



Montana BEAD Technical Assistance Main Round Overview

August 23, 2024

BEAD PROGRAM OVERVIEW

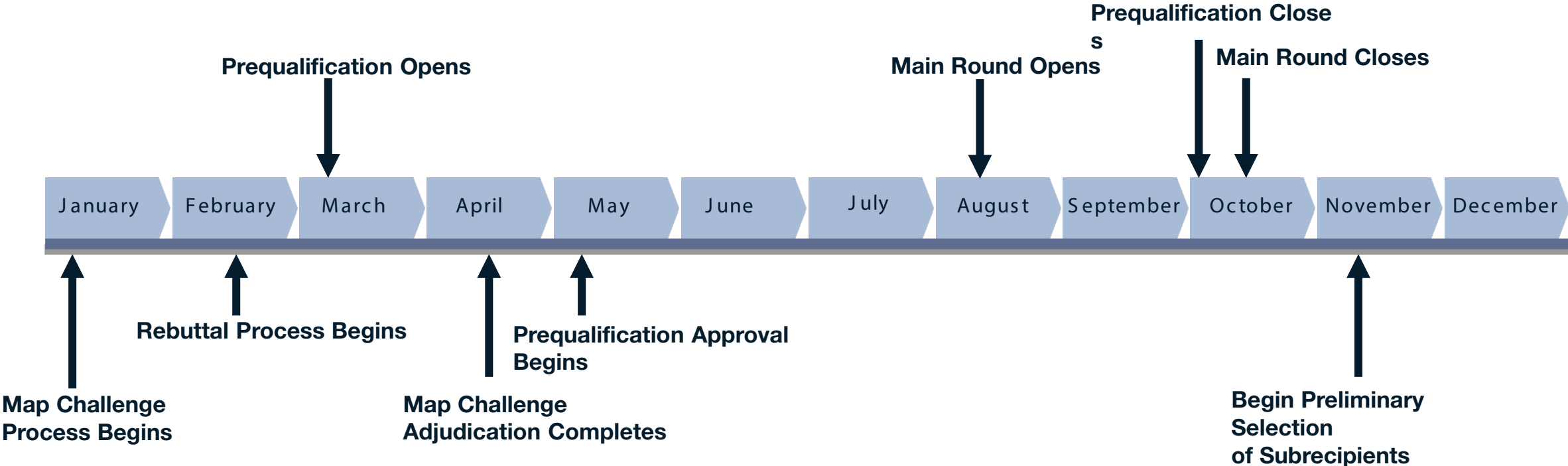
- **The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program is designed to expand high-speed internet access by funding planning, infrastructure deployment, and adoption programs across the country.**
- **The state of Montana (MT) was awarded close to \$629 million in BEAD funding to connect all unserved and underserved locations in the state with reliable and affordable broadband. The ConnectMT Broadband Office will execute the subgrantee selection process across three phases:**
 - **Map Challenge Process: Nonprofits, ISPs, and local governments can submit challenges to the broadband map.**
 - **Prequalification: Applicants will submit materials for prequalification to meet the BEAD minimum eligibility requirements.**
 - **Main Round Application: Once prequalification is completed, applicants will be invited to submit proposals for projects as part of the main round.**

BEAD Program Dates:

- **BEAD Main Round opened Tuesday, August 13, 2024.**
- **BEAD Prequalification Application closes Tuesday, October 1, 2024.**
- **BEAD Main Round Application closes Tuesday, October 15, 2024.**



2024 BEAD PROGRAM TIMELINE



MAIN ROUND OVERVIEW

- **The purpose of the Main Round Application is to allow prequalified applicants to submit detailed project proposals for consideration under the BEAD program.**
- **Subgrantee Eligibility Requirements: To receive BEAD funding, subgrantees must:**
 - **Meet mandated financial requirements;**
 - **Demonstrate capability to provide broadband service in MT;**
 - **Propose a project that will provide 100/20 service to all locations within service area within timeline; and**
 - **Certify ability to comply with all requirements mandated by NTIA and the State of Montana.**

