

# **BEAD and Digital Equity Update**

Division of Broadband and Digital Equity

Aug. 27, 2024

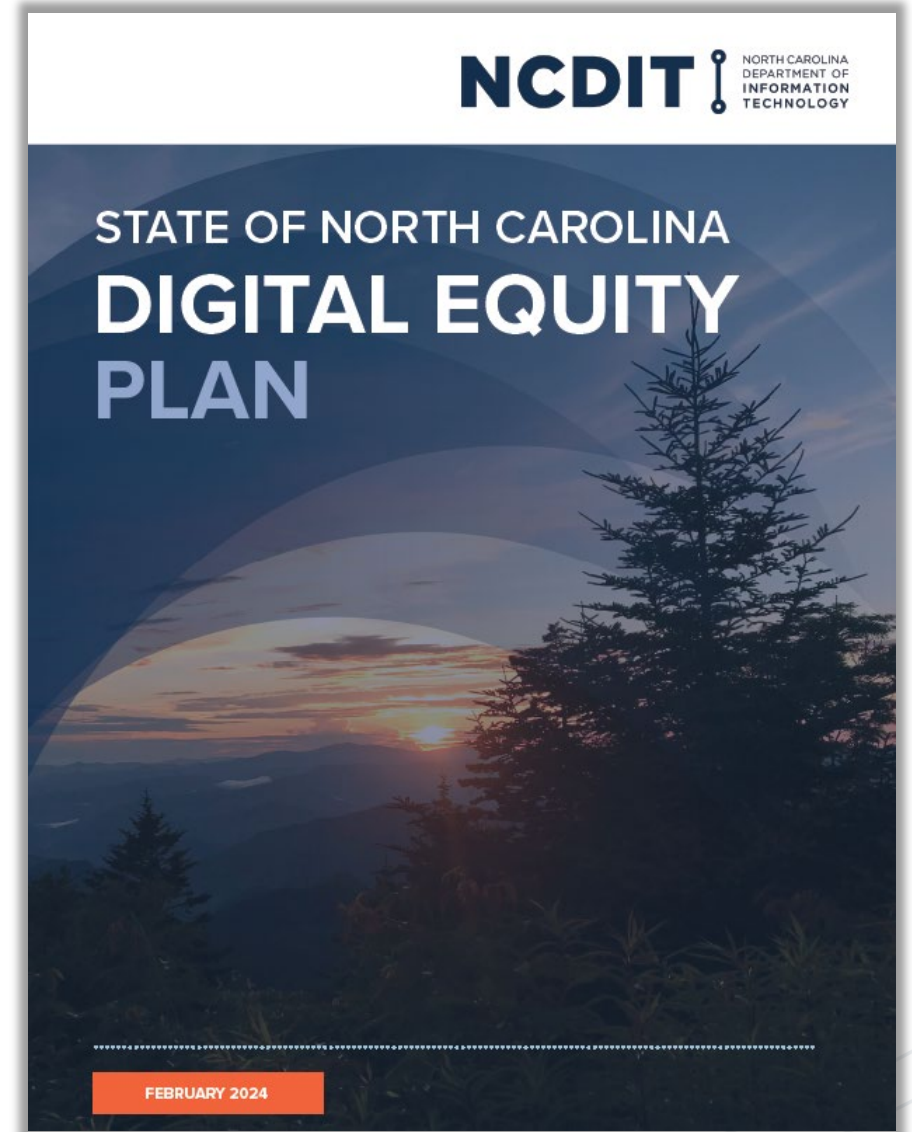
# Digital Champion Grant Program

- Awarded \$30 million to 63 organizations in June; Awardees and project descriptions listed at [ncbroadband.gov/digital-champion-grantees](https://ncbroadband.gov/digital-champion-grantees)
- Creates partnerships with organizations statewide to implement digital equity solutions that positively impact target populations identified in the Digital Equity Act; Received 230 applications from local government, nonprofit, higher education and regional organizations requesting more than \$150 million in funding
- Applications proposed digital equity projects from eligible entities to serve all 100 counties; many counties had project proposals from multiple applicants

**Received \$50 million in ARPA funds over 4 years; Awarded \$44 million**

# Digital Equity Plan Approved!

- Digital Equity Plan was **ACCEPTED** by NTIA in March 2024
- Plan is available at [ncbroadband.gov/Digital-Equity-Plan](https://ncbroadband.gov/Digital-Equity-Plan)



