



Montana Broadband Communications Advisory Commission Meeting

October 16, 2025

Discussion Topics

October 2025 Commission Meeting:

- BEAD Program Update
- ARPA Program Update
 - Differences between BEAD and ARPA
 - Background
 - Status
 - Lightning Round
- Public Comment



BEAD Program Update

Final Proposal Submission:

- MBO submitted the Final Proposal materials to NTIA on September 3, 2025.

NTIA Curing Process:

- Finalizing the curing of the Final Proposal materials in coordination with NTIA.

Timeline Expectations:

- NTIA continues to project a 90-day turnaround for Final Proposal approvals.

Grant Agreements and Post Award Activities:

- Preparing updated draft grant agreement, reimbursement policy, and post award monitoring and compliance procedures. As updates are available, they will be posted to ConnectMT website.



Differences Between BEAD and ARPA

	BEAD	ARPA
Federal Agency	NTIA	US Treasury
Federal Involvement	Heavy, Prescriptive	Light, Non-Defined
Technology Priority	Fiber, HFC, Fixed Wireless, LEO	Fiber
Program Structure	Universal Coverage, Awards Based on Cost	ISP Defined Project Areas, Awards Based on Score
Governing Documents	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act BEAD NOFO BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice Numerous Guidance Documents	American Rescue Plan Act Montana SB 297 Montana HB 632



SB 297: ConnectMT Act / HB 632: ARPA

SB 297

- Enacted in 2021 Session, sponsored by Senator Jason Ellsworth.
- Created the State's first broadband grant program to support broadband deployment.
- Established definitions and scoring for broadband projects.

HB 632

- Governed all American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars for Montana.
- Broadband a priority for all federal ARPA dollars administered by the U.S. Treasury.
- Provided ~\$310M in funding to support broadband deployment.
- Established the Communications Advisory Commission to oversee ARPA funding deployment.



SB 297: ConnectMT Act (Continued)

Key Definitions:

- **Eligible Provider:** authorization to do business in the State, has demonstrated that it has technical, financial, and managerial resources and experience to provide broadband service or other communications service to customers in the state.
- **Frontier:** no or extremely limited terrestrial broadband service.
- **Underserved area:** where any of the delivery points have no access to service offered with a download speed range of less than 100/20.
- **Unserved area:** where at least 10% of the points have no access to at least 25/10 service.



ConnectMT ARPA Program Outcomes

Program awards were announced in 2022:

- The end of the period of performance for the ARPA Program is December 31, 2026
- Subgrantees must complete their projects by September 30, 2026

~\$310 Million in grant funds were awarded:

- From a combination of CPF and SLFRF program funds

56 Awards, 16 different subrecipients:

- The CAC implemented an award cap, limiting the amount of funds given to a single awardee to 35% of the ARPA funds
- The CAC also passed a motion to allow DOA to award unallocated/defaulted funds to the “next-in-line” applications that were not awarded during subgrantee selection process

~60,000 locations served and 2000+ miles of fiber deployment



ConnectMT ARPA Status Update

Project Closeouts:

- ~ 25% of the ARPA projects will be fully closed out by December 31, 2025
- ~80% of the ARPA projects will be fully closed out by the end of Q2 2026
- All remaining ARPA projects are on pace to be closed out by the September 30, 2026

4 of the 56 awarded projects will not be completed :

- 100% of the awarded funding for those projects is available for re-allocation

1 project has received a partial scope reduction:

- A portion of that project's awarded funding is available for re-allocation

~ \$17.5M of funds available to be re-allocated:

- Must be expended by September 30, 2026



ARPA Lightning Round

DOA no longer has viable “next-in-line” projects to award:

- Previously unawarded projects are outdated (*3 years since application submissions*)
- The BEAD program has provided “universal” coverage to all BEAD-eligible locations in Montana removing those originally proposed locations

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 ARPA subgrantee selection
- The awards are still subject to the program end date of September 30, 2026

