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**Texas Broadband Development Office's Response to Frequently Asked Questions**

The BEAD Challenge Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document has been created to provide clear, consolidated information about the processes and requirements related to the Texas Broadband Development Office's (BDO) implementation of the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. This FAQ aims to support local governments, nonprofits, and other stakeholders by addressing common questions about the challenge process, eligibility criteria, timelines, data standards, and technical requirements. The BDO will update this document on a periodic basis as more questions arise. Newly added questions and update answers in this FAQ version are indicated with an asterisk (\*). Additional questions may be submitted to [broadband@cpa.texas.gov](mailto:broadband@cpa.texas.gov).

Please note that all new questions are disbursed throughout the document in the appropriate sections.

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## BEAD Challenge Frequently Asked Questions

### Definitions

| Acronym/Term | Definition   |
|--------------|--|
| BDO          | Texas Broadband Development Office                         |
| BEAD         | Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment                  |
| BOOT         | Bringing Online Opportunities to Texas                     |
| BSL          | Broadband Serviceable Location                             |
| CAI          | Community Anchor Institution                               |
| CSV          | Comma-separated values (file)                              |
| DSL          | Digital Subscriber Line                                    |
| FCC          | Federal Communications Commission                          |
| Gbps         | Gigabit per second   |
| IPV1         | Initial Proposal Volume One                                |
| IPV2         | Initial Proposal Volume Two                                |
| ISP          | Internet Service Provider                                  |
| IDs          | Identification   |
| MB           | Megabyte   |
| Mbps         | Megabits per second  |
| NOFA         | Notice of Funding Availability                             |
| NTIA         | National Telecommunications and Information Administration |

### 1. Program Overview and General Information

#### 1.1. What locations are considered eligible or ineligible for BEAD funding?

All unserved and underserved locations qualify for BEAD funding. Further details regarding served locations can be found in the Texas [IPV1](#) and Texas [IPV2](#).

#### 1.2. Do eligible entities need to participate in the challenge process to be eligible for the application phase?

No, eligible entities do not need to participate in the challenge process to be eligible for the application phase.

#### 1.3. Are there current guidelines on who is eligible to become a subgrantee after the challenge process?

Yes, eligibility details for the subgrantee selection process are outlined in the [Texas IPV2](#).

#### 1.4. Is registration required to apply for BEAD funding as a new ISP if not participating in the challenge process?

Registration is not required for the subgrantee selection process. However, registration is encouraged, as it offers valuable insights into the current state of broadband in Texas.

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### **1.5. How are ISPs involved in the challenge process?\***

During the challenge submission window, ISPs with registered and approved accounts can submit challenges through the portal. After submitted challenges are reviewed, ISPs will have a two-week rebuttal submission period for upheld challenges. The rebuttal period begins on Jan. 10, 2025. During this period, ISPs may contest upheld challenges by providing supporting evidence.

### **1.6. How will ISPs be notified if a challenge is submitted that impacts them?\***

Texas BEAD challenges will be published online, and the rebuttal phase announced. ISPs should register for access to the challenge portal and regularly check the portal as well as their email for further information on challenges. Additional information on the rebuttal phase can be found in Texas's [IPV1](#).

### **1.7. Are the project areas for the BEAD applications pre-defined? If so, how are they determined?\***

As indicated in the approved Texas [IPV2](#), the BDO has elected to use census tracts as the pre-defined area unit for designing [projects](#).

## **2. Challenge Portal Access and Submission Guidelines**

### **2.1. Who is the vendor for the BEAD challenge portal?**

The BDO's BEAD challenge portal vendor is Ready.net.

### **2.2. Is registration required to access the challenge portal**

Yes, registration is required to access and submit data through the portal.

### **2.3. Is registration to access the challenge portal required to participate in the subgrantee selection process?**

Registration is not required to participate in the subgrantee selection process. However, it is encouraged as it provides valuable insights into the current state of broadband in Texas.

### **2.4. When will access to the portal be available?**

Registration for portal access opened on Nov. 5, 2024. Portal access will be granted to eligible challengers upon the BDO's approval, with the earliest possible access date being Nov. 15, 2024.