# What's Inside

*We envision a future where all North Carolinians have access to reliable, affordable high-speed internet and the digital tools, resources, and skills to fully and equitably participate in our society, democracy and economy.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Overview .....	9
A Vision for Digital Equity in North Carolina .....	12
Planning and Community Outreach Process .....	13
<b>CURRENT STATE OF DIGITAL EQUITY IN NORTH CAROLINA</b> .....	<b>17</b>
Defining Covered Populations.....	18
Asset Inventory.....	20
Overview and Development of the Asset Inventory .....	20
Spotlight on model programs and initiatives.....	21
Programs and Initiatives for Covered Populations.....	23
County and Regional Digital Inclusion Plans .....	36
Barriers and Needs.....	40
<b>MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES..</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE</b> .....	<b>88</b>
<b>ALIGNING STATE PLANS AND PRIORITIES</b> .....	<b>97</b>
<b>SUSTAINING DIGITAL EQUITY IN NORTH CAROLINA</b> .....	<b>103</b>
<b>COORDINATION OF SOURCES OF FUNDS FOR IMPLEMENTATION</b> .....	<b>106</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>108</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>110</b>
Appendix A: Glossary of Terms .....	111
Appendix B: Key Partnerships .....	112
Appendix C: Research Questions and Related Data Sources .....	119
Appendix D: Digital Equity Survey.....	121
Appendix E: Asset Inventory .....	123
Appendix F: Listening Sessions .....	125
Appendix G: Deeper Analysis of Barriers and Needs by Covered Population.....	126
Appendix H: Covered Population Demographic Summaries.....	127
Appendix I: Student Freedom Initiative.....	157
Appendix J: Public Comment.....	169
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>213</b>

# What's Next?

## Digital Equity Capacity Grant NOFO released by NTIA

- \$22 million for North Carolina (*only NCDIT could apply*)
- Expected award date: Fall 2024
- Additional funding rounds expected in 2025 and 2026 (so program may continue until 2031)

## Digital Equity Competitive Grant NOFO released by NTIA

- Organizations in the state eligible to apply (*except NCDIT*)
- Due date: Sept. 23, 2024

## Asset Inventory/Tech Resource Finder

- Interactive database being developed by NCDIT
- Expected publish date: October 2024

# NTIA Digital Equity Competitive Grant NOFO

\$750 million in total funding available nationwide: [ntia.gov/federal-register-notice/2024/notice-funding-opportunity-digital-equity-competitive-grant-program](https://www.ntia.gov/federal-register-notice/2024/notice-funding-opportunity-digital-equity-competitive-grant-program)

- Eligible applicants include local governments; native entities; certain nonprofits; community anchor institutions; local educational agencies; and workforce development organizations
  - Individual awards will be between \$5-\$12 million with required minimum match of 10% (cash or in-kind)
  - NTIA anticipates 150-200 total awards; **Partnerships are highly encouraged.**
- Applications must be submitted in the NTIA Grants Portal by 11:59 p.m. ET on Sept. 23
- NTIA expects to begin issuing awards to applicants on a rolling basis, beginning this winter through no later than April 20, 2025
- Want to partner with others? Connect with us by emailing [Maggie.Woods@nc.gov](mailto:Maggie.Woods@nc.gov)

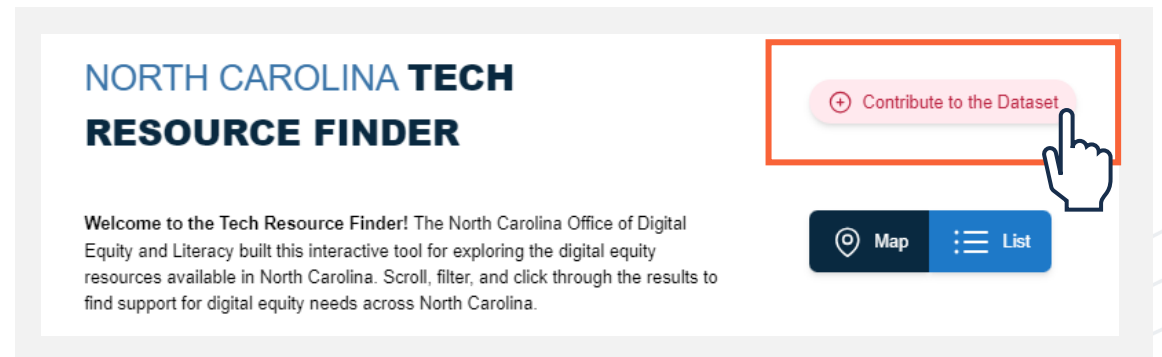
# Tech Resource Finder - Site is a Living Tool Powered by Crowdsourced Data

