457	🗑️
19 Country Club Ln, Lewistown, 59457	🗑️
220 Country Club Loop, Lewistown, 59457	🗑️
466 Country Club Ln, Lewistown, 59457	🗑️



CHALLENGE PROCESS TIMELINE



All dates are estimated and subject to change



UNDERSTANDING SUBGRANTEE REQUIREMENTS



Subgrantee Eligibility Requirements

To receive BEAD funding, subgrantees must:

1. Meet mandated financial requirements;
2. Have provided broadband service in MT for at least 1 year;
3. Propose a project that will provide 100/20 service to all locations within service area within timeline; and
4. Have the ability to comply with all requirements mandated by NTIA and MT.



Prequalification Application Requirements

The BEAD NOFO explicitly outlines the requirements to meet the minimum eligibility criteria for the program, which Montana used to develop prequalification requirements. These include:

1. Financial Capability: Certifications and documentation, Letter of credit compliance statement, Audited financial statements
2. Organizational Capability: Key management resumes, Organizational charts, Certification of operational readiness, Past Performance, Compliance with regulatory filings
3. Certifications and Compliance: Adherence to federal, state, and local laws, Compliance with occupational safety regulations



PREQUALIFICATION OVERVIEW

Purpose

- Prequalification is the first phase in a multi-phase application process to select subrecipient as part of the BEAD program. The purpose of prequalification is to evaluate the potential applicants to have a smooth main round application process.
- As a reminder, you can only apply to the main round if you have successfully passed the prequalification round.

PREQUALIFICATION (30
DAYS)

PASS PREQUALIFICATION

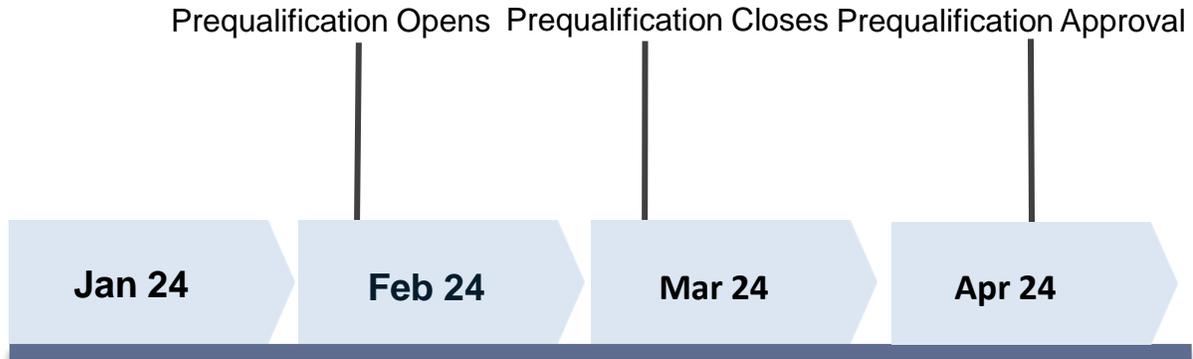
Timing

- The prequalification round will last for 30 days, and all providers who intend to submit subgrantee applications during the main round will be required to participate. After successfully passing the prequalification process, then and only then can an applicant then apply for the main round.

APPLY FOR MAIN
ROUND



PREQUALIFICATION TIMELINE



Comprehensive Technical Assistance Schedule			
Component	Topic	Anticipated Date	Mode
Prequalification	Overview	1/17/2024*	Webinar
Prequalification	Deep Dive	2/8/2024 *	Webinar
Prequalification	Q/A	2/16/24 *	Webinar
Prequalification	Deep Dive	2/20/2024 *	Webinar
Prequalification	Q&A	3/1/2024*	Webinar
Prequalification	Q&A	3/8/2023 *	Webinar
Prequalification	Q&A	3/15/2023*	Webinar



THE MAIN ROUND

What to expect

- The main round requires the submission of project-specific documentation along with updating relevant prequalification materials.
- Components include scoring criteria, financial documents such as pro forma, programmatic and technical documentation, service area maps, and other documentation.
- Once an applicant successfully prequalifies, they must attend a bidder's conference
- Fair evaluation approach to enable a transparent, objective, and unbiased assessment of their submissions.



How to prepare

- Begin community outreach and project planning early.
- Remember any proposals on tribal land will need documented permission from tribal entities.
- Consider partnerships with local economic development boards or other service providers to develop cost-effective solutions.
- Review requirements outlined in Initial Proposal Volume 2 to begin planning application development.



MAIN ROUND TIMELINE



Proposed Technical Assistance			
Component	Topic	Anticipated Date	Mode
Main Round	Overview	04/03/2024 *	Webinar
Main Round	Bidder's Conference	04/17/24 - 04/18/24*	In-Person
Main Round	Application System Demo	05/02/2024 *	Webinar
Main Round	Financial	05/07/2024*	Webinar
Main Round	Technical	05/09/2024*	Webinar
Main Round	Environmental	05/14/2024*	Webinar
Main Round	Program Requirements	05/16/2024*	Webinar
Main Round	Q&A	05/24/2024*	Webinar
Main Round	Q&A	06/07/2024*	Webinar
Main Round	Q&A	06/14/2024*	Webinar



DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM GOALS

Vision statement: To narrow the digital divide in support of Montana’s economic, workforce, health, and educational goals by ensuring reliable, affordable internet access for all Montanans

Area	Program goals
Broadband Availability & Affordability	Ensure all Montana residents have access to affordable internet and necessary devices in their homes, schools, libraries, and businesses irrespective of their income level
Online Accessibility & Inclusivity	Reduce the digital divide among all Montana residents by increasing broadband adoption by covered populations and increasing access to online resources for all residents
Digital Literacy	Build digital skills to enhance broadband use through programs and partnerships with community stakeholders
Device Availability & Affordability	Reduce the digital divide among Montana residents by ensuring widespread access to internet-capable devices Reduce the digital divide among state agencies by ensuring adequate internet-capable device inventory
Online Privacy and Cyber-security	Ensure all Montana residents have access to internet that meets online privacy and cybersecurity standards



Key Resources

- **IIJA Program Information:** <https://connectmt.mt.gov>
- **Initial Proposal Volumes 1 and 2:** <https://connectmt.mt.gov/IIJA/Funding>
- **Frequently Asked Questions:** <https://connectmt.mt.gov/IIJA/FAQ>
- **Technical Assistance Email:** connectmttechassist@mt.gov



QUESTIONS

Q&A