Please Note:

- **To begin the Main Round application, users must first provide information in the Prequalification section of the application.**



MAIN ROUND REQUIREMENTS

- **Eligible Applicants:**
 - Eligible applicants for a BEAD subgrant include cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, public-private partnerships, private companies, public or private utilities, public utility districts, or local governments.
- **Eligible Program Areas:**
 - The ConnectMT Broadband Office has opted to allow applicants to define their proposed broadband project areas consisting of existing Census Block Groups (CBGs).
- **Eligible Program Costs:**
 - The BEAD NOFO (Notice of Funding Opportunity) defines eligible uses of funding in connection with last-mile broadband deployment projects.

Please Note:

- Applicants must propose to provide service to all unserved (less than 25 Mbps) and underserved (between 25/3 Mbps and 100/20 Mbps) Broadband Serviceable Locations (BSLs) in any CBGs they offer.



PRIORITY VS NON-PRIORITY

- **To approach the process holistically, maximize competition, and give the State the most complete view of its service options, priority and non-priority bids will be accepted in tandem in the main round.**
- **Priority Application Project: Applications that will provide service via end-to-end fiber-optic facilities to each end-user premise; these applications will be evaluated first for every project area.**
- **Non-Priority Application Project: Applications that propose a technology solution that does not include a fully fiber solution, which could include HFC, DSL, licensed fixed wireless, or a mix of these technologies.**





Main Round Application Components

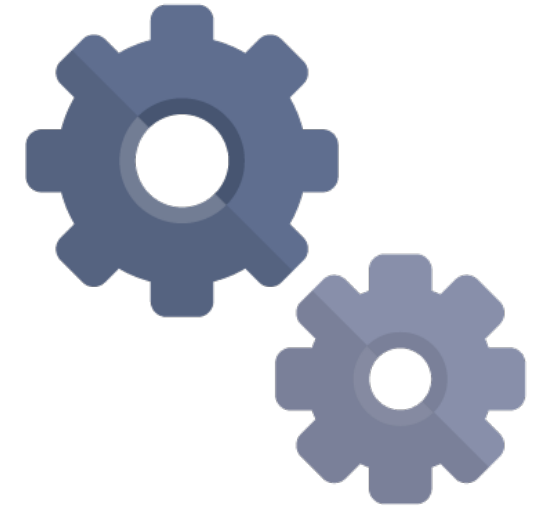
SECTION 1: ADMINISTRATIVE

- **This section of the application includes company details and primary and secondary contact information.**
- **Applicants can provide updated information from the Prequalification application, as necessary.**



SECTION 2: METRICS

- This section of the application requests key metrics for the proposed broadband project:
 - Total project cost,
 - Amount that will be requested as a grant,
 - Amount the applicant will provide as a match.
- The grant request and proposed match should add up to the Total Cost.
 - The match can be cash or in-kind or a mix thereof but must be compliant with eligible expenses, as summarized in the Grant-Eligible Subgrantee Costs subsection of the [Main Round Application Guide](#).
- Proposed Route Miles and/or Estimated Coverage Area.
- Project Description.



SECTION 3: SCORING CRITERIA

- The answers provided will be central to the scoring of the application based on the scoring rubric published in Montana's Initial Proposal Volume II (IPVII Section 2.4.2.c.i) and in Appendix C of the [Main Round Application Guide](#).
- This section includes:
 - BEAD Outlay
 - Affordability
 - Fair labor practices
 - Speed to deployment
 - Unserved areas
 - Existing infrastructure
 - High-cost areas
 - Length of service
 - Locations served

Documents and Templates:

- CBG Template
- Documentation of labor record, policies, and practices
- Documentation justifying length of service
- Geo-located photograph of existing network access point identifiable in lat and long
- Network design drawings



SECTION 4: FINANCIAL CAPABILITY

Applicants will provide project specific financial information and may update documents provided during prequalification, if necessary.

