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Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding and workforce development: An overview

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A word of warning

- This overview is based on the [BEAD Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO) issued by the US Commerce Department's NTIA in **Spring 2022**.
- Since that time, NTIA has issued additional FAQs and guidance about the BEAD program which **may supersede some of the specifics** in this document.
- For the most up-to-date information, visit the federal [InternetforAll.gov BEAD page](#).





Here's what this overview covers:

- What is the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program?
- What money is coming to states, and when?
- What recommendations does NSC have for state leaders and skills advocates?



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What is the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program?

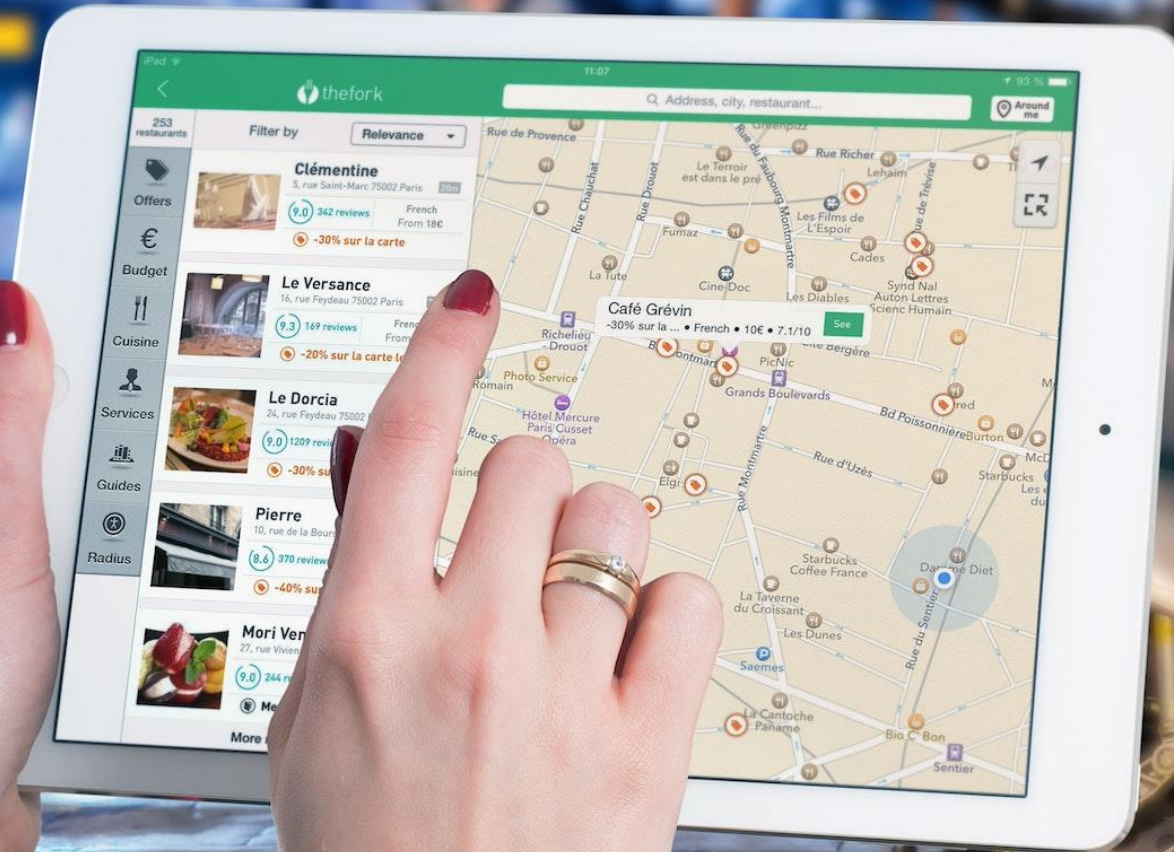


BEAD legislation passed as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).



States are getting \$42.5 billion to:

1. Bring broadband (high-speed) internet to **unserved** people who don't have any internet access right now
2. Bring broadband to **under-served** people who have only slow internet access right now
3. Bring broadband to **Community Anchor Institutions** (including schools, libraries, hospitals, higher education institutions, and others)
4. Spend on other “non-deployment” broadband-related activities, **including workforce development**



The FCC released maps showing unserved and under-served for each state...



..and right now, there are challenges going on over the maps' accuracy.



The stakes are high:
Maps will affect how money is spent in
communities across the United States.





**The deadline for
agreement on maps
is June 30, 2023.**





Yes, states can spend BEAD money on things other than laying fiber

- States' **primary spending will be on “last-mile deployment”** to get broadband to un/underserved residents and Community Anchor Institutions.
- **This** last-mile money can be used for (among many other uses):
 - Training for cybersecurity professionals who will be working on BEAD-funded networks
 - Workforce development, including Registered Apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships, and community college and/or vocational training for broadband-related occupations to support deployment, maintenance and upgrades



If states still have money left over after “last mile” deployment...

- All states have **the right to spend BEAD money on other purposes** as long as they have a plan for getting service to un/underserved residents and Community Anchor Institutions. *(They don't have to have completed all of the activities in their plan, they just have to have a clear plan.)*



Some ways states can spend their non-deployment money:

- Digital literacy/upskilling (from beginner to advanced)
- Computer science, coding, and cybersecurity education programs
- Implementation of Digital Equity plans (*supplementing but not duplicating or supplanting DE Act funds*)
- Broadband sign-up assistance and programs that provide technology support
- Multi-lingual outreach to support adoption and digital literacy
- Prisoner education to promote pre-release digital literacy, job skills, online job-acquisition skills, etc.
- Digital navigators

Non-exhaustive list. See [BEAD Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO) for details.



