Montana BEAD Technical Assistance Negotiation Process

September 27, 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 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:

  o **Map Challenge Process**: Nonprofits, ISPs, and local governments can submit challenges to the broadband map.

  o **Prequalification**: Applicants will submit materials for prequalification to meet the BEAD minimum eligibility requirements.

  o **Main Round Application**: Once prequalification is completed, applicants will be invited to submit proposals for projects as part of the main round.
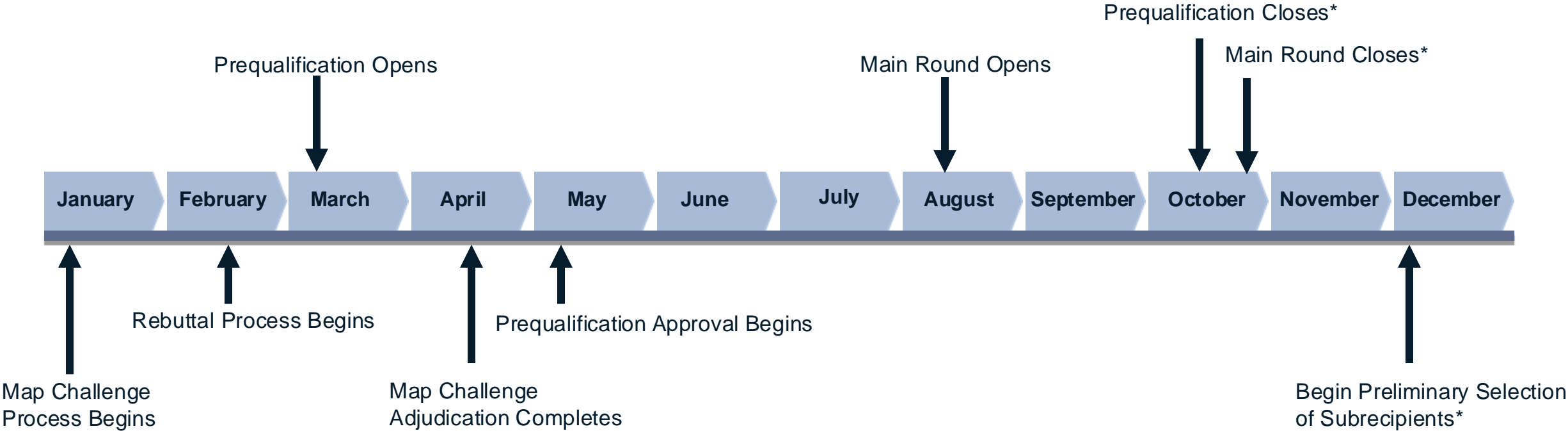
BEAD Program Dates:
- BEAD Main Round opened Tuesday, August 13, 2024.
- BEAD Main Round Application closes three weeks after the challenge results are approved by NTIA.

2024 BEAD PROGRAM TIMELINE

NOTE: Main Round Closure subject to NTIA Challenge Results Approval.

Prequalification Closes*

Prequalification Opens

Main Round Opens

Main Round Closes*

| January | February | March | April | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December |

Rebuttal Process Begins

Prequalification Approval Begins

Map Challenge Process Begins

Map Challenge Adjudication Completes

Begin Preliminary Selection of Subrecipients*

UPDATED APPLICATION DEADLINE

- As of September 26, 2024, Montana has not received approval of the Challenge Results.

- Montana is committed to ensure that potential applicants have sufficient time to complete applications based on accurate eligible location data.

- Montana will keep Prequalification and Main Round Application portals open three weeks after it receives approval of the Challenge Results.

