



ARConnect
The Arkansas State Broadband Office

ARConnect

BEAD APPLICATION USER GUIDE

Version 1.0 – December 4, 2024
Version 2.0 – December 20, 2024
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Table of Contents

Confidentiality Statement	2
Overview	4
Bidding Process	5
Starting a BEAD Application	5
Section 1: Select Locations	6
Section 2: Project Technical Details	7
Section 3: Commercial Details	9
Section 4: Weather Resiliency	10
Section 5: Local Coordination	11
Section 6: Fair Labor Practices	12
Section 7: Workforce Support	13
Section 8: Letter of Credit	14
Review and Submit	16
Final Attestation	17

Confidentiality Statement

The Arkansas State Broadband Office (ASBO) is dedicated to ensuring the protection of sensitive and proprietary information submitted during the application process. State law protects information considered proprietary, subject to the specifications of Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-105 (9):

Specifically, Arkansas Code Annotated § 25-19-105 (9) provides in pertinent part,

- A. Files that if disclosed would give advantage to competitors or bidders; and
- B. (i) Records maintained by the Arkansas Economic Development Commission related to any business entity's planning, site location, expansion, operations, or product development and marketing, unless approval for release of those records is granted by the business entity. (ii) However, this exemption shall not be applicable to any records of expenditures or grants made or administered by the commission and otherwise disclosable under the provisions of this chapter.

To provide transparency and assurance to applicants, our trusted vendor partners, Michael Baker International, Boston Consulting Group (BCG), and Ready.net, have submitted detailed statements below outlining their measures for safeguarding all confidential data.

From Michael Baker International:

Michael Baker International, its employees, consultants, and contractors (“MBI”) will take reasonable measures to safeguard information clearly marked by the applicant as protected, proprietary, or confidential information, including personally identifiable information (“Confidential Information”), obtained through the grant pre-qualification, application, award, administration, and enforcement process, consistent with applicable law. Except as required by applicable laws, rules, regulations, and legal requirements, MBI will not use or disclose any Confidential Information for any purpose other than for the performance of its grant-related obligations on behalf of the State of Arkansas. Confidential Information will only be shared with employees, consultants, and contractors with a need to know such information for performing their obligations.

MBI may be required to submit financial and performance information and data to the Department of Commerce and/or other federal agencies, employees, and contractors, as necessary to comply with the Notice of Funding Opportunity and other applicable laws, rules, regulations, and legal requirements.

From Ready.net:

Ready uses a multi-tenanted data model that secures customer data via a uniquely identifiable internal tenant ID. This allows us to logically segregate data obtained by Arkansas State Broadband Office and other data, secure it in our logic tier, and identify/sanitize any tenant data if the need arises.

When data is at rest, it is stored via RSA 128-bit encryption. In transit, our data is sent using encrypted TLS (SSL) 1.2+. Our internal data systems are accessible via a secure VPN. All external systems have certificates granted from Google Trust Services LLC - <https://pki.goog> - or from Amazon Trust Services - <https://www.amazontrust.com/repository/>. Internal systems have certificates signed using an internal certificate authority, which also uses RSA 128-bit encryption.

We rely on our cloud service providers in Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Google Cloud Platform (GCP) to implement further security measures around the hardware of the systems themselves. In terms of our cloud usage, we regularly review and tighten our firewall policies across our cloud infrastructure. We have implemented continuous vulnerability and intrusion detection and scanning according to System and Organization Controls 2 (SOC 2) recommendations, as well as robust logging and monitoring across our production infrastructure. We also have regular penetration testing, security audits, and a paid bug bounty program.

From Boston Consulting Group:

Boston Consulting Group ("BCG") maintains strict procedural and technical protocols to ensure that the information shared by each client is kept secure and confidential. In order to properly maintain client confidential information and prevent any conflicts of interest, BCG operates under stringent policies and guidelines which include the following: (i) BCG adheres to strict confidentiality obligations with its clients and ensures that each BCG consultant is trained to abide by these obligations and our internal procedures; (ii) Each individual client team establishes confidential "firewalls" between itself and other client teams

working in the same industry and/or practice group (and the rest of the company and all third parties), so that no information is shared between competitor groups or with unauthorized individuals or entities; (iii) BCG fosters (to the extent possible) geographic/physical separation among BCG client teams working with competitive companies in the same industry; and (iv) BCG employs technical security and encryption protocols to ensure all confidential information is safeguarded securely from inadvertent disclosure of any kind.

BCG maintains a best-in-class IT system environment to meet special safeguarding and privacy requirements, ensuring that nonpublic information is not accessed by unauthorized personnel. This separation is continually monitored. Only BCG employees assigned to a specific contract have access to project information. Other BCG employees, regardless of their roles or clearances, do not have access to this data. Client documents are managed in central folders with limited access rights, protected through encryption, complex passwords, access controls, and data loss protection protocols. BCG has implemented security measures to detect and prevent unauthorized access to equipment and data storage devices, including restrictions on email attachments for external correspondence.

Overview

The ARConnect Grantor Portal (“Portal”) is being used for several components of the Arkansas Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. This includes the pre-registration process, BEAD application submission, and communication of BEAD award results. This application user guide is intended to provide step-by-step instructions on how to navigate the Portal during the bidding process, which is how eligible entities will apply for BEAD funding. The application must be completed by an officer of the company or legal representative with binding authority to make business decisions.

For help with pre-registration, refer to the BEAD Pre-Registration Applicant User Guide. Additional information, including past Technical Assistance webinars and FAQ materials, can be found on the Arkansas BEAD program webpage.¹

- Questions related to BEAD policy or procedural items should be directed to broadband@arkansas.gov.

