THE ENABLING MIDDLE MILE BROADBRAND INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

Project Information – Application Guidance
Today's webinar will focus on the Middle Mile Program – one of four high-speed Internet programs administered by NTIA¹

**BEAD**

**$42.45B**

Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment Program

A program to get all Americans online by funding partnerships between states or territories, communities, and stakeholders to build infrastructure where we need it to and increase adoption of high-speed Internet.

**DIGITAL EQUITY**

**$2.75B**

Digital Equity Act

Three programs that provide funding to promote digital inclusion and advance equity for all. They aim to ensure that all communities can access and use affordable, reliable high-speed Internet to meet their needs and improve their lives.

**TRIBAL**

**$2.00B**

Tribal Connectivity Technical Amendments

A program to help tribal communities expand high-speed Internet access and adoption on tribal lands.

**MIDDLE MILE**

**$1.00B**

Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure

A program to expand middle mile infrastructure, to reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas.

¹. National Telecommunications and Information Administration. Note: Funding amounts inclusive of all administrative set-asides
Middle Mile Grant Program will invest in the construction, improvement or acquisition of middle mile infrastructure

Funding pool
$1.00B

A program to expand middle mile infrastructure, to reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Middle mile infrastructure refers to the mid-section of Internet infrastructure that carries large amounts of data at high speeds over long distances and connects the "backbone" of Internet infrastructure to the "last mile", which connects to end users

Entities eligible to apply include a wide variety, including but not limited to government entities, utilities, companies, and non-profits that provide Internet services

Example uses of funds:
- Construction, improvement or acquisition of facilities and equipment
- Engineering design, permitting and work related to projects
- Personnel costs, including salaries and benefits
- Other costs necessary to program's activities

ESTIMATED TIMELINE

Timeline approximate unless exact date specified
Today's webinar will focus on Project Information portion of the Middle Mile Grant Program Application

**Today's focus**

- **APPLICANT INFORMATION**
  - June 30, 2022

- **PROJECT INFORMATION**
  - July 13, 2022

- **BUDGET INFORMATION**
  - August 10, 2022
NTIA will only accept applications submitted electronically via its online application portal by September 30, 2022

Applications must be received through the NTIA Application Portal no later than 11:59 p.m. EDT on Sept. 30, 2022

Please contact middlemile@ntia.gov with any questions and nghelpdesk@ntia.gov for technical support with the portal.

Application format requirements

- Figures, graphs, images, and pictures should be readable and may be presented in landscape
- Font should be easy to read and 11-point minimum; figures and tables may use smaller type
- One-inch margins on top, bottom, left, and right
- Portrait orientation except for figures, graphs, images, and pictures
- Page size 8 ½ by 11 inches
- All applications must be typed in English
There are three sections to complete for the Project Information portion of the Middle Mile Grant Program Application:

- **Project Details**
- **Technical Capabilities**
- **Required Documents**
PROJECT DETAILS
Project Details - Executive Summary

**Executive Summary (6,000 characters)**

- **High-level** introduction to the project; no technical jargon
- Provide project purpose:
  - Address how proposal will advance Middle Mile Grant Program/NOFO objectives
  - Provide an overview of proposed route or service area(s)
  - Indicate level of need in service area(s)
- Describe binding commitments made (see Binding Commitment):
  - Connect networks servicing unserved areas
  - Connecting non-contiguous trust lands
  - Offering broadband at reasonable rates, carrier-neutral
- All information in this area should be considered **PUBLIC**.
- Consider writing the **Executive Summary** last for consistency: it should contain no new information.

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Note: Applicants are encouraged to compose narrative responses separately, then copy and paste into the narrative text fields. Save and archive narrative responses for record keeping purposes.
Project Details - Level of Need

**Level of Need Narrative** *(6,000 characters)*

- Describe the level of need in the proposed service area(s)
  - Include competitive landscape and variations in service
  - Project value-add
- Confirm proposal is consistent with state broadband plan/priorities and that broadband office(s) were directly consulted
- Note any specific service providers that have expressed interest in utilizing the network to provide last mile service, including degree of interest (e.g., letters of interest, contracts)
- Estimated number of expected users
- Describe general economic conditions in the proposed area
- Provide the most complete picture possible of the existing state of broadband infrastructure in the proposed area
  - Include reasons why it is currently insufficient
- Discuss the extent to which the proposed project will meet all broadband needs of the communities within the project area
Government & Community Involvement
(3,000 characters)

