GREAT Program

Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology Program

SUMMARY

The North Carolina Department of Information Technology's Broadband Infrastructure Office (BIO), as authorized under S.L. 2018-5, is providing grants to private providers of broadband services to facilitate the deployment of broadband service to unserved areas of the State. The Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) Program funds eligible projects in economically distressed Tier One counties. The enclosed application materials and program guidelines are for use when applying for the GREAT Program and have been developed based on the enabling legislation for the GREAT Program within S.L. 2018-5. Applicants will apply for funding through the Department of Information Technology's online grants management system.

The GREAT program is designed to expedite the terrestrial deployment of broadband within unserved areas of Tier One counties, with transmission speeds of at least 10 Mbps download, and at least one Mbps upload. Deployment of speeds of 25:3 Mbps or greater is encouraged.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Eligible Recipient – Eligible grant recipients are private providers of broadband services, including cooperatively organized entities, or any partnerships formed between cooperatively organized entities, private providers, or any combination thereof, on or after January 1, 2018.

Partnerships – Projects involving partnership or affiliation by a private provider with a nonprofit or not-for-profit, or a for-profit subsidiary of either; that is required to enable certain partnership activities, or any combination thereof, where the partnership or affiliation will facilitate deployment and reduce cost per housing unit by utilizing the resources, facilities, and infrastructure of the partner or where the nonprofit or not-for-profit partner provides only financial support.

Eligible Economically Distressed County – A county designated as a development Tier One area as defined in N.C.G.S. 143B-473.08.
Department of Commerce's 2018 Tier Designations can be found here:
https://www.nccommerce.com/research-publications/incentive-reports/county-tier-designations

Eligible Project - An eligible project is a discrete and specific project located in an unserved area of an economically distressed county (Tier One) seeking to provide broadband service to homes, businesses, and community anchor points not currently served. Eligible projects do not include middle mile, backhaul, and other similar projects not directed at broadband service to end users.

Broadband Service - For the purposes of the GREAT Program, terrestrially deployed Internet access service with transmission speeds of at least 10 Mbps download and at least One Mbps upload (10:1). Terrestrially deployed technologies are generally understood to include: wired infrastructure (such as fiber, coax, copper) and fixed wireless.

<u>Unserved Area</u> - A designated geographic area that is presently without access to broadband service, meaning terrestrially deployed Internet access service with transmission speeds of at least 10 Mbps download and at least 1 Mbps upload, offered by a wireline or fixed wireless provider. *See definition for ineligible areas.

<u>Ineligible Areas</u>
Areas where a private provider has been designated to receive funds through other State or federally funded programs designed specifically for broadband deployment shall be considered served if such funding is intended to result in construction of broadband in the area within 18 months.
Project areas comprised of census blocks, or portions thereof, within which a broadband provider is receiving State or federal matching funds to deploy technologically neutral scalable broadband service within the next 18 months are ineligible for the GREAT Program. Failure on the part of a provider to submit the listing of census blocks to the BIO by the required annual deadlines shall result in those areas being eligible for inclusion under this program during the relevant program year. The deadline for this program year was August 30, 2018.

See further information in *Section II- Identifying Eligible Areas*.

<u>Awards</u>
- One application should be submitted for each county in which deployment is being proposed. An application should encompass any/all proposed services within that county. A broadband provider should submit multiple applications if applying to deploy in multiple counties.
- A single grant award shall not exceed $2,000,000.
- No more than one grant may be awarded per fiscal year for a project in any one economically distressed county.
- Matching funds are required (*see detail in Section III – Application Materials*).

The primary award requirements are detailed under *Section VI - Grant Awards / Award Agreements*. Awarded projects require a five-year service agreement.

<u>Deployment Project Period</u> – For awarded projects, 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. The preferred timeline for this construction period is completion within one year from the execution of the award. However, exact timelines for deployment schedules are subject to negotiation during execution of the grant agreement.

<u>5-Year Service Agreement</u> –For awarded projects, all executed agreements are required to have a 5-Year Service Agreement. This term is understood to mean a five-year grant agreement. Following the deployment phase, service must continue to be made available to those households and businesses for the remainder of the five-year agreement period.