- Updated preliminary challenge result data has been posted to the ConnectMT website.
  - Reminder: This data is still preliminary and is subject to change. Once approved these lists will be the item of record for BSL and CAI eligibility.
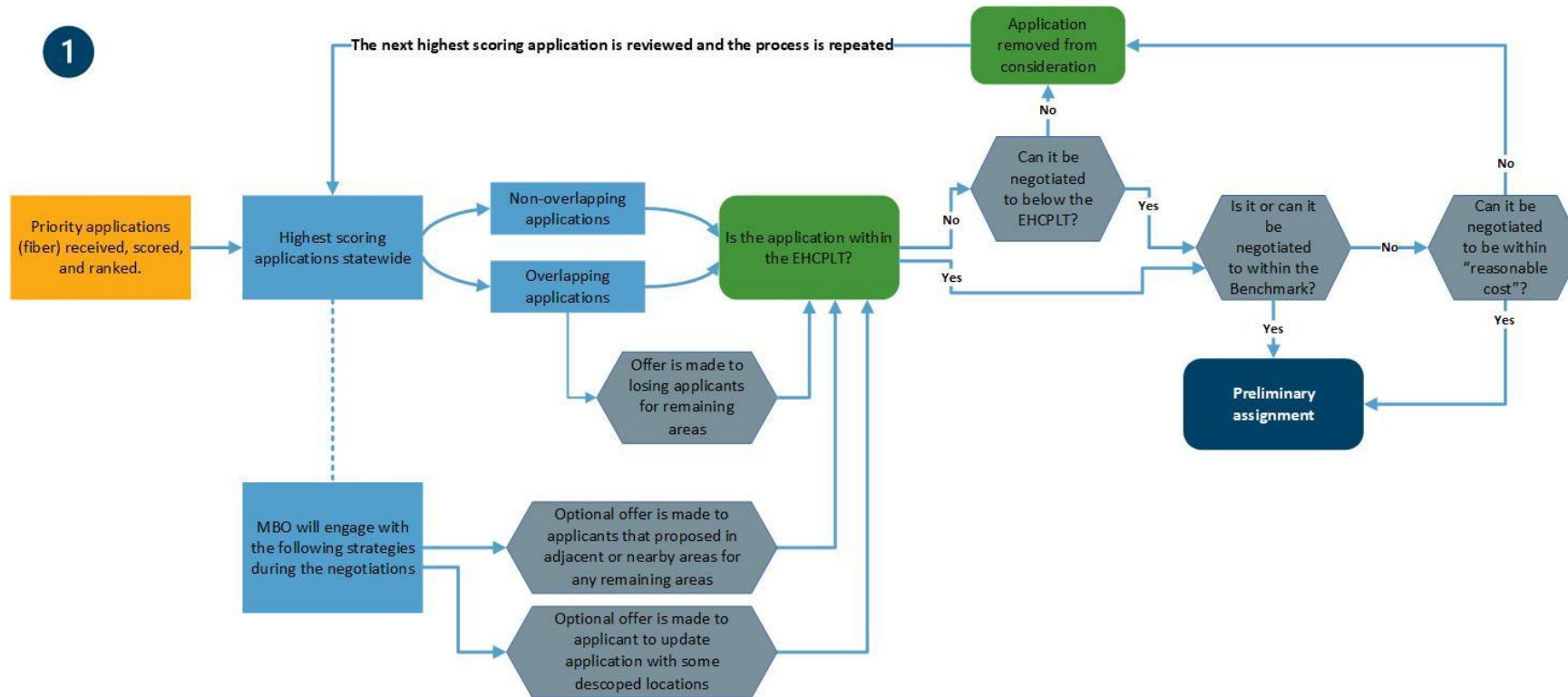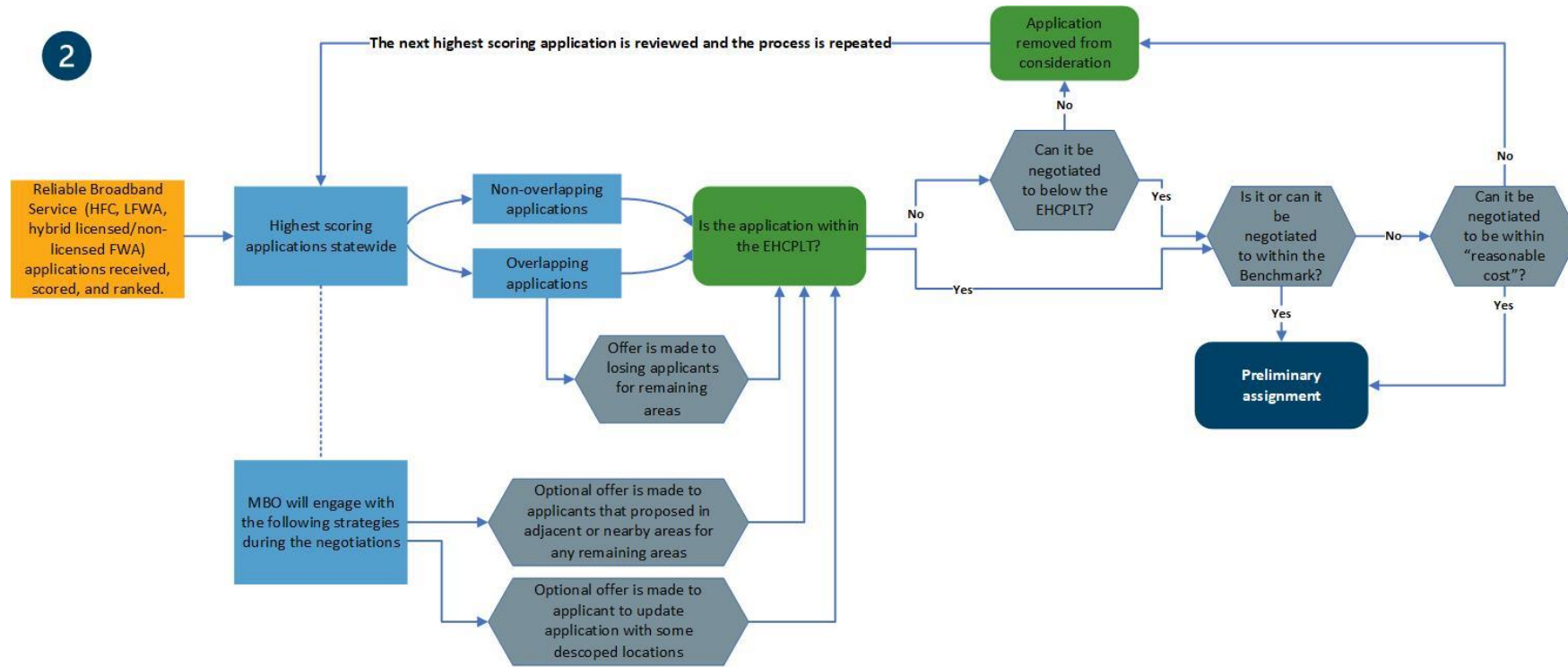
PRIORITY VS NON-PRIORITY

