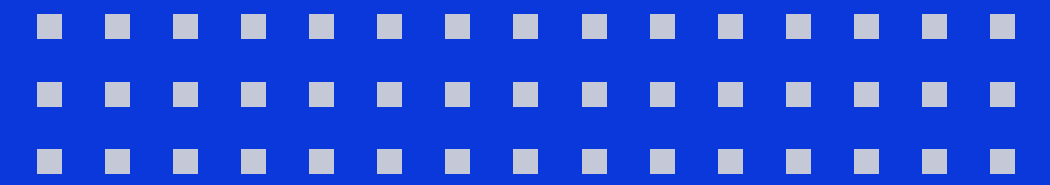# Calix

Navigating the BEAD Program

1) Preparation Phase

January   Febuary   March   April   May   June   July   August   September   October   November   December
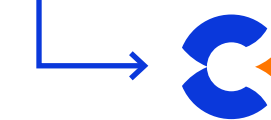
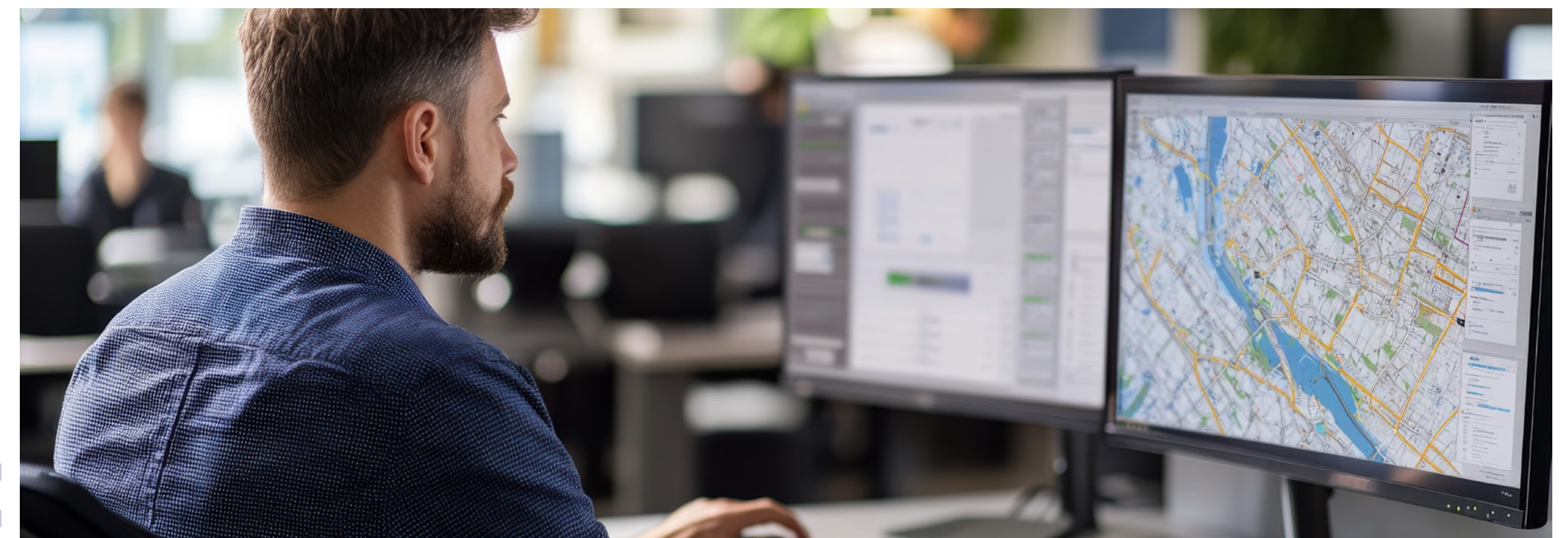## PHASE 1: PREPARATION

Understand the BEAD Requirements

As you prepare to apply for BEAD funding, ensure that you understand key requirements of the program, including:

- **Eligibility:** Confirm that your company meets the BEAD program's eligibility criteria, including ownership, operational, or financial requirements. Review your State's "Eligible Sub-Grantee" criteria for more information.