ELIGIBLE & INELIGIBLE PROJECT AREAS

Eligible Areas:
Eligible Areas for the GREAT program are areas without Internet service providing transmission speeds of 10 Mbps download, 1 Mbps upload (with wireline or fixed wireless). As defined in conjunction with the Eligible Project and Broadband Service definitions of the legislation, these are the areas that are considered "unserved" and are targeted for deployment under this grant program.

Ineligible Areas:
Locations that already have Internet service *available* to them at transmission speeds of 10 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload (with wireline or fixed wireless) are ineligible. In addition, areas where a private provider has been designated to receive funds through other State or federally funded programs are ineligible as follows: these areas (census blocks) targeted by other programs shall be considered "served" if such funding is intended to result in construction of broadband in the area in the upcoming 18 months. Failure on the part of a provider to submit the relevant listing of census blocks by August 30, 2018 results in those areas being eligible for funding for the current program year.

Identifying Your Project Areas:
The GREAT program is designed somewhat like the USDA's Community Connect Program in that applicants identify the areas they wish to apply to serve. Applicants can apply for funding to serve census blocks, or *portions* of census blocks. The application offers a range of ways to provide location data for projects (address-level, street segment, polygons, etc.). See *Section III. Application Materials* for more detailed information on submission of locations where service is proposed to be made available.

While the Broadband Infrastructure Office (BIO) cannot provide a listing of all households or businesses within the state that have broadband service of less than 10:1 Mbps available, the Office encourages applicants to consider the following sources of information as a starting point for identifying project areas.

- *Tier One Counties*

All locations must be located within Tier One counties as designated by the NC Department of Commerce for 2018:
https://www.nccommerce.com/research-publications/incentive-reports/county-tier-designations

- *Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Form 477 Data*
  Census blocks with less than 10/1 Mbps (entire blocks)

Broadband availability data is collected twice per year by the Federal Communications Commission, from providers of facilities-based broadband services through their Form 477 data submissions. This data is granular to the census block level. If one household within a census block is shown as being served, the full census block is reflected as being a served block. Census blocks that are entirely unserved with advertised speeds of 10:1 Mbps can be identified through the FCC Form 477 data. These

census blocks have been mapped by BIO using the latest FCC data (July 2017) and are available for download for grant planning purposes.

- *Ineligible Areas*

The areas ineligible for GREAT due to current/upcoming broadband deployments utilizing State or federal funds have been mapped by BIO and are made available for download to denote ineligible census blocks. This information is compiled based on provider submissions to BIO (as of August 30, 2018).

- *Connect America Fund (CAF) Deployments*

In October 2018 the Universal Service Administrative Company released a new online map - the Connect America Fund Broadband Map. The federal Connect America Fund (CAF) is the largest source of federal funding in North Carolina for broadband deployment. Four providers in North Carolina have received Connect America Funds for Phase II (AT&T, CenturyLink, Frontier Communications and Windstream), with Wilkes Telephone Membership Corporation also recently receiving an award for the CAF Phase II Auction 903. In addition, some rate-of-return carriers in the state have participated in the CAF Broadband Loop Support program.

The online CAF Broadband Map may be useful in understanding where CAF cost model and BLS locations have been deployed. The map is current through 2017 in terms of deployments. CAF location data is downloadable from USAC's CAF map.

- o Connect America Fund Broadband Map:
  https://data.usac.org/publicreports/caf-map/

In addition, the BIO has mapped the original CAF-eligible areas to inform interested applicants of where the CAF-eligible areas are, within the Tier One counties. To be CAF-eligible, an area generally had to have had service of less than 10:1 Mbps and meet the CAF cost model, at the time the areas were designated. The map layers demonstrate which areas were identified by the FCC as having those thresholds.

- GREAT Grant Online Mapping Tool

The Broadband Infrastructure Office, with its partner the Center for Geographic Information & Analysis, has created the GREAT Grant Online Mapping Tool to provide in one place, many of these various data sets discussed above. This online map does not contain all eligible locations for GREAT but can be used as a foundation to begin planning potential service areas, especially for potential applicants that may not have GIS capabilities to map these datasets themselves.