- 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 Reliable Broadband Service technology solution that does not include a fully fiber solution, which could include HFC, DSL, licensed fixed wireless, or a mix of these technologies.
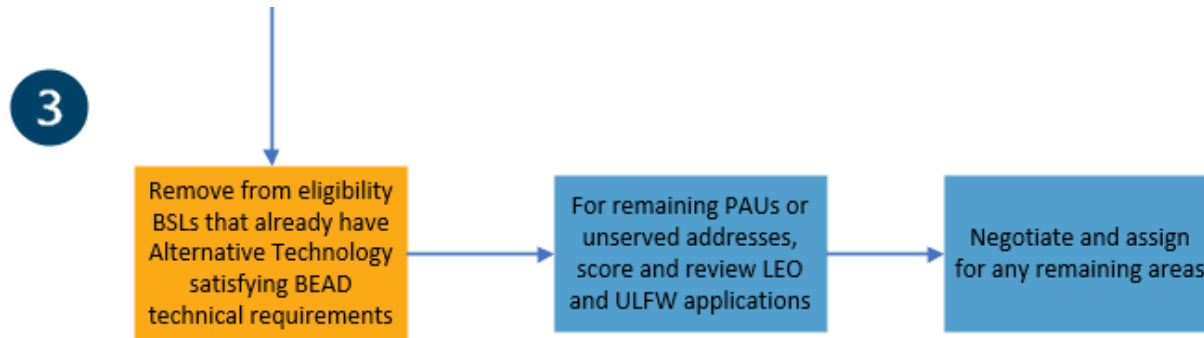
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

SELECTION PROCESS OVERVIEW

SELECTION PROCESS OVERVIEW

SELECTION PROCESS OVERVIEW

Main Round Application Review and Negotiation Process

APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

HIGH-LEVEL
REVIEW PROCESS

05 PRELIMINARY SELECTION

04 ELIGIBILITY REVIEW

03 NEGOTIATION

02 SCORING

01 INTAKE & COMPLETENESS

AUGUST 2024

INTAKE AND COMPLETENESS CHECK

- The Completeness Reviewers will ensure that applicants have answered all questions and uploaded documentation where needed.