## How did North Carolina gather resources?

- The NCDIT Office of Digital Equity and Literacy, part of the Division of Broadband and Digital Equity, gathered the information in the Tech Resource Finder as part of its Digital Equity planning work in 2023
- Community members, digital navigators, academic partners, state agencies, and North Carolinians contributed to the dataset

## How can I add or update information on a resource?

- We are committed to keeping information on digital equity resources correct and current
- Click on the “contribute to the dataset” button to submit a correction or update information you see on this site



## NCDIT: Broadband & Digital Equity Grant Tracker (Updated as of 7/19/2024)

County	Program	Awardee	Project Status	Clear All Filters
Multiple selections <input type="checkbox"/>	All <input type="checkbox"/>	All <input type="checkbox"/>	All <input type="checkbox"/>	

**Total Funds (Statewide)**  
**\$800M**

**Funds Awarded**  
**\$17M**

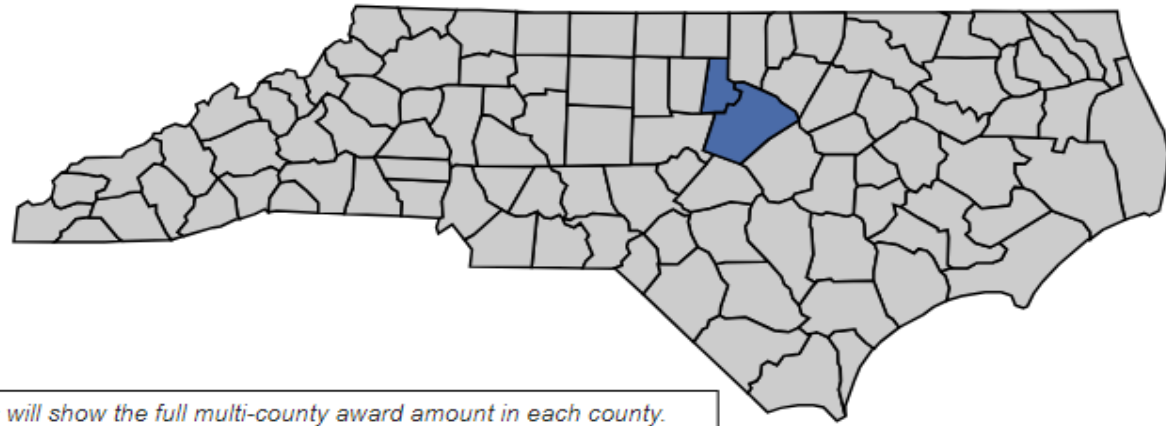
**Grants Awarded**  
**9**

**Households Served**  
**4,040**

**Businesses Served**  
**173**

**Program Scope:**  County  Multi-county

### Grant Award Details by County



### Individual Grant Award Details by County

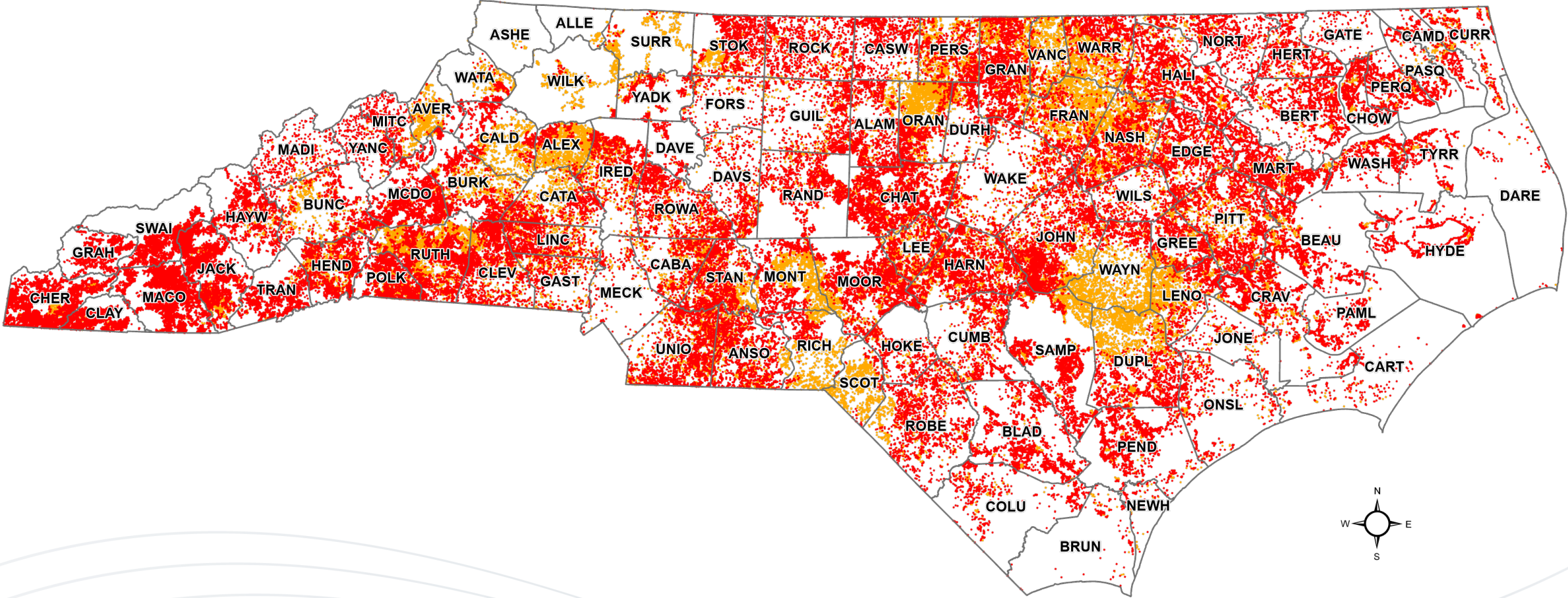
County	Program Scope	Program	Grant Program	Awardee	Grant Amount	Match Amount	Project Status	Construction Deadline
Wake	County	Completing Access to Broadband		AT&T	\$2,882,414	\$5,353,055	Contracted	10/31/2026