- o The GREAT Grant Online Mapping Tool can be found here:
  https://bit.ly/2CGdpZ9

- *Downloadable Shapefiles*

Many of the data sets described above that can be downloaded as shapefiles can be found here:
From BIO GREAT webpage:
   o Census block boundaries in the Tier One counties
   o Census blocks with less than 10/1 Mbps, according to the FCC Form 477 Data (entire blocks)
   o Ineligible blocks for 2018
   o CAF Eligible Areas (original CAF eligible areas from FCC)
      https://www.ncbroadband.gov/great-grant-getting-started/

From USAC CAF Broadband Map:

   o Location data for CAF builds to-date
      https://data.usac.org/publicreports/caf-map/

- *Other Data*

This program allows applicants to apply for funding to serve census blocks *OR portions* of census blocks where current speeds are less than 10:1. Applicants may choose to utilize other sources of data, including field data, as part of their planning and application development, to identify unserved portions of census blocks. Applicants may also submit applications for areas where transmission speeds are less than 10:1 Mbps, if data is available to support differences between advertised and transmission speeds.

Application Review & Protest Process
Once all applications are received they will be publicly posted. The Protest Process will provide an additional check to verify eligible areas. In addition, the BIO will conduct its own review on eligible areas for relevant proposals, based on data available, and may perform field tests when necessary.

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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**

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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:
    - o Narrative explaining the general design of the broadband deployment project.
    - o 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.
    - o 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.
    - o 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).
    - o 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 <u>per household</u> 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.

Project Budget Summary		Requested GREAT Funds		Matching Funds		Total Project Funds
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:

Application Score	Matching Requirement
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.

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.

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PROTESTS

The enacting legislation requires the Department of Information Technology to make all applications publicly available by posting on the department's website for a period of at least 30 days prior to award. During the 30-day period, any interested party may submit comments to the Secretary of DIT concerning any pending application. A provider of broadband services may submit a protest of any application on the grounds the proposed project covers an area that is not an eligible area as defined within the GREAT Program. *This is the only criteria by which an application may be challenged.*

Protests shall be submitted in writing, accompanied by all relevant supporting documentation, and shall be considered by the Office in connection with the review of the application. An applicant will be notified of a protest. NCBIO may request additional information from the applicant.

A protest may be denied, granted or granted in part. If a protest is granted in part the applicant will be notified and allowed 7 days to amend their application for the purposes of revising the proposed project area and budget (which may affect their score). For applications with filed protests, the Secretary of DIT shall issue a written decision to the protesting party at least 15 days prior to the approval of that application.

Details on timeline of the Protest window, where to view applications, how to submit comments, or for broadband providers to submit protests, will be available on the DIT/BIO's GREAT Grant Program Webpage https://www.ncbroadband.gov/Great-Grant/.

Applications will be posted as .pdfs, with corresponding digital files posted as well.

Protests will require the following information:
- Name of Broadband Provider Submitting Protest
- Contact Information for Protest Submission (Name, phone, email)
- Application Being Protested (Name of Broadband Provider Applicant, Plus County)
- A list of census blocks that contain the area(s) being disputed.
- A narrative of why the areas within these blocks are believed to be in dispute - as to being an eligible area for the GREAT Program.
- Supporting Documentation: Inclusion of detail and supporting documentation on why the locations within these service areas are believed to be ineligible. Protests should be specific and speak to specific locations within proposed service areas.

Note: One Protest Form should be submitted for each Application/County being disputed. The list of census blocks in question is required for tracking purposes, however, more granular information on the specific service area in question must be presented with the Protest.

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SCORING

The GREAT Program is a competitive grant program. Applications shall be scored based upon a system that awards a single point for criteria considered to be the minimum level for the provision of broadband service with additional points awarded to criteria that exceed minimum levels. **Applications receiving the highest score shall receive priority status for the awarding of grants.**

Project Applications will be scored as follows:

- Partnership – Projects involving partnership or affiliation by a private provider with a nonprofit or not-for-profit , or a for-profit subsidiary of either that is required to enable certain partnership activities, or any combination thereof, shall be given five points in their application score where it is documented to the satisfaction of the BIO that the partnership or affiliation will facilitate deployment and reduce cost per housing unit by utilizing the resources, facilities, and infrastructure of the partner or where the nonprofit or not-for-profit partner provides only financial support.

