

Alternative Technology in BEAD Subgrantee Selection

Document Overview

The Indiana BEAD Alternative Technology Policy outlines the Indiana Broadband Office (IBO) process for accepting and evaluating Alternative Technology (alt-tech) applications as allowed by the [NTIA's Alternative Broadband Technology Policy Notice](#). The purpose of this policy is to ensure a fair, transparent, efficient, equitable subgrantee selection with the inclusion of alt-tech applications while adhering to all BEAD requirements. The IBO reserves the ability to modify its plans based on additional guidance from the NTIA or participant feedback. Any changes will be documented and communicated to pre-qualified internet service providers in a timely manner.

Application Process

The application and evaluation processes for alternative technology projects will take place during the Indiana BEAD Subgrantee Selection Process. The IBO intends to host up to 3 rounds of subgrantee selection, during which applicants may apply to receive BEAD dollars for broadband deployment projects. In each round, the IBO will accept applications for all technology types, including alternative technology. However, alt-tech project applications will not be reviewed until the final round of subgrantee selection has concluded. The circumstances for alternative technology project eligibility and evaluation are outlined in the sections below.

Alternative Technology Project Eligibility

The alternative technology application process applies exclusively to locations for which the IBO does not receive *Priority Broadband Projects* or *Other Last-Mile Broadband Project* applications during the Subgrantee Selection Process OR that receive an application that exceed the Extremely High-Cost Per Location Threshold. The definitions of broadband project types are as follows:

- **Priority Broadband Project**—A broadband project that will provision service via end-to-end fiber-optic facilities to each end-user premises.
- **Other Last-Mile Broadband Project** – Broadband service via:
 - Fiber-optic technology and another technology;
 - Cable Modem/Hybrid fiber-coaxial (HFC) technology;
 - Digital subscriber line (DSL) technology; or
 - Terrestrial fixed wireless technology utilizing entirely licensed spectrum using a hybrid of licensed and unlicensed spectrum.
- Together, priority broadband projects and other last-mile broadband projects make up **reliable broadband service**.

- **Alternative Technology**— Any broadband access technology that terminates at the end user’s location or premises and does not qualify as the above categories, but meets the BEAD Program’s minimum technical requirements, which may include, but is not limited to, unlicensed fixed wireless (ULFW) and low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite service.

Eligible Entities must prioritize deploying fiber or other reliable broadband service projects. Only when the IBO does not receive reliable broadband service projects, or if no such projects are feasible below the Extremely High Cost Per Location Threshold (EHCPLT) can alternative technology solutions be considered.

LEO Capacity Subgrants

In addition to other eligible uses of funding, the NTIA has provided Eligible Entities the flexibility to award BEAD subgrants for the *reservation of capacity* on a LEO satellite network (“LEO Capacity Subgrant”) to deliver last-mile service to Broadband Serviceable Locations (BSLs). The subgrant must reserve a sufficient amount of capacity for the LEO provider to deliver qualifying broadband service to each BSL in the project area. Additionally:

- Recipients of LEO Capacity Subgrants must begin providing broadband service to each customer who wishes to subscribe to broadband service no later than four years from the date of the subgrant. A LEO Capacity Subgrant recipient will be deemed to have begun to provide service when it certifies to the IBO that customers can receive broadband service within 10 business days of a request to any covered BSL in the project area with no charges or delays attributable to the extension of service.
- The period of performance for a LEO Capacity Subgrant concludes ten years from the date from which the subgrantee certifies to the IBO that broadband service is available to every location covered by the project. Subgrantees must offer access to broadband service to each BSL served by the project area throughout the full period of performance.
- The prospective LEO Capacity subgrantee must indicate their intention to apply specifically for a capacity subgrant and must submit their estimated cost for reserving capacity in the project area. The cost estimate should include any needed subsidy for the customer premises equipment to comply with the low-cost broadband service requirements and ensure that any other initial, non-recurring charges at the location are comparable to terrestrial technologies.

Unlicensed Fixed Wireless Outreach Process

Prior to awarding any alt-tech projects, the Indiana Broadband Office is required to identify any unlicensed fixed wireless (ULFW) provider that has an enforceable commitment for or already reports service at or above 100 Mbps/20 Mbps at any locations within a proposed alt-tech project. This process will be conducted using the FCC National Broadband Map, NTIA resources, and Ready.net-supported analysis of Indiana’s eligible location data.

The IBO will then contact each of these ULFW providers and announce a 7-day claims window for ULFW providers to declare their intent to provide evidence about their service for those locations. Additional information about the claims process and format will be provided as the IBO moves forward with the process.

Then, ULFW providers will have a 30-day period to provide evidence. During the evidence phase, providers must submit documentation confirming they currently meet the minimum BEAD Program requirements for speed and latency for all locations claimed.

Providers should also submit evidence of any BSLs already subject to enforceable commitments through other federal, state, or local projects during this time. Any BSLs under an enforceable commitment will be excluded from the project areas to ensure only eligible locations are considered for funding.

If no ULFW providers meet the requirements above, the IBO will begin reviewing alternative technology applications¹.

Evaluation Process

The evaluation process of alt-tech applications ensures that proposed projects meet the standards of the BEAD Program while addressing the unique needs of Indiana’s unserved and underserved communities. ULFW and LEO applications will be reviewed concurrently, as there is no preference for alt-tech technology types, per the NTIA. To assess whether an alt-tech project meets the BEAD Program’s minimum requirements, the IBO will review all sections of the application for adherence to the NTIA’s alt-tech guidance and apply the scoring rubric for “Other Last-Mile Broadband Deployment Project Scoring,” as outlined in [Indiana’s approved Initial Proposal Volume 2](#). The IBO recognizes some criteria in the scoring rubric may not directly apply to alt-tech project proposals and will account for the variation by deferring to the NTIA guidance to offset any discrepancies or nuance in project proposals.

¹ ULFW providers that fail to meet the burden of persuading an EE that they are reasonably capable of meeting the above requirements may still apply for an Alternative Technology Subgrant to serve the relevant BSLs and are not disqualified from participating in the Subgrantee Selection Process.

Timeline Recap

The IBO will evaluate alternative technology applications only after all subgrantee selection rounds have concluded. Alt-tech applications will not be awarded until all other higher-priority submissions, including priority and other last mile projects, have been exhausted. The following timeline outlines the evaluation and awarding of project applications during the Indiana BEAD Subgrantee Selection Process:

1. **Subgrantee Selection Rounds 1-3:** Accept alt-tech project area applications and pull forward through rounds for evaluation.
2. **End of Round 3:** Conclude all broadband deployment project evaluations and preliminary award priority and other last mile applications.
3. **Alternative Technology Application Evaluation:** Begin evaluating alt-tech applications.
4. **ULFW Outreach:** Contact Unlicensed Fixed Wireless (ULFW) providers that report service at potential alt-tech project locations.
 - a. *7-Day Claims Period:* Allow ULFW providers 7 days to indicate their ability to provide service.
 - b. *30-Day Evidence Period:* After a claim has been submitted, ULFW providers have an additional 30 days to submit evidence proving their ability to serve all locations claimed.
5. **ULFW Deduplication:** Remove from alt-tech projects any locations sufficiently claimed by ULFW.
6. **Award Period:** Preliminarily award selected alt-tech projects.