- **Documentation from a third-party financial institution certifying access to funds.**
- **Letter from a bank, credit union, or surety company confirming commitment to issuing an irrevocable standby letter of credit or performance bond.**
- **Business plans and related analyses supporting the long-term viability of the project.**
- **Project level pro forma (templated provided).**
- **Certifications and compliance questions.**



SECTION 5: ORGANIZATIONAL AND MANAGERIAL CAPABILITY

- The organizational and managerial capability section of the Main Round BEAD Application allows applicants to update and submit essential organizational documentation and certifications for their broadband project proposals as well as provide additional programmatic information.
- This section includes:
 - Legal opinion demonstrating capability to carry out funded activities competently and in compliance with applicable laws, including disclosure of any violations or pending court proceedings (in Word or PDF format).
 - Cybersecurity and Supply Chain Risk Management Plans (if not provided during prequalification).
 - Tribal Consent (if applicable).
 - Required certifications.
 - Organizational risk and readiness questions.



BUILDING ON TRIBAL LANDS

- **If an Applicant intends to build on tribal lands during the main round application, an applicant must certify that they have already engaged with tribal authorities and commit that if awarded, they will provide a binding tribal resolution prior to receiving the final award.**
- **An applicant must upload documentation of initiating a tribal consent process or receiving tribal consent from the appropriate tribal authority as required in the BEAD NOFO.**
- **If proposing a project on tribal lands, please contact the tribe directly or reach out to Director Misty Kuhl, Department of Indian Affairs, State of Montana at misty.kuhl@mt.gov and cc the ConnectMTTechAssistance@mt.gov website to facilitate the process of coordinating with tribal leadership.**

Documents and Templates:

- **(If applicable), legally binding tribal resolution certifying consent and approval to build on tribal land (in Word or PDF) or evidence of beginning process of obtaining such documentation.**



SECTION 6: PROJECT STAFFING AND LABOR REQUIREMENTS

- This section of the application focuses on project staffing and subcontracting plans and ensuring workforce qualifications.
- Applicants are required to explain their staffing approach, provide project-specific resumes, detail recruitment plans, assure workforce credentials and compliance with workplace safety, certify personnel qualifications, and outline subcontracting plans.
- Required documents:
 - Project-specific resumes for key personnel involved in the project, demonstrating their qualifications and experience (in PDF format).
 - Relevant certifications required for staff deployment as mandated by state and federal law and reflective of industry best practices (in PDF, Word, or Excel format).
 - Materials that demonstrate compliance with workplace safety (in PDF or Word format).



SECTION 7: PROJECT PLAN

- **The Project Plan centers on the technical aspects and financial planning of the proposed broadband infrastructure project.**
- **Applicants are required to submit a project plan to demonstrate technical capability with respect to the proposed project.**
- **The detailed design plan submission shall be certified and stamped by a currently licensed professional engineer (who can be licensed in any state).**

Documents and Templates:

- **Zipped file of shapefiles illustrating current infrastructure relative to the proposed network design.**
- **PDF file illustrating the network's major components and specifications.**
- **Excel document detailing project costs.**
- **Excel template outlining the project's planning and completion schedule.**
- **PDF file certification demonstrating the networks capability.**
- **Relevant documents certifying technical and financial qualifications.**



SECTION 8: ENVIRONMENTAL AND HISTORICAL COMPLIANCE

- This section contains no questions, only a note on upcoming guidance.
- For NTIA to fulfill the necessary National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA, also commonly referred to as Section 106) requirements, applicants seeking Montana BEAD may need to provide additional information during the review process.
- Additional NEPA guidance is forthcoming from NTIA for how it wants the state to engage on these issues.
- The ConnectMT Broadband Office will follow up as necessary with applicants concerning any questions, unresolved issues, and other concerns, to complete the NEPA/Section 106 review process.

