



Lightning Round Application

TA Webinar
10/20/2025

ARPA Lightning Round

Additional Round of Subgrantee Selection

\$17,524,407 of funds available to be re-allocated

- Must be expended by September 30, 2026

4,040 eligible locations

- The BEAD program has provided “universal” coverage to all “BEAD-eligible” locations in Montana, removing eligibility for most of the BSLs in the state

Treasury has allowed DOA to run another round of subgrantee selection

- Treasury is requiring DOA to use the same scoring criteria and technical requirements as used in previous rounds of subgrantee selection
- The awards are still subject to the program end date of September 30, 2026

DOA will be able to leverage and modify the materials developed for BEAD to run an efficient and quick round of ARPA subgrantee selection



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Program Structure

The ARPA program differs from BEAD

- The available ~\$17.5 million are CPF program funds
- Must be expended by September 30, 2026

ARPA “Lightning Round” will prioritize fiber

- Projects shall be end-to-end fiber

Matching funds

- A minimum of 20% match is required
- Additional points will be awarded to projects with higher match

Awards are based on score not coverage area

- Applications will be ranked and stacked based on score
- Awards will be made to the highest-ranking applications, in descending order until the funds are expended



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Application

The Lightning Round Application will be open for 2 weeks

- Opens 10/20 and will close at 5pm MT on 11/3

Applications shall be submitted via AmpliFund ([link](#))

- This is the same portal used in the various BEAD rounds
- The application has been streamlined to match the ARPA program requirements

Prequalification

- Specific questions pertaining to organizational qualifications have been omitted from the Lightning Round Application to further streamline the requirements
- Applicants who have prequalified for BEAD or have an existing ARPA award have satisfied these specific requirements
- Applicants who do not have a previous ARPA award and have not prequalified for BEAD can contact DOA (connectmt@mt.gov) to obtain the additional information required to qualify for ARPA



ARPA Lightning Round

Application Structure

Lightning Round Application

- Project Details
- Section 1: Administrative
- Section 2: Metrics
- Section 3: Financial Capability
- Section 4: Organizational and Managerial Capacity
- Section 5: Project Plan
- Section 6: Additional Community Commitments
- Section 7: Additional Information and Curing



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Project Plan Section

Section Requirements

- Locations List
- Technical Narrative
- Network Design (Routes)
- Logical Network Design (Diagram)
- Cost Estimate
- Timeline
- Montana PE Certification*
- (Optional) Performance Template



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Application Materials

Application materials are posted on the ConnectMT website

- <https://connectmt.mt.gov/>

Posted materials include:

- The detailed application guide
- The required application templates
- Access instructions for the State Broadband Map