¹ <https://broadband.arkansas.gov/bead/>

- Questions related to technical assistance with the Grantor Portal (which includes the pre-registration module) should be directed to argrants@mbakerintl.com.
- For questions or issues logging into the grantor portal, reach out to arhelpdesk@ready.net.

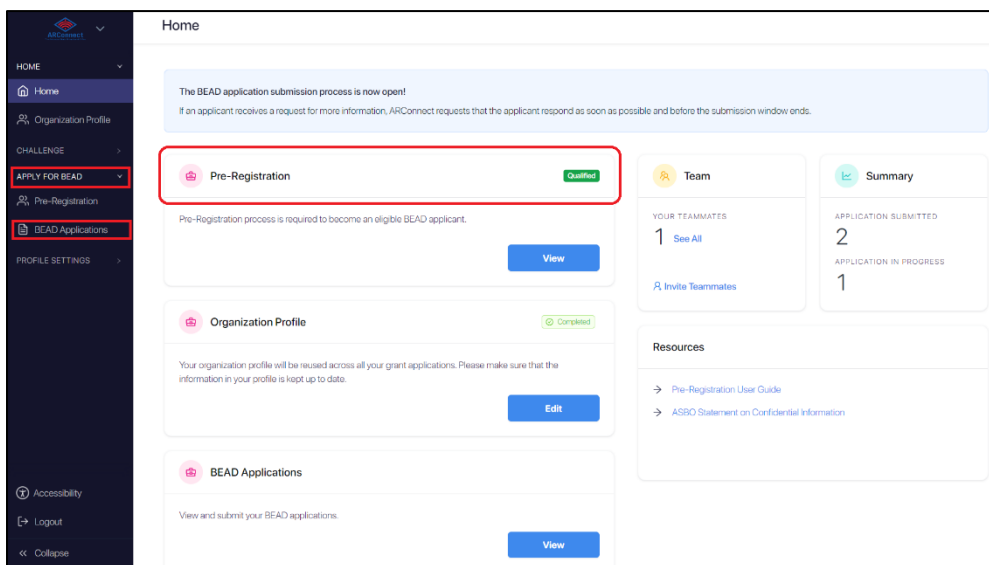
Bidding Process

The bidding process consists of two bidding stages (Tranche-1 and Tranche-2) and a negotiation stage to achieve 100% coverage of all broadband serviceable locations (BSLs). During the application process, prospective applicants are encouraged to access and reference the Applicant Primer for detailed rules, guidelines, data, and application materials. There will be a communication blackout during the bidding timeframe to facilitate a fair and transparent process.

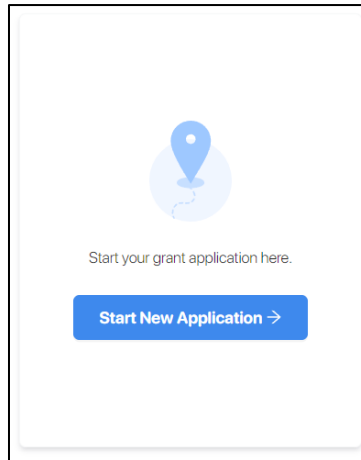
Starting a BEAD Application

Prospective applicants must complete the pre-registration process and receive an official notice of qualification from the Arkansas State Broadband Office before they receive an invitation to submit a BEAD application. Users are allowed to submit multiple applications. An applicant may include the same CBG in a maximum of three bids in Tranche-1.

To start the BEAD application process, first, log in to the ARConnect Grantor Portal (upon logging in, you will see if you have been qualified through the pre-application process). If you have been qualified through the pre-registration process, click the **BEAD Applications** header on the left side of the screen. *If you have not already been qualified, you are not eligible to participate in the BEAD application process.*



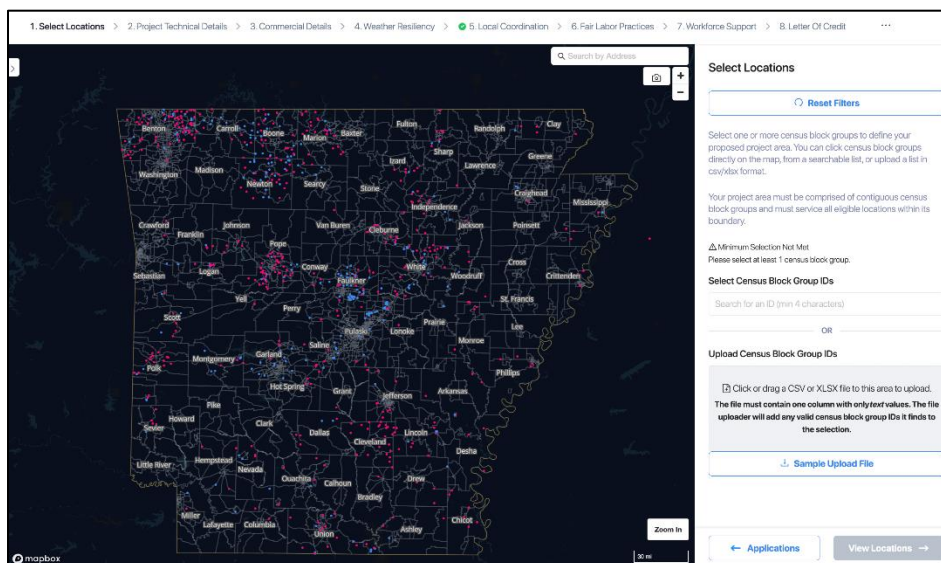
Once on the BEAD Applications screen, click **Start New Application** to begin.