Wake	County	Completing Access to Broadband		Spectrum	\$463,790	\$861,325	Contracted	10/31/2026
Chatham, Moore, Durham, Johnston, Lee, Wake, Oran	Multi-county	Digital Equity	Digital Champions Program	Central Pines Regional Council	\$800,000			

\* All data is exclusively reflective of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and does not include state-funded GREAT grant awards.



# Broadband Profile: Evolving identification of Unserved Locations

New FCC Broadband Data Collection Serviceable Location Fabric – December 2023



- Unserved Broadband Serviceable Locations (Less than 25mbps download and 3mbps upload)
  - 236,463 Locations
- Underserved Broadband Serviceable Locations (Less Than 100mbps download and 20mbps upload)
  - 146,760 Locations

# Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Funding

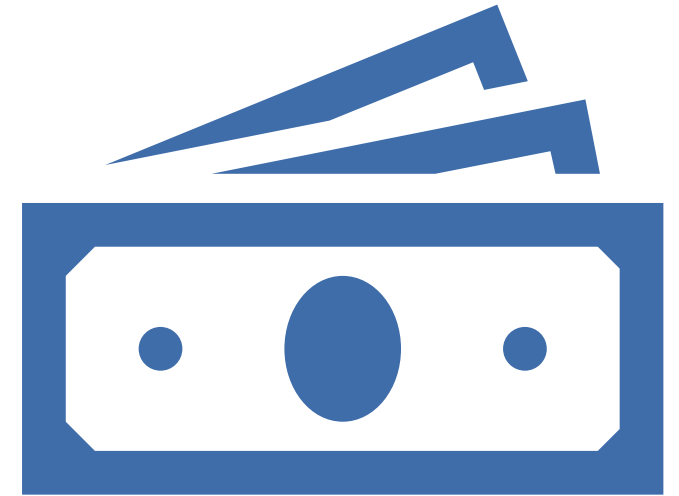
**\$1.5 billion from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to make sure all North Carolinians can access reliable high-speed internet**

Eligible uses of funding include:

- Infrastructure for homes and businesses
- Upgrades to infrastructure for community anchor institutions
- Mapping and data collection
- Internet and Wi-Fi infrastructure for multi-family residential buildings
- Broadband adoption, including affordable internet capable devices and sign-up assistance
- Training and workforce development
- Digital equity programs