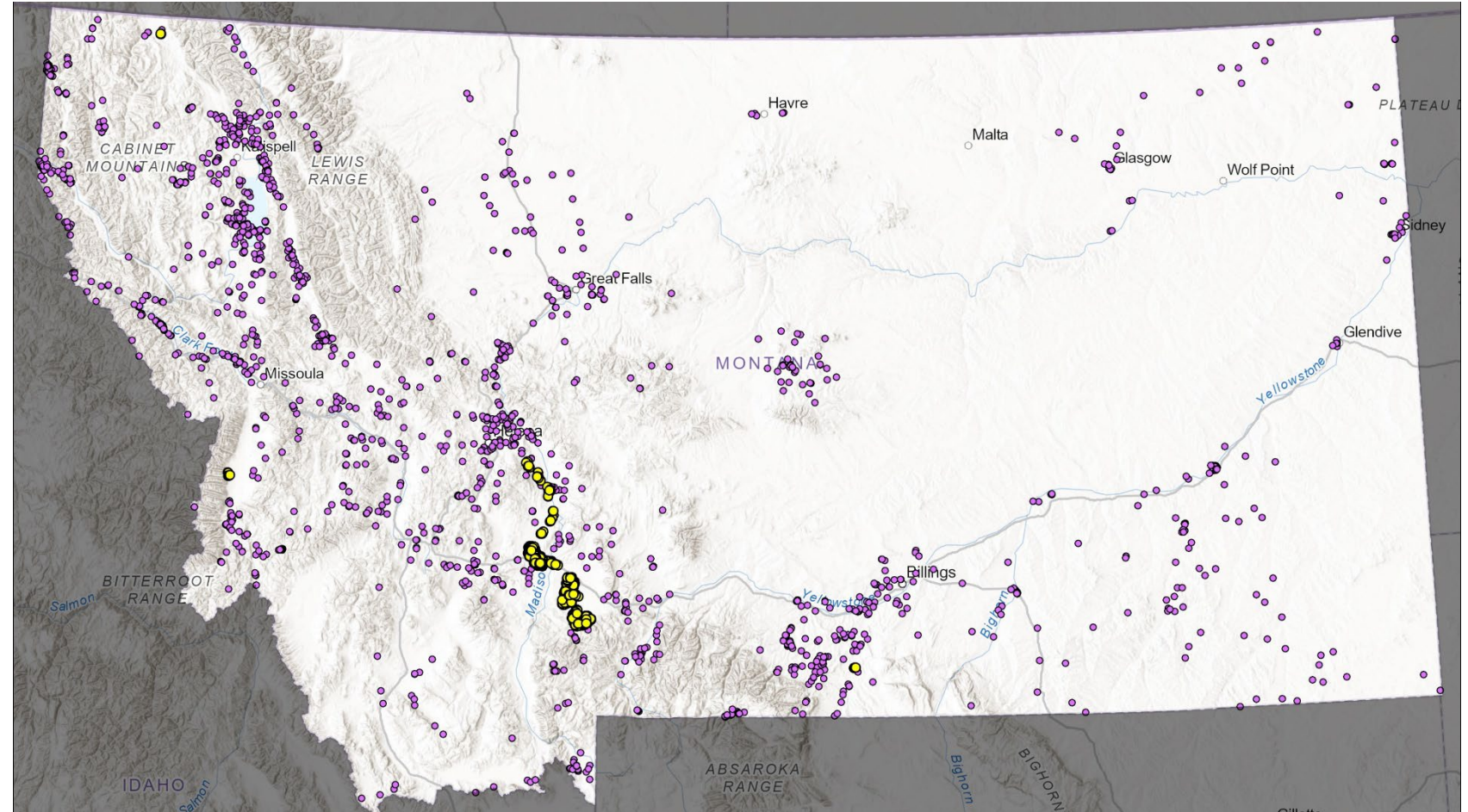


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Eligible locations

● **ARPA Default Location**

● **FCC Fabric v6 Location**



ARPA Lightning Round

Scoring Criteria

- **The scoring criteria for the Lightning Round will not be altered from the from the original subgrantee selection process. However, DOA is updating how information is presented and collected to quickly and sufficiently verify responses**
- **ConnectMT ARPA Scoring Rubric (Maximum of 130 Points)**
 - 15 Points: Matching Funds
 - 20 Points: Service Designation of Project Locations
 - 6 Points: Demographics of Project Locations
 - 30 Points: Scalability of Network
 - 5 Points: Speed of Deployment
 - 10 Points: Jobs Created
 - 10 Points: Existing Infrastructure
 - 34 Points: Additional Community Commitments



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Scoring Criteria – Matching Funds

- Applicants will receive up to 10 points for the percentage of matching funds provided, relative to the total project cost
- Applicants will receive up to 5 points for the percentage of matching funds contributed by a local government, tribal entity, or school district, relative to the total project cost

Match %	Points
≥70%	10
≥50% to <70%	7
≥40% to <50%	4
≥20% to <40%	2

Match %	Points
≥30%	5
≥20% to <30%	3
≥10% to <20%	2
≥1% to <10%	1



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Scoring Criteria – Service Designation of Project Locations

- **Applicants will receive up to 20 points based on the percentage of project locations that currently receive broadband service at the following service designations:**
 - Frontier – Receiving speeds less than *4 Mbps Download & 1 Mbps Upload*
 - Unserved – Receiving speeds less than *25 Mbps Download & 10 Mbps Upload*
 - Underserved – Receiving speeds less than *100 Mbps Download & 20 Mbps Upload*

Project Locations Designation	Points
100% Frontier	20
≥50% Frontier or 100% Unserved	15
≥50% Unserved	12
100% Underserved	10



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Scoring Criteria – Demographics of Project Locations

- **Applicants will receive up to 6 points based on the percentage of project locations that meet the following criteria:**
 - Are at or below the poverty level
 - Receiving WIC services
 - Have an unemployment rate above the national average
 - *Receive free or reduced cost school meals*

Project Locations Designation	Points
30% or more of the project's residential locations are at or below poverty level	2
30% or more of the projects residential locations receive WIC	1
The unemployment rate of the locations in the project area is above the national average	2
20% of the project's residential locations are receiving free or reduced cost school meals	1



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Scoring Criteria – Scalability of Network

- **Applicants will receive 30 points for providing 100/100 Mbps service to all project locations and will receive 20 points for any percentage below 100%**
 - Applicants will be required to certify they will provide 100/100 Mbps service
 - Applicants will also be required to submit network details and calculations supporting this claim, similar to the evidence submitted during BEAD to qualify as a priority broadband project



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Scoring Criteria – Speed of Deployment

- **Applicants will receive 5 points for completing their project by September 30, 2026**
 - *The required program deadline ensures all eligible applications will receive full points in this category*



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Scoring Criteria – Jobs Created

- **Applicants will receive 10 points for creating a number of new jobs representing a minimum of 1% growth in the counties of the proposed project**
 - Applicants must provide the number of jobs to be created by the proposed project



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Scoring Criteria – Existing Infrastructure

- **Applicants will receive up to 10 points for leveraging existing fiber optic infrastructure and for obtaining prior access to required public rights-of-way and/or easements**
 - Applicants must certify they meet the necessary criteria to receive points
 - Applicants must also submit any applicable evidence required by the program to receive points

Existing Infrastructure	Points
Project uses existing fiber optic middle mile infrastructure to support deployment	5
Applicant has obtained prior access to the public rights-of-way/easements in the project area	5



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Scoring Criteria – Additional Community Commitments

- **Applicants will receive up to 34 points for any additional commitments that benefit the communities within the project area**
 - Applicants must certify that they meet the necessary criteria to receive points
 - Applicants must also submit any applicable evidence required by the program to receive points

Community Commitments	Points
Provider offers monthly subscriber fees for low-income residents within the project area	2
Project will provide free broadband service for 3 years to an identified community center	2
Project will provide service to an identified health care location that provides telehealth services	10
Project will provide co-location of existing or new facilities for an identified public safety network	10
Provider offers “Open Access” on identified segments of their proposed project deployment	10



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Timeline

- **Pre-application launch (10/1 – 10/16)**
 - Prepare application and guidance materials
 - Publish map of locations for providers
- **October CAC (10/16)**
 - Publicly announce the ARPA Lightning Round of subgrantee selection
- **Application window (10/20 – 11/3)**
 - Technical assistance webinar hosted on 10/20
- **Review applications and assign preliminary awards (11/4 – 11/10)**
- **November CAC (11/19)**
 - Present results to the CAC

