LOCAL GOVERNMENT LETTER OF SUPPORT

INDIANA BEAD PROGRAM

Indiana Broadband

OVERVIEW

The IBO believes that local engagement and coordination are key to running a successful Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. As part of these efforts, the IBO has included Letters of Support from local government officials as one of the scoring categories for BEAD subgrantee selection. This one-pager covers the basics of subgrantee selection, how Letters of Support can be used, and potential topics to consider as local government leaders engage with internet service providers.

SUBGRANTEE SELECTION

BEAD is a competitive subgrant program where the Indiana Broadband Office will award project areas and program funds directly to internet service providers with the goal of reaching every unserved and underserved location in the state. Awardees will be chosen during subgrantee selection. The IBO will host three rounds of subgrantee selection, and local government leaders can write Letters of Support during each round. The IBO expects these rounds to start during Fall 2024. Internet service providers will submit any Letters of Support with their application materials, and a letter can earn them up to 5 points (5% of total project score).

Letters are a tool that give local leaders a voice in the process. The IBO highly encourages local government leaders to be judicious with these Letters of Support, meeting with potential providers and learning about how their proposed projects align with the community's goals.

Local government leaders can write one, multiple, or no letters of support. However, if leaders write multiple letters of support for the same area, the internet service provider applicants may receive the amount of points.

WHO CAN WRITE LETTERS OF SUPPORT?

Eligible officials who can write a Letter of Support include:

- County Commissioners
- County Council Members
- Auditors
- Mayors
- City Council Members

LETTER CONTENT AND CONVERSATION STARTERS

SCORING CRITERIA FOR LETTERS OF SUPPORT

The IBO's scoring matrix, as outlined in its planning documents called the Initial Proposal Volume 2, awards up to 5 points for Letters of Support based on the following criteria:

- **Basic Support:** 1 point for a general letter with no specific details.
- **Details on Meetings and Correspondence:** 2 additional points for including evidence and detail about meetings or communication between the applicant and the local government.
- **Justification for Support:** 2 additional points for a well-reasoned justification of the applicant's qualifications and plans.

ENGAGING IN CONVERSATION

The first round of subgrantee selection is likely to begin later this fall. To maximize the impact of your Letter of Support, consider what your community may need from an internet service provider and have conversations with potential providers **early and often**. The following talking points may help guide conversations with ISPs:

- **Technology Type -** Talk about your preferred technology, such as fiber, and whether it will be aerial or buried. If aerial, discuss plans the ISP has to address pole attachment concerns.
- **Affordability -** Discuss the importance of affordable broadband options for your community.
- **Buildout Plan -** Ask about the proposed timeline for the project and how it aligns with community needs.
- **Reliability of Service -** Understand the provider's plan for dependable service, especially in hard-to-reach areas.
- **Agricultural Concerns -** Discuss any agricultural areas that would be within the project and how the provider will address any specific needs, such as aerial fiber height.
- **Community Anchor Institutions -** Ensure that critical institutions like schools, libraries, and healthcare facilities are included in the deployment plans.
- **Other Concerns -** Address any additional community-specific concerns that should be considered in the project.