• Describe coordination and level of involvement with applicable State, Territory, Tribal, local governments, and other community organizations/partners across public, non-profit, and private sectors
  • Pay particular attention to community anchor institutions involved in the project
• Outline each organization’s planned role in the project, including financial or equipment contributions
• Clarify any benefits received from the project
• Submit additional documentation if available, e.g., letters of support
Project Details – Binding Commitment & Statutory Purpose

**Binding Commitment & Statutory Purpose**

Confirm via Y/N that the eligible entity will make a binding commitment to prioritize **at LEAST ONE** of the following per Section 60401(e) of the IIJA in questions 1-3:

**Question 1:**
Connecting Middle Mile Grant infrastructure to last mile networks that service unserved areas

**Question 2:**
Connecting non-contiguous trust lands
  - Describe in narrative *(1,000 characters)*

**Question 3:**
Offering wholesale broadband service
Confirm via Y/N that the eligible entity meets at least TWO of the following five requirements in questions 4-8 in order to receive priority in programmatic review.

Question 4:
Adopts fiscally sustainable Middle Mile Grant strategies (ref Budget Narrative)

Question 5:
Commits to offering non-discriminatory interconnect to parties that request it (ref Interconnect Policy)

Question 6:
Identifies specific terrestrial and wireless last mile broadband providers that have (i) requested interconnection and (ii) demonstrated sustainable plans/funding sources for interconnection (ref Level of Need Narrative)

Submit financial documents that demonstrate anticipated revenues associated with MM projects, e.g., financial studies & analyses
  • Purpose: Validate revenues are sufficient for long-term provision of service

Note: Required Financial Documentation is uploaded with Budget Narrative
Project Details – Binding Commitment & Statutory Purpose cont.

**Binding Commitment & Statutory Purpose**

Confirm via Y/N that the eligible entity meets at least TWO of the following five requirements in questions 4-8 in order to receive priority in programmatic review.

**Question 7:**
Identified supplemental investments or in-kind support to accelerate completion of project (ref Project Timeline Narrative)

**Question 8:**
Demonstrated MMG infrastructure will benefit national security interests (ref National Security Interests Narrative, next slide)

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Note: As directed by Section 60401(d)(2) of the IIJA the Middle Mile Grant Program will prioritize applications that meet at least two of the five criteria.
Benefitting National Security Interests

Include project’s benefits to national security, e.g.:

• Redundancy and resiliency of telecommunications networks that support broadband services

• Other commercial telecommunications services

• Protection of critical national infrastructure (power grid, transmission facilities)

• Border security

• Physical infrastructure sensors

• Monitoring, etc.
Project Details - Project Timeline

Project Timeline

**Question 1:** Applicants must select the number of years for the project (1-5)

**Question 2:** Enter a narrative (3,000 characters) that demonstrates:

a) Project Path

b) Capital Investment Schedule
   - Demonstrate yearly buildout

c) Potential Acceleration
   - Explain if the project can be accelerated with supplemental investments or in-kind support

d) Completion Objectives
   - Consider network design, securing licenses, site preparation, inside/outside plant deployment, operational support systems, and network testing

*Notes: Round-up years if timeline range is not a whole integer*
Project Details - Project Timeline cont.

Project Timeline

**Question 3:** In addition to the narrative, the Applicant’s project plan file must be uploaded
Project Details - Tribal Certification & Waivers

Waiver of Alternative Requirements Requested

- **ALL** waiver or requirement modification requests to the project must be included here. Should specify necessity:
  - For effective delivery or administration of grants
  - For the construction, improvement, or acquisition of middle mile infrastructure on trust land.
  - Check & upload waiver if applicable

Tribal Land Certification – Unserved or Underserved

- A Tribal Government may certify whether an area within its own Tribal Land is unserved or underserved based on criteria of its choosing
  - Must provide a statement on Tribal letterhead that:
    - Notes the area being certified as unserved or underserved
    - Explains how the determination was made
    - Provides any supporting information available

