



ConnectMT ARPA Lightning Round FAQs

October 27, 2025

1. Will all eligible locations be served with the remaining funds?

The Montana Broadband Office (MBO) will attempt to serve as many locations as possible using the remaining available funds based on the applications received.

2. In reference to the Professional Engineer (PE) certification, you mentioned the certification should be provided by a "third-party engineer." Is it correct that we cannot use an internal resource if we have a Montana-certified PE?

Before a contract can be executed, the detailed design plan submission must be certified by a currently licensed Montana Professional Engineer. This engineer can be a resource in your organization as long as they meet that requirement.

Note: If you cannot provide this certification with your application, be prepared to provide it in the negotiation process if selected for award. (See, [ConnectMT ARPA Program Lightning Round Guide](#), p. 26.)

3. The Application Guide specifies that we need a Professional Engineer certification by a Montana Professional Engineer. Montana has reciprocal arrangements with other states and our engineers were licensed in Colorado and North Dakota. Both engineers are displayed as licensed in a license look-up search of the Montana database. Can you confirm that this qualifies as acceptable for the ARPA Lightning Round?

Yes. MBO will accept PE licenses that are approved by the State of Montana's Department of Labor & Industry. The license must be able to be validated using the look-up function on the Department of Labor & Industry's website.

4. Will projects receive a bonus in score for serving locations with speeds of 1 Gbps symmetrical?

No, there is no bonus in scoring for providing 1 Gbps symmetrical service. However, if all locations are served by 100 Mbps symmetrical, the application will receive additional points. (See, [ConnectMT ARPA Program Lightning Round Guide](#), p. 30.)

5. Can a company submit multiple applications?

Yes, the same organization can submit multiple applications.

However, an organization should not submit multiple applications with overlapping project areas.



6. Can you confirm that providers can draw their project areas any way they want, compared to using Census Block Groups (CBG) for BEAD?

Yes, providers can include any number of locations to define the project area in their application. The Lightning Round does not have project area units defined by CBGs, like Montana's BEAD application.

7. Would a previous ARPA subgrantee that has successfully completed its project receive any preference or higher scoring for its performance, compared to a competitive subgrantee that has not fulfilled the original ARPA contract?

Previous participation in ARPA or successful completion of an ARPA project is not a scoring criterion for the Lightning Round.

8. Can a municipality provide match through waiving permitting fees?

In the initial round of ARPA funding, MBO required cash match only. The Lightning Round is consistent with that approach.

9. Does ARPA allow for "pre-award match," like BEAD (for example, infrastructure that is necessary for the ARPA project and was built prior to the Lightning Round)?

In the initial round of ARPA funding, MBO required cash match only. The Lightning Round is consistent with that approach.

10. Would using keywords such as "telehealth" in an application and the frequency of their use be used to determine the score?

No, keywords are not used for scoring. Instead, applicants wishing to earn points related to telehealth should answer question LR6.03 in the affirmative and submit a completed template with evidence in questions LR6.03a and LR6.03b. (See, [ConnectMT ARPA Program Lightning Round Guide](#), p. 34.)

11. Will the WIC criterion be scored based on State data or other data provided by the applicant?

MBO will score this criterion using State data, not data provided by the applicant.



12. Is there a definition of “low-income residents?”

While CPF does not define a specific national low-income threshold, it prioritizes funding for projects that serve: (1) Low- and moderate-income communities; (2) Economically distressed areas; and (3) Rural and Tribal communities. Using proxy programs to determine eligibility like the former Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which defines low-income eligibility as households with income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, or those participating in qualifying assistance programs (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid, SSI), is a good approach to model.

13. If a small number of addresses are “sandwiched” between preliminarily awarded BEAD areas, will these addresses be scored differently?

No, there is no bonus in scoring for selecting locations in proximity to areas awarded through BEAD. The Lightning Round uses the same scoring criteria as the previous ARPA round.

14. What fiscal year should the audited financials be for? We have financials ready for FY22/23, but not FY24.

Please submit your most recent audited financials. FY22 or FY23 is acceptable. If FY24 audit results become available after the application deadline, but before the Communications Advisory Commission meeting on November 25, 2025, then the applicant should contact ConnectMT for guidance. Further, if an applicant is awarded then they will be expected to update MBO as soon as FY24 audit results are available.

15. What is the timeline for distributing ARPA funds to Lightning Round awardees?

MBO’s goal is to announce awards at the November 25, 2025, Communications Advisory Commission (CAC) meeting. MBO will then award projects and distribute initial funds in November/December 2025 so awarded providers have as much time as possible to finish design, permitting, and materials procurement before the 2026 construction season.

16. Does ARPA have set milestones or tranches for reimbursement? Or is the reimbursement process on a monthly cadence?

The ConnectMT ARPA Program does not have set milestones for reimbursement. As under the existing ARPA contracts, reimbursement requests should be submitted no more than every 30 days. (See, [*ConnectMT Reimbursement Quick Tips*](#), p. 1.)



17. If a previous ARPA winner were awarded in the Lightning Round, would the contract be amended or will a new contract be executed?

MBO expects to award new contracts but may amend existing contracts if the project scope makes it expedient for MBO and the provider to do so.

18. Some of the eligible locations are directly adjacent to our provisionally awarded BEAD project area and we anticipate we will be able to serve these locations as a result of the BEAD award. Aside from submitting an application, is there a better method for us to communicate that those locations are or will be served as a result of those commitments?

No. NTIA has provided explicit direction to the State of Montana that these locations do not qualify for BEAD. Further, the State is not allowed to associate proposed service to these locations with the BEAD program. Therefore, these locations are not eligible to be removed from ARPA due to BEAD commitments.

19. For the ARPA Lightning Round, can we get points for providing free service to an identified healthcare facility if the location is either currently served or under an enforceable commitment (including locations preliminarily awarded through BEAD)? Does the service have to be in place by September 30, 2026, or can it qualify if it will be built by BEAD in 2027 or 2028? In other words, can we gain the points with a commitment to 3 years' free service once service is available?

Applicants are encouraged to review the [Lightning Round Technical Assistance Webinar](#) for further clarification on the scoring criteria and how points will be awarded. The Additional Community Commitments points will be evaluated separately based on the evidence provided. Any healthcare facility or community center location named must be an eligible location in the Lightning Round

Applicants wishing to receive points for providing new service to an identified health care location that provides telehealth services will need to complete the [Healthcare Location Template](#) and provide sufficient evidence from the health care facility that telehealth services will be provided through the facility. The location must be considered "served" as defined by the FCC as of September 30, 2026.

Applicants wishing to receive points for providing free service to a community center will need to complete the [Community Center Identification Template](#) and provide sufficient evidence and agreement from the community center that the community center will receive free service for three years from the connection date, which must occur by September 30, 2026.