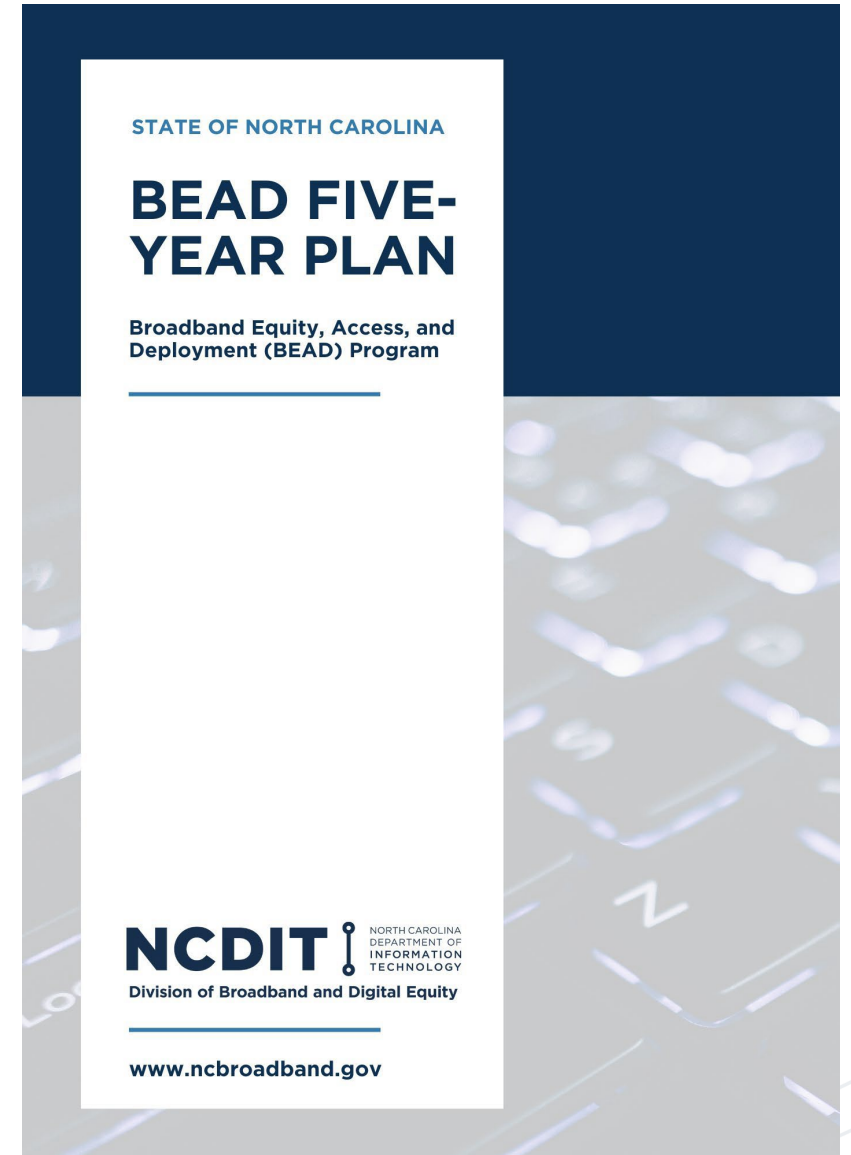
# How Will BEAD Funding be Prioritized?

- 1. Top priority: Unserved areas** (locations with internet speeds below 25/3 Mbps)
- 2. Second priority: Underserved areas** (locations with speeds between 25/3 and 100/20 Mbps)
- 3. Third priority: Community anchor institutions- CAIs** (those with internet service under 1 Gbps symmetrical)
  - CAIs - a school, library, health clinic, health center, hospital or other medical provider, public safety entity, institution of higher education, public housing organization (including any public housing agency, HUD-assisted housing organization, or tribal housing organization), or community support organization that facilitates greater use of broadband service by vulnerable populations, including, but not limited to, low-income individuals, unemployed individuals, children, the incarcerated, and aged individuals



# BEAD Five-Year Plan

- Refined draft plan based on public comments received (partners listed in plan), and then submitted it to NTIA on July 28, 2023
- Plan was approved by NTIA in August 2023
- Approved plan is available at: [ncbroadband.gov/BEAD](https://ncbroadband.gov/BEAD)



# The BEAD Program

In June 2023, North Carolina was allocated \$1.53 billion in BEAD funds that will become available following completion of the federal planning and approval cycle