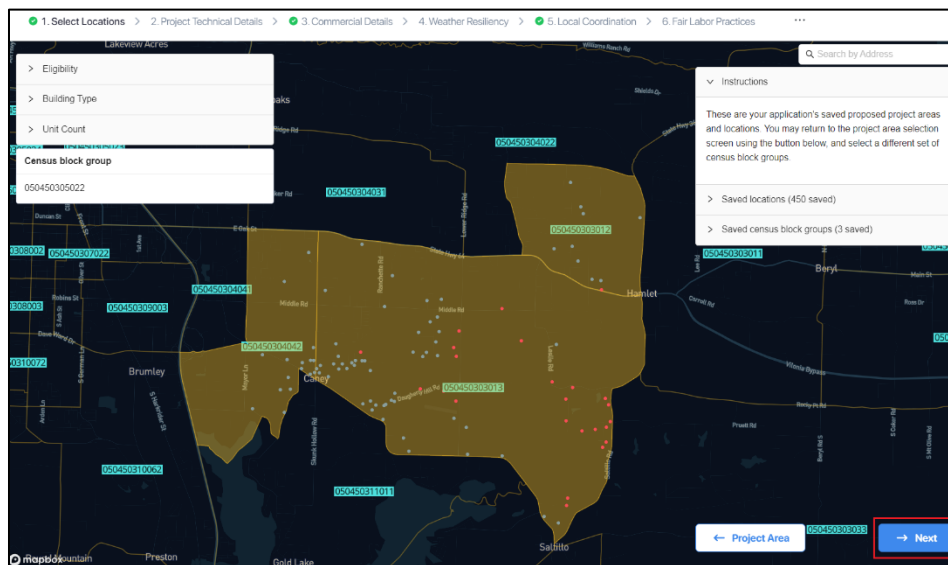
Section 1: Select Locations

In Section 1, select the CBGs that you would like to bid on. This selection will define the proposed project area. Unserved and underserved BSLs are preloaded into the selection map as location points. There are several ways applicants can select locations:

- *Click on a CBG directly on the map to select.*
- *Choose Census Block Group IDs via a searchable list.*
- *Upload a list in a .csv/.xlsx format. The file must contain only one column with only text values.*



You must serve all eligible locations within a selected CBG. When selecting multiple CBGs, they must be contiguous (sharing a border or corner). *In addition, if two or more CBGs containing eligible locations do not border each other but both share a border with a third CBG that does not contain any eligible locations, the set of CBGs can be considered contiguous. In this situation, within the tool, you would need to select the CBG with zero eligible locations as part of your project area.* After completing project area selections, click **Review Locations** at the bottom of the screen to review each of the locations included in the selected project area. You may review each location in the portal map by clicking the location ID to zoom, or by exporting selected locations as a .csv or .xlsx file. The exported file will come as a table download with area ID, service address, latitude, and longitude. After reviewing and confirming the selected locations (a prompt to **Save Locations** will open), click **Next** at the bottom right of the screen to proceed to Section 2.



Note: Please make sure that your Letters of Support (Section 5: Local Coordination) match the areas of your selected locations.

Section 2: Project Technical Details

In Section 2, enter the project's technical details by answering the following questions:

- 1) **Will you be serving all eligible locations in your project area with one technology type or multiple technology types?** (Choose One: One Technology Type or Multiple Technology Types) Depending on your answer, one or more of the following prompts will open:

Please select your technology type for this bid. (drop down menu)

- XGS-PON fiber technology,
- non-XGS-PON fiber technology
- non-fiber technology 1000/500 Mbps
- non-fiber technology 400/200 Mbps
- Other Reliable
- Other Alternative

1a.i. Please disclose the latency (in milliseconds) of the broadband service to be provided for this bid for each technology type selected (as measured and/or reported under the applicable rules).

Priority Technology Pop-Up 1a.ii. You have selected a priority technology as part of your bid. Please commit to a baseline price (per month) for the highest tier of service that you will offer in this bid's project area (this will determine your Affordability score in accordance with Section 1.2 of the Scoring Rubric). The reference price for priority technology (1/1 Gbps) is \$85/month. In accordance with Arkansas' approved Initial Proposal Volume II, applicants will be permitted to adjust their plan costs annually based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' annual Consumer Price Index. Affordable plan commitments will last per the term of Federal interest, as determined by the NTIA.²

