

# Q&A: The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program

Answers to questions asked during the Local Infrastructure Hub's BEAD webinar "Bridging the Gap: Funding Broadband for All" on Sept. 26, 2023

**Q:** Is the 30 day public comment period for the challenge or for the original plans for the state departments?

**A:** The 30 day public comment period is for the initial proposal.

**Q:** Which two states have already submitted?

**A:** Louisiana and Virginia

**Q:** Can you clarify the difference, if any, between the public comment period and the challenge process?

**A:** Challenge Process: how the eligible entity (the state/territory) will determine the locations and community anchor institutions within each jurisdiction that are eligible for BEAD funding.  
Public Comment Period: Prior to submission to NTIA, the Initial Proposal must be made available for public comment, and the Initial Proposal must incorporate local coordination feedback.

**Q:** There are geographic differences in the level of cooperation with ISP's - some areas have the benefit of positive linkages between municipalities and ISPs while others experience less fruitful relationships. Is there any traction on the concept of deeming broadband an essential "public utility" equivalent to electricity, natural gas, water, etc.?

**A:** *Ian Linssen (Mesa, AZ):* Broadband, from our perspective, is very much essential to everything we do. However, from a pure cost standpoint, it would have been the largest capital expenditure we had ever undertaken as a city. Additionally, we wouldn't have had the technical capacity to run an ISP. I suggest taking a look at the market first to see what can realistically be done.

*Michelle Wu (Boston, MA):* In a perfect world, broadband would be viewed as critical infrastructure and treated as such. The only way to really focus on the public interest is through the public sector. In our case, we are so lucky to have ISPs competing in different parts of the city so our direction/focus has been more on how do we leverage what is already happening? We've had to consider how to incentivize and push some of those partners to upgrade and work with us.

*Frank Whitfield (Elyria, OH):* We also try to foster that sense of competition. When the pandemic began, we reached out to both ISPs in our community and explained the problem. Then, we celebrated the one that took the opportunity to help and kinda shamed the one that didn't, which has forced them to step up and also reduce the cost/burden for residents.

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**Q:** Are the numerous providers able to share the same "cable/pipe" or are they each micro-trenching for their own product?

**A:** *Ian Linssen (Mesa, AZ):* In the license itself, we say we encourage providers to coordinate with each other to use the same facilities, but ultimately it is not a requirement. We also created the first ever set of micro-trenching standards in Arizona which allowed us to set 3 next to each other without causing a significant concern. Talks have revealed that providers are all hesitant in sharing the same "cable/pipe" so it is something we'll continue to watch and if needed, the mayor/council is willing to revisit and require the sharing.