

## Solicitation No. 2024-MBI-01 for Broadband Infrastructure Gap Networks Grant Program- Questions and Answers Batch #2

#	Question	MBI Response
1.	Does MBI have any acceptable and not acceptable methods for collecting and providing sufficient evidence regarding a BSL that challenges both MBI's and the FCC's Map? This question is in reference to the following, "MBI recognizes that there is not a single source of information that accurately identifies and categorizes all Broadband Serviceable Locations (as defined in Section 4.4.1) in Massachusetts. Therefore, MBI will make the final determination on the eligibility of specific locations based on the totality of information submitted by the Applicant and such other information that may be available to MBI."	<p>MBI recognizes that there are inaccuracies in each source of information. The FCC maps, the MBI maps and MBI's data set of broadband serviceable locations are all available to identify the unserved and underserved BSLs. MBI expects applicants to conduct appropriate due diligence, which can include local knowledge and/or field verification of the status of specific locations.</p> <p>Submit all locations in the proposed service area using the Address Data Template. If a location is not in the MBI or FCC BSL datasets, include the location with the address data source set to "Other." If the unserved/ underserved status does not match the MBI or FCC maps, set the Current Service Source to "Other."</p>
2.	Is a lateral off a backbone 'middle mile' or 'last mile'?	Both middle mile and last mile networks may have lateral and backbone components. In order to reach a BSL typically a lateral will be built off of a last mile network rather than a middle mile network.
3.	Are parts of Quincy eligible?	As a general rule, please consult the MBI maps and the FCC maps for any municipality in the Commonwealth in order to determine where there may be eligible broadband serviceable locations that are unserved or underserved. MBI expects applicants to conduct appropriate due diligence, which can include local knowledge and/or field verification of the status of specific locations.
4.	So, if it is believed that there are subgrantee contractors, typically from out-of state, that do not pay prevailing wages, there would be the ability to request certified payrolls?	Please refer to Section 24 of the Grant Agreement Template for information on applicability of the Davis-Bacon Act.
5.	The request for grant funds are required prior to the challenge time for the FCC map. How is it handled if a location shows served, but is being challenged due to carrier not providing speed they stated? Can these locations be put on a grant application?	The types of challenges referenced here relate more to reliability or quality of service and will be addressed through the Challenge Process for the BEAD Program.
6.	Are there file size limitations to the upload fields or Attachments?	There's a 20 MB limit for each individual file. It's not cumulative, but any one file cannot exceed 20 MB.

		The text boxes will accept up to 100,000 characters.
7.	What file (and data) formats are the identified underserved locations being provided? Are they posted online for download?	<p>MBI BSL data is available in the MBI Map Gallery (<a href="https://broadband.masstech.org/map-gallery">https://broadband.masstech.org/map-gallery</a>). The file formats are Esri Geodatabase (GDB) and comma delimited (CSV) formats. However, this dataset contains location information only. It does not currently contain unserved/underserved status. The MBI unserved/underserved status information is only available through the Massachusetts Broadband Map (<a href="https://mapping.massbroadband.org">https://mapping.massbroadband.org</a>).</p> <p>The FCC BDC data may be downloaded from the FCC Broadband Availability Map (<a href="https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/data-download/nationwide-data">https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/data-download/nationwide-data</a>) and used with a licensed version of the CostQuest FCC Fabric data to determine individual un/underserved locations.</p>
8.	What steps does a municipality need to go through to provide sufficient documentation to demonstrate capability to fund the match portion?	Please refer to the match verification requirement in Section 5.3 of the grant solicitation.
9.	Will the program pay for equipment upgrades that will guarantee systemically 100 Gbps speeds?	Eligible project expenses must fall within one of the categories listed in Section 4.5.1 of the grant solicitation and must directly support the delivery of 100 Mbps symmetrical speeds to the unserved and underserved locations in the Project Service Area.
10.	Should we ignore health & safety objections from citizens and town officials?	Any concerns related to health and safety should be addressed during the community engagement process with the applicant. MBI is administering the Gap Networks Grant Program pursuant to all applicable federal requirements and will make awards consistent with those requirements.
11.	Is MBI willing to listen to citizens who want FTTP (Fiber) because of cancer concerns with up close RF radiation?	Any concerns related to health and safety should be addressed during the community engagement process with the applicant. MBI is administering the Gap Networks Grant Program pursuant to all applicable federal requirements and will make awards consistent with those requirements.
12.	Is MBI providing a list of interested private providers that might want to partner with municipalities or nonprofits on application submissions?	No, but MBI encourages communication between ISPs and municipalities as part of this application process.
13.	Also, for Gateway Cities, if we can show that a PSA with a large # of low-income residents, although technically it is "served" in that 100/20 is possible, if few residents take advantage of that due to cost, would that be a criteria to bring 100/100 symmetrical through a	No, this program is not intended to address adoption barriers to service. Any location that has 100/20 Mbps service available is not eligible for funding under the Gap Networks program.