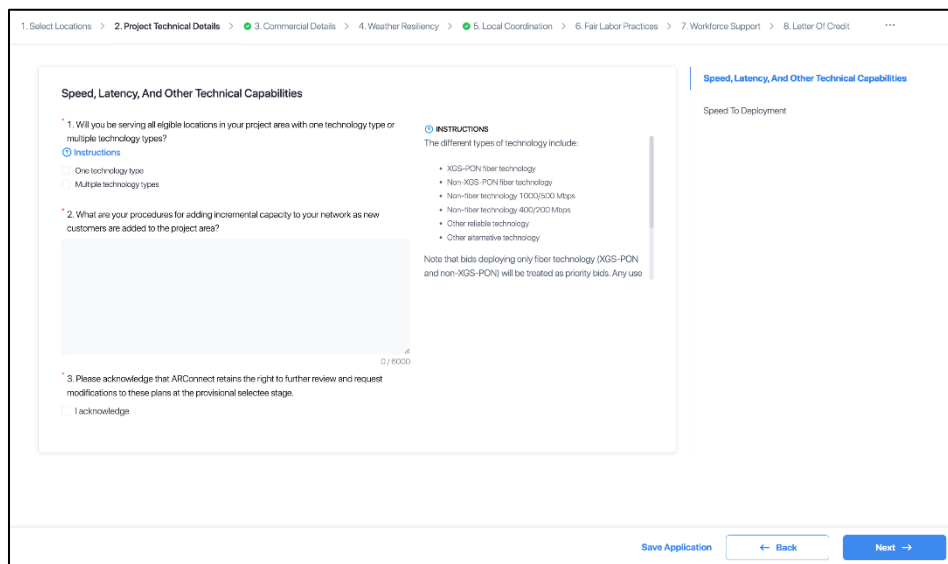
Non-Priority Technology Pop-Up 1.a.ii. You have selected a non-priority technology as part of your bid. Note, you selected only non-priority technology(s) in your bid. Please commit to a baseline price (per month) for the highest tier of service that you will offer in this bid's project area (this will determine your Affordability score in accordance with Section 1.2 of the Scoring Rubric). The reference price for non-priority technology (100/20 Mbps) is \$37/month. In accordance with Arkansas' approved Initial Proposal Volume II, applicants will be permitted to adjust their plan costs annually based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' annual Consumer Price Index. Affordable plan commitments will last per the term of Federal interest, as determined by the NTIA.

2) What are your procedures for adding incremental capacity to your network as new customers are added to the project area? Please provide a brief (300 words maximum) yet detailed narrative answer.

² https://broadband.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/NTIA-Approved-Volume-2-2024.09.30_Redacted.pdf

- 3) Please acknowledge that ARConnect retains the right to further review and request modifications to these plans at the provisional selectee stage. (Check box)
- 4) Please provide your planned deployment timeline in months for this bid (from the date of applicant receiving notice of their final award). Please note that timelines shall not span more than 48 months from the date of signing the Subaward Agreement. (Choose from drop-down menu)
- 5) Certify acknowledgment that the final subgrant agreement will include enforceable penalties for non-performance of final commitments. (Check box)

TIP: Your application will periodically save as you progress between the sections. A **Save Application** button will appear near the bottom of the screen after Section 1 is complete. It is recommended that you save your progress often, as applicants will be automatically logged out after 15 minutes of inactivity.



1. Select Locations > 2. Project Technical Details > 3. Commercial Details > 4. Weather Resiliency > 5. Local Coordination > 6. Fair Labor Practices > 7. Workforce Support > 8. Letter Of Credit >

Speed, Latency, And Other Technical Capabilities

1. Will you be serving all eligible locations in your project area with one technology type or multiple technology types?

INSTRUCTIONS
The different types of technology include:

- XGS-PON fiber technology
- Non-XGS-PON fiber technology
- Non-fiber technology 100/200 Mbps
- Non-fiber technology 400/200 Mbps
- Other reliable technology
- Other alternative technology

Note that bids deploying only fiber technology (XGS-PON and non-XGS-PON) will be treated as priority bids. Any use

2. What are your procedures for adding incremental capacity to your network as new customers are added to the project area?

3. Please acknowledge that ARConnect retains the right to further review and request modifications to these plans at the provisional selectee stage.

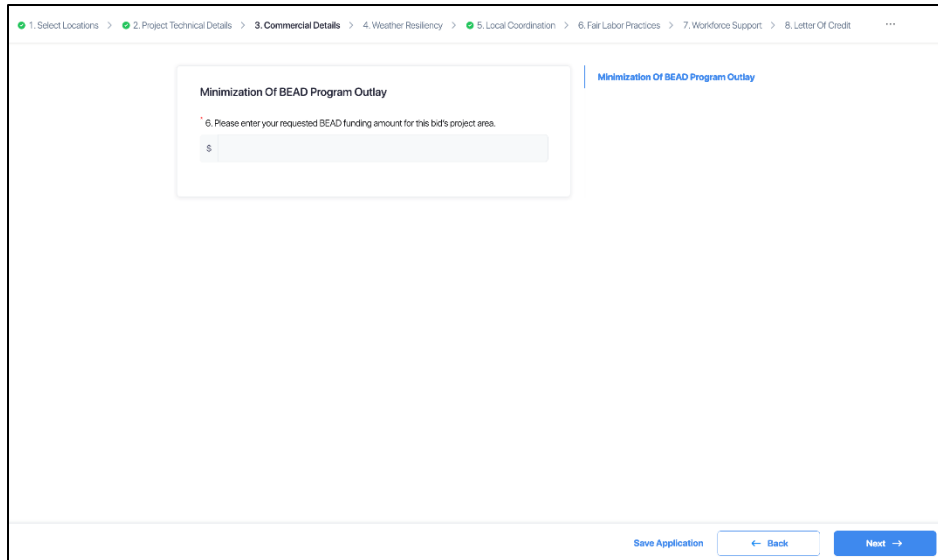
I acknowledge

Save Application ← Back Next →

Section 3: Commercial Details

In Section 3, question 6, **Minimization of BEAD Program Outlay**, asks you to enter the amount of BEAD grant funding you are requesting for the bid's project area. Click inside the response box and enter your requested funding dollar amount. *Responses must be entered out to two decimal places.*

6. Please enter your requested BEAD funding amount for this bid's project area. Please note that this amount does not represent the total estimated project budget, but only the amount of funding you are requesting for the project (grant request). This amount should represent, at most, 75% of your estimated project budget, to be supplemented by a minimum of a 25% match unless a waiver is granted by NTIA based on evidence of economic need for a given project.



