



Office of Broadband Access and Expansion
Department of Information Technology

Connect New Mexico Pilot Program

Overview: Scoring Guide

Webinar Series

August 2022

Topics

- Purpose of Scoring Guide
- Review Process
- Scoring Categories
- Recommendations
- Walk Through

Purpose of Scoring Guide

- The scoring guide aims to achieve several objectives.

Methodical, Structured Approach

- Provide a methodical, structured approach to comprehensively assess an application's potential to achieve the purpose of the Pilot Program

Consistency

- Enables an individual reviewer to apply a consistent evaluation standard across multiple applications and ensure a consistent evaluation approach across various reviewers.

Transparency

- Provides applicants and stakeholders detailed transparency regarding the evaluation criteria and weight of the individual factors.

Incentivizes Awardee Alignment with Program Objectives

- The scoring guide (along with the application) directs applicants to develop a comprehensive strategy and implementation plan that achieves the program objectives.

Enables Due Diligence Process

- Allows program staff to identify and resolve a significant weakness during the diligence process (for an otherwise strong application).
 - E.g., lack of budget or project plan details; insufficient corroborating details regarding matching contributions

Review Process

- The review process involves a three-part process.



	Application Review	Due Diligence	Final Selection
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate an application based on a standard set of comprehensive evaluation criteria Eight major categories and 25 sub-categories that sum to 200 points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the strongest application to further assess and/or resolve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key deficiencies from review process Unserved/underserved challenge by incumbent ISP Waiver requests Concerns with business history with state of New Mexico or federal government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider other factors that serve the public interest, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding a diversity of projects across organizations, geographies, technologies, and business models Socioeconomic development priorities Broadband strategic planning activities and coordination with other federal funding programs
Owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team of at least three subject matter experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OBAE staff and contractors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Leadership
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects that receive a relatively high percentage of the total score move to due diligence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolution of such issues enables application to move toward final selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final selection of strongest applications that best achieve program purpose and offer other distinct strategic advantages to New Mexico

Review Process (stated in NOFO)

Overview

- Applications will be reviewed by a team of subject matters experts in the broadband sector.
- Each application will have at least three reviewers. These reviewers may be state or non-state employees and contractors.
- During the review process, the reviewers may discuss the application with each other but not their scores, which will be determined on an individual basis.
- Projects will be scored based on the scoring criteria listed in the Scoring Guide.
- Projects that receive a higher proportion of the available points, especially relative to the average scores in a particular wave, then move into the Due Diligence phase.

Scoring Categories

- Eight major categories divided among 25 sub-categories form the basis of the evaluation and sum to 200 points.

A) Project Impact	36
• Broadband Impact: Degree of: a) unserved and underserved premises passed by wireline or covered by fixed wireless or alternative technologies; b) unserved premises relative to underserved premises; c) magnitude of speed increase relative to existing service speeds	16
• Comprehensive Community Impact: Degree to which network serves the broader community, including: community institutions; government facilities; backhaul for commercial mobile and public safety networks; backhaul to data centers; etc.	12
• Socioeconomic Development: Designing the network and providing solutions to foster social and economic development across targeted communities	4
• Degree of Economic Hardship: Level of economic distress (based on key indicators as unemployment rates, poverty levels, income levels, etc.)	4
B) Community Engagement	20
• Local and Regional Community Partnerships: Partnerships with local and regional community organizations, businesses, government entities, and other broadband service providers to help achieve the project's mission and maximize impact	8
• Community Support: Degree of community support from residents, businesses, institutions and other local interests (e.g., customized support letters)	8
• Community Financial Contribution: Financial and/or in-kind contribution from community organizations and individuals	4
C) Economic Efficiency	20
• Matching Contribution Degree: Degree of matching contribution above the 25% requirement	8
• Project Cost Efficiency: Demonstration that the collective set of decisions across technology selection, network design, procurement processes, and strategic planning yields the most cost-effective project	8
• Leveraging of Existing Assets: Leverage of existing network assets and facilities that would otherwise require expenditure	4

Scoring Framework (continued)

- Eight major categories divided among 25 sub-categories form the basis of the evaluation and sum to 200 points.

D) Project Readiness	24
• Network and Technology Details: Details of network design and technology architecture	8
• Detailed Budget: Detailed itemized budget that lists quantities, costs, and brief narrative on purpose and reasonableness of expenditure	8
• Detailed Project Schedule: Details of project activities, milestones, target dates, and dependencies	4
• Comprehensive Risk Mitigation Plan: Identification of all major risks and detailed risk mitigation plan	4
E) Organizational Qualifications	20
• Organizational Experience and Capability: Demonstrated experience and capabilities in executing similar projects	8
• Business Structure: Networks owned or operated by, or affiliated with, local and tribal governments, non-profits, and cooperatives**	8
• ** Note: The American Rescue Plan Act (APRA) requests states to prioritize projects that involve networks owned by such entities	
• Local/Regional Workforce Participation: Strategy to hire local staff and leverage local/regional firms and contractors to design, plan, deploy, and operate the project	4
F) Marketing and Services Strategy	32
• Pricing Competitiveness: Prices commensurate with rates in competitive, urban markets	12
• Diverse Set of Service Offerings: Breadth of service offerings to accommodate a diverse set of customer segments and other supporting services	8
• Customer Acquisition and Retention Strategy: Details around plans to capture and retain customers	8
• Open Access Policies: A) For last-mile networks, policies and programs to offer wholesale services to other retail last-mile service providers; b) For middle-mile, policies and programs to provide wholesale services, including dark-fiber to other network service providers.	4
• ** Note: For middle-mile segments, NOFO requires grantees to provide interconnection and wholesale services to service providers; dark-fiber must be provided to government entities for government usage.	

Scoring Framework (continued)

- Eight major categories divided among 25 sub-categories form the basis of the evaluation and sum to 200 points.

G) Adoption Assistance	24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordability Assistance Programs: Collective set of programs and policies to foster affordability for all community segments • Note: ARPA requires applicants to participate in the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program and other future programs to enable affordability for designated low-income residents. 	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Inclusion Programs: Programs and strategies to enable adoption, including devices, digital literacy, outreach, community networks, etc. 	12
H) Project Sustainability	24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Viability: Assessment of business case (e.g., detailed showing of revenue and cost elements) and financial strength of applicant (or consortium) 	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Capacity and Scalability: Total capacity available today and capability of network to efficiently scale to accommodate future bandwidth demand 	12

Recommendations

Tips

- Ensure your responsiveness to the evaluation criteria is reflected throughout the answers in the application.
- Meet the three C's across all your responses: clarity, credibility, and comprehensiveness.
- Highlight the factors where you offer distinct advantages (e.g., innovative community partnerships to promote digital equity, sharing fiber with mobile and public safety networks, high matching contribution).
- Showcase all the signs of pent-up demand for the project – e.g., the customized volume of support letters; fit with community development plan; community survey feedback; no competitive alternative; etc.
- For non-fiber projects, showcase how the alternative technology is future proof– e.g., the path to 100/100 Mbps, current performance standards exceeding 100/20 Mbps at the “busy hour” with many subscribers; data and analytics that inhibit fiber deployment due to exorbitant costs and/or terrain infeasibility, etc.
- Expect that many great projects may not receive an award due to the heavy capital costs required to achieve universal service relative to the available funds. There will be other funding rounds.

Walk Through

<https://api.realfile.rtsclients.com/PublicFiles/16569e3bf98c467e95901b46fd511499/f5f6ec83-8bf2-4bc4-b2ff-2d68ce8ade64/pilot-program-scoring-guide-2022-08-08.pdf>