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**2.5. How will eligible challengers know if their registration request was successfully received?**

Eligible challengers will receive an automated notification confirming receipt of their registration request.

**2.6. If an eligible challenger would like multiple individuals from their organization to have access to the challenge portal, should each person submit a separate registration?**

No, only a single registration is needed per eligible challenger. After the registration request is reviewed and approved, portal access will be granted, and the eligible challenger can then add additional users and link their accounts.

**2.7. Can prospective challengers preview the portal following registration?**

Yes, once access is granted, prospective challengers can preview the portal and familiarize themselves with the setup, including adjusting map settings as needed.

**2.8. Does the portal allow bulk uploads of all location IDs, including CAIs?**

Yes, bulk uploads are allowed for up to 250 location IDs at a time. CAIs can be bulk uploaded if they are part of the same challenge type, with a limit of 250 location IDs.

**2.9. What is the file format to use for the portal?**

Where a specific file format is required, it will be listed in the upload field (e.g., CSV for location IDs, PDF or Excel for evidence).

**2.10. Are there any file size limitations or data caps for portal submissions?**

Yes, limitations are listed in the upload instructions in the portal. There are instructions to zip files of certain sizes as needed.

**2.11. What is the required data format to populate templates downloaded from the portal?**

Depending on the type of challenge being submitted, specific data may be required. If a template is needed it will be available for download from the portal and prepopulated with the selected location IDs. If not, a CSV file containing location IDs will be needed.

**2.12. Is there a limit to the number of users an organization can have registered within the portal?\***

There is no set limit to the number of users an organization can register in the portal. However, it is recommended to limit registrations to approximately 10 users for efficiency. Each organization should designate one representative to submit the initial portal registration request. Once approved, that representative can add additional users

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to the account, enabling collaboration and ensuring all users from the same organization are linked within the system for streamlined challenge preparations and submissions.

### **2.13. What is the definition of “bulk” for the portal?\***

A bulk challenge refers to any challenge involving more than one location.

### **2.14. Are there any recommended or required naming conventions for file submissions in the portal?\***

There are no required naming conventions for location ID files.

### **2.15. Does the portal allow ZIP file uploads for larger files?\***

Yes, the Portal accepts ZIP file uploads.

### **2.16. How should the narrative for a challenge submission be structured?\***

The narrative should clearly articulate the theme and purpose of the challenge, outlining the reasons for proposed adjustments to the BSLs. Additionally, the narrative should provide context to reviewers on why a change in the classification or service level is necessary.

### **2.17. Can eligible challengers submit multiple challenges to switch locations from unserved and underserved to “served” all at once?\***

Yes, eligible challengers can submit bulk uploads of the same challenge type for up to 250 location IDs at once.

### **2.18. Does the challenge portal allow for shapefile uploads?\***

Yes, the portal allows for shapefile uploads. Shapefiles should be limited to 250 locations per bulk upload.

### **2.19. What is the challenge portal website?\***

The challenge portal website is <https://challenge.broadband.texas.gov/>. Access to the portal is dependent upon registration and approval.

### **2.20. Where can information on the challenge submission process be found?\***

Please refer to the [BEAD Challenge Process Webinar, Part 2](#) recording that is available on the BDO website for information on challenge submissions.

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### **2.21. For challenge submissions, should evidence be presented by location IDs or addresses?\***

It is encouraged that evidence is presented by location IDs. Eligible challengers can search for location IDs by address on the challenge map, this can also be done in bulk.

### **2.22. What is the file size limit for portal uploads?\***

The portal allows zipped files up to 100 MB each, with a total upload limit of 500 MB per submission.

### **2.23. Where can the pre-challenge location IDs be accessed?\***

Eligible challengers can review the pre-challenge location IDs through the challenge portal following successful registration and approval. The CSV files of pre-challenge location IDs are publicly available on the [Texas Challenge Registration Webpage](#) or by following this link [Pre-Challenge Location ID Lists](#). Given the large size of these CSV files, please open the downloaded files using a data processing program capable of handling up to 10 million data points.