Section 4: Weather Resiliency

In Section 4, you are asked to provide responses related to weather-resilient broadband planning and infrastructure by answering the following questions:

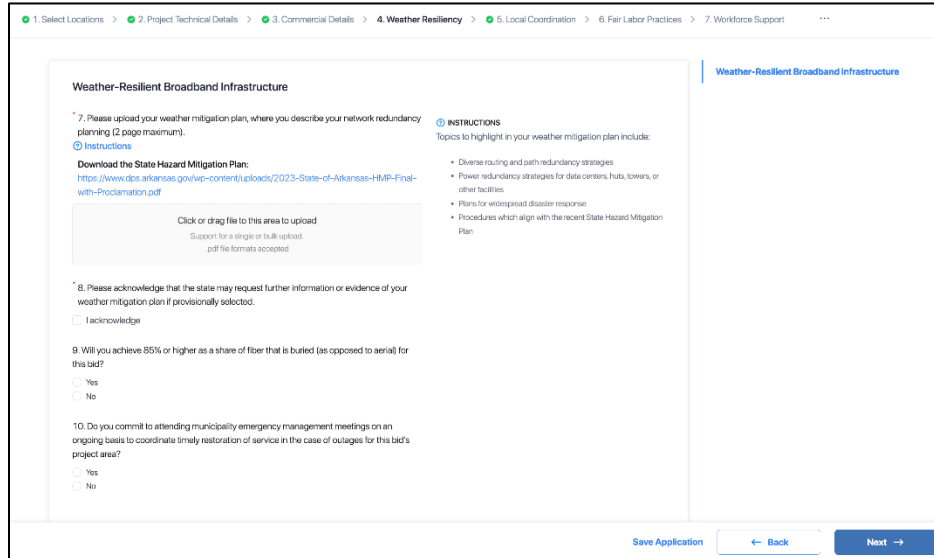
- 7. Please upload your weather mitigation plan, where you describe your network redundancy planning (2 page maximum). To upload the required document, click the upload field to navigate to the location of the saved file on your computer or drag it into the upload field.**
 - You can access and review view the Arkansas State Hazard Mitigation Plan (It is a large document - 275 pages) by clicking on the hyperlink and downloading. It can also be accessed directly from the State of Arkansas website.

<https://dps.arkansas.gov/emergency-management/adem/plan-prepare/hazard-mitigation/>

Items to highlight in your weather mitigation plan include:

- Diverse routing and path redundancy strategies
 - Power redundancy strategies for data centers, huts, towers, or other facilities
 - Plans for widespread disaster response
 - Procedures which align with the recent State Hazard Mitigation Plan
- 8. Please acknowledge that the state may request further information or evidence of your weather mitigation plan if provisionally selected. (Checkbox)**
 - 9. Will you achieve 85% or higher as a share of fiber that is buried (as opposed to aerial) for this bid? (Yes or No)**

- 10. Do you commit to attending municipality emergency management meetings on an ongoing basis to coordinate timely restoration of service in case of outages for this bid's project area?**
(Yes or No)



1. Select Locations > 2. Project Technical Details > 3. Commercial Details > 4. Weather Resiliency > 5. Local Coordination > 6. Fair Labor Practices > 7. Workforce Support

Weather-Resilient Broadband Infrastructure

* 7. Please upload your weather mitigation plan, where you describe your network redundancy planning (2 page maximum).

[Instructions](#)

Download the State Hazard Mitigation Plan:
<https://www.dps.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023-State-of-Arkansas-HMP-Final-with-Proclamation.pdf>

Click or drag file to this area to upload
Support for a single or bulk upload.
pdf file formats accepted

INSTRUCTIONS
Topics to highlight in your weather mitigation plan include:

- Diverse routing and path redundancy strategies
- Power redundancy strategies for data centers, hubs, towers, or other facilities
- Plans for widespread disaster response
- Procedures which align with the recent State Hazard Mitigation Plan

* 8. Please acknowledge that the state may request further information or evidence of your weather mitigation plan if provisionally selected.

I acknowledge

9. Will you achieve 85% or higher as a share of fiber that is buried (as opposed to aerial) for this bid?
 Yes
 No

10. Do you commit to attending municipality emergency management meetings on an ongoing basis to coordinate timely restoration of service in the case of outages for this bid's project area?
 Yes
 No

Save Application ← Back Next →

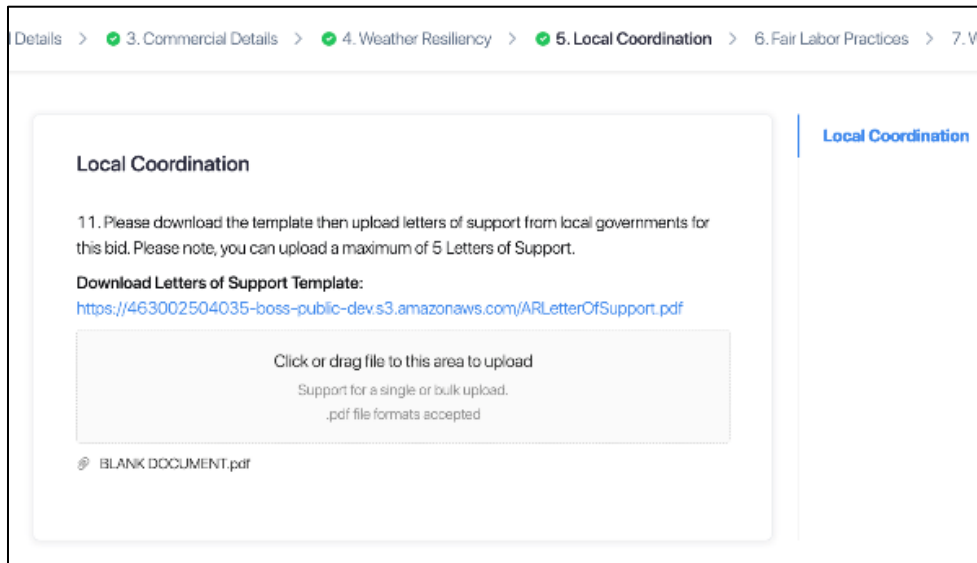
Section 5: Local Coordination

In Section 5 applicants should upload letters of support for each project bid. These letters must come from officials *in the project area*. You are encouraged to obtain letters of support from entities such as:

