



Nebraska Broadband Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who is eligible to submit an application?

A. Internet service providers, in consultation and with the support of local community officials, may apply.

Q. What areas are eligible for the grant?

A. Any community in Nebraska in which the majority of the population (50 percent or greater) either does not have internet access or whose internet speeds do not meet the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) standard of 25/3 Mbps (download/upload) is eligible. The provider, in cooperation with the community where the proposed project is located, shall demonstrate that a majority of the population does not have the option to purchase an internet service package meeting said standard. Ineligible areas include those eligible for the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) or areas that have been approved to receive funding from the Nebraska Universal Service Fund (NUSF).

Q. How do I provide documentation that my community is underserved or unserved?

A. Documentation may include promotional materials or screenshots showing the available internet access plans in a community, as well as specific addresses from telecommunications providers. Speed test results may also be included as additional documentation.

Q. What is the definition of underserved or unserved?

A. Underserved is defined as internet service speeds above 10/1 Mbps (download/upload) but below 25/3 Mbps. Unserved is anything below 10/1 Mbps.

Q. Who is considered a “community official?”

A. Communities can determine which official(s) are best suited to demonstrate the community’s need of and broad support for the proposed project. This could include the mayor, city council members, city administrator, superintendent, a hospital official, etc. The required letter from a community official serves two purposes: to provide documentation that the community lacks broadband, and to demonstrate that lack of broadband is impeding community residents from working at home, participating in online learning and/or accessing health care via telehealth. Additional letters of support should be included as evidence of broad community support.

Q. Does this grant program require a pre-application?

A. No.

Q. Under what timeline do the project build and expenditures need to take place?

A. As required by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, projects need to be completed by December 30, 2020.

Q. Engineering will be critical, especially with this timeline. Will the program allow for engineering costs to be funded using grant dollars?

A. Yes, all engineering and pre-construction costs need to be included in the application cost breakdown for review.

Q. Can a fiber project be aerial, or does it have to be built underground?

A. The decision of how to specifically deploy will be decided by the community and the provider.

Q. Is the Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier (ILEC) in these communities eligible to apply for the grant?

A. Any ISP can apply.

Q. Will you share feedback with applicants who weren't funded?

A. To the best of our ability, any application that is not approved will be provided feedback.

Q. Are fixed wireless providers allowed to apply?

A. Yes, fixed wireless providers may apply alongside a community for this grant as long as all the addresses to be served can receive at minimum 25/3 broadband connectivity and the project area is eligible.

Q. How can communities document how limited broadband availability has impeded the ability to work from home, participate in online learning or access health care through telehealth?

A. Applicants must include a letter from a local official documenting how limited broadband availability has impacted the ability of residents to respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional documentation can be provided in several ways:

- *Community residents can complete forms indicating how they have been impacted. A sample form can be found at the end of this FAQ.*
- *Applicants could also submit letters from residents attesting to the impact of limited broadband on their ability to work from home, participate in online learning or access health care through telehealth.*

Q. Will a Memorandum of Understanding between a provider and municipality satisfy the agreement to have a contract in place?

A. Yes; however, funds will not be awarded until a contract is signed between the provider and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED).

Q. Is a project that is "currently under contract" or "under construction" eligible for funding?

A. If a project is currently under construction but evidence can be provided that the grant will expedite the construction by the end of the year, the application will be considered. Eligible costs are only those that expedite the process.

Q. Are rural areas outside city limits eligible?

A. Yes, rural areas outside of municipal limits are eligible if they are not eligible for RDOF or have not been approved for funding for broadband projects from the NUSF. Areas that have received federal funding to build out broadband at 25/3 or greater from programs such as the USDA ReConnect program would also not be eligible.

Q. Can providers submit an application to provide broadband service to only a portion of a community?

A. The intent of the program is to provide broadband to an entire community. However, due to the tight timeframe and special cases such as having a portion of a community within an RDOF-eligible area, there may be circumstances in which it is only feasible to build out a portion of a community before the Dec. 30, 2020, deadline. If an application is only for a portion of a community, make sure to include an explanation of why only a portion of the community is included, as well as any plans to provide service to the remaining portion of the community. The project map should show the actual area to be served.

Q. Is there a limit on the number of grants that will be awarded?

A. The number of grants awarded will depend on the number of applications and the amounts requested.

Q. Are communities still required to contribute 1% of the cost of the project?

A. The minimum 1% match can be provided by the telecommunications provider, a county, municipality or other sources including philanthropies. Federal funds cannot be used for the match.

Q. Will funds flow to community or a broadband provider?

A. Only broadband providers are eligible to apply, and payments will be made to the broadband providers.

Q. Will payment be made only upon completion of the project, or as needed?

A. Once a project has been approved by DED and a contract between DED and the provider is signed, 1/3 of the grant shall be funded. Upon 60 percent completion, another 1/3 of the grant shall be funded. Upon inspected completion (including speed tests), the final 1/3 of the grant shall be funded and the project will be listed as closed.

COVID-19 Broadband Impact Form

During the COVID-19 pandemic, my current broadband service has impeded my ability and/or the ability of family members living with me to:

(Please check all that apply)

- Complete online schoolwork
- Work at home
- Receive health care via telemedicine
- Other (Please specify) _____

My current internet service provider is _____

I subscribe to broadband at the following speed tier:

- Less than 25 Mbps down
- Over 25 Mbps down, but less than 100 Mbps down
- I don't know

Please test your broadband speed by going to www.speedtest.net . Please record the results of three speed tests below.

Date	Time	Download	Upload

By signing below, I affirm that the information provided on this form is true and accurate.

Signature:

Printed Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip: