



Q&A: Broadband and Middle Mile

Answers to questions asked during the Local Infrastructure Hub's Closing the Digital Divide: Broadband Expansion and Middle Mile webinar on Aug. 16, 2022

Q: Mayors have had mixed success in working with States, and there is an emphasis on working with States on broadband and affordability. Why is broadband different or similar to other issues?

A: *Answered live by Andy Berke, Special Representative for Broadband at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA):* I was sued by my State for broadband access. At the U.S. Department of Commerce, we receive lots of requests in our NOFOs for local participation, but ultimately the Commerce Department has authority. If things are going poorly in your state, Commerce is there to help and should be alerted. Cities and local nonprofits have power – states are required to include cities' plans in their digital equity plan to receive funding, notoriety, and validity.

Q: In Boston, 200,000 households are signed up across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the new program. How can the funds be used for Community Based Organizations (CBOs)?

A: Faced with the Sept. 30 deadline, start talking to people right now. Submit your Middle Mile application. The goal of this program is to lower prices for everyone across America in the long run. This includes low-income and middle-class Americans. The Middle Mile program and solutions could be really helpful for lowering costs in communities.

Q: I am meeting with my State's Chief Information Officer. Any words of advice?

A: I would urge the State to think of you as a partner in making sure that they meet their end goal of 100% connectivity.

We have an entire White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs now. If you have a question or want to be in contact with the staff for your city, contact Andy Berke at aberke@ntia.gov, and he will make sure someone gets back to you as soon as possible.

Q&A: Broadband and Middle Mile

Additional questions (*continued*)

Q: Can local American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding be used as a local match for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding?

A: It depends – but we encourage States and localities to use ARPA money now, especially if it can help offset costs for last mile, affordable deployment. One area we'd like to see more activity on is seeing funders provide matching funds when capital is short. That's an eligible use of funds under BEAD.

Additional resources shared in the chat:

- ❖ States are largely responsible for disbursing billions of dollars in federal funds that could support local broadband plans. NTIA [publishes](#) the name, title, and email of each State broadband officer in the State Broadband Leaders Network.
- ❖ The Pew Charitable Trusts has detailed which State entities are responsible for the implementation of State-level broadband plans [here](#). You can find more resources [here](#).
- ❖ The [Affordable Connectivity Program](#) provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for low-income households and up to \$75 per month for eligible households on qualifying Tribal lands.
- ❖ The [Lifeline Program](#) provides eligible consumers with up to \$9.25 off the cost of phone, internet, or bundled services.
- ❖ In 2020, Next Century Cities conducted a [case study](#) on connectivity in Mesa, AZ.
- ❖ The National Broadband Resource Hub (NBRH) is a philanthropic initiative empowering government and community leaders to build a better broadband future. [Learn more](#).

Andy Berke, *Special Representative for Broadband at the NTIA*, provided an overview of the Middle Mile program and answered questions from mayors during the webinar. Other broadband experts also provided answers. Visit the [Local Infrastructure Hub's website](#) for additional resources and expert advice.