NCDIT has submitted the state's required Five-Year Action Plan and Initial Proposal Volumes I & II to NTIA; NTIA approved NCDIT's Volume I in April 2024

BEAD program  
planning

2023-2024

Challenge Process, followed by  
subgrant program

2024

Deployment

2025 - 2028

# BEAD Initial Proposal

- Includes two volumes submitted Dec. 22, 2023
  - Volume 1 (approved)
  - Volume 2 Draft (in curing process with NTIA)
  - Workforce Development Draft Plan (awaiting approval as part of Vol. 2)

# What's Next? BEAD Program Estimated Timeline

- **Fall 2024:**

- Challenge process to determine eligible locations for BEAD funding
- Prequalification process for internet service providers

- **2025:**

- Internet service providers' project applications accepted and evaluated to achieve universal service
- Final proposal due to NTIA; Project selections are not final until NTIA has approved them
- Final Proposal also serves as Initial Proposal for how the state will use any remaining funding for eligible non-deployment uses

# BEAD Challenge Process to Determine Eligible Locations

- Eligible challengers need to submit challenges to ensure we have the most accurate data possible
- Eligible challengers must **pre-register in the Challenge Portal at [register.broadband.nc.gov](https://register.broadband.nc.gov)**

BEAD Challenge Process Timeline	
Aug. 20	Webinar for eligible challengers and preregistration opens in the challenge portal
Sept. 3	Challenge phase open until Oct. 3
Oct. 15	Rebuttal phase open until Nov. 14
November - December	Final determination phase
January 2025	Submit challenge process results to NTIA for approval and publish preliminary results for the public



# What is the BEAD Challenge Process?

- The Challenge Process will determine locations and community anchor institutions within the state that are eligible for BEAD funding
- It is designed to confirm whether existing data in the federal broadband map are correct about which locations lack adequate internet service
- Challengers will offer input on whether specific locations are not accurately reflected in the datasets and therefore should or should not be eligible for BEAD funding



# Who Can Submit a Challenge?

Local governments



Nonprofit organizations



Tribal governments



Broadband service providers

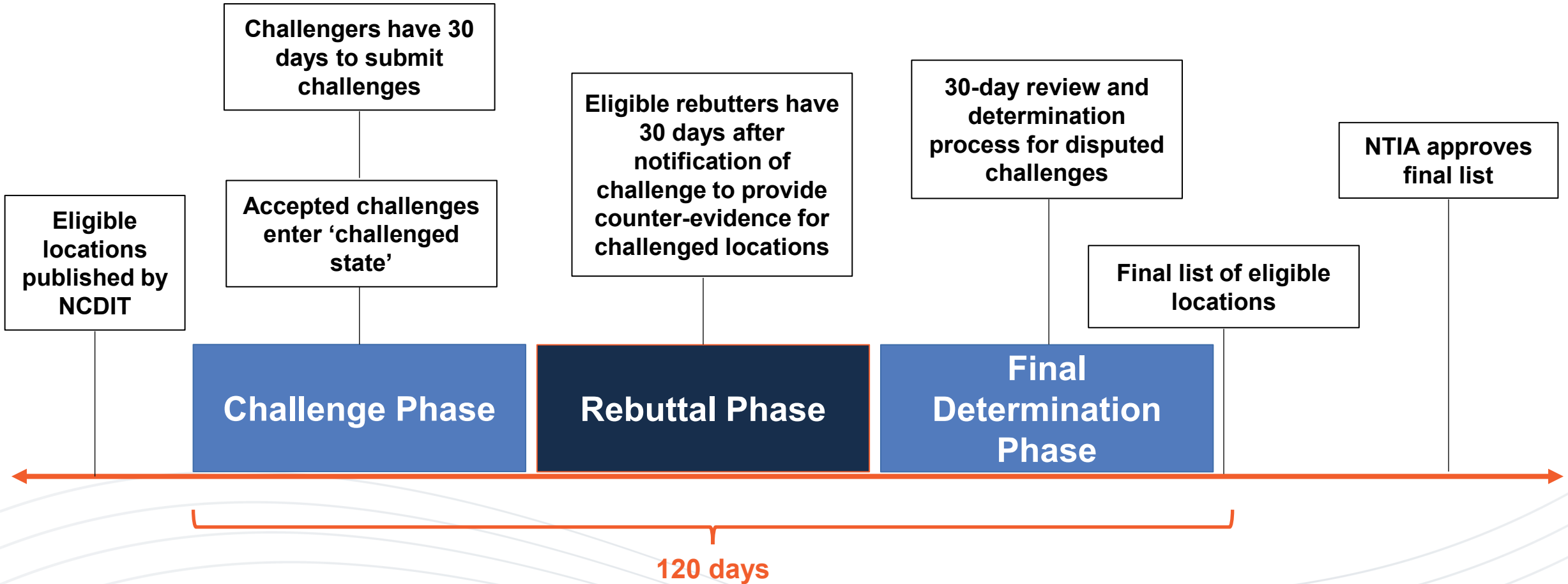
# Why is the BEAD Challenge Process so Important?

