

Washington's Internet for All

Washington State Broadband Office
(WSBO)

Dave Pringle

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY DIRECTOR

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Washington State
Department of
Commerce

We strengthen communities



HOUSING AND
HOMELESSNESS



INFRASTRUCTURE AND
BROADBAND



SMALL BUSINESS
ASSISTANCE



ENERGY



PLANNING AND TECH
ASSISTANCE



COMMUNITY SERVICES



CRIME VICTIMS AND
PUBLIC SAFETY



ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

What is BEAD?

- **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD)**
 - National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
- The BEAD program is working to get all Americans online by funding partnerships to **build infrastructure** where needed and increase high-speed internet adoption.
 - The federal program provides over \$42 billion for infrastructure planning and implementation nationwide.
 - Washington will receive more than \$1.2 billion in funding.

Who does BEAD serve?

- The BEAD program is open to cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, public-private partnerships, private companies, public or private utilities, public utility districts, and local and tribal governments.
- Projects must serve areas identified and approved through the federal BEAD process.
- Commerce posted BEAD construction project area maps that detail unserved and underserved locations across the state eligible for BEAD funding.

Where are we in the BEAD process?

- **Washington Round 1 BEAD Application closed on Jan. 31, 2025**
 - 307 applications received
 - 77% of BEAD-eligible locations received at least one bid, representing 79% of Broadband Service Locations (BSLs)
 - 49% of BEAD-eligible locations received two or more bids
- **Washington Round 2 BEAD Application closed on May 16, 2025**
 - 202 applications received
 - 70% of BEAD-eligible project areas received at least one bid, representing 70% of Broadband Service Locations (BSLs)
 - 32% of BEAD-eligible project areas received two or more bids
 - Four counties did not receive an application in Round 2 including: Grant, Grays Harbor, Wahkiakum and Yakima.
- **WSBO planned final Round 3 **delayed** anticipating new federal guidance**

Updated federal BEAD guidance - removes previous program elements

- Technology Neutrality – removes fiber preference
- Labor, Employment and Workforce Requirements – no longer required
- Climate Change Resilience Analysis – no longer required
- Open Access/ Net Neutrality – no longer required
- Local Coordination/Stakeholder Engagement – no longer required, but already completed in Washington
- Non-Traditional Broadband Providers - preference no longer given
 - municipalities are an example of a non-traditional provider
- Low-Cost Service Plans – no longer required

Updated federal BEAD guidance (cont.)

- Community Anchor Institution (CAI) definition narrowed to statutory definition in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)
- Non-Deployment Funding – all non-deployment approvals rescinded
 - No impact to Washington as all funding is dedicated to infrastructure
- NEPA Permitting Guidance – Expedited federal permitting process, federal approval within two weeks
- Unlicensed Fixed Wireless Providers (UFWP) – Now an eligible subgrantee
- [View the complete notice](#)

Expedited BEAD Application

- WSBO hosted a webinar on June 18 to explain how the federal changes will impact Washington's process
 - Continue to connect through July office hours and applicant support
- All previous provisional awards from Round 1&2 are canceled
- New Application Round Requirements
 - "Benefit of the Bargain" – 30-day window, planned to open first week of July pending grant application finalization
- Applicants may choose to have their previous proposal entered but also adapt it to reflect new federal policies

Expedited BEAD Review

- All project areas are available for application
- Direct negotiating may still be needed if a county doesn't receive an application
- Final proposal due to NTIA for **review September 4**
- Federal review and approval to occur 90 days following receipt of final proposal

WSBO Director

- WSBO Director Aaron Wheeler's last day will be June 27
 - Wheeler will be pursuing his passion of IT and education with the Suquamish Tribe
 - [Commerce released the news last week](#)
- We anticipate naming an interim director soon while we begin the recruitment process for a permanent director.



WSBO's Role

- In recognition that broadband access is critical to the residents of Washington, RCW 43.330.532 established the Washington State Broadband Office (WSBO) and tasked it with promoting access and achieving download/upload speed goals for residences, businesses and communities.
- WSBO's mission is to enrich the lives of all Washington state residents and businesses by ensuring they have access to affordable, reliable, redundant and scalable/future proof broadband technologies ensuring the economic viability of both urban and rural Washington state today and into the future

Thank you!

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