



THE ENABLING MIDDLE MILE BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT (MMG) PROGRAM

PROGRAM DETAILS FOR APPLICANTS

MAY 2022



Introduction

Uses of funding

Review and scoring process

Application components and process



INTRODUCTION

Today's webinar will focus on the Middle Mile Program – one of four high-speed internet programs administered by NTIA¹

BEAD	DIGITAL EQUITY	TRIBAL	<i>Today's focus</i> MIDDLE MILE
<p>\$42.45B</p>	<p>\$2.75B</p>	<p>\$2.00B</p>	<p>\$1.00B</p>
<p>Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment Program</p>	<p>Digital Equity Act</p>	<p>Tribal Connectivity Technical Amendments</p>	<p>Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure</p>
<p>A program to get all Americans online by funding partnerships between states or territories, communities, and stakeholders to build infrastructure where we need it and increase adoption of high-speed internet.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>A program to help tribal communities expand high-speed internet access and adoption on tribal lands.</p>	<p>A program to expand middle mile infrastructure, to reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas.</p>

1. National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
 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.

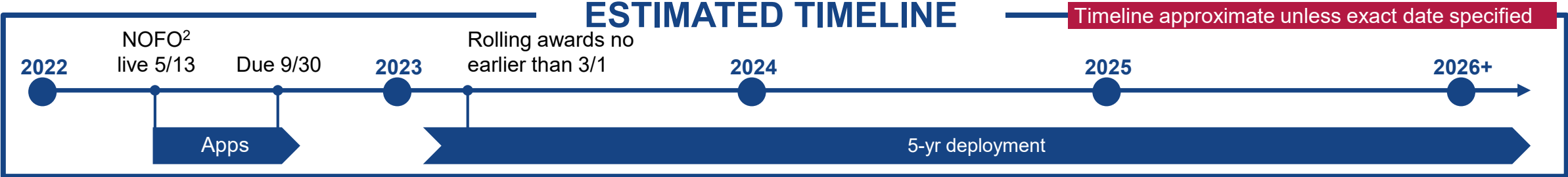
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

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 users¹

Entities eligible to apply include a wide variety of entities, incl. 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



1. California Department of Technology, ["What is the middle mile?"](#) 2. Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), available [here](#).

Middle mile infrastructure broadly means the mid-section of internet infrastructure

Middle mile infrastructure carries large amounts of data at high speeds over long distances²

Middle mile infrastructure includes:

- Leased dark fiber, interoffice transport, backhaul, carrier-neutral internet exchange facilities, carrier-neutral submarine cable landing stations, undersea cables, transport connectivity to data centers, special access transport, and other similar services
- Wired or private wireless broadband infrastructure, including microwave capacity, radio tower access, and other services or infrastructure for a private wireless network, e.g., towers, fiber, and microwave links

1. California Department of Technology, ["What is the middle mile"?](#)

Middle Mile funding is available to variety of entities and partnerships

The term “eligible entity” means:

Government:

- State, political subdivision of a State, Tribal / Native government

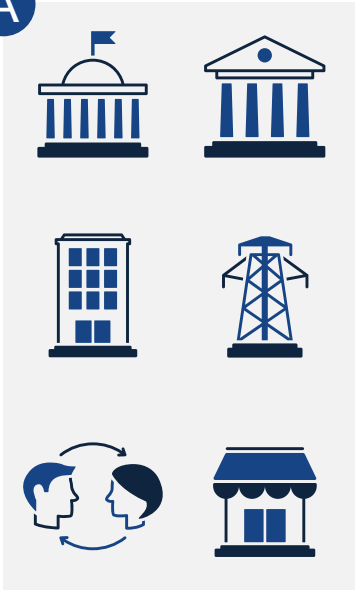
Industry:

- Tech company, electric utility, utility coop, public utility district, telecom company/coop

Non-profits and other associations:

- Non-profit foundation/corporation/institution/association, regional planning council, Native entity, or economic development authority

A



B



A partnership of two or more entities described in (A)

Middle Mile program will support broadband access, affordability, and adoption across all Americans



Access



Aggregates large quantities of traffic **between points to improve access**, enabling future investment in infrastructure to reach the end user's location



Carries traffic to **remote, unserved, or underserved locations** such as Hawaii or American territories, unserved Tribal / Native lands, or simply a neighboring town



Affordability



Reduces the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas **expanding and extending infrastructure** to carry large amounts of data to the backbone of the Internet



Unlocks future opportunities for providers to offer cost-effective **last-mile services**



Adoption and equity



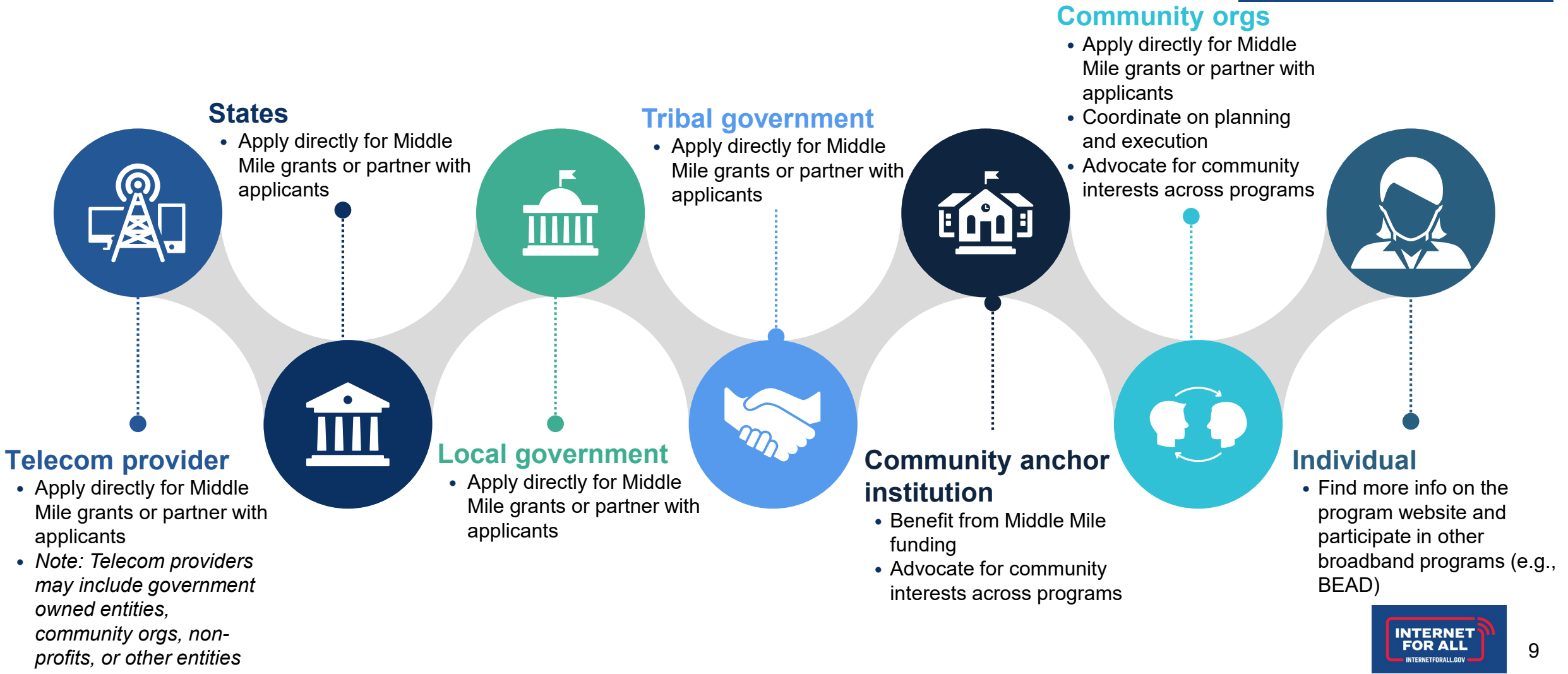
Funds projects in **diverse geographies** and **priority communities**, such as unserved, underserved, remote and high poverty areas



Builds middle mile infrastructure to **connect to last mile services**, including where there are community or anchor tenant commitments to adopt services

This webinar focuses on info for MMG applicants, incl. but not limited to telecom providers, States, local and Tribal governments

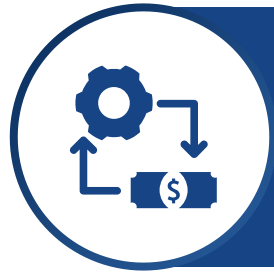
Illustrative, non-exhaustive





USES OF FUNDING

NTIA will grant up to \$980M through \$5-100M grants



Funding
availability

NTIA will make up to **\$980M** available for federal assistance under the middle mile grants program



Award
amount

NTIA expects to make awards under this program within the following funding range: **\$5M to \$100M**

This range is not a required minimum or maximum, but eligible entities requesting amounts for projects outside of this range must provide a reasonable explanation for the variance in their project size