### **2.24. Will the information uploaded into the Portal by eligible challengers be publicly accessible?\***

Yes. In accordance with the Public Information Act, all information uploaded into the portal during the challenge process is considered public information unless deemed sensitive or proprietary. Participating challengers should redact any confidential, customer or personal information from their submissions.

## **3. Data and Technology Requirements**

### **3.1. What version of FCC mapping data will be used?\***

The BDO will use version 5 of the FCC mapping data published on Nov. 15, 2024 to conduct the BEAD challenge process.

### **3.2. Is a Tier E license required for registration?**

No, a Tier E license is not required for registration. A Tier E license is recommended for nonprofit organizations and local governments. It is encouraged that a Tier E license is obtained to preview the data before submitting a challenge. This allows prospective challengers to prepare their data, information and evidence in advance of the 14-day challenge period.

### **3.3. Is a Tier E license different from a Tier D license**

Yes, a Tier E license is different from a Tier D license.

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- Tier E License: This license is intended for nonprofit organizations and local governments. Entities that will engage in the challenge process but will not participate in the BEAD subgrantee selection process should apply for a Tier E license. For example, nonprofit organizations should request a Tier E license.
- Tier D License: This license is designed for internet service providers and entities with data reporting obligations. Entities participating in any federal broadband programs, including those with reporting requirements or those planning to engage in the BEAD subgrantee selection process, should apply for a Tier D license.
- For more information, please visit the [NTIA's Website](#).

### **3.4. What is the CostQuest license status for Texas?**

The state has a Tier C CostQuest license.

### **3.5. If submitting plant maps with multiple locations, do the maps need to be broken down for submission?\***

Yes, plant maps should be divided into zones of 250 locations. A narrative may be submitted, explaining how the plant map supports the challenge for the associated locations.

### **3.6. What coordinate reference system (CRS) is used for the challenge map?\***

The supported CRS is EPSG: 4326 - WGS 84.13.

## **4. Timeline and Important Dates**

### **4.1. When does the challenge process begin?**

The BDO plans to start the challenge process on Dec. 3, 2024, challenge submissions will be accepted through Dec. 17, 2024.

### **4.2. When will the state be able to share eligibility files (eligible served, eligible unserved, CAIs) with FCC location IDs?**

The BDO plans to publish the CSV files and location data at least 7 days prior to the start of the challenge process. ready for all interested stakeholders.

### **4.3. Does the BDO plan to extend the two-week challenge submission window?**

No, the BDO does not plan to extend the two-week challenge submission window due to the size of Texas. The BDO, will need the enough time to review the submitted challenges and ensure a fair and transparent process.



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### **4.4. When will the rebuttal process begin?\***

Rebuttal submissions for upheld challenges will be accepted from Jan. 10 through Jan. 24, 2025.

## **5. Challenge Types, Eligibility, and Service Standards**

### **5.1. What challenges will be prioritized?**

There is no prioritization of individual challenges; each will be reviewed and given a final determination based on its eligibility regardless of the challenge type. All eligible challenge types can be found in the Texas [IPV1](#).

### **5.2. When submitting challenges is there a requirement to group locations with corresponding evidence for different technology codes?**

The challenge portal restricts each challenge to a single technology code. If multiple technologies are involved, each would require a separate challenge submission.

### **5.3. Does the challenge process permit new BSLs to be added or allow the validity of a BSL to be challenged?**

The challenge process does not permit BSLs to be added or allow the validity of a BSL to be challenged.

### **5.4. Do CAI locations marked as served on the challenge map reflect 1 Gig symmetrical service?\***

A CAI is considered to have qualifying broadband service if it receives a minimum 1 Gbps symmetrical service. If a CAI is labeled as “served” on the challenge map, it indicates that the CAI location has access to qualifying broadband service at or greater than 1/1 Gbps. However, if there is evidence to suggest that the location does not meet this standard, it can be challenged.

### **5.5. Are separate categories available for submitting challenges for Existing and Planned Service?**

Yes, the portal provides separate categories for these challenge types. The BDO will provide additional resources to assist in the submission of challenges including a webinar to demonstrate the submission process for specific challenge types.