	competitor provider at a lower cost to these PSAs?	
14.	Can you please describe how the challenge process will work? E.g., once an application is submitted, how will MBI administer challenges from incumbent service providers that such an area is served.	<p>The Challenge Process is only related to the BEAD Program. The Gap Networks grant program does not include a challenge process. However, if there are ambiguities as to whether a location is served or underserved, MBI will take appropriate steps to verify the location's status.</p> <p>More information about the BEAD Challenge Process can be found in Volume I of the BEAD Initial Proposal (<a href="https://broadband.masstech.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/DRAFT%20BEAD%20Initial%20Proposal%20Draft%2011-13-23_Version%20for%20Public%20Comment.pdf">https://broadband.masstech.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/DRAFT%20BEAD%20Initial%20Proposal%20Draft%2011-13-23_Version%20for%20Public%20Comment.pdf</a>).</p>
15.	Should we ignore health & safety objections from citizens and town officials, especially about children's brain health issues, because they are more vulnerable? Is MBI willing to listen to citizens who want FTTP (Fiber) because of cancer concerns with up close RF radiation?	Any concerns related to health and safety should be addressed during the community engagement process with the applicant. MBI is administering the Gap Networks Grant Program pursuant to all applicable federal requirements and will make awards consistent with those requirements.
16.	If MBI does not address health issues - who do we go to?	Any concerns related to health and safety should be addressed during the community engagement process with the applicant. MBI is administering the Gap Networks Grant Program pursuant to all applicable federal requirements and will make awards consistent with those requirements.
17.	Will the letter of credit suffice for applicant's financial response?	<p>Yes, there are three options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Audited financials, if they are available</li> <li>- Unaudited financials</li> <li>- Qualifying letter of credit</li> </ul> <p>Please refer to Amendment #2 to the grant solicitation that describes the requirements of the letter of credit in more detail.</p>
18.	Communities like West Springfield show both 100/20 & 1200/35 are available in your map - would that community not be eligible? Or do we want to get them to 100/100?	Those locations would be considered served and ineligible for funding under the Gap Networks program. Eligibility for funding is on a location by location basis.
19.	Who is insuring our programs for health issues - such as in Pittsfield, MA - where 17 families got sick?	Any concerns related to health and safety should be addressed during the community engagement process with the applicant. MBI is administering the Gap Networks Grant Program pursuant to all applicable federal requirements and will make awards consistent with those requirements.
20.	December deadline for Round 1 seems really tight. These sorts of projects have to go to the Selectboard for approval. Just scheduling can take weeks. Given	The submission deadline will not be changed for Round 1. All Round 1 applications must be submitted by 5:00PM on December 11, 2023. MBI will administer a Round 2 pursuant to the schedule in the grant solicitation.

	the announcement of program opening in late October, a late Jan. deadline would seem more doable.	
21.	Are municipalities that are not currently providing broadband services eligible to apply? The characterization at the start of the webinar suggested they are not.	Eligibility would depend on the applicant effectively addressing the solicitation requirements. Every applicant must demonstrate its financial, operational and technical capability to implement these types of projects. The applicant also needs to provide evidence of performance on projects of similar scope and size.
22.	All or nothing service coverage would be probably impossible in Wellfleet. We have pockets of underserved, but to serve every part of the town would require millions of dollars for both fiber, laterals, and household hookup.	When proposing to serve any unserved or underserved location in that BSL, the applicant must agree to reach all the unserved or underserved locations in that municipality. Gap Networks Grant Program funding is not available to provide service to currently served locations.
23.	Are there character limits in the narrative fields within the application template?	Narrative boxes allow for up to 100,000 characters.
24.	What towns are eligible? I don't see any except Monroe and Florida.	There are pockets of unserved or underserved locations in many areas of the State. The Massachusetts Broadband Map ( <a href="https://mapping.massbroadband.org">https://mapping.massbroadband.org</a> ) shows an estimate of the number and percent of unserved and underserved locations for the area selected on the map.  Use the Boundaries drop-down menu to identify the type of area to select (e.g., Municipality, Census Tract or Census Block). Click on the map to select an area. Mouse over the Service Coverage bar chart to see this information.
25.	Can a list of eligible towns be provided?	Eligibility is not town by town, rather applications will identify unserved and underserved locations at the address level. MBI encourages applicants to look at the FCC maps and MBI's maps to identify specific broadband serviceable locations.
26.	Can commercial or business addresses be included in these requests or is it only residential locations?	Businesses are eligible to be included as locations, provided they are unserved or underserved.
27.	Can we include FTTP as they did successfully in Chattanooga? <a href="https://www.tenn4fiber.com/benefits">https://www.tenn4fiber.com/benefits</a>	Municipalities are eligible to apply for funding under the Gap Networks Grant Program.
28.	I thought the final rule for ARPA requirements was 100/100 symmetrical, which is different than BEAD. If so, is there a reason why MBI has chosen to state the speed must be 100/20? Will you weigh higher speed availability higher?	100/20 Mbps is the definition for a location that is considered to be served. The definitions for unserved and underserved for Gap Networks are the same as BEAD. The distinction under the Gap Networks program is that the resulting network has to be capable of providing 100 Mbps symmetrical service. The 100/100 applies to the performance standards for networks that receive grant funding under the Gap Networks Grant Program.  Yes, higher speed offerings will be scored more favorably.
29.	Two applicants file for the same PSA. What happens?	The grant solicitation contains a detailed scoring system and MBI reserves the right to modify proposed PSAs by removing specific locations in furtherance of the goals and