Documents and Templates:

- Please refer to NTIA's BEAD NEPA Resource page for general information about these requirements for BEAD subgrantees. See <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/funding-programs/broadband-equity-access-and-deployment-bead-program#BEADNEPA>



SECTION 9: OWNERSHIP INFORMATION

- **This section provides applicants with the option to update organizational ownership information provided during the prequalification application.**
- **If opting for an update, detailed disclosure is mandated for various ownership aspects, including real parties of interest, stockholders, limited and general partnership members, limited liability company members, indirect ownership interests, and FCC-regulated entities in which the applicant or related parties hold significant stock.**
- **Each disclosure must include comprehensive details such as names, addresses, citizenship, relationship to the company, and percentage of interest held.**



SECTION 10: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND CURING

- This section provides applicants with the option to submit additional information as part of their applications. This section is optional.
- This section allows for applicants to upload:
 - Letters of support
 - Confidential documents
 - (If needed) Curing request information





Other Application Resources

APPLICATION TEMPLATES AND MATERIALS

- There are a number of materials available on the ConnectMT website to assist in the development of your application:
 - **Main Round Application Guide**
 - **CBG Spreadsheet Template**
 - **Pro Forma Template**
 - **Model Letter of Credit**
 - **Sample Legal Opinion**
 - **Logical Diagram Example**
 - **Project Cost Reduction Template**
 - **Project Cost Submission Template**
 - **Project Cost Submission Example**
 - **Project Timeline Template**
 - **Fixed Wireless Design Spreadsheet**
 - **Professional Engineer Certification Sample**
 - **Initial Reference Funding Benchmark**
 - **Draft Grant Agreement and Exhibits**
 - **Interim Challenge Results (master lists of eligible locations)**



WHAT IS BENCHMARKING?

- **Benchmark Reference Price:** A reference price set for each Census Block Group (CBG) for the provision of broadband to all unserved and underserved Broadband Serviceable Locations within the CBG.
- **Set by the State,** the benchmark is used as an objective reference against which to score applications, incentivizing minimum BEAD outlays per CBG.
- **The reference funding benchmarks do not represent the actual cost for an ISP to deploy broadband service to CBGs, and ISP bids can be above or below the benchmarks based on factors such as existing infrastructure, business plans, and expected competition.**



REFERENCE FUNDING BENCHMARK

Information	Description
Purpose	The reference funding benchmark calculated for each CBG primarily serves as an objective reference against which individual applications can be scored equitably.
Notes	If a CBG in the accompanying dataset does not have a "benchmark" value, there are no eligible BSLs in the CBG.
Version	Preliminary Data
Publish Date	Thursday, July 18, 2024
Summary Statistics	Description
Eligible Locations	There are 65,167 eligible locations (unserved and underserved) for the purposes of the BEAD program.
CBGs	520 of 900 CBGs in the state of MT have eligible BSLs
Data Field	Description
cbg_id	Census Block Group ID
county_name	County associated with the CBG
benchmark	Reference Funding Benchmark for the CBG. This value is used as part of the application scoring to calculate the BEAD outlay.
high_cost_cbg	Indicates CBGs that are designated high cost by NTIA. These CBGs do not require the 25% match.
num_bsl_unserved	Number of Broadband Serviceable Locations unserved in the CBG.
num_bsl_underserved	Number of Broadband Serviceable Locations underserved in the CBG.
num_cai_unserved	Number of Community Anchor Institutions unserved in the CBG.
num_cai_underserved	Number of Community Anchor Institutions underserved in the CBG.
tribal_intersect	Indicates if the CBG intersects with Federally defined tribal lands (tribal block groups). Applicants are reminded to confirm if proposed projects in these CBGs intersect tribal land and to follow Tribal Consent guidelines if applicable.

Reference Funding Benchmarking Spreadsheet:

- Located under the Internet Service Provider Information Page.
- <https://connectmt.mt.gov/IIJA/Internet-Service-Provider-Information>
- This first sheet serves as a key to what is found on the Reference Funding Benchmarking dataset.
- The data will be updated following the final Challenge Process Approval.