Grants can be used for the construction, improvement, or acquisition of middle mile infrastructure

Non-exhaustive examples of eligible uses of funds:



Construction, improvement, and/or acquisition of facilities and telecommunications equipment



Engineering design, permitting and work related to environmental, historical and cultural reviews



Personnel costs, including salaries and fringe benefits for staff and consultants (e.g., PMs, SMEs, financial analysts, accountants, attorneys)

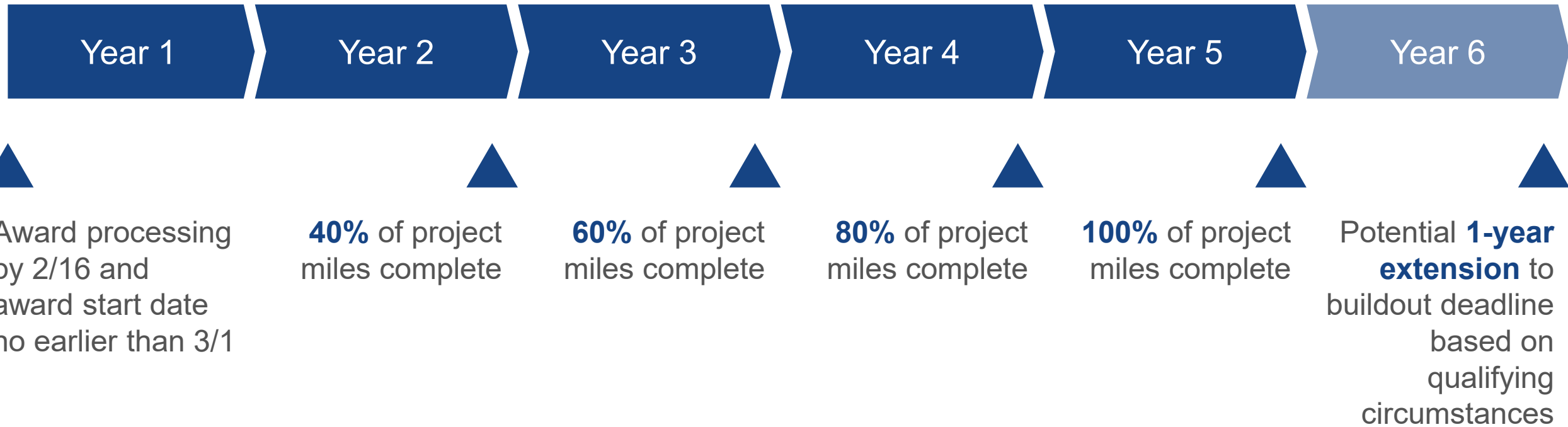


Select pre-application expenses <\$50,000 incurred after NOFO publication and before grant award



Other costs necessary to programmatic activities, excluding ineligible costs

Middle Mile projects must be completed and operating no later than five years from when the award is made



The five-year project deadline may be extended by no more than one year under qualifying circumstances

Qualifying circumstances for project extension



The eligible entity has a plan for use of the grant funds;



The project to build out middle mile infrastructure is underway; or



Extenuating circumstances require an extension of time to allow completion of the project to build out middle mile infrastructure



Requests for extensions will be granted at the sole discretion of the Assistant Secretary

If an extension is granted, the Assistant Secretary shall modify any milestones as necessary under the extension



REVIEW AND SCORING PROCESS

Middle mile program review process includes three steps



1

Eligibility review

NTIA ensures applicants are eligible, including verifying:

1. Application is complete
2. Eligible Entity meets eligibility criteria

2

Merit review and prioritization

Reviewers evaluate and score applications on a scale of 0-100 across two categories of criteria:

1. Project purpose and benefits (60 points)
2. Project sustainability (40 points)

3

Programmatic review and selection

NTIA Program Staff review and assess applications in two steps:

1. Ask applicant to submit additional info, as appropriate
2. Assess proposed project and calculate weighted scores

DOC selects projects for funding based on ranked list with potential adjustments for geographic diversity and diversity in award sizes

Transition from step 2 to step 3

NTIA prioritizes projects for programmatic review based on merit review score and whether applications meet 2 of 5 criteria from the statute

Eligibility review | Eligible entities must meet five eligibility criteria



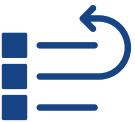
First, provide evidence sufficient to demonstrate that it is capable of carrying out a proposed project in a competent manner, incl. by demonstrating financial, technical, and operational capability, per the program applicant qualifications – [detail on next slide](#)



Second, certify that the project will be capable of **supporting retail broadband service**



Third, commit to **non-Federal cost share of no less than 30%** of the total project cost; only Tribal / Native entities may request a partial or complete waiver



Fourth, make a binding commitment to prioritize at least one of the following:

- 1 Connect middle mile infrastructure to last mile networks in **unserved areas**
- 2 Connect **non-contiguous trust lands**; or
- 3 Offer **wholesale broadband service** at reasonable rates on a carrier-neutral basis.