- Specifically, reviewers will:
  - Review documents to ensure they can be opened and contain content
  - Verify that applicants have completed a Prequalification Application
  - Verify that the CBG Data Template is the correct template, CBG IDs are valid, and the approved version of the challenge results (eligible BSLs) was referenced

Curing
- The Completeness Review is the first instance in the review process where curing is possible.
- Curing will occur if:
  - Questions are unanswered
  - Documents are blank/unable to be opened
  - Incorrect CBG template and/or invalid CBG IDs.
- Applicants will be given 2 business days to cure

SCORE VALIDATION

- Initial Score Reviewers will conduct the Score Validation process by reviewing information provided in Section 3 of the application.
- Responses are scored and evaluated using a Scoring Rubric detailed in Initial Proposal Volume II:
  - BEAD outlay
  - Price per Gigabit service commitment
  - Compliance with federal labor laws
  - Speed to deployment
  - Ratio of unserved locations
  - Use of existing infrastructure
  - Length of service in Montana
  - Inclusion of high-cost areas
  - Number of locations served
  - Speed of network and other technical capabilities (non-priority)

Curing
- Curing will only occur if an applicant does not provide sufficient information to calculate a valid score.
- Applicants will be given 5 business days to cure.

NEGOTIATION

- There will be a ranking process that will occur directly after the Scoring process.
- Applications will be ranked by technology first. Priority technologies are ranked first followed by non-priority technologies. Second, they will be ranked by total Scores in Section 3.
- From here:
  - Applications can be eligible for preliminary selection and move forward to Eligibility Review.
  - Applications can be eligible for negotiation and move forward to Negotiation process.
  - Applications can be determined not eligible for preliminary selection or initial negotiation and placed on the waitlist.
- The State of Montana Grants Manager will notify applicants if they are being moved to the Negotiation process.

NEGOTIATION

- According to the results of the ranking process, applicants may be contacted by the State of Montana Grants Manager for negotiation.
- Aspects of the application that could be subject to negotiation:
  - o Award amount requested
  - o CBGs requested (either add or descope)
  - o Individual BSLs (either add or descope)
- The State of Montana Grants Manager will provide a high-level description of the negotiation being requested.
  - o The applicant will have the option to accept or deny the offer to negotiate.
- Negotiation will progress through the ranked order of applications.
- If additional BSLs remain after negotiation completes, the state will continue with the procedures described in IPV2.

NEGOTIATION

- If an applicant accepts the negotiation request, a negotiation call will be scheduled with DOA and an assigned Manager and other Legal attendees (for documentation purposes).
  - Summary of the call and negotiation request will be shared with the applicant after the call. If necessary, additional calls will be scheduled with the applicant to discuss the negotiation requests.
- If an applicant accepts the negotiation terms offered by the State of Montana Grants Manager, their application will be re-opened, and they will have 10 business days to re-submit their application.
- Once re-submitted, the Negotiation team will review the application thoroughly to ensure it is what was agreed upon during the Negotiation call.
- If the new submission meets the agreed upon negotiation terms, the application will move forward to Eligibility Review and continue the application review process.

ELIGIBILITY REVIEW

- There are three types of Subject Matter Expert Reviewers that will review sections 4-9 of the application:
  - Financial
  - Technical
  - Programmatic
- The Reviewers will review these sections and determine if an applicant's answer to a question is compliant or non-compliant with application and BEAD NOFO requirements.

Curing
- If an applicant's answer is deemed to be non-compliant or insufficient by the reviewers, the corresponding question may require a curing request.
- Applicants will be given 5 business days to respond.

PROVISIONAL SELECTION AND FINAL PROPOSAL

- Once applications have been reviewed and the State has identified service for each eligible BSL, applications will be preliminarily selected.

- Based on this preliminary selection, Montana will develop the Final Proposal in accordance with NTIA guidance:
  - Final Proposal will be posted for public comment for 30 days.
  - Final Proposal will be submitted to NTIA for approval.

- Once NTIA approves Montana's Final Proposal, DOA will begin to execute awards.

UPCOMING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Upcoming Webinars		
Topic	**Date**	**Time**
Q&A Part One	Friday, October 04, 2024	11 am – 12pm MT
Q&A Part Two	Tuesday, October 08, 2024	11 am – 12pm MT
TBD- Additional TA		

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 the ConnectMT website for any updates and registration

MAIN ROUND NEGOTIATION PROCESS Q&A

Q&A

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

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

Kim Martinell – Broadband Program Manager
- Representing the State of Montana
- kim.martinell@mt.gov
- 406-444-3393