REFERENCE FUNDING BENCHMARK

cbg_id	county_name	benchmark
300650001001	Musselshell County	
300359404002	Glacier County	
300410401001	Hill County	\$ 178,800.55
300530001001	Lincoln County	\$ 4,262,345.34
300530004013	Lincoln County	\$ 164,707.82
300670004002	Park County	
300670004003	Park County	\$ 133,500.00
300650001002	Musselshell County	
300670004005	Park County	
300670004006	Park County	
300490001001	Lewis and Clark County	\$ 3,407,901.32
300670005002	Park County	\$ 11,888,723.29
300439622021	Jefferson County	\$ 4,972,794.07
300530005001	Lincoln County	\$ 18,869.49
300690001001	Petroleum County	
300439622022	Jefferson County	\$ 3,663,430.68
300530005002	Lincoln County	\$ 217,029.45
300310005021	Gallatin County	\$ 519,000.00
300439622023	Jefferson County	\$ 310,016.86
300479403061	Lake County	\$ 539,597.83

Reference Funding Benchmarking Spreadsheet:

- This data sheet includes a breakdown of each CBG including their county, benchmark price, number of high-cost locations, unserved and underserved locations (BSLs and CAIs).



BROADBAND AVAILABILITY MAP

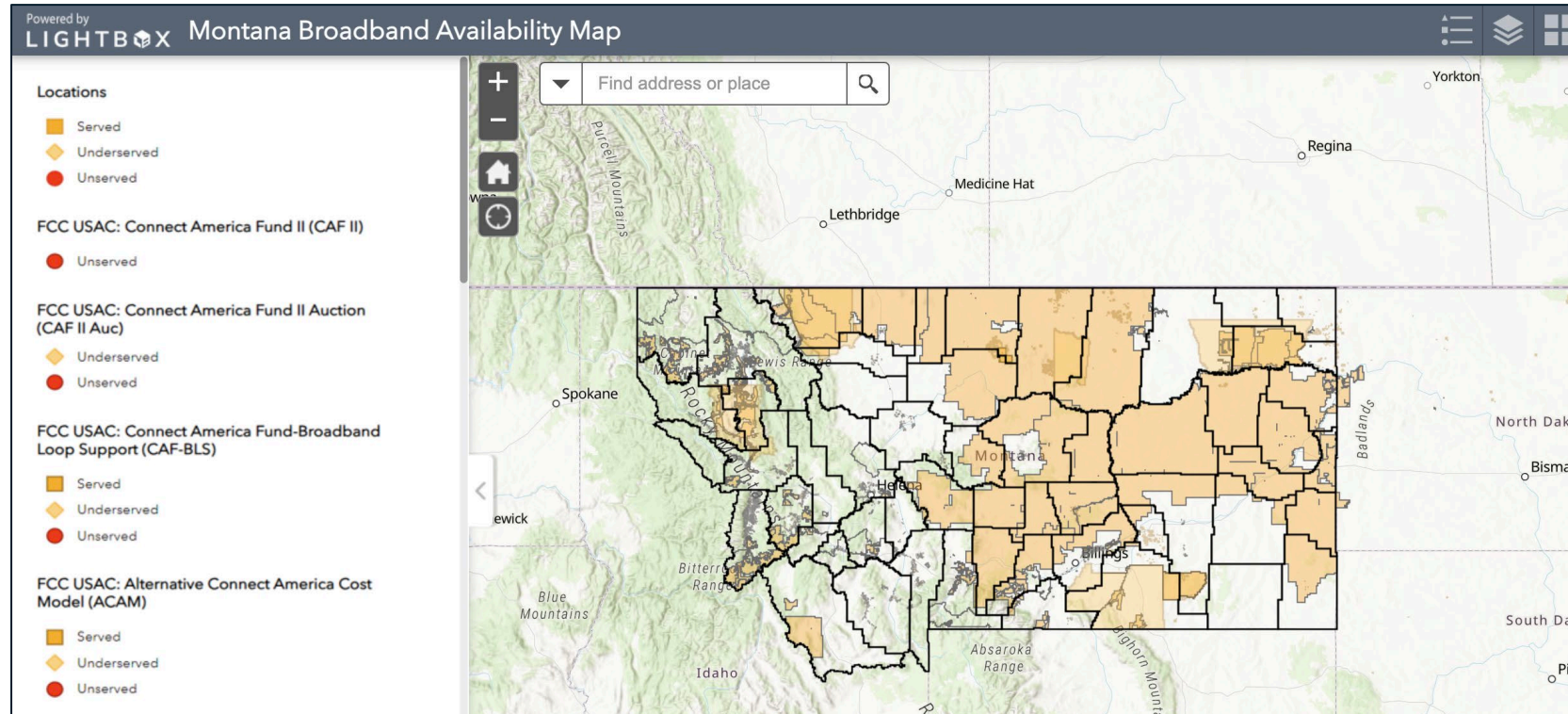
- **The Broadband Availability Map is the outcome of Montana's BEAD Challenge process, and it identifies which locations within Census Block Groups (CBGs) are eligible for funding under the BEAD program.**
- **Each CBG outlines the number of served, unserved, and underserved locations, the total number of locations, the benchmarking reference price, and what percentage of the CBG is eligible for BEAD funding.**
- **This map is a resource for applicants as they prepare their applications for the BEAD program.**