Special Rules exist for Tribal Governments & Native Entities

Waivers & Alternative Requirements may be granted if considered necessary (NOFO III.G.1)
Project Details - Program Details

**Question 1 - Fair Labor Narrative** *(3,000 characters)*

- Demonstrate compliance with federal labor and employment laws by providing examples of items described per the NOFO III.H

**Question 2 – Officer Certification**

- Upload a certificate from a director-level employee or officer
  - An officer certification is an affirmation of compliance with Fair Labor and Employment Laws by an authorized individual within the company.
Program Details: Highly Skilled Workforce & Workforce Development

**Question 3 – Highly Skilled Workforce Narrative** *(3,000 characters)*

- Applicants must submit a plan for ensuring that the project workforce will be appropriately skilled and credentialed as per NOFO III.I

**Question 4 – Advancing Workforce Development Narrative** *(3,000 characters)*

- Provide examples of advancing workforce development through appropriate investments in a diverse and well-trained workforce as per NOFO III.J
Program Details: Climate Resiliency & Civil Rights and Nondiscrimination Law

**Question 5 – Climate Resiliency** *(3,000 characters)*

- Demonstrate that weather and climate-related risks related to Middle Mile Grant program infrastructure projects have sufficiently been accounted for and there are plans to combat those per NOFO III.I

**Question 6 – Civil Rights and Nondiscrimination Law Compliance**

- Y/N: Applicants must agree to set nondiscrimination requirements by future binding commitment set forth by the legal authorities listed per NOFO III.I

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*Item uploaded by applicant into the NTIA Grants Portal*  
*Item input directly into the NTIA Grants Portal*  
*Fillable form uploaded by applicant into the NTIA Grants Portal*
TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES
Technical Capabilities

Upload Certification of Technical Capability

**Technical Overview Narrative (3,000 characters)**

- Applicant must describe targeted last mile service objectives, including last mile service provider letters of commitment or contracts
- Applicant must describe proposed service offerings. This includes the pricing of the services to be offered over the proposed facility

Note: Applicants are encouraged to upload supplemental documentation.

Questions 2 through 4 are limited to 3000-character narrative responses

Item uploaded by applicant into the NTIA Grants Portal

Item input directly into the NTIA Grants Portal

Fillable form uploaded by applicant into the NTIA Grants Portal
Technical Capabilities

Competitive Landscape Narrative (3,000 characters)

• Applicant should be able to demonstrate decline in Middle Mile Grant costs that are likely to flow through to consumer broadband prices

Interconnect Policy (3,000 characters)

• Describe network management practices that will comply with nondiscrimination & interconnection obligations while blocking access to illegal & harmful content
• Applicant will include the URL to the publicly available interconnection policy and verify that such policy is to be offered in perpetuity.

When Completing Narratives

• Compose narrative responses offline, then copy and paste into narrative text fields
• Save and archive narrative responses for record keeping purposes
Technical Capabilities

Determine Technology Details:  ❑ Fiber Optic Technology  ❑ Wireless  ❑ Other

For Question 1, if 'Fiber Optic Technology' is selected, applicant must click radio button to select a response to the expanded section.

If 'Fiber' is selected, a mandatory narrative field will auto populate and applicant must certify that upon completion of project, BB service speeds will be no less than 1 Gigabit per second for downloads and 1 Gigabit per second for uploads within designated parameters.

If a Wireless or Other technology type is proposed, a certification statement is optional.

Note: Applicants selecting 'Fiber' must upload Template Community Anchor Institution (CAI) Fillable form uploaded by applicant into the NTIA Grants Portal

Item uploaded by applicant into the NTIA Grants Portal

Item input directly into the NTIA Grants Portal

Fillable form uploaded by applicant into the NTIA Grants Portal
Technical Capabilities

**Network Route Map**
- Project area highlighting unserved/underserved areas
- Pre-existing service area with current service levels
- Physical path of network’s transmission medium
- Points of interconnection
- Wireless towers & associated coverage areas
- Anchor Institutions within 1,000 feet

*Network Route Map must delineate between network & facilities that are:*
1. Part of the Applicant’s/key partners’ existing network;
2. Proposed as part of this project;
3. Leased from a third party;
4. Utilized under some alternative arrangement; or
5. Relevant to interconnection with either Last Mile or Middle Mile service providers

