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BEAD APPLICATION PROJECT AREA METHODOLOGY

Defining project areas efficiently and strategically is fundamental to achieving the BEAD Program’s goal of delivering fiber connectivity to as many households as economically feasible. Idaho’s Initial Proposal Vol. II defines project areas as being clustered U.S. Census Blocks (CBs) using broadband serviceable location (BSL) service data designating unserved and underserved locations¹.

Establishing Idaho’s Application Project Areas (APAs) included the following objectives: (1) ensure all BEAD eligible locations receive access to reliable internet service and (2) promote efficient network design by accounting for permitting requirements, geographic obstacles/details and cost per location.

The National Broadband Availability Map Version 4 location fabric, released December 31, 2023, was used in Idaho’s Challenge Process which resulted in the Final Determination Locations feature layer, establishing the list of BEAD eligible locations. CBs containing eligible locations were used as the foundational layer for APAs.

Data that was considered in the creation of APAs includes the number of unserved locations, number of underserved locations, number of served locations, land area size, CostQuest investment cost for both fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) and licensed fixed wireless (LFW) and Idaho’s in-house cost model investment cost for both FTTH and LFW. Idaho’s in-house cost-modeling accounts for characteristics such as geology type, BSL density, passings per mile, distance to a served location and terrain (elevation and slope change).

The following feature layers were then used in clustering CBs, both through computer automation and manual processes, while striving to achieve the APA objectives.

- Bureau of Indian Affairs Native Land Area
- Railroads
- Interstates, US Highways, and State Highways
- Rivers, Lakes, and Watersheds
- Idaho ILEC Study Areas
- County Boundaries
- Incorporated Municipalities
- Federal Permitting Areas
 - National Park Service
 - Fish and Wildlife Service
 - Forest Service
 - Department of Defense
 - Army Corp of Engineers
 - Bureau of Reclamation
 - Bureau of Land Management

¹ Idaho’s [BEAD Initial Proposal Volume II](#) page 37 section 5.1 Definition of Application Project Areas (APA).



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BEAD APA Methodology Continued

In consideration of the public comments received during the BEAD APA comment period at the end of 2024, the originally proposed APAs were subdivided in an effort to create projects best suited for specific technologies.

All comments were reviewed and analyzed. Many comments are reflected in the modifications made to the APAs. Comments pertaining to individual BSLs were compiled; however, APAs are clustered by census blocks, so the addition or removal of individual BSLs is not allowed per Idaho's BEAD Initial Proposal Volume II.

An additional review of permitting areas was conducted, including County boundaries, and project areas were further subdivided accordingly.

The refined APAs demonstrate an enhanced focus on technology type as well as re-evaluating those BSLs that are likely the hardest to reach and/or the costliest to connect with fiber. Among the variables considered were: BSL density, building type and proximity to the nearest served BSL.