How to access the Broadband Availability Map:

- **Visit**
<https://connectmt.mt.gov/IIJA/IIJA-Map>
- **Select the State Broadband Availability Map.**
- **The Map is publicly available.**
- **If you are an ISP and would like to download data, you need to register with the state to access the BEAD Application Map.**



BROADBAND AVAILABILITY MAP



Understanding the Map:

- This map identifies which locations within census block groups (CBGs) are eligible for funding under the BEAD program.
- Each CBG outlines the number of served, unserved, and underserved locations, the total number of locations, the benchmarking reference price, and what percentage of the CBG is eligible for BEAD funding.
- Here is a link to the [Broadband Map Technical Assistance Webinar](#) which explains in detail how to use the maps.



UPCOMING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Upcoming Webinars		
Topic	Date	Time
Overview	Friday, August 23, 2024	11 am – 12pm MT
Scoring	Tuesday, August 27, 2024	11 am – 12pm MT
Financial Requirements	Friday, September 6, 2024	11 am – 12pm MT
Technical Requirements	Tuesday, September 10, 2024	11 am – 12pm MT
Programmatic Requirements	Friday, September 20, 2024	11 am – 12pm MT
Q&A Part One	Friday, September 27, 2024	11 am – 12pm MT
Q&A Part Two	Friday, October 04, 2024	11 am – 12pm MT
Q&A Part Three	Tuesday, October 08, 2024	11 am – 12pm MT

Where to find webinar links:

- All webinar dates, times, and links to register can be found at <https://connectmt.mt.gov/Events/Upcoming>.
- All webinars are recorded and posted on the ConnectMT website.

****All dates are estimated and subject to change, please reference ConnectMT for any updates****



MAIN ROUND OVERVIEW Q&A



Q&A



PROGRAM RESOURCES

BEAD Program Information: <https://connectmt.mt.gov>

Initial Proposal Volumes 1 and 2: <https://connectmt.mt.gov/IIJA/Funding>

Frequently Asked Questions: <https://connectmt.mt.gov/IIJA/FAQ>

Technical Assistance Email: ConnectMTTechAssistance@mt.gov

Moriah Keller - Broadband Coordinator

- Representing the State of Montana
- moriah.keller@mt.gov
- 406-444-4099

Thom Szucs – Grants Contracts Coordinator

- Grants Contracts Coordinator
- thomas.szucs2@mt.gov
- 406-444-3393