- State Government: State Representative; State Senator
- County Government: County Judge; Justice of the Peace
- Local Municipality: Mayor; Member of City Council
- Local School District: Member of the School Board

Applicants are **required** to use ARConnect's standard template for local government officials' letters of support, which can be downloaded from the application portal under question 11. If you do not use the required template, you will not receive credit for the letter. You will NOT be asked for a revision.

- 11. Please download the template and then upload letters of support from local governments for this bid. Please note, you can upload a maximum of 5 Letters of Support. Upload each letter as a separate file and label the file with the name of the local official. To upload files, click the upload field to navigate to the location of the saved file on your computer or drag it into the upload field.**



Letters of support **must** be uploaded through the application portal. *Letters that are emailed to ASBO, etc., will not be accepted.*

Section 6: Fair Labor Practices

In Section 6 applicants will be asked to address Fair Labor Practices. You will be asked to answer the following questions:

12. How many years of operational experience do you have?

If you select “3+ years” on question 12, the following questions will appear:

12a. **Please provide examples and brief descriptions on your historical compliance to federal labor and employment laws over the past three years. Please cite the specific federal labor and employment laws. Ensure your response remains in the context of deployment and operation of existing broadband services. (600 words maximum)**

12b. **Do you certify future compliance to federal labor laws? (Check box)**

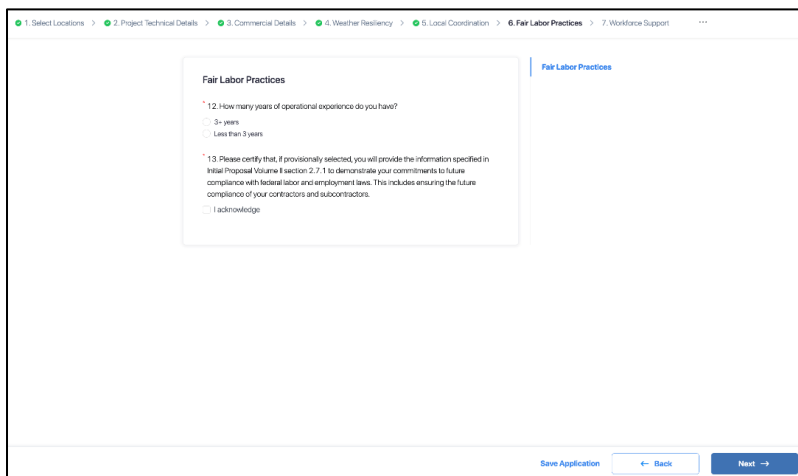
13. **Please certify that, if provisionally selected, you will provide the information specified in Initial Proposal Volume II section 2.7.1 to demonstrate your commitments to future compliance with federal labor and employment laws. This includes ensuring the future compliance of your contractors and subcontractors. (Check box)**

If you select “Less than 3 years” on question 12, the following questions will appear:

12a. Do you certify your compliance to federal labor laws?

12b. Please provide examples and brief descriptions of your planned compliance to federal labor and employment laws. Please cite the specific federal labor and employment laws. Ensure your response remains in the context of deployment and operation of existing broadband services. (600 words maximum)

13. Please certify that, if provisionally selected, you will provide the information specified in Initial Proposal Volume II section 2.7.1 to demonstrate your commitments to future compliance with federal labor and employment laws. This includes ensuring the future compliance of your contractors and subcontractors.



Section 7: Workforce Support

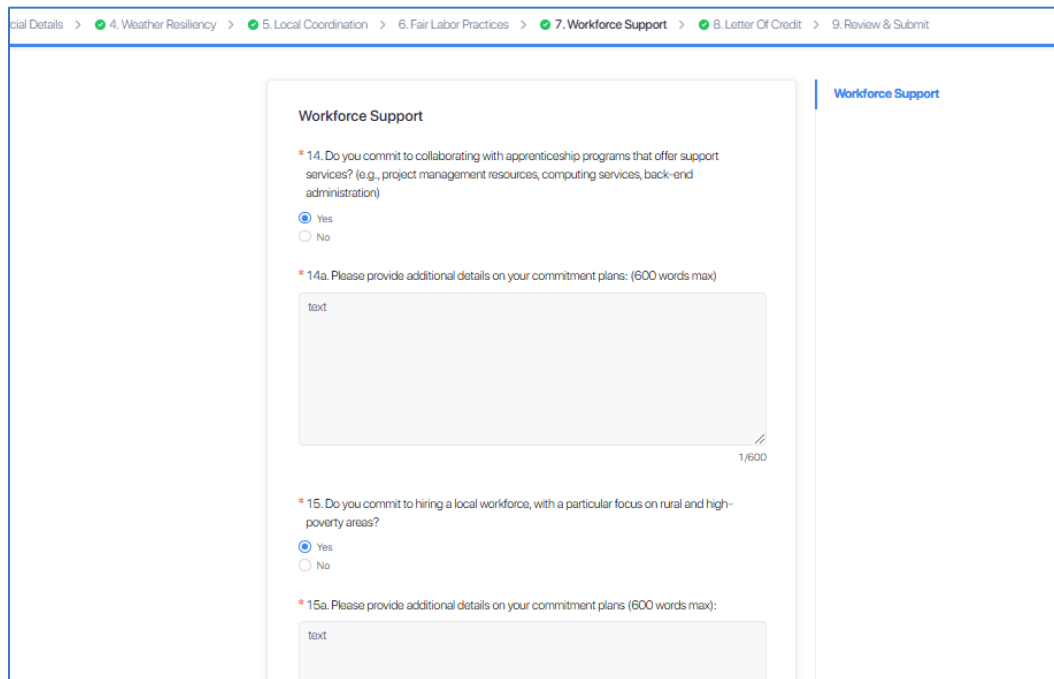
In Section 7 applicants are asked to describe their plans to support workforce development. You will be asked to answer the following questions: [YES/NO] If yes, please provide additional details on your commitment plans for each question (600 word maximum).

