



# FUNDING ALERT!

Professional Assistance for Today's Unprecedented Funding Opportunities



## Program Name

Connect Montana Broadband Grant Program

## Funding Amount

- Up to \$266 million funded by the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
- Matching requirement is 20%

Montana

## Key Dates

**\$266 million**

- 2/7/22 – Application Window opens
- 4/29/22 – **Application Window closes (EXTENDED)**
- 5/6/22 – Challenge Period opens
- 6/4/22 – Challenge Period closes
- 6/4/22 - 7/5/22 – DOA responses to challenges (exact dates TBD)
- 6/4/22 - 7/5/22 – Applicant modifications for successful challenges (exact dates TBD)
- 6/6/22-7/5/22 – Final application review
- 7/6/22 – Awards announced

## Eligible Applicants

Incorporated business or partnership, a Montana nonprofit organization, limited liability company, incorporation, or cooperative entity organized for the purpose of expanding broadband access

## Eligible Areas

- **Frontier Area** - no or extremely limited terrestrial broadband service
- **Unserved Area** - 10% of delivery points have no access to broadband service at 25/10 Mbps with low latency
- **Underserved Area** - 10% of the delivery points have no access to broadband service at 100/20 Mbps with low latency

## Eligible Projects

- Project constitutes an unserved or underserved area described on a shapefile basis
- Implementation of middle mile and/or the last mile infrastructure that can support broadband service scalable to speeds of at least 100/100 Mbps
- Demonstrated technical, financial, and managerial resources
- Demonstrated experience providing broadband service or other communications service to end-user residential or business customers in Montana

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## Eligible Projects (continued)

- Minimum 20% project match
  - Match may not be from any funds derived from government grants or subsidies, excepting federal funds designated for broadband deployment
- May not receive funds under any other federal or state government grant or loan program where government funding supports 100% of this proposed project's capital costs

## Mapping Issues

- PDF version of the map and .shp, .kmz, or .kml files must be provided in the application including:
  - Map of the proposed project area and/or a complete list of addresses to be served by the project
  - Specific mapping of currently served areas, if any, including actual speed verification
  - Map of a last mile project should include the service area boundaries and also include place names, boundaries, buildings, road/street names or other features clearly identifying the project area
  - List of census blocks and road segments if a census block is over two square miles where project provides broadband
  - For middle mile projects, the map should indicate the location of the middle mile facilities that will be placed
- [2022 Montana Broadband Availability Map](#)

## Application Contents

- Part I – Project Background
  - Evidence demonstrating the provider's technical, financial, and managerial resources and experience to provide broadband service or other communications services
- Part II – Project Location
  - Description of the project area, mapping including shapefiles
  - Evidence demonstrating the unserved or underserved nature of the project area to the best of the provider's knowledge
- Part III – Project Funding
  - Funding allocation request and total project cost
  - Amount of matching funds, identifying source
- Part IV – Broadband Improvements
  - Description of the broadband service proposed, including facilities, equipment, and network capabilities including minimum speed thresholds
  - Number of households, businesses, and community anchor institutions or entities that receive new access to broadband service
- Part V – Community Participation
  - Letters of support from community stakeholders
- Part VI – Project Readiness
  - Use of funds budgeted, total cost of the proposed project, and the timeframe for completion
  - Preliminary list of all government authorizations, permits, and other approvals required, and an estimated timetable for acquisition of approvals and completion of the proposed project
- Part VII – Project Sustainability
- Part VIII – Applicant Affidavit

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## Scoring

### 120 Total Possible Points

#### Matching Funds (15 points maximum)

- Percentage of tribal, local government, school district contributed of total eligible project costs
- Percentage of broadband deployment allocation requested of total eligible project costs
- Percentage of applicant funds used for total eligible project costs

#### Passing Counts of Locations (20 points maximum)

- Number passed vs current served locations (households, businesses, farms, anchors)

#### Speed Thresholds of project (20 points maximum)

- 100/20 Mbps up to 99/99 Mbps with scalability to 100/100 Mbps
- Or speeds 100/100 or higher

#### Use of Existing Infrastructure (30 points maximum)

- Use of existing rights of ways and easements
- Use of existing fiber optics middle mile infrastructure
- Colocation of existing & new facilities for public safety communication networks
- Use of new construction project funds for middle mile open access

#### Timeframe to Complete Project: up to 2 years (5 points) or longer than 2 years (3 points)

#### Number of Montana Jobs Created (10 points maximum)

- Jobs created or maintained relative to county or counties of project area

#### Equity and Affordability (10 points maximum)

- Free public access offered at community center for broadband service for 3 years
- Monthly subscriber fees included for low-income residents
- 30% or more of residential locations at or below poverty level
- 30% or more of residential locations receiving WIC
- Percentage of unemployment of area above national average
- 20% of residential locations receiving national school lunch program

## Middle Mile

- New construction of open access middle mile projects is allowed
- The program encourages providers to use existing middle mile infrastructure to support the new last mile infrastructure

## Budget Categories

- Construction – Labor – Last Mile
- Construction – Labor – Middle Mile
- Construction - Materials
- Electronics
- Customer Premise Installation – Labor
- Customer Premise – Equipment
- Professional services and engineering

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## Allowable Costs

### Eligible Costs

- Project planning, obtaining construction permits, construction of facilities – including construction of both middle mile and last mile infrastructure, enhancing internet exchange points to avoid speed bottlenecks, equipment, and installation and testing of the broadband service

### Ineligible Costs

- Noncapital expenses, including general operations of an eligible provider, video or voice services nonbroadband services, marketing, or advertising
- Any expenses incurred prior to the date that the allocation contract is executed

## Links & Emails

- [Grant Announcement \(mt.gov\)](#)
- [ConnectMT ARPA Broadband Application Instruction Packet](#)
- [State of Montana Grant Submission Manager \(covidreliefmt.org\)](#)
- [2022 Montana Broadband Availability Map](#)
- [ConnectMT ARPA Broadband Grant Webinar Details \(mt.gov\)](#)
- Please submit questions about the ConnectMT grant at this [link](#)

- Opportunity Evaluation
- Effective Grant Writing
- Track Record of Success