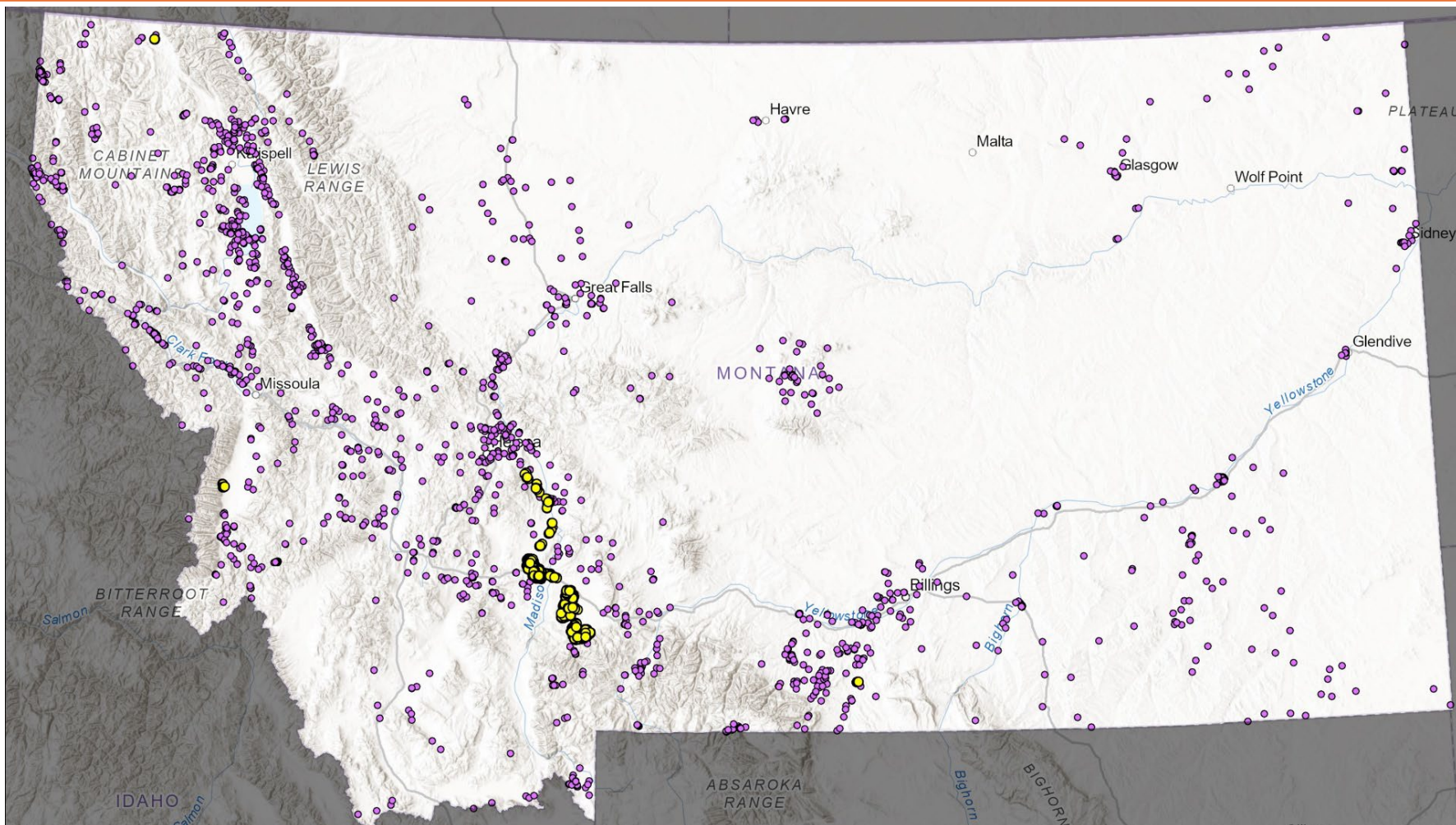
DOA will be able to leverage and modify the materials developed in BEAD to run an efficient and quick round of ARPA subgrantee selection.

Post BEAD awards, Montana has 4,040 BSLs eligible for ARPA funding:

- 2,017 BSL from defaulted ARPA projects
- 2,023 BSL eligible from BDC Map Fabric v6, but not allowed in BEAD by the NTIA



ARPA Lightning Round Eligible Locations



ARPA Lightning Round Scoring Criteria

The scoring criteria for the lightning round will not be altered from the original subgrantee selection process. However, DOA will update 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



ARPA Lightning Round Timeline

Pre-Application Launch (10/1 – 10/17):

- Prepare application and guidance materials
- Publish map of locations for providers

October CAC (10/16):

- Seek approval from the CAC to initiate the “Lightning Round” of ARPA subgrantee selection

Application Window (10/20 – 11/3):

- Technical assistance webinar to be hosted at 1:00 PM MT on October 20, 2025

Review applications and assign preliminary awards (11/4 – 11/10)

November CAC (11/19):

- Present results to the CAC





Public Comment