14. Do you commit to collaborating with apprenticeship programs that offer support services (e.g., project management resources, computing services, back-end administration)?

15. Do you commit to hiring a local workforce, with a particular focus on rural and high-poverty areas?

16. Do you commit to providing financial support to employees on BEAD-related projects for services that address family needs (e.g., childcare, transportation, mentorship)?

17. Do you commit to provisioning scholarships and student stipends for community college training programs for software, radio frequency, and field engineers?
18. Do you plan to offer any in-house training or certification programs covering areas such as fiber optics, cybersecurity, and other telecommunications and broadband digital skills?
19. Do you plan to facilitate guaranteed letters of commitment with state technical colleges, demonstrating good-faith efforts through letters of intent to hire Arkansan graduates?
20. What steps will you take to identify new sources of workforce, such as recent graduates and ex-convict populations? Provide a brief description of 2-3 steps or initiatives to identify new sources of workforce.



Section 8: Letter of Credit

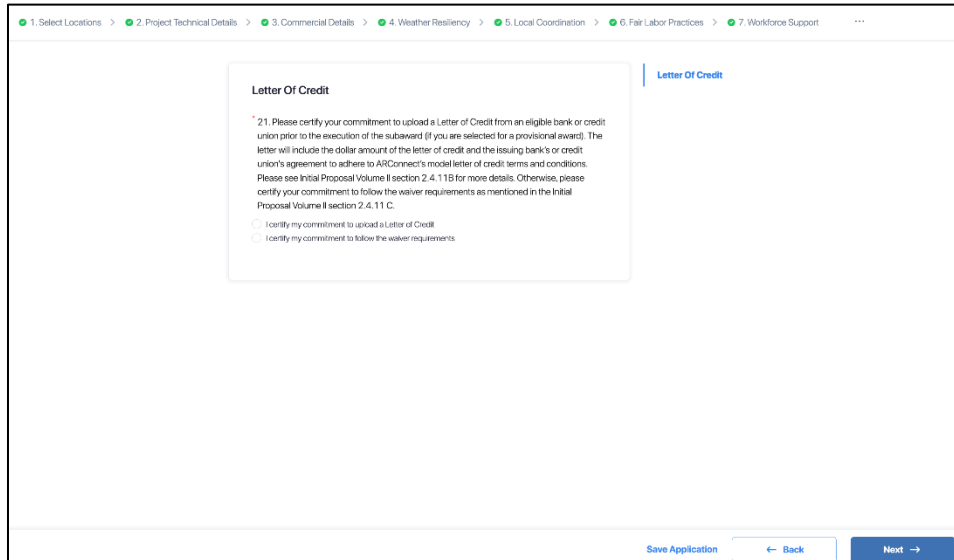
Section 8 asks you to certify your commitment to upload a Letter of Credit from an eligible bank or credit union prior to the execution of the subaward if selected, or to follow waiver requirements. The question reads:

21. Please certify your commitment to upload a Letter of Credit from an eligible bank or credit union prior to the execution of the subaward (if you are selected for a provisional award). The letter will include the dollar amount of the letter of credit and the issuing bank's or credit union's agreement to adhere to ARConnect's model letter of credit terms and conditions.

Please see Initial Proposal Volume II section 2.4.11B for more details. Otherwise, please certify your commitment to follow the waiver requirements as mentioned in the Initial Proposal Volume II section 2.4.11 C.

Choose one of the statements

- ✓ I certify my commitment to upload a Letter of Credit
- ✓ I certify my commitment to follow the waiver requirements

