

GREAT Program

Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology Program

APPLICATION MATERIALS SUMMARY

The online application process will require the following materials to be submitted for consideration of each proposal. Additional explanation or details are offered within the online form itself. The following items are a summary of what is required as part of the GREAT Grant Application process. The detailed instructions are included in this guidance document.

- A. Applicant Information, Statement of Qualification, & Partnerships**
- B. Project Area & Locations to be Served**
- C. Technical Report**
- D. Project Costs, Budget and Match**
- E. Proposed Services, Marketing, Adoption & Community Support**

APPLICATION MATERIALS – DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS

A. Applicant Information, Statement of Qualification & Partnerships must include the following:

- The identity of the applicant and its qualifications and experience with the deployment of broadband.
- The identity of any Partners or Affiliates, as defined at the beginning of these guidelines under Partnerships.

B. Project Area & Locations to be Served must include the following:

- A map and description of the area to be served and the number of homes, businesses, community anchor points, agricultural operations, or agricultural processing facilities that will have access to broadband as a result of the project.
- The corresponding Census Block numbers (for tracking purposes only)
- The description should note any businesses with 31 or more full-time employees

Map and Description of the Area to be Served

One of the scoring components for the grant program is the number of households to be served, unserved businesses to be served, or agricultural operations or processing facilities that will have access to broadband as a result of the project. In addition, for the proposed area to be served, the infrastructure cost *per household* must be provided.

BIO is requesting granular data on areas to be served in order to: confirm that the project is serving eligible locations, to ensure that granular data is available for scoring purposes, and to be able to track progress and completion of the project if awarded. **See data submission requirements below.** The Application requires *both a map*, and description, of the area(s) to be served. Applicants can submit data in the following ways, or in combination.

Address-Level Data

Data may be submitted as address points of locations where service will be made available through the grant build. All addresses should include latitude/longitude coordinates.

Street Segment Data

Data may be submitted as street segments, with the expectation that any street segment submitted corresponds to service being available throughout/ or along the segment.

Polygons

Data may be submitted as a polygon (or census block), with locations to be served mapped within the polygon, or with the expectation that the polygon submitted corresponds to service being available to *all* locations within the polygon.

Polygons and Addresses

For applicants that may not have geo-coding capabilities, the service area(s) can be submitted as a simple polygon/outline of the service area, with a list of addresses to be served within the polygon attached for detail.

Fixed Wireless Providers

For applicants proposing a fixed wireless solution, the service area(s) can be submitted as a polygon of the propagation area, with the targeted number of homes provided. Wireless Internet Service Providers (WISPs) utilizing fixed wireless may not know which exact households can be served within an area due to line-of-sight challenges that can require rigorous on-the-ground field work. Nevertheless, the number of households for which service will be made available through the grant funds, in the defined service area, must be provided.

Digital Format of Data

Locations of households projected to be served must be digitally submitted in a GIS shapefile, CAD (.dwg), or MicroStation (.dgn) file format georeferenced to the North Carolina State Plane NAD83 (US Feet) coordinate system. If another coordinate system is used, this must be explicitly stated. The files can contain points representing households, street centerlines, or polygons outlining the specific households to be served. CAD drawings must not contain external references. Any service to businesses, community anchor institutions or agricultural facilities should also be referenced.

Project scoring will consider the number of households served by a project, and the cost-per-household. As part of the grant agreement, applicants awarded grants will be required to build to the number of households stated in their Application.

Protesting the application based on the proposed service area

The GREAT legislation includes a provision for protests of areas deemed eligible to be served. Within this process applications must be made publicly-available for a 30-day period. The Broadband Infrastructure Office prefers data submitted to be as granular as possible for ensuring accuracy of eligible areas and monitoring of deployments. The Office also recognizes the need for information to be publicly-accessible as part of the legislated protest process. Applicants are encouraged to evaluate these considerations in determining how they submit their data.

- **An assessment of the current level of broadband access in the proposed deployment area.**

The Application requires an assessment of the current level of broadband access in the proposed deployment area. Within this section of the Application, the applicant should describe what they believe to be the current level of service within the area and provide the data source or methodology used to capture this information. Raw data can be submitted as part of the assessment as well.

- **An attestation to the Broadband Infrastructure Office that the proposed project area is eligible.** The Attestation statement and required signature is included as part of the Application Form. Broadband service provider applicants are required to sign this statement to signify that the area(s) identified within the Application are eligible, to the best of their knowledge.

