

NEXT LEVEL CONNECTIONS BROADBAND GRANT

OBJECTIVE

To provide funding to specific areas in Indiana that lack broadband coverage, with less than actual speeds of 25 Mbps downstream; areas that lack quality, reliable access to fixed terrestrial broadband; and areas with compelling need.

ELIGIBLE PROJECT AREAS

Broadband infrastructure projects are eligible if they are extending the deployment of eligible broadband service to areas and addresses in which Internet connections are unavailable or the only available connections to the Internet are at actual speeds of less than 25 Mbps downstream.

Additional information must be sufficient to conclude that an area is eligible and may include but is not limited to:

- Statistically significant survey data for each address to be served within the project area, which may include, but is not limited to, speed testing at the address level data, or;
- Documentation of the location of existing infrastructure that do not provide 25/3 speed levels within the proposed project area.
- Other relevant and available broadband data sets illustrating address-level data shared with OCRA

PROVIDER REQUIREMENTS

Indiana Broadband Providers serving at least 100 subscribers for at least three years in Indiana are eligible for this program. Applicants that do not meet these requirements must then meet one of the following: 1) Be a corporation organized under IC 8-1-13; 2) Be a corporation organized under IC 23-17 that is an electric cooperative; or 3) Be a cooperative that has at least one member that is a corporation organized under 8-1-13.

Eligible registered Indiana Broadband Providers can submit project areas that commit to bringing high-speed, terrestrial broadband at more than 50/5 in areas where there is currently less than 25 Mbps. Projects can be funded for up to \$5 million.

FUNDING

Preference will be given to projects delivering higher speeds and serving more locations. Projects that include providing connections to schools and/or rural health facilities will receive priority of funding, if part of an eligible project.

The NLC Broadband Grant Program will pay up to 80% of the eligible costs for a qualifying project.

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CHANGES IN ROUND 3

- Eligible areas for funding now include addresses that have less than 25/3 service.
- Address level data now required with LOI submission. All address level data will be published on NLC website.
- Challenger must challenge at the address data level not the census block level.
- Any challenge to an LOI must complete one of the following:
 1. If able to provide service in ten days, challenger submits information;
 2. Challenger submits documentation for addresses already served; or
 3. If plans to serve the address within 18 months are in place, challenger submits evidence and supplemental information.
- There is an additional competitive application period after applications are submitted. A provider may submit an application, based on an original application, if they can provide the same or better service for the same project area at a lower cost to the state. The original applicant then has one more opportunity to amend the original application.
- Included additional scoring criteria for projects providing service to economically disadvantaged student households.
- Optional survey data template provided to capture actual speed data per address in project area to assist in verifying speeds available.

TIMELINE

NLC Round 3 opens in August of 2021. Projects must be completed 24 months after the contract is signed. OCRA reserves the right to adjust the timeline.

