



State Connections

The broadband working group for state legislators

First Friday of Every Month

4:00 ET / 3:00 CT / 2:00 MT / 1:00 PT

WE WILL BEGIN SHORTLY!

Agenda



Federal News & Letter Progress

- 90 Day BEAD Extension
- Letter signatures and coverage continues to increase.

Impact of Delays

- On BEAD & States
- On ISPs
- On DEA & Nonprofits
- Group Discussion

Additional Updates & General Discussion

- Rep. Louis Riggs and Rep. Matt Pierce

Federal News

90 Day BEAD Extension

(automatic – states do not have to request)

- April 22 Commerce Notice
- First “delay” but likely not the last
- Potential changes.

“In anticipation of forthcoming programmatic changes and to ensure States and Territories have sufficient time to implement them, [NTIA]...provides notice of a programmatic waiver...granting a ninety (90) day extension to all Eligible Entities.”

Upcoming Deadlines (with extra 90 days)

- Done — Louisiana, Delaware, and Nevada
- July 2025 — Kansas and West Virginia
- August 2025 — Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania
- September 2025 — Colorado, New Hampshire, Illinois, Oregon, Kentucky, and Maine

(Drew or Janie can assist you if you need help identifying your state’s deadline)

State Connections BEAD/DE Letter

~~115~~ 130+ Bipartisan Signatories

~~28~~ 33+ States

- Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin
- (We are still taking signatures so refer your peers to Drew or Janie)

April 3, 2025

TO:
Secretary Howard Lutnick
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

CC:
Adam Cassady, NTIA Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and Deputy Administrator
Arielle Roth, Nominee, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications & Information
Members of Congress

RE: BEAD and DE Implementation

Dear Secretary Lutnick,

Congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of Commerce. We look forward to working with you to bring fast, reliable, affordable broadband to every last one of our constituents.

We, the undersigned group of 115 bipartisan state legislators representing 28 states, respectfully request that the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) allow state Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) and Digital Equity (DE) programs to proceed without delay. If NTIA changes program conditions, we ask that those changes be optional rather than mandatory. We are concerned that mandatory changes will undermine state authority over state programs (a central feature of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law), undo our BEAD and DE plans, and delay broadband deployment by a year or more.¹

After three years of preparation, we are just now beginning to implement our BEAD and DE programs. And, so far, it is going very well. For BEAD, initial grant rounds have resulted in nearly universal coverage, widespread competition, and substantial winnings for local and regional providers.² For example, Louisiana has achieved 95% fiber coverage, 3% wireless/cable, and 2% satellite; Nevada achieved 83% fiber coverage, 7% wireless/cable, and 9% satellite; and Delaware achieved 100% fiber coverage. These are incredible results, and the flexibility to prioritize fiber while still incorporating wireless and satellite technologies will bring our constituents high-quality, affordable service at reasonable costs.³ For DE, our states are creating programs that address the full range of digital needs—skills for agriculture, healthcare, personal finance and entrepreneurship, online safety, cybersecurity, and efficient use of government

¹ Former NTIA Official: BEAD Changes Could Add Years to Deployment

² Summary of state results to date

³ Letter from Gov. Landry of Louisiana

State “One Pagers”

janiedunning@hotmail.com (Let me know if you want one for your state)

State Connections

ARKANSAS BROADBAND OVERVIEW

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program – This funding is for broadband infrastructure.

- State allocation — \$1,024,303,994
- Eligible locations — Approx 84,000 (i.e. locations with little or no internet service).
- Status – Arkansas is one of roughly 35 states that are currently selecting which ISPs will receive BEAD funding. So far, Arkansas is on track to bring fiber to over half the locations for less than a quarter of available funding.

Digital Skills & Opportunity Program – This funding is to promote digital skills, technology adoption, and online safety.