C. Technical Report

- Applicants should include a detailed narrative report on the technology/technologies to be utilized and the general deployment plan including the following:
 - Narrative explaining the general design of the broadband deployment project.
 - Explanation of current networks and equipment to be leveraged for this project build. For technical plans that require assets from an entity other than the private sector provider, this need for external assets should be generally explained.
 - An explanation tying the number of households, businesses, community anchor points - for which service will be made available - back to the technical design or upgrades. For example, if a telco is upgrading service to particular households, the number of households to be served should tie back to a specific listed site – a remote exchange/DSLAM, etc. For cable – this could be a pedestal; for fixed wireless - an access point, etc. This information will be used to verify deployment progress in the case of an award.
 - Fixed wireless providers should explain the frequency/frequencies to be utilized for the deployment, whether the deployment will use licensed or unlicensed technologies, as well as mitigation of line-of-sight challenges (which should tie to the number of households to be served).
 - An explanation of the scalability of the broadband infrastructure to be deployed for higher broadband speeds in the future.
- For applications involving Partnerships, a brief narrative explaining how the partnership or affiliation will facilitate deployment and reduce cost per housing unit by utilizing the resources, facilities, and infrastructure of the partner (as relevant). For applications where the nonprofit or not-for-profit partner provides only financial support – that information can be documented in the Budget section of the application.
- Applicants should include a general explanation of whether work will be performed in-house or through contractors.
- The proposed construction timeline and duration of the Deployment Project Period. The Deployment Project Period is the time from execution of the Grant Agreement to the time that service is available to the targeted households and businesses under the grant.

D. Project Costs, Budget & Match

- Project Budget (see summary template below) and Budget Narrative
- The total cost of the project.
- For the proposed area to be served, the infrastructure cost per household for the project, and how this was calculated.
- The amount to be funded by the applicant or another source funds (including sample scoring sheet with calculation of match required, plus applicant source of funds).

Eligible Project Costs

Costs directly related to the construction of broadband infrastructure for the extension of broadband service for an eligible project, including installation, acquiring or updating easements, equipment, fiber, construction, backhaul infrastructure, and testing costs. The term does not include overhead or administrative costs. Project Funds (GREAT funds and match) should be utilized for the deployment phase of the project, not the subsequent years of service. Eligible costs do not include recurring operating costs or maintenance, or sales and marketing of services.

<u>Project Budget Summary</u>	<u>Requested GREAT Funds</u>	<u>Matching Funds</u>	<u>Total Project Funds</u>
Easements (one-time fees)			
Materials (fiber, equipment, etc.)			
Construction/Installation			
Testing			
Other (please specify) _____			
Other (please specify) _____			
Other (please specify) _____			

The Project Budget should reflect all Eligible Project Costs to be funded through the GREAT Program within each Application – including State GREAT Funds and Match. The total Project Budget should then be split between GREAT grant funds and applicant match, per the relevant match requirement percentage.

Example:

Broadband Project for Tier One County
Total Project Budget: \$1,000,000
Required Match: 45%
GREAT Funds Requested: \$550,000
Match Provided by Applicant: \$450,000

Note regarding middle mile and backhaul:

Per the GREAT legislation, “eligible projects do not include middle mile, backhaul, and other similar projects not directed at broadband service to end users”. However, the eligible costs do allow for construction/equipment of “backhaul infrastructure”. While costs for building backhaul infrastructure can be included in the project budget, the build must facilitate last-mile service towards specific end-users and cannot include recurring operating costs.

Note regarding towers:

While costs for building towers are not expressly ineligible, applicants are encouraged to utilize vertical assets already in place or easily installed (poles, small monopoles, repeaters, etc.), as much as possible. Including new macro towers in a project may create lengthy construction timelines, especially around land purchase and environmental regulations.

Matching Funds

Grant recipients are required to provide matching funds as part of the GREAT program. Eligible Project Costs for matching funds are the same as Eligible Projects Costs for the GREAT State grant funds. **The match amount is determined by the application scoring.** A sample scoring sheet is provided as part of the application. Applicants may use the scoring sheet to calculate their estimate of the required match. Upon scoring and awarding of grant funds, the Broadband Infrastructure Office will confirm match requirements with applicants as part of the award process.

Matching Requirements are as follows:

<u>Application Score</u>	<u>Matching Requirement</u>
7.0 points or less	55%
Greater than 7.0, but less than 14.0 points	50%
Greater than 14.0, but less than 21.0 points	45%
21.0 points or greater	35%

Up to fifty percent (50%) of matching funds paid by the grant recipient may be comprised of third-party funding and other grant programs. Universal Service Fund, Connect America Fund, or other grants awarded for broadband expansion through a separate State or federal program shall not be used for the required matching funds, S.L. 2018-5. The source of the matching funds should be included in the applicant’s budget narrative.

Proof of Funding Availability

Grant recipients must submit a signed letter of funding availability from each source of funds committed for the project. The total of all funding commitment letters must meet or exceed the total project cost. If loan or other grant funds are pledged, a loan/grant commitment letter from each source of funds must be included. During the review process, the NC BIO may also request financial statements, audits, or pro formas to ensure financial and organizational strength regarding the ability to successfully meet the terms of the grant requirements and the ability to meet the potential for repayment of grant funds.

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E. Proposed Services, Marketing, Adoption & Community Support

- A description of services to be provided, including the proposed upstream and downstream broadband speeds to be delivered and any applicable data caps. Any applicant proposing a data cap below 150 Gigabytes of usage per month shall provide justification to the satisfaction of the BIO that the proposed cap is in the public interest and consistent with industry standards.
- The proposed advertised speed to be marketed to end users (broken out by households, businesses, and community anchor institutions).
- A plan to encourage users to connect that incorporates, at a minimum, community education forums, multimedia advertising, and marketing programs.
- Evidence of support for the project from citizens, local government, businesses, and institutions in the community. The applicant may provide letters or other correspondence from citizens, units of local government, businesses, and institutions in the community that supports this project.