

Solicitation No. 2024-MBI-01 for Broadband Infrastructure Gap Networks Grant Program- Questions and Answers Batch #1

#	Question	MBI Response
1.	Where and when will all questions and answers be posted for GAP grants?	Answers will be posted to the MBI website and CommBUYS.
2.	Section 10.2.1 "Data Collection" of MBI's Broadband Infrastructure Gap Networks Grant Program Solicitation, requires applicants to provide "spatial data layers of proposed project service area and network route including road centerlines, easements, and points of interconnection to existing infrastructure..." Easements cannot be depicted in spatial data as set forth in the Broadband Infrastructure Gap Networks Grant Program Solicitation. However, we can affirm in our proposal that Verizon has or will obtain all required authorizations to deploy in public rights of way. Would this be acceptable to MBI in lieu of a depiction of easements in spatial data?	As long as it is clear within the spatial data layers which locations are being passed as part of the project, then easements need not be identified.
3.	We are concerned that the deadline for submitting applications for the first round of GAP funding—December 11, 2023—is unrealistic, at least for small communities. We would therefore respectfully request that the December 11, 2023, deadline be extended.	The submission deadline will not be changed for Round 1. All Round 1 applications must be submitted by 5:00PM on December 11, 2023. MBI will administer a Round 2 pursuant to the schedule in the grant solicitation.
4.	We are concerned about the ability of a municipality to satisfy the 25% match requirement. Could the match waiver be extended to all municipal applicants?	Eligibility for the funding match waiver in Section 5.4 of the grant solicitation will not be modified.
5.	Is the letter of support from the municipality in each Project Service Area a mandatory requirement?	The letter of support is a mandatory requirement for the program.
6.	Is there a mandatory format for the municipal letter of support?	No.
7.	Will there be a Round 2 of grant applications for this program?	Yes.
8.	Given the priority for Gateway Cities and Qualified Census Tracts, where does that leave rural communities? Is the evaluation going to include the number of people served since of course low population communities will then be at a disadvantage. Please respond however is appropriate.	While the grant solicitation does prioritize Project Service Areas in Gateway Municipalities and Qualified Census Tracts there are evaluation criteria that also relate to more broadly to low income communities. This prioritization does not affect eligibility for funding relative to unserved and underserved locations in rural communities. Any Project Service Area that satisfies the grant solicitation requirements is eligible for

		funding regardless of whether it is in a Gateway Municipality or Qualified Census Tract.
9.	The online map seems to show that QCT/Gateway locations already meet >99% of coverage criteria.	According to the latest FCC broadband maps, broadband availability is approximately 99% statewide. The goal of the Gap Networks Grant Program is to extend broadband coverage to the remaining unserved and underserved locations.
10.	Is there a restriction within the awards, similar to the percentage cap for middle mile costs, for costs related to make-ready work required in last mile installation? Are make-ready estimates a requirement in the application process?	There is no percentage cap on make-ready costs as a percentage of the overall project cost. The budget to be submitted with the application for each Project Service Area does include a line item for estimated make-ready costs. MBI recognizes that actual make-ready costs will vary from the estimate.
11.	Does MBI have a plan, or how are they planning to address, installation delays due to long make-ready timelines which may make it difficult to complete project installation by the deadline?	The program requirement is for awardees to complete the project within 12 months of acquiring all make-ready licensing and permitting rights subject to allow excusable delay justifications for force majeure events.
12.	If address on west side of a road is not covered under GAP because it has been funded under RDOF or other funding, but the address across the street on the east side of the road is not identified, will grant funding cover running service down the same road to connect the addresses on the East Side?	Under this hypothetical, locations on the west side of the street would be covered under a prior Federal funding commitment Rural Digital Opportunities Fund (RDOF) so those are ineligible for funding under the Gap Networks Grant Program. However, if there are locations on the east side of the street that are not covered under RDOF or any other existing funding commitment and they are unserved or underserved, then they would be eligible for support under the Gap Networks Grant Program.
13.	What labor standards are you using in this procedure? It seems that all that was addressed was workforce development.	Awardees are required to comply with all legal requirements associated with the expenditure of ARPA Capital Projects Funds, including any guidance issued by