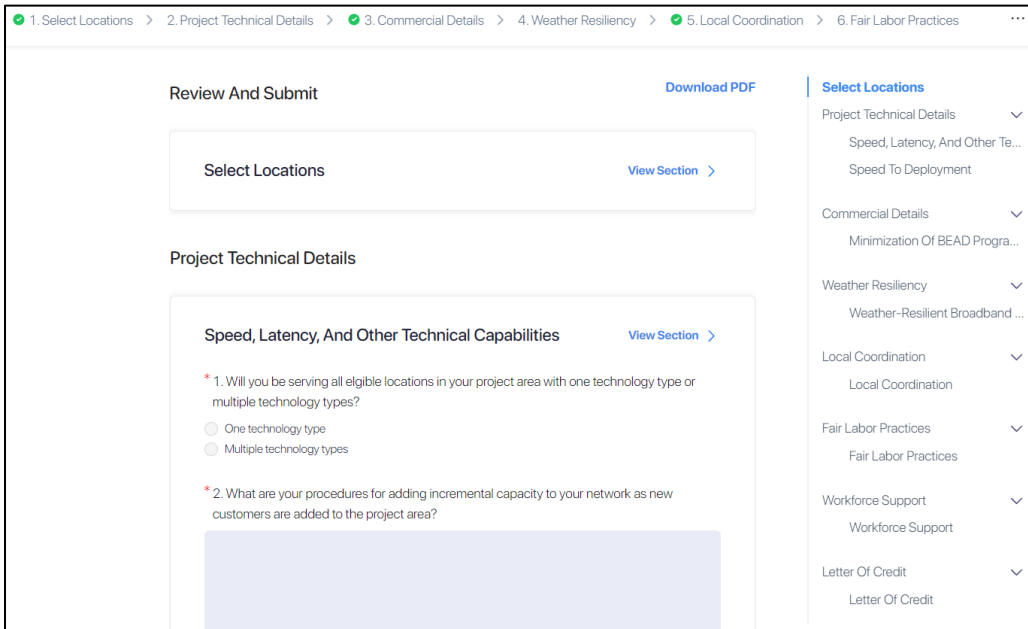


The screenshot shows a web application interface for the 'Letter Of Credit' section. At the top, a breadcrumb trail indicates the user's progress through seven steps: 1. Select Locations, 2. Project Technical Details, 3. Commercial Details, 4. Weather Resiliency, 5. Local Coordination, 6. Fair Labor Practices, and 7. Workforce Support. The current step, 'Letter Of Credit', is highlighted. The main content area contains a text box with the following instructions: '21. Please certify your commitment to upload a Letter of Credit from an eligible bank or credit union prior to the execution of the subaward (if you are selected for a provisional award). The letter will include the dollar amount of the letter of credit and the issuing bank's or credit union's agreement to adhere to ARConnect's model letter of credit terms and conditions. Please see Initial Proposal Volume II section 2.4.11B for more details. Otherwise, please certify your commitment to follow the waiver requirements as mentioned in the Initial Proposal Volume II section 2.4.11 C.' Below this text are two radio button options: 'I certify my commitment to upload a Letter of Credit' and 'I certify my commitment to follow the waiver requirements'. At the bottom of the form, there are three buttons: 'Save Application', '← Back', and 'Next →'.

Review and Submit

Once you have completed all sections of the application, please go back and review each section to ensure that all information is accurate and that the correct attachments are included where applicable. For your records, you may also download a PDF copy of the application in this section.

Note: Revisions will only be allowed for technical issues (i.e., corrupted file, incorrect document) with any of the four file uploads. Applicants will only be asked to revise the question that needs a revision.



The screenshot displays the 'Review And Submit' section of the ARConnect application. At the top, a progress bar shows six steps: 1. Select Locations, 2. Project Technical Details, 3. Commercial Details, 4. Weather Resiliency, 5. Local Coordination, and 6. Fair Labor Practices. The 'Review And Submit' section includes a 'Download PDF' button and a 'Select Locations' button with a 'View Section >' link. Below this is the 'Project Technical Details' section, which is currently expanded to show the 'Speed, Latency, And Other Technical Capabilities' section. This section contains two questions: Question 1 asks if the user will serve all eligible locations with one or multiple technology types, with radio button options for 'One technology type' and 'Multiple technology types'. Question 2 asks for procedures for adding incremental capacity to the network as new customers are added. A 'View Section >' link is also present for this section. On the right side, a sidebar menu lists all sections: Select Locations, Project Technical Details (with sub-items: Speed, Latency, And Other Te..., Speed To Deployment), Commercial Details (with sub-item: Minimization Of BEAD Progra...), Weather Resiliency (with sub-item: Weather-Resilient Broadband...), Local Coordination (with sub-item: Local Coordination), Fair Labor Practices (with sub-item: Fair Labor Practices), Workforce Support (with sub-item: Workforce Support), and Letter Of Credit (with sub-item: Letter Of Credit).

Final Attestation

To finish and submit your BEAD application, you will be asked to complete several attestations. Carefully read and complete each attestation by checking the boxes to the left, then submit the application.

You MUST hit the SUBMIT button or your application will not be considered received!!!!

Attestation ×

Please complete the required attestation verifying the validity of your grant application

- I certify that I have the legal authority to submit this application on behalf of Yahoo_Wireless_by_Jules
- I certify that all information submitted in this application is true and correct and understand that intentionally submitting false or misleading information will result in rejection of the application if discovered in the application phase of the grant program. If false information is used to obtain a grant, it could result in civil and criminal investigation, fines, penalties, and criminal prosecution.
- I certify that the Applicant/Grantee will observe and follow all applicable local, state, and federal laws, rules, and regulations for the entirety of the project and agree that it is the Applicant/Grantee's sole responsibility to be knowledgeable about these requirements. Failure to adhere to these requirements may result in cancellation of the grant, de-obligation of funds and a demand for repayment.
- I certify that the funds listed in the Application as "requested BEAD funding amount" have been or will be used for the Project detailed in the application. The requested funding amount (grant request) will be supplemented by a minimum of 25% match; therefore, the requested funds represent, at most, 75% of the expected budget of the project detailed in the application unless a waiver is granted by NTIA based on evidence of economic need for a given project.
- I certify and acknowledge that the Applicant/Grantee is required to complete projects funded by this grant program, if necessary, through separate funding not provided through this grant program.
- I certify that the Applicant/Grantee will be required to provide quarterly and annual reports, and that these reports will include status updates, cost updates, budget information, and any other documentation needed to establish expenditures, substantiation of costs and work progress.

BackSubmit →

You MUST hit the SUBMIT button or your application will not be considered received!!!!