Partnership	Points
Documented Partnership per definition	5

- Unserved Households (HH) – The BIO shall give additional points to projects based upon the estimated number of unserved households within the eligible economically distressed county, as determined by the most recent data published by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) or any other information available to the BIO. Points shall be given to projects that will be located in counties with estimated unserved households as follows:

Unserved HH	Points
700 or less	1
700 – 1999	2
2000 and over	3

The BIO has utilized FCC data to estimate the number of unserved households per county. This data is available for use and can be found in the Appendix.

- Households (HH) To Be Served – The BIO shall give additional points to projects that will provide broadband service to unserved households within the eligible economically distressed county, as determined by the most recent data of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) or any other information available to the BIO. Points shall be given to projects that will serve unserved households within the project area as follows:

Unserved HH to be Served	Points
Under 150	1
150-249	2
250 and up	3

  The definition for households is as follows:
  Household – A house, apartment, single room, or other group of rooms, if occupied or intended for occupancy as separate living quarters, and where the occupants to not live with any other persons in the structure and there is direct access from the outside or through a common hall.

  Applicants should ensure that their applications clearly outline the number of unserved households where service will be made available through an eligible project.

- Unserved businesses – The BIO shall give additional points to projects that will provide broadband service to unserved businesses located within the eligible economically distressed county, as determined by the most recent data published by the Federal Communications Commission or any other information available to the BIO. Points shall be given to projects that serve unserved businesses within the project area as follows:

Unserved Business	Points
Between 1 and 4	1
5 and 10	2
a) more than 10 b) Agricultural operation, Agricultural Processing Facility or c) Business w/31 or more f/t employees	3

  Applicants should ensure that their applications clearly outline the number of unserved businesses, agricultural operations and agricultural processing facilities, where service will be made available through an eligible project. Businesses with 31 or more full-time employees should be noted.

- Cost Per Household – The BIO shall give additional points to projects that minimize the infrastructure cost of the proposed project per household, based upon information available to the BIO. Points shall be given to projects based upon the estimated cost per household as follows:

  For projects proposed in the *Piedmont or *Coastal Plain Regions:

Estimated Cost per Household	Partnership Using Infrastructure	Private Provider Only
Up to $1700	4	9
$1701-2200	3	8

  Piedmont Region – The portion of the State lying west of and including Franklin, Lee, Moore, Richmond, Wake and Warren Counties, to the eastern boundaries of Alleghany, Burke, Caldwell, Rutherford and Wilkes Counties.

  Coastal Plain Region – The portion of the State lying east of the eastern boundaries of Franklin, Lee, Moore, Wake and Warren Counties.

  For projects located in the *Mountain Region:

Estimated Cost per Household	Partnership Using Infrastructure	Private Provider Only
Up to $2500	4	9
$2501-3300	3	8

  Mountain Region – The portion of the State lying west of and including Alleghany, Burke, Caldwell, Rutherford, and Wilkes Counties.

- Base Speed Multiplier - Projects that will *provide minimum download and minimum upload speeds shall have the aggregate points given under items 1-5, multiplied by a factor at the level indicated below:

Minimum Speeds	Score Multiplier
10:1 Mbps	0.95
25:3 Mbps or greater	1.35

  Note: "Provide" a particular speed is understood to mean that this calculation should be based on the planned "typical speeds" to be provided, not the advertised speeds.

Community Broadband Planning – The BIO shall also award an additional point to projects where a county has a Community Broadband Planning Playbook that meets the guidelines established by the BIO. A county must meet (and be able to document) *at least* <u>one</u> of the following criteria to receive a point for the Community Broadband Planning Playbook scoring item:

- A county must have a current Broadband Planning Committee;
- A county must have undertaken some type of active broadband project or study within the past two years (since summer of 2016);
- A county official or county leader must have worked actively with the Broadband Infrastructure Office in the past year (since summer 2017) to begin developing a broadband planning committee or broadband goals;
- A county official must have reviewed the BIO's Community Broadband Planning Playbook, since it's release in Spring 2018, with the goal of implementing a playbook process for the county, and having conveyed this goal to the Broadband Infrastructure Office seeking assistance from the Office's Technical Assistance Team.