- **Key BEAD Documents:** Familiarize yourself with the program's guidelines and your state's BEAD submissions, including.
  - **NTIA's BEAD NOFO:** Provides general guidance to all states and territories describing how this program will work.
  - **State BEAD Five-Year Plan:** Review this foundational document to understand state priorities, timelines, and goals for broadband expansion.
  - **State BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 1:** Review this document to understand exactly how the "Challenge Phase" will work in your state (i.e. permissible challenges, evidence required, timelines, etc.).
  - **State BEAD Initial Proposal Volume 2:** Review this document to understand exactly how the "Application Phase" will work in your state (i.e. program guidelines, timelines, scoring rubrics, post award requirements, etc.).

- **Research and Mapping:** Analyze your serving area and identify opportunity areas that fall within the BEAD program's scope. Key actions include:
  - Conduct GIS mapping to verify unserved and underserved areas in your region.
  - Verify unserved and underserved areas based on FCC or state broadband maps.
  - Identify local demographics and economic needs to justify broadband expansion in these regions.

Reach out to Calix's <u>funding team</u> to learn how we can assist with initial research and mapping needs.

Engage in the Challenge Process

The challenge process is critical to ensure BEAD funding is distributed to those locations that truly lack sufficient broadband.

• **Submit Challenges:** Work to improve the accuracy of the FCC Broadband Map by:

  ○ Submitting data challenges for un(der)served locations within your region.

  ○ Contesting claims from other service providers that may have overstated their capabilities, ensuring your project covers areas that genuinely require better service.

Establish Partnerships to Build Support

Collaboration is essential to strengthen your BEAD proposal by demonstrating community support and alignment with state objectives. Important things to consider:

• **Local and State Governments and Agencies:** Forge relationships with your State Broadband Office (SBO), tribal governments, and local organizations. Align your project goals with state and local broadband plans, which will strengthen your proposal's credibility.

• **First Responders:** Partner with First Responders and other emergency support organizations to provide vital communications in places where cellular coverage is poor or highly saturated.

▶ **To learn more about how you can support first responders <u>click here</u>.**

• **Private/Public Collaborations:** Engage with stakeholders such as community leaders, utilities, educational institutions, and private sector entities. These partnerships can strengthen your proposal by showing broad-based support and help secure necessary resources and access for network infrastructure development.

Download Calix's BEAD Advocacy Toolkit for tips and tricks with working with partners.

• **Community Support:** Collect Letters of Support (LoS) from stakeholders and local entities to demonstrate community buy-in, a factor that may enhance your proposal's appeal to reviewers.

Get Ahead on Network Design and Permitting

- **Network Design:** Outline the technical and logistical groundwork required for your network deployment. This topic is discussed in greater detail in phase 2.

- **Permitting:** Follow this 10-point checklist that provides best practices for permitting:

  ☑ **Identify All Required Permits Early:** Research and compile a list of necessary permits from federal, state, and local agencies. Common permits include environmental reviews, right-of-way access, and construction permits.

  ☑ **Engage Local Planning Departments and Agencies:** Reach out to local permitting and planning offices early in the process. Establishing communication with these departments can clarify requirements, reduce potential roadblocks, and build rapport.

  ☑ **Understand Environmental and Cultural Requirements:** Many broadband projects require environmental assessments, particularly if they cross sensitive areas. For projects involving tribal lands, consult with relevant tribes to address cultural considerations.

  ☑ **Coordinate with Utility Companies and Infrastructure Owners**: If your project involves utility poles, underground conduits, or shared infrastructure, coordinate early with utility companies or infrastructure owners to secure access and permits.

  ☑ **Create a Permitting Timeline and Factor in Buffer Time:** Develop a timeline for obtaining each permit, including anticipated processing times. Permitting delays are common, so include buffer time in your project schedule.

✓ **Leverage "Dig Once" Policies Where Possible:** Many municipalities have "Dig Once" policies that allow multiple infrastructure improvements (like broadband and water) in a single excavation. Aligning with these policies can reduce costs and permit processing times.

