



Border to Border Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program

Frequently Asked Questions—Supplement August 10, 2016

Definition Questions:

Can you clarify the definition of what is last mile and middle mile infrastructure?

Minn. Stat. 116J.394 includes definitions for last mile and middle mile as follows:

(e) "Last-mile infrastructure" means broadband infrastructure that serves as the final leg connecting the broadband service provider's network to the end-use customer's on-premises telecommunications equipment.

(f) "Middle-mile infrastructure" means broadband infrastructure that links a broadband service provider's core network infrastructure to last-mile infrastructure.

To provide further clarification, yet remain within the meaning provided by Minnesota Statutes, we would offer the following interpretation of what last mile and middle mile mean for purposes of the Border to Border Broadband Development grant program:

Last Mile: The last mile is the portion of the network infrastructure that carries signals from the backbone network to and from the home or business. Depending on network design and density of the area served, the actual distance of the last mile can be relatively short or may be considerably longer than a mile. In a traditional telephone network, middle mile would be that portion of the network from the central office to the neighborhood node and is generally fiber; the last mile piece would be from the node to the home or business and could be copper or fiber.

Middle Mile: The portion of the telecommunications network that connects a network operator's core network to the local network (last mile) plant. Middle mile facilities provide fast, large capacity connections and can range from a few miles to a few hundred miles. They are often fiber, but microwave links may be used. In a traditional telephone network, middle mile would be that portion of the network that connects two central offices or the connection from a central office to the neighborhood node.

Prevailing Wage Questions:

If both middle mile and last mile facilities are in a trench, and the grant request is \$200,000 or greater so that prevailing wage requirements apply to the middle mile piece, how should the prevailing wage provisions apply?

If there are any middle mile facilities placed in the trench, prevailing wage provisions should be applied to all costs for the trenching.

Office of Broadband Development

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Project Documentation Questions:

The grant program, by law, requires a potential applicant to contact in writing all existing broadband providers in the proposed project area to see if they have plans to improve broadband service. How long do the existing providers have to respond to these inquiries?

The law does not provide a timeline for the existing providers to respond. However, we are recommending that existing providers respond within ten business days/two weeks. That schedule should allow existing providers time to prepare responses, recognizing they may have several inquiries to respond to, while still enable potential applicants time to consider the response and decide whether to finish completing their application for submission.

If an incumbent telephone company is submitting an application and is the only wired broadband provider in proximity to the project area, who do they need to contact at least six weeks prior to submitting their application?

The incumbent telephone company applicant should submit information, such as a screen shot from the interactive map available on the Office of Broadband website, showing that there are no cable, fiber or DSL providers in or near the project area other than the incumbent.

If we have an existing cable or telephone company in our project area that does not currently offer broadband service, so that they are not included on the map or on the list of broadband providers by county, should we contact them to see if they have plans to deploy broadband service in our project area?

Yes, you should. Generally the wired broadband options in a location are the telephone company and/or the cable company. So, while they may not currently offer broadband service, it is possible they have plans to upgrade their facilities to do so, and that information should be considered by the potential applicant.

Challenge Process Questions:

If an application is submitted and a portion of the project area is successfully challenged, is the entire application denied?

As a general rule, we would ask the applicant if they wanted their application to be considered for grant funding with the successfully challenged portion of the project removed from the project area. If they did, we would also ask them to identify the costs that had been included for serving that portion of the project and have them remove it from the grant request amount.

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Eligibility Questions:

Are school districts eligible to apply for the broadband grants so they can provide filtered mobile broadband to their students off campus?

A school district project as described would be appropriate for the grant program that was established in the 2016 legislative session for K-12 wireless access pilot projects which will be administered by the Minnesota Department of Education.

MDE is currently developing the RFP for this grant. There are two parts to the grant; one for student devices and one for bus connectivity. MDE hoped to have the grant RFP published in early August. It will be posted at the MDE Grants website when it is completed.

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