		objectives of the Program. For example, MBI may determine which Applicant will be awarded a grant to serve specific BSLs if more than one Applicant proposes to serve that BSL. MBI also reserves the right to negotiate with Applicants on any element of their Applications, including project schedule and budget.
30.	Is the state looking for a two-year completion date on this funding vehicle?	Per section 9 of the grant solicitation, MBI will require that each awardee achieve final completion within 12 months of receipt of all make ready licenses subject to excusable delay justifications for force majeure events.
31.	Is MBI interested in hearing directly from scientists and doctors who are concerned about health issues with up close, constant / pulsating RF-EMF radiation exposures?	Any concerns related to health and safety should be addressed during the community engagement process with the applicant. MBI is administering the Gap Networks Grant Program pursuant to all applicable federal requirements and will make awards consistent with those requirements.
32.	If on MBI's map you have locations that are listed as having served speeds, but that isn't actually the speeds that communities are experiencing due to lots of folks living in the same space using the same bandwidth (like in high-rise housing), would they be eligible or ineligible?	The Gap Networks Program is not intended to address reliability or quality of service issues. Those concerns will best be addressed through the Challenge Process for the BEAD Program that will be administered in 2024.
33.	Is there an XLS version of eligible locations across the state?	The MBI and FCC data is available in comma delimited (CSV) data formats. The MBI BSL data contains locations only, no eligibility status.
34.	What is the main distinction between round 1 and round 2 funding? Would there be less funding/opportunities available in round 2?	The goal is to deploy the funding as quickly as possible. However, MBI will administer Round 2 of funding for the Gap Networks Grant Program.
35.	If we hear about individual homeowners who are not on the FCC map, but they are telling us they're unserved and have to front upfront costs, can they be added to the list?	Yes, applicants may include BSLs that are not on the FCC map. MBI encourages applicants to reference both the FCC map and MBI's own maps and BSL data before submitting additional unserved or underserved locations.
36.	How can we get those addresses to applicants that may not be considering them in their submission?	MBI encourages interested parties, including municipal officials, to reference the relevant resources and share this information with internet service providers as part of the community engagement process.
37.	What about a situation where a neighborhood in a rural community is more easily served from a different town? Could two entities work together despite neither committing to cover 100% (but collectively they would)?	The applicant is required to serve 100% of all unserved and underserved BSLs in each municipality within the PSA. If the applicant is comprised of more than one entity, the applicant should clearly describe the respective obligations of each entity.
38.	Can you please make the deadline in January 2024	The submission deadline will not be changed for Round 1. All Round 1 applications must be submitted by 5:00PM on