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What money is coming to states, and when?



States already got **\$5M** each for planning

- Right now, state broadband offices are in the midst of developing their 5-year BEAD **Action Plans**
- These plans are due to the US Commerce Dept's NTIA in **late 2023** (exact deadlines vary by state)
- After the Action Plans, states must submit an **Initial Proposal** and then a **Final Proposal** to NTIA



How much **total** money will states get?

- Overall, BEAD will be distributing \$42.45 billion. So far, states have gotten \$5M each for planning.
- Every state will get **at least \$100 million** in BEAD funds, and most will get much more.
- Exact amounts will be dictated by the formula set by Congress and the FCC unserved/underserved maps (*due to be finalized by June 30, 2023*).



As state broadband officials work on their BEAD plans, they are in learning mode regarding workforce policy options.



States' BEAD 5-year Action Plans must:

- Be informed by collaboration with:
 - Local, regional, and tribal entities
 - Unions and worker organizations
- Align with the state's economic development, workforce, community benefit, digital equity, and other related efforts
- Include a digital equity section (*states are encouraged to just drop in their State Digital Equity Plan wholesale*)



States' BEAD Action Plans must *also*:

- Include strategies to ensure an available and highly skilled workforce...**including plans to attract, retain or transition the skilled workforce** needed to achieve the plan's goals, including describing the involvement and partnerships of sub-grantees, contractors, and subcontractors with:
 - Existing in-house skills training programs, unions and worker organizations, community colleges and public school districts;
 - supportive services providers;
 - Registered Apprenticeship programs and other labor-management training programs;
 - or other quality workforce training providers.



FINALLY
FINISHED

**What happens
once the 5-year
Action Plan has
been submitted?**

States will need to submit an Initial Proposal to NTIA, and then...



- States have to use a **competitive process** to dispense funding
- States are allowed to give **extra weight** to grant applicants who have enforceable commitments related to equitable workforce development and job quality objectives
- Projects funded under BEAD have a **25% match requirement**, which can be met using \$ from business, nonprofit, philanthropic, or local/state government sources. In general, federal money *cannot* be used for the match, with a few exceptions such as CARES and ARPA
- **In-kind** matching is fine (doesn't have to be cash)



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**What recommendations does
NSC have for state leaders
and skills advocates?**

Broadband officials can tap into expertise from workforce, education, and industry partners to identify their workforce policy options:





1. Invest in new and expanded broadband apprenticeship programs and other “earn and learn” opportunities that allow workers to upskill without debt.



2. Establish industry partnerships for broadband workforce development, and support their capacity to engage in equity-advancing practices.



3. Incentivize and support training, hiring, and career advancement of local residents in broadband jobs.

4. Ensure that workforce programs provide economic supports to make career transitions possible for workers entering broadband-related roles.





5. Improve financial aid to expand access to shorter-term skills training programs at community colleges.

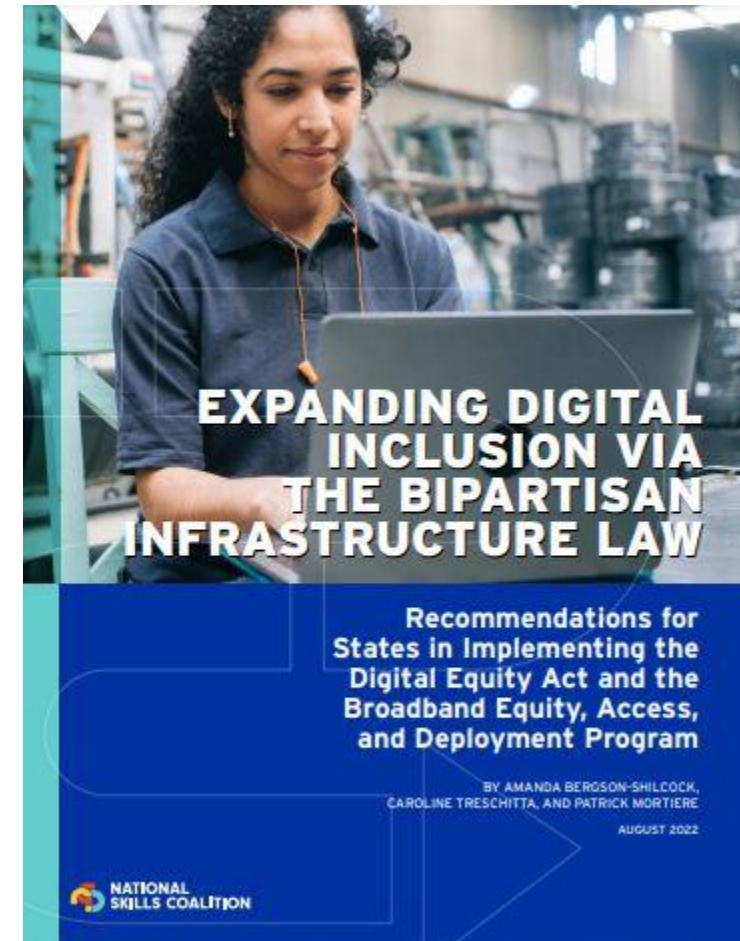


6. Collect data and report on jobs outcomes of broadband infrastructure spending -- disaggregating results by race, gender, and geography



Additional resources

- NSC's experienced policy staff can help state leaders identify other specific administrative or legislative policy possibilities
- NSC's Digital Equity Act and BEAD **recommendations** (see *right*) may also be helpful





Contact us for detailed examples of state broadband workforce policies

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