- It will **determine location eligibility for BEAD funding** (which totals **\$1.5 billion** in North Carolina)
- It is the **best chance** to correct the FCC's National Broadband Map
- You can **advocate for your community** by providing evidence that locations are incorrectly shown as served on the FCC's map
- The improved data will help the BEAD Program and future programs **allocate funding to the locations that need it most**



# Challenge Process Sequence of Events

[ncbroadband.gov/BEADchallenge](http://ncbroadband.gov/BEADchallenge)



*The Rebuttal Phase begins upon notification of challenge and may overlap with the Challenge Phase*

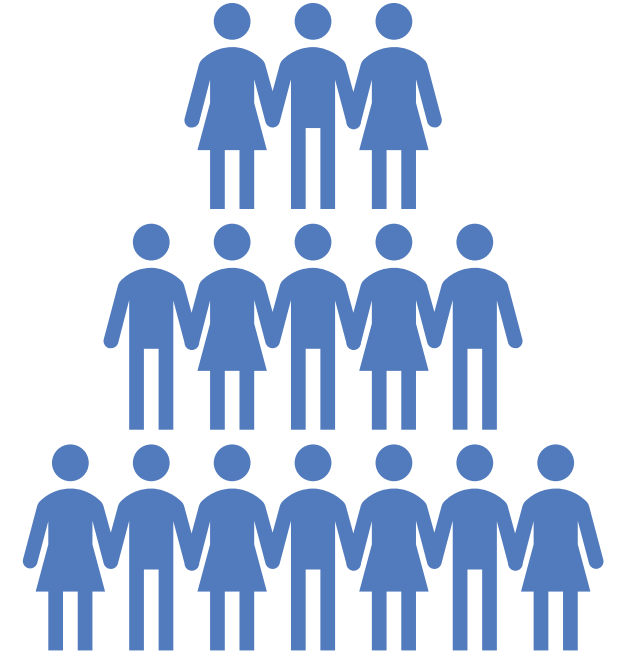
# What Can Be Challenged?

- **Internet speeds and other specifications** for Broadband Serviceable Locations included in the FCC's National Broadband Map (to determine BEAD eligibility for those locations)
- **Community anchor institution eligibility and identification**
- **Enforceable commitments** to build new broadband infrastructure to that location
- **Planned service** to that location



# Can Individuals Participate?

- NTIA requirements do not allow individuals to submit challenges directly
- **Members of the public can play an important role in the Challenge Process** by identifying inaccuracies and working with eligible participating local governments, tribal governments, or nonprofits that can submit those challenges
- Individuals can:
  - Look at publicly available **broadband map** to see if it is accurate for their address
  - **Submit evidence** through the **Consumer Input Website** (publicly available website for evidence submission)
  - Take **speed tests** through approved platforms and the Consumer Input Website



# Evidence Submission for Individuals

Individuals may submit evidence for the following types of challenges:

- Availability
- Speed
- Latency
- Data cap
- Technology
- Business service only

# Phases of the BEAD Subgrantee Selection Process

Prequalification requirements  
(Fall 2024)

- Financial, Managerial, Technical and Operational
- Process will open in September and close in November

Multiple Funding Rounds  
(2025)

- Priority vs. non-priority
- Extremely high-cost location threshold setting
- Best and final offer concept
- Deconfliction
- Process will open in 2025

Negotiations and award  
(2025)

- Broadband Serviceable Locations with no applications
- Inducements



# QUESTIONS?

**Place your questions in the chat feature**

Visit the division's website to learn more and see additional resources: [www.ncbroadband.gov](http://www.ncbroadband.gov)

# Stay in touch:

[broadband@nc.gov](mailto:broadband@nc.gov)

[digitalequity@nc.gov](mailto:digitalequity@nc.gov)