Fifth, offer **interconnection** in perpetuity, where technically feasible without exceeding current or reasonably anticipated capacity limitations, on reasonable rates and terms

1

Eligibility review | Eligible entities must meet program applicant qualifications

Prospective grant recipients must meet two program applicant qualifications

A

Is capable of carrying out the project in a **competent manner**

B

Has the **financial, managerial, technical and operational capability** to carry out the project and operate the resulting MMG broadband network

Six steps for applicants to demonstrate EE meet qualifications

- **Financial capability:** Supply certification attesting to financial qualification, a letter of credit, and financial Statements for past 3 years
- **Managerial capability:** Supply resumes for key personnel, org chart(s), and a narrative describing managerial readiness
- **Technical capability:** Supply certification attesting to technical qualification, a network design diagram, project costs, build-out timeline and milestones for implementation, and a capital investment schedule
- **Compliance with laws:** Demonstrate capability of carrying out activities in a competent manner in compliance with all applicable federal, State, and local laws and permit workers to create worker-led health and safety committees with which management will meet upon reasonable request
- **Operational capability:** Supply certification attesting to operational qualification and additional certifications if applicant has operated select types of services in the past¹
- **Ownership:** Provide ownership info, including name, address, and citizenship of any party with >10% stock in applicant

1. A MMG broadband network for >2 years, voice and/or broadband internet access service, or electric transmission or distribution service

Merit review and prioritization | Reviewers evaluate applications across two categories of criteria



Criteria	Description	Points
Underserved areas or affordability	Deploy to un- or underserved areas or improve affordability in existing markets	20
Interconnection	Offer non-discriminatory interconnection in perpetuity, where feasible	10
Open access wholesale	Offer open access to the funded infrastructure in perpetuity	10
Other benefits	Provide other benefits (e.g., redundancy, direct interconnect facilities)	10
Tech solution and shovel ready	Meet community's needs and complete project in two-year period	10
Total: Project purpose & benefits		60
Org capability	Organizational capability to complete the specific project proposed	5
Budget	Reasonableness of applicant's proposed budget	10
Fiscal sustainability	Project's fiscal sustainability beyond the award period	10
Non-federal cost share	Contribute a non-federal cost share >30% ¹	15
Total: Project sustainability		40

1. Sliding scale with 5 points for 30-40%, 10 points for 41-50%, and 15 points for >50%

2

Merit review and prioritization | NTIA prioritizes applications based on merit review score and two of five statutory criteria

Projects are prioritized based on merit review score and statutory criteria

- 1 Applications with **score ≥ 80** during Merit Review and that meet at least **two of the five statutory criteria**
- 2 Other applications with **score ≥ 80** during Merit Review
- 3 Applications with **score < 80** during Merit Review but meet at least **two of the five statutory criteria**



Projects that meet two of five statutory criteria are prioritized for programmatic review

- 1 Adopt **fiscally sustainable** middle mile strategies
- 2 Commit to offering **non-discriminatory interconnect** to last mile broadband providers and any other party making a bona fide request
- 3 Identify **last mile broadband providers** with (i) interest in interconnection; and ii) sustainable business plans or adequate funding for interconnection
- 4 Identify **supplemental investments or in-kind support** (such as waived franchise or permitting fees) that will accelerate project completion
- 5 Benefit **national security interests** of the US and the Department of Defense

3

Programmatic review and selection | NTIA may ask for additional info and calculates weighted scores



First, NTIA may ask applicants to **submit additional information** to confirm eligibility or Merit Review score



Second, NTIA **calculates weighted scores** (i.e., multiply Merit Review by 1.0x to 1.8x) based on eight criteria

Eight criteria assessed in programmatic review to calculate weighted score









- 1 Reduce end-user prices
- 2 Reduce latency in remote or insular areas
- 3 Benefit priority areas and groups
- 4 Benefit unserved areas or Tribal Lands
- 5 Connect unserved anchor institutions
- 6 Comply with select requirements¹
- 7 Demonstrate climate resiliency
- 8 Proposed use of community benefit agreements