✓ **Consider Hiring a Permitting Consultant:** If your project involves multiple jurisdictions or complex regulations, a permitting consultant can navigate local requirements, expedite processes, and manage the paperwork on your behalf.

✓ **Document All Interactions and Agreements with Permitting Authorities:** Maintain thorough records of all communications, approvals, and agreements with permitting agencies to avoid misunderstandings and have documentation ready if issues arise.

✓ **Plan for Community Engagement:** Some permits require public hearings or community engagement. Prepare materials to inform residents about your project, address concerns, and ensure smooth public interactions.

✓ **Monitor and Manage Permitting at Every Step:** Track the status of each permit application actively. Regularly follow up with permitting authorities to check on progress and address any outstanding issues promptly.

Develop a Strong Proposal

A compelling proposal should clearly demonstrate the need for broadband expansion, your approach to fulfilling it, and the positive impacts on the community.

- **Needs Assessment:** Perform a thorough assessment of broadband needs in your target area. This should include:
  - Identifying existing service gaps and outlining how your project will close them.
  - Analyzing the demographics of the population you aim to serve, including age, income, education, and digital literacy, to tailor your broadband offerings and ensure equitable access.
  - Highlighting the potential economic, educational, and social benefits of broadband access for unserved and underserved communities.

- **Scoring Rubric:** Review the scoring rubric in your state's Initial Proposal Vol. 2 to align your proposal with scoring criteria. Be sure to address all points in the rubric to maximize your score.

- **Affordability:** Describe your commitment to affordable service options, which is a requirement for BEAD funds. Highlight:
  - How you will provide low-cost plans for low-income households.
  - Strategies for digital equity and inclusion, such as digital skills training or device distribution.

Build a Comprehensive Financial Plan

Develop a comprehensive financial plan that aligns with the BEAD programs funding requirements and shows your project's long-term viability.

- **Cost Analysis:** prepare a detailed budget, including:
  - Total project costs, per-passing costs, and a breakdown of network equipment expenses.
  - Quotes from equipment vendors to substantiate project expenses.
  - Labor and Material Costs: Account for potential increases in labor and material costs by incorporating inflation assessments and contingencies. Use current market trends and historical data to ensure you budget remains realistic and adaptable.

- **Match Requirements:** Confirm that your proposal meets the 25 percent match requirement:
  - Identify private funding or in-kind matches (i.e. private investment options, equipment donations, community resources, etc.).
  - Consult with your SBO to clarify eligible in-kind match sources to maximize benefits.
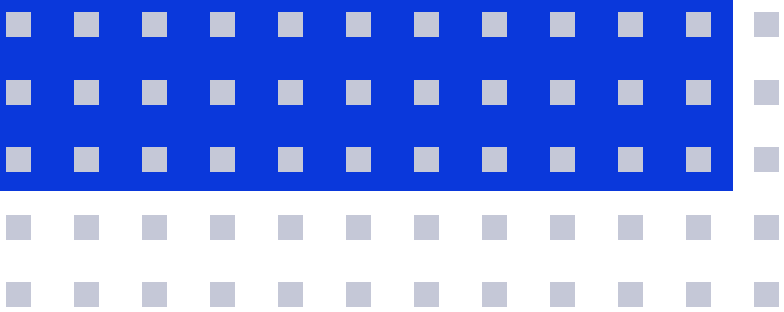
Reach out to Calix's _funding team_ for introductions to entities who can assist with matching capital needs.

- **ROI & Sustainability:** Create a financial model showcasing ROI and project sustainability by including:
  - Projected subscriber take rates, operational cost savings, and anticipated revenue.
  - Demonstrate how the project can operate sustainably without continued subsidy.

- **Affordability Planning:** Work on affordability options by analyzing the economic feasibility of offering a low-cost service tier. Make sure this option aligns with both your financial goals and the BEAD's affordability requirements.

Book a _funding consult_ with Calix's funding team for a comprehensive BEAD overview!

Book Now