



Four Factors Defining 'The Year of Execution' for BEAD

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) says 2024 will be “the year of execution” for BEAD. Here are four factors that could define the difference between success and so-so execution:

1. **The BEAD challenge process is critical to determining which locations are eligible for funding.** Most states have not begun, or are early in, the process. ISPs should monitor and participate in challenges, even if they do not plan to bid for funding as a necessary step to help prevent overbuilding of networks, promote efficient use of funds, and ensure effective coordination with other programs.
2. **Large BEAD project areas could discourage small providers from participating and drive costs higher.** Smaller, right-sized project areas target funds to the areas that most need them and will encourage program participation by those best able to serve them.
3. **BEAD presents a once-in-a-lifetime investment in broadband.** But this historic public investment must be matched by investments in future-proof technology that will enhance rural communities' education, healthcare and economic opportunities and help close the digital divide. There likely won't be any “do-overs” when it comes to broadband funding, so we need to get it right.
4. History and broadband maps show that community-based providers provide better services and a better customer experience, but **matching fund requirements, burdensome compliance reporting mandates and the taxing of broadband grants may make small and rural ISPs less competitive** in many states.

During this key execution phase, it is essential to stay focused on the risks that could undermine the program's success — and to plan for what must be done to realize the vision of “Internet for all.”