### **5.6. When can the planned service challenge be used?**

The planned service date is May 30, 2025. The planned service challenge can be used in instances where the challenger knows that the location will be connected by May 30, 2025, without an enforceable commitment, if the requisite evidence is provided.

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**5.7. Are government-funded Wi-Fi hotspots with 25/3 Mbps speeds considered served?**

No, under the BEAD program, communities with 25/3 Mbps speeds do not meet the required threshold of 100/20 Mbps and are therefore not considered served.

**5.8. Did the state remove the enforceable commitments in the unserved/underserved list?**

All locations under an enforceable commitment are marked with their respective commitment and funding source. Locations labeled as "underserved" or "unserved" qualify for BEAD funding, while those labeled "served" or "funded" do not. CAIs are designated by default as either "eligible for funding" or "ineligible for funding."

**5.9. Is fixed wireless considered served or a reliable form of internet?**

Yes, fixed wireless is considered a served or a reliable form of internet. For more detailed information regarding specific types of fixed wireless, please refer to the Texas [IPV1](#).

**5.10. Is DSL considered served?**

Yes, if it meets or exceeds 100/20 Mbps speeds, DSL is regarded as a reliable technology. Additional information can be found in Texas' [IPV1](#)

**5.11. Will a redacted bill be accepted as evidence of service for rebuttals?\***

Yes, a redacted bill demonstrating that the location/address subscribes or has subscribed to service within the last 12 months is acceptable as evidence for a rebuttal.

**5.12. Will there be any changes to the CAI list, and can it be used for challenge submissions?\***

The BDO does not plan to make changes to the existing CAI list, and it can be used for challenge submissions. Interested parties can access the CAI list by following this [link](#).

**5.13. What are the evidence requirements for challenging served locations?\***

To prove that a location is served, eligible challengers must provide documentation which varies by challenge type, please review Texas [IPV1](#) for specific requirements.

**5.14. Can eligible challengers begin collecting evidence using location IDs from the portal, or should they wait for the release of the final BSL list?\***

Once eligible challengers gain access to the portal, they are encouraged to familiarize themselves with its functions and the map. They can begin collecting evidence immediately but should be aware that the map may be subject to updates and the final list of BSLs will be available on Nov. 26, 2024.

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### **5.15. What is the reason that some CAIs report different overall service availability than the service availability indicated under the "Providers" section of the Texas Challenge Portal? Is the BDO expecting challengers to file challenges for such locations?\***

As of Dec. 3, 2024, the overall service availability on the Challenge Portal reflects the CAI service availability submitted by the BDO to the NTIA with the Texas [IPV1](#), approved in April 2024. The "Providers" section of the Texas Challenge Portal reflects service availability from the FCC Version 5 data, released in November 2024.

There are instances where the CAI's overall service availability differs from the "Providers" section. For example, a CAI might be marked as unserved, but the "Providers" section lists a provider offering 1 Gigabit symmetrical service to that CAI. In such cases, the BDO plans to update the service availability for any unchallenged CAIs to reflect the FCC Version 5 service availability during the final determination phase before submitting to NTIA.

During the challenge window, providers may file challenges for these CAIs where service availability differs between the NTIA-approved BDO CAI List and the FCC Version 5 data. However, such challenges are not mandatory.

### **5.16. Are copper-based BSLs shown as served on the challenge map considered to have BEAD qualifying broadband service?\***

Yes, as indicated in the approved Texas [IPV1](#), locations connected through a copper network providing speeds of at least 100/20 Mbps and low latency are considered served. For more details, refer to the Texas [IPV1](#).

### **5.17. For Data Cap challenges, what is the defined data cap for unreasonable capacity allowance?\***

As indicated in the approved Texas [IPV1](#), an unreasonable capacity allowance is defined as a data cap below 600 GB per month. Please refer to page 23 of the Texas [IPV1](#) for additional details.

### **5.18. Can locations covered by other Federal and State funded broadband programs such as BOOT II be challenged?\***

Prospective challengers can submit challenges for any location provided they have sufficient evidence. However, all locations covered by other Federal and State funded broadband programs with qualifying broadband service, including locations awarded through the BOOT Program, are labeled as "funded" and will be removed from BEAD eligibility.