1. Requirements related to Fair Labor Practices, Advancing Workforce Development Objectives, and Civil Rights and Non-Discrimination Law Compliance



APPLICATION COMPONENTS AND PROCESS

Project application includes several components

-  1 **Executive summary**, not to exceed two pages or ~1,000 words; NTIA may use all or a portion of the Executive Summary as part of a press release or other public info
-  2 **Project purpose, need, and beneficiaries**, including how the proposal will advance program objectives, proposed routes or service areas, info on existing middle mile offerings, list of anchor institutions and types within 1,000 feet of proposed route (for fiber projects only), etc.
-  3 **Proposed project – technical approach, service area, and build out plan**, including network route map(s), network diagram and system design, technical details, timeline for buildout, etc.
-  4 **Project financials and organization financial capacity**, including project budget and funding, non-federal cost share sources, financials for last 3 years, audit for last year, pro forma, etc.
-  5 **Project implementation team and organizational capacity**, including org charts, management team and key resumes, plans for labor standards and workforce development, etc.
-  6 **Government and community involvement**, including info on coordination with State, Territory, Tribal / Native entities, and local governments and community organizations
-  7 **Budget narrative and detailed budget justification spreadsheet**, including an explanation of the necessity and basis for all costs and reflecting the cost categories on the SF-424C
-  8 **Required forms**, including Standard Form 424: Application for Federal Assistance, Standard Form 424C: Budget Info for Construction Programs, CD–511 Certification Regarding Lobbying etc.

Note: Description of sections are not inclusive of all requirements

NTIA will only accept applications submitted electronically via its online application portal by September 30, 2022



NTIA Application Portal

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



NEXT STEPS

Next steps for applicants related to the Middle Mile Program

- 1 Coordinate with your State or local broadband office
- 2 Submit questions to middlemile@ntia.gov
- 3 Attend future NTIA webinars and engage with NTIA
- 4 Submit an application for the Middle Mile Program by September 30, 2022

For specific inquiries, please contact the appropriate office

Programmatic inquiries

Sarah Bleau
Middle Mile Director
Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
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Washington, DC 20230
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Grant management inquiries

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Grants Management Division
National Institute of Standards and Technology
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Boulder, CO 80305
Phone: (303) 497-3444
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Email: press@ntia.doc.gov



APPENDIX

Applicants must demonstrate their record of and plans to be in compliance with federal labor and employment laws



Information on record of compliance



Information on record of compliance with federal labor and employment laws for applicant and any other participating entities



Certification of past compliance



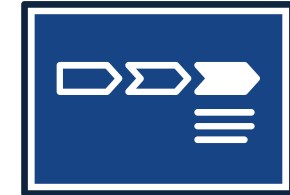
Certification from Officer / Director-level employee evidencing compliance with federal labor and employment laws



Written disclosure



Written disclosure of any instances in which the applicant has been found to have violated laws



Plan for ensuring compliance



A written plan for ensuring compliance with Federal labor and employment laws across applicant and its contractors and subcontracts

Applicants must make appropriate investments to develop a skilled and diverse workforce



Use of highly trained workforce

Description of how applicant will use a highly trained workforce capable of carrying out Middle Mile Program work in a manner that is safe and effective



Participation in partnerships

Description of the applicant's participation in partnerships that provide skills-based training and wrap-around services to support workers



Job availability to diverse worker pool

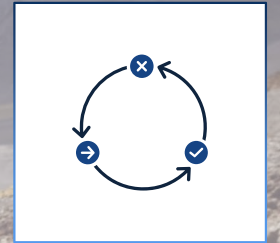
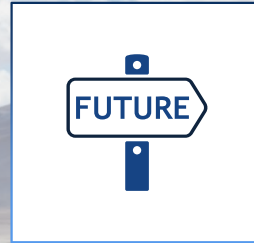
Description of how the applicant will ensure job opportunities created by broadband funding programs are available to a diverse pool of workers



Other workforce development activities

Description of other workforce development activities (e.g., Registered Apprenticeships, hiring of local workers, etc.)

Applicants must demonstrate that they sufficiently account for current and future weather- and climate-related risks



Identify **geographic areas** for an initial hazard screening and time scales for such screenings



Identify the most important **weather and climate hazards** in these areas



Characterize **risks to new middle mile infrastructure** for 20 years following deployment



Identify how the proposed plan will **avoid or mitigate the risks** identified



Detail the applicant's plans for periodically **repeating this process** over the life of the project