		<p>the U.S. Treasury Department. For example, there are certain project cost thresholds that would trigger Davis Bacon and prevailing wage.</p> <p>Federal funding flow down requirements are addressed in the grant agreement template posted on the procurement page for this program - https://masstech.org/broadband-infrastructure-gap-networks-grant-program.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to receive bonus points for applicants that propose labor and workforce standards that go beyond the federal requirements.</p>
14.	<p>Will there be a clawback provision? If a grantee is not abiding by what was originally agreed to will there be a way to get back the money and use another grantee?</p>	<p>MassTech will enforce all contractual provisions and any non-compliant entity is at risk of having their grant agreement terminated.</p> <p>There is specific language in the grant agreement template that states: <i>MassTech shall have the right to recover from any payment previously made amounts on preceding or pending invoices found by MassTech or any State or Federal Agency with authority for this funding not to be properly supported as payable or not allowable in accordance with the Cost Principles contained in 2 CFR 200, Subpart E or other regulations specified in this agreement.</i></p>
15.	<p>How do we answer health & Safety objections that the FCC's guidelines for RF-EMF microwave radiation exposure levels - including for our equipment - have not been updated since 1996? (We are hearing lots of objections / concerns.)</p>	<p>Any concerns related to health and safety should be addressed during the community engagement process with the applicant. MBI is administering the Gap Networks Grant Program pursuant to all applicable federal requirements and will make awards consistent with those requirements.</p>

16.	Are there file size limitations to the upload fields or Attachments?	<p>There's a 20 MB limit for each individual file. It is not cumulative, but any one file cannot exceed 20 MB.</p> <p>The text boxes have a 100,000 character limit.</p>
17.	What's the definition of a location vs area? Will towns that received RDOF funding be eligible for this grant money for addresses that were not listed under RDOF?	A location ties to a specific address. An area will have numerous locations. Unserved or underserved locations remaining in a municipality that are not subject to an existing funding commitment, such as RDOF, will be eligible for funding under the Gap Networks Grant Program.
18.	Clarify 60% median income test. Does anywhere on Cape Cod qualify? We have plenty of individuals under 60% median, but I doubt we have any census tracts under 60% on the Outer Cape, probably not on the entire cape.	The qualified census tracts are a federal definition but are not a baseline requirement for funding eligibility under the Gap Networks Grant Program. Any Project Service Area that satisfies the grant solicitation requirements is eligible for funding regardless of whether it is in a Gateway Municipality or Qualified Census Tract.
19.	How should Municipalities and/or MLPs handle the financial request for records?	Any documentation submitted to MBI is subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law and is subject to disclosure unless an exemption applies as determined by MassTech's General Counsel. The procedure for requesting confidential treatment of documents is addressed in the grant solicitation in Section 7.2.
20.	If MBI receives applications from qualified applicants in round 1 that meet all the unserved and underserved needs in ways that satisfy MBI's criteria, would MBI award those applications and forego round 2. Or will MBI reserve some portion of funding so round 2 is conducted regardless?	The goal is to deploy the funding as quickly as possible. However, MBI will administer a second funding round as per the schedule in the grant solicitation.
21.	Confirming the underserved speed is between 25MB/3Mb and 100MB/20MB. The speaker said "100B/200MB"	Correct. An underserved location has access to a minimum of 25/3 Mbps but does not have access to 100/20 Mbps broadband speeds.

22.	The Mashpee Tribe receives NTIA funds to service Tribal Members in the Town of Mashpee; however, the tribe would like to service tribal members on the outskirts of the Town of Mashpee, would they be eligible to apply. NTIA funding is for infrastructure and not to address GAP issues.	If those locations meet the definition of unserved or underserved, then they would be eligible under the Gap Networks Program.
23.	Just to clarify, does a municipality need to include all unserved/underserved in our municipality's proposed project, if we apply?	Yes. Once an applicant proposes to serve an unserved or underserved location, they have to commit to provide coverage to all of the unserved / underserved locations in that municipality.