		December 11, 2023. MBI will administer a Round 2 pursuant to the schedule in the grant solicitation.
39.	If on MBI's maps you have locations that are listed as having service speed, but that isn't actually the speeds that communities are experiencing, due to lots of folks living in the same space, using the same bandwidth, like in high-rise housing, would they be ineligible or eligible?	The Gap Networks Program is not intended to address reliability or quality of service issues. Those concerns will best be addressed through the Challenge Process for the BEAD Program that will be administered in 2024.
40.	Does MBI have a Costquest license? If yes, what type is it?	Yes. MBI has a Type 2a license.
41.	What version of the FCC's BDC fabric and availability maps should be used?	MBI encourages Applicants to use the latest version of the FCC Fabric and availability maps.
42.	Is MBI able to share a data set of un and underserved addresses in MA?	MBI has made MBI's downloadable broadband serviceable location (BSL) data set available on its website in the MBI Map Gallery ( <a href="https://broadband.masstech.org/map-gallery">https://broadband.masstech.org/map-gallery</a> ). MBI encourages Applicants to look at the FCC's BDC BSL data as well. ( <a href="https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/data-download/nationwide-data">https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/data-download/nationwide-data</a> )
43.	Can you please clarify the requirement that we must serve (or include in the PSA) 100% of the unserved and underserved within a Town for the grant to be considered?	Applicants must include all eligible broadband serviceable locations (BSLs) within each municipality that is included in a proposed Project Service Area.
44.	On the Application, the MBI notes in Section 4. Project Service Area Overview, subsection a), that the applicant's project summary including a brief description of the project, impacted area, benefits to communities served, and technology and speeds to be deployed may be posted on MBI's website should the application be awarded.  Is MBI considering posting the overview prior to awards as part of a Challenge Process?	MBI will not be administering a challenge process as a component of the GAP Networks Grant Program.
45.	How will the MBI ensure there is no, or only incidental, overbuild without providing an opportunity for ISPs to offer information about serviceability of proposed project areas?	MBI will conduct appropriate due diligence to evaluate the nature, extent and necessity of any proposed overbuilds.
46.	With delays in rollout of online application and program docs, will the deadline be extended?	The submission deadline will not be changed for Round 1. All Round 1 applications must be submitted by 5:00PM on December 11, 2023. MBI will administer a Round 2 of the Gap Networks Grant Program.
47.	Will this particular grant program be available again in the future; and, if awarded in the current round, would applicants be eligible to apply for	There will be a second round of grant funding administered by MBI under the Gap Networks Grant Program.  Applicants would be able to apply for additional funding in Round 2 to cover unserved or underserved broadband

	additional funding in subsequent rounds to continue fiber buildout projects?	serviceable locations remaining after Round 1.. However, applicants must include all unserved and underserved broadband serviceable locations within each municipality that is included in a proposed Project Service Area.
48.	How does the amount of leveraged funds impact the overall scoring of a proposed project? <i>(i.e.: If an applicant applies for the maximum \$20M and commits to a match of at least 20% - 30%; would that score lower than applicants who commit to higher percentages of leveraged funds?)</i>	Please refer to the table in Section 8.2.2.3(A) of the grant solicitation for a description of the scoring of matching funds.
49.	With only \$145 million available statewide, are requests for the maximum amount of \$20 million likely to be considered; or will MBI look to maximize distribution of funds by making more awards of lesser amounts?	<p>MBI is administering the Gap Networks Grant Program in a manner that is consistent with the goal of maximizing the number of unserved and underserved broadband serviceable locations that will receive broadband access.</p> <p>MBI reserves the right to modify proposed PSAs by removing specific locations in furtherance of the goals and objectives of the Program. For example, MBI may determine which Applicant will be awarded a grant to serve specific BSLs if more than one Applicant proposes to serve that BSL. MBI also reserves the right to negotiate with Applicants on any element of their Applications, including project schedule and budget.</p>
50.	If an applicant applies for the maximum award amount, but MBI opts not award that much to one provider; would MBI consider making an award at a reasonably reduced amount? Or would that applicant be disqualified entirely?	MBI reserves the right to modify proposed PSAs by removing specific locations in furtherance of the goals and objectives of the Program. For example, MBI may determine which Applicant will be awarded a grant to serve specific BSLs if more than one Applicant proposes to serve that BSL. MBI also reserves the right to negotiate with Applicants on any element of their Applications, including project schedule and budget.
51.	Is there an existing service map, data set or shape file available to determine exactly what broadband speeds are available on a household / individual address basis?	The MBI and FCC broadband maps can be used to determine availability online. The downloadable FCC data has availability information at the individual address level but requires a CostQuest FCC Fabric license.
52.	Latitude column on the 5.1C spreadsheet defaults to a "Location Type" drop-down menu. This may have inadvertently carried over from the preceding column?	The spreadsheet has been updated to rectify this error.
53.	"Support of Target Populations and Equity" Form – Page 4, Section 3a – Link provided to HUD LMI scores does not work.	The form has been updated by adding the correct hyperlink.
54.	How will applications with similar scoring for the same PSAs be awarded?	Please refer Section 8.1 of Solicitation 2024-MBI-01 for detailed information on the scoring of grant applications.

55.	Can MBI confirm Florida, Savoy, Monroe, and Hawley are eligible for Gap funds though they received Last Mile grant funds in the past? ( <i>Solicitation section 4.4.2 ineligible locations include Last Mile grant awardees yet none of the 4 offer 100/20</i> )	Any broadband serviceable location (BSL) is eligible for funding if: 1) the location is unserved or underserved, and 2) the location is not subject to a binding funding commitment from other federal or state sources where the resulting level of broadband service meets or exceeds 100/20 Mbps. Therefore, the state Last Mile grants will not disqualify broadband serviceable locations in Florida, Hawley, Monroe, and Savoy, but there may be other federal broadband programs that have made awards that impact eligibility of certain BSLs in these towns.
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