Community Broadband Planning Playbook	Points
Planning	1

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Appendix – Estimate of Unserved Households per County
Compiled for Scoring for GREAT Program

These numbers are estimates based on the latest FCC Data available; and are being provided for informational purposes, for use by applicants in estimating their scoring to determine match requirements.

Number of households in census blocks with less than 10 Mbps download and Mbps upload according to the July 2017 FCC form 477 data release

County	Estimated # of Unserved Households	County	Estimated # of Unserved Households
ALLEGHANY	531	LENOIR	1,313
ANSON	451	MACON	3,078
ASHE	286	MARTIN	1,433
BERTIE	1,154	MCDOWELL	2,019
BLADEN	1,144	MITCHELL	197
CAMDEN	22	MONTGOMERY	3,448
CASWELL	4,087	NORTHAMPTON	1,349
CHEROKEE	2,691	PASQUOTANK	7
CHOWAN	257	PERQUIMANS	265
CLAY	1,170	PERSON	1,245
COLUMBUS	2,684	RICHMOND	102
EDGECOMBE	967	ROBESON	4,964
GATES	723	SCOTLAND	15
GRAHAM	1,171	SWAIN	1,576
GREENE	1,928	TYRRELL	175
HALIFAX	1,636	VANCE	248
HERTFORD	1,232	WARREN	1,220
HYDE	1,193	WASHINGTON	328
JACKSON	4,382	YADKIN	134
JONES	693	YANCEY	132

GRANT AWARD / AWARD AGREEMENT

Applications receiving the highest score shall receive priority status for the awarding of grants. Applicants awarded a grant(s) shall enter into grant award agreement(s) with the NC Department of Information Technology/Broadband Infrastructure Office. The agreement shall contain the elements outlined in the Application Materials.

Once projects are deployed, and service is available to end-users, the award requires a five-year service period. The target for the program is to have all construction completed, deployments in place, and service available, within one-year of having the award agreement executed. However, exact timelines for deployment schedules will be negotiated during execution of the grant agreement. Grant recipients will be required to offer the proposed advertised minimum download and minimum upload speeds identified in the project application for the duration of the five-year service agreement.

The agreement shall contain a provision governing the timeline and minimum requirements and thresholds for disbursement of grant funds measured by the progress of the project. Grant funds shall be disbursed only upon verification by the BIO that the terms of the agreement have been fulfilled according to the progress milestones contained in the agreement.

At project completion, the grant recipient shall certify and provide to the BIO evidence consistent with Federal Communications Commission attestation that the proposed minimum upstream and minimum downstream broadband speeds identified in the application guidelines, and for which a base speed multiplier was awarded per the scoring guidelines, are available throughout the project area prior to any end user connections.

Grant recipients shall submit to the BIO, an annual report for each funded project for the duration of the agreement. The report shall include a summary of the items contained in the grant agreement and a level of attainment for each and shall also include:

- The number of households, businesses, agriculture operations, and community anchor points that have broadband access, available to them, as a result of the project;

- The percentage of end users in the project area who have access to broadband service and actually subscribe to the service; and

- The average monthly subscription cost for broadband service in the project area.

In addition:

- At least annually, a grant recipient shall provide to the office evidence consistent with the FCC attestation that the grant recipient is making available the proposed advertised speed, or a faster speed, as contained in the grant agreement.
- For the duration of the agreement, grant recipients shall disclose any changes to data caps for the project area that differ from the data caps in the grant application.
- Additional reporting requirements as negotiated during execution of the grant agreement.

A grant recipient shall forfeit the amount of the grant received if it fails to perform, in material respect the obligations established in the agreement. Grant recipients that fail to provide the minimum advertised connection speed for which a reduction in matching funds was applied, shall forfeit the amount. A grant recipient that forfeits amounts disbursed through the GREAT program is liable for the amount disbursed plus interest at a rate established in the General Statutes, computed from the date of disbursement. The number of subscribers that subscribe to broadband services offered by the provider in the project area is not a measure of performance under the agreement.