- State allocation — \$11,005,102

Relevant Links

- NTIA [dashboard](#) of states' BEAD progress and location eligibility [process](#).
- Arkansas BEAD [plan](#)
- Arkansas Digital Skills & Opportunity [Plan](#)

Contact Information

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Provider Defaults Prior to BEAD, the FCC ran multiple programs that awarded funds to ISPs for broadband infrastructure deployment. Unfortunately, many ISPs defaulted on their awards and will not deliver the proposed broadband service. There were a number of reasons for these defaults, which can be important to consider as states award BEAD funds to many of these same ISPs.

- In Arkansas, the total for defaults of these previous programs is \$20,223,678 that should have been invested in Arkansas but broadband at 22,125 locations due to providers not completing their commitments did not get deployed.
- Arkansas ranked 35th in the nation for support dollars lost (lost less than 34 other states).
- Providers that had defaults in Arkansas (see this Benton [article](#) for a full analysis)
 - Communications Co
 - Cox Communications
 - Wisper
 - Home Town Broadband
 - NEXT Powered by NAEC
 - Resound Networks
 - SW Arkansas Telecomm
 - South Central Connect
 - Starlink Services

Thank you for being a member of State Connections to help bring fast, reliable, and affordable broadband to everyone in your state. Please contact us for more information or we will be happy to set up a call to discuss your state.

Drew Garner – dgarner@benton.org

Janie Dunning – janiedunning@hotmail.com

Impact of Delays



On BEAD & States

- *Shawna Taets*
Illinois Dept. Commerce & Economic Opportunity

On ISPs

- *Loyd Rice*
SEMO Electric Cooperative, GoSEMO Fiber

On DEA & Nonprofits

- *Amy Huffman & Shauna Edson*
National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA)

Group Discussion

Shawna Taets

Illinois Dept. Commerce & Economic Opportunity

Notes

- The Illinois Office of Broadband provided a great overview of the BEAD program in Illinois. Please find the slides [here](#).
- Main points on the risk of delay of BEAD to Illinois:
 - Fiber focused
 - There is cap on administrative costs so if extension is too long, the allowance would not be adequate and would need a waiver.
 - HR1870 SPEED for BEAD Act (US House) and policy changes being floated through Dept of Commerce could impact/delay Illinois' BEAD deployment by up to TWO YEARS.
 - Expected delays would add time and costs to the BEAD program.
- Suggested contacting your federal lawmakers to share information and encourage them to preserve state autonomy to implement the BEAD program.

Loyd Rice

SEMO Electric Cooperative, GoSEMO Fiber

Notes

- SEMO is an ISP that has also used the Reconnect Program, CAF II awardee and the RDOF programs for broadband infrastructure. They have now applied for BEAD funds.
- Key points on the impact of delay or changes in the BEAD program:
 - Many areas become problematic
 - Cost of filing applications is high (they have spent \$200,000 on BEAD applications. If have to redo it adds cost.
 - Delays impact their networks.
 - Fiber is key infrastructure to the state and changes could impact quality of broadband to the states.

The following statement made by Loyd says it all: *“Not sure as a coop how long we can continue – causing uneasiness and it is extremely costly”*

Amy Huffman & Shauna Edson

National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA)

Notes

- NDIA provided a great overview of the DEA programs. Please find the slides [here](#).
- Main points on the risk of delay of DEA and Nonprofits:
 - Pauses or changes the work that NTIA (competitive grants) and the state (state capacity grants) have already completed.
 - Funds allocated to states could be rescinded, redirected, or reallocated.
 - Purpose of DEA to prevent or eliminate digital inclusion is not addressed

General Updates & Discussion

Reactions? Questions? Updates from your state?

Notes

- **Rep Louis Riggs – Missouri**
 - **Let the states finish and give them flexibility**
 - **Need to get Governors on Board and advocate for states to finish**
 - **NEED FOR SPEED – build for the future, not for just now – need fiber.**
- **Rep Matt Pierce – Indiana**
 - **Indiana had good results – need Feds to allow us to go forward**
 - **Need to get Governors on Board and advocate for states to finish**
 - **Pole Attachments are an issue in Indiana so SB50 is on the Governors desk to sign – basically provides that if ISP receives a grant, the owner of pole needs to work with the ISP.**

Contact Information



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