*Note: Only ESRI Shapefiles will be accepted and uploaded (.shp, .shx & .dbf)*
Data Submission Specifications

Applicants must complete and upload the “Data Submission Specification Template” with information for all interconnection points proposed for the network. All three required fields of the template must be completed:

- Point Name
- Latitude
- Longitude

This should accommodate information for all interconnection points proposed for network access, points to Last Mile service providers, Internet peering points, and towers.
Technical Capabilities

**Network Logical Diagram**

Applicant must provide network diagrams that including all network elements and the capacity, facilities, and mileage between each element. The diagram must denote the network elements that already exist while explicitly demonstrating:

- Links between the network nodes
- Internet access peering points
- Proposed aggregation node facilities that will serve as egress point
- Points of interconnection and collocation facilities
- For Wireless Systems, the antennae height, proposed frequencies, and approximate coverage area for each access point

**Environmental Narrative (1,000 characters)**

- Applicants must comply with environmental regulation (e.g., National Environmental Policy Act)
- Applicants must include site and aerial photographs

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**While developing the Network Diagram**

- Indicate points of interconnection for third party service providers and Internet peering points.
- Show miles between points, use of existing ducts or poles/overlay versus new build, and in-ground versus aerial, and lateral versus backbone.
- Denote basic equipment types and capacity figures at key aggregation nodes.
REQUIRED DOCUMENTS
Required Documents

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement

Each applicant must provide a document that estimates the indirect rate negotiated between the Federal Government and a Grantee’s organization which reflects the indirect facilities and administrative costs incurred by the organization. This must be completed, if applicable.

Template Table of Funded Partners and Unfunded Collaborators

List all funded and unfunded project collaborators and provide details on their scope of work. Fillable Template “Funded Partners and Unfunded Collaborators” must be completed and uploaded.
Required Documents

Certificate of Operational Capability

Each applicant must supply and upload

- A certification from an officer-level employee attesting to the applicant’s operational capability to complete and operate the proposed project.

- A certification attesting that an FCC form 477s and Broadband DATA Act has been submitted from an officer-level employee.

- If the Applicant has operated only an electric transmission or distribution service, it must submit qualified operating or financial reports.
Applicants should pay close attention to application requirements to avoid delays in review

Common Mistakes

In previous NTIA programs, some of the most common reasons for curing included **missing or incomplete forms**. Additional curing reasons included:

- Documents uploaded in incorrect file type, format, or template
- Inconsistent or inaccurate information across application narratives, summaries, and forms
- Incorrectly selecting Y/N options
- Password protected documents that cannot be opened
- Images and text in uploaded documents are blurry and cannot be clearly read

Ensure that all NTIA required forms, templates, and documents related to Applicant Information have been **uploaded** into the NTIA Grants Portal, including:

- Network Logical Diagram
- Network Route Maps (ESRI Shapefile only)
- Data Submission Specification Template
- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- Table of Funded Partners & Unfunded Collaborators
- Certificate of OperationalCapability
- Certificate of Technical Capability
- Other Technical Capabilities documents, as needed
- Tribal Waivers & Certifications, as applicable

Ensure that Project Name and budget information are consistent across all forms
Applicants should implement best practices to make certain the application is prioritized and not delayed

**Best Practices**

- Thoroughly read through the NOFO for a comprehensive understanding
- Communicate, connect, and collaborate with your broadband offices
- Draft narrative information offline and save forms for record-keeping purposes
- Copy and paste all narratives from separately saved documents
- Always use NTIA provided templates when available
- Confirm that all required forms are properly completed prior to upload
- Ensure that summary information is consistent across all forms; write the Executive Summary last
- Do not include non-public information in the Executive Summary
- Document that the eligible entity meets at least TWO or more statutory requirements in questions 4-8 so the application is prioritized in programmatic review
Additional resources about the Middle Mile Grant Program

1. Visit the InternetForAll.gov for additional information on federal funding programs

2. Engage with your State or territory regarding their plans to improve high-speed Internet access

3. Submit questions to middlemile@ntia.gov

4. Attend future NTIA webinars, including program-specific application guidance webinars for applicants
Programmatic inquiries
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For specific inquiries, please contact the appropriate office