### **5.19. What is the appropriate challenge type to submit concerning locations that are covered by other federal and state broadband programs?\***

If a challenger has knowledge that one or more locations is already subject to an enforceable federal, state or local commitment to deploy qualifying broadband as of

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the date that the challenge process is scheduled to conclude, they can submit an enforceable commitment challenge. Please see page 21 on the Challenge Resource Guide under section “Enforceable Commitment Challenges”.

### **5.20. What are some examples of evidence that can be uploaded for various challenge types?\***

Please see page 15 on the Challenge Resource Guide under section “Evidence and Documentation Requirements”. Also, review the approved Texas [IPV1](#) for specific information on evidence requirements.

### **5.21. What kind of evidence can be provided for an Existing Service challenge?\***

Please see page 25 on the Challenge Resource Guide under section “Evidence for Existing Service Challenges” to learn more about what is required. Also, review the approved Texas [IPV1](#) for specific information on evidence requirements.

### **5.22. For bulk challenges, can location IDs and evidence be uploaded together in one file?\***

If you are considering submitting bulk challenges, you must upload location IDs and evidence in separate files. For evidence submissions, multiple screenshots can be submitted in one PDF, but each screenshot should be clearly labeled for clarity. Bulk uploads of location IDs and evidence are limited to 250 location IDs at a time.

### **5.23. Will the BDO accept evidence that exceeds the maximum age limits noted in Table 3 of the Texas IPV1 for various challenge types?\***

No.

## **6. Resident Input and Community Engagement**

### **6.1. What is the Resident Input Tool?**

The Resident Input Tool allows individuals, not acting on behalf of a government, nonprofit organization or service provider, to submit a challenge for one location at a time. A form will be available on the BDO website for residents to complete and submit their information. This form will then be entered into the challenge portal, where eligible nonprofit organizations and local governments can review and submit it on behalf of residents. Bulk input submissions will not be available for residents. The BDO will host a webinar to provide additional information and a demonstration of the Resident Input Tool.

### **6.2. What evidence should residents submit for availability challenges?**

Please refer to the Texas [IPV1](#) for additional details on the acceptable evidence for all challenge types.

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**6.3. For the unhoused population, is there any consideration of transitional centers as unique from traditional residential locations?\***

The BDO is restricted to the definitions included in NTIA's BEAD notice of funding opportunity. Further questions about unhoused populations and transitional centers can be sent to [digital.opportunity@cpa.texas.gov](mailto:digital.opportunity@cpa.texas.gov) for consideration.

**6.4. Will the BDO provide marketing and communication tools for local entities?\***

Yes, the BDO has prepared an outreach toolkit that will be available in both English and Spanish for local community organizations and governments to use to encourage resident input. The toolkit will be circulated to the local community organizations and governments. Interested parties can request a copy of the toolkit by emailing [broadband@cpa.texas.gov](mailto:broadband@cpa.texas.gov).

**6.5. If a local government or community organization plans to submit challenges on behalf of residents, will bulk submissions be allowed?\***

No, challenges submitted on behalf of residents will need to be submitted for single locations only.

**6.6. When will the Resident Input Tool be available for residents?\***

The resident input tool is now accessible at [www.register.broadband.texas.gov](http://www.register.broadband.texas.gov) and open for submissions. Resident are encouraged to submit their input promptly, as the submission deadline is Dec. 17, 2024.

**6.7. Can residents submit inputs if the location is already eligible for BEAD funding?\***

No, resident inputs cannot be submitted for locations already deemed eligible for BEAD funding.

**6.8. When can eligible challengers begin submitting challenges on behalf of residents?\***

The Resident Input Tool is live and active now. Residents have until Dec. 17, 2024, to submit input. Eligible challengers can review resident submissions after they have registered and been approved for access to the portal. Eligible challengers can begin submitting challenges on behalf of residents starting Dec. 3, 2024.

**6.9. Can eligible challengers view all resident inputs or only those from their respective counties?\***

Eligible challengers can view all resident inputs and may choose to submit on behalf of all counties or just one.