

Proposals for BEAD Final Proposal Consulting Services

(2025-MBI-04)

Questions and Answers

December 16, 2024

	Question	Answer
1.	Does being awarded this contract for proposal consulting services preclude consultants from participating in future work once the plan is finalized with the NTIA?	The selected consultant will not be prohibited from being awarded future work by MBI or other parties after completion of this engagement and expiration of the contract associated with this engagement on the basis that the selected consultant was selected to perform this work.
2.	Is door-to-door canvassing or other forms of in-person outreach considered an acceptable strategy for fulfilling the “stakeholder engagement and public comment period management” scope of work?	Updated NTIA guidance has shortened the public comment period from 30 days to 14 days. MBI does not anticipate any in-person outreach for the public comment period or other forms of stakeholder engagement.
3.	Does the scope of work anticipate any in-person engagement activities, such as public forums or stakeholder meetings, during the 30-day public comment period? If not, what are the expectations for virtual or written feedback mechanisms?	See answer to #2. MBI anticipates receiving public comment feedback virtually through a form or survey.
4.	Regarding the subgrantee selection process, what specific criteria will be used to evaluate technical and financial capabilities during the prequalification phase? Are there additional metrics beyond those outlined in the RFP?	The initial Pre-Qualification phase of our BEAD program has ended. Any organization that did participate in the Pre-Qualification process or did not successfully complete the Pre-Qualification process will need to submit their qualification information and documentation as part of the Round 1 application process. Please refer to the Pre-Qualification Guidelines posted on the MBI website for more details. Full BEAD Program applications will be evaluated using the scoring criteria that can be found in MBI’s BEAD Initial Proposal Volume II .

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5.	In cases where BEAD Rounds 1 and 2 address all unserved and underserved locations, is there a plan to repurpose funds allocated for a potential Round 3? If so, what types of projects would be prioritized?	If Massachusetts reaches universal service, MBI and the Executive Office will determine the extent to which BEAD funds would be deployed to expand community anchor institute (CAI) access to 1 Gbps symmetrical service. All remaining funds then remaining will be shifted to Non-Deployment activities.
6.	How will MBI continue to engage with the Mashpee Wampanoag and Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) during the implementation phase? Will there be any specific consultation or reporting requirements for these Tribal entities?	MBI will make appropriate efforts to engage with the two federally recognized Tribes during the timeframe when the Final Proposal is being developed. This will include complying with the following requirement for the Final Proposal – The Stakeholder Engagement Tracker should be used to document any plans submitted to the Eligible Entity or existing plans or programs instituted by municipal, regional, or local governments and/or Tribal Entities, and how these plans will be incorporated into the Final Proposal. Each political subdivision and federally recognized Tribe must have an opportunity to submit its own local broadband plan to the Eligible Entity for consideration in the development of the Eligible Entity’s Proposals.
7.	How will the outcomes of the Gap Networks Program, funded by the ARPA Capital Projects Fund, and other federal programs like the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and the NTIA’s Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, influence the prioritization of BEAD-funded projects? Will applicants for BEAD subgrants be required to integrate or align their proposals with these programs' results?	BEAD eligible locations will only be un/underserved broadband serviceable locations (BSLs) that are not subject to an enforceable commitment, such as Gap Networks and TCBP. MBI will post the list of BEAD eligible locations with the BEAD solicitation, The Affordable Connectivity Program ended ended in May of 2024.
8.	Will there be a distinct scoring rubric or criteria for proposals that focus on delivering gigabit symmetric service to CAIs, or will these be evaluated alongside standard BSL deployment projects?	BEAD Program applications will be evaluated using the scoring criteria that can be found in MBI’s BEAD Initial Proposal Volume II . This scoring criteria is also included in the BEAD solicitation.

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9.	How does MBI envision leveraging existing digital equity partnerships to support subgrantee activities under the BEAD program? Are there specific collaborative frameworks or tools in place?	MBI works to ensure integration and coordination of activities across all grantees and will continue to do so under the BEAD program. MBI has regular meetings with grantees to discuss programmatic needs and challenges and will use that framework to identify potential partnership synergies.
10.	Does MBI anticipate selecting a consultant for these services prior to the start of the Subgrantee Selection Process (recognizing that such process may only begin upon NTIA approval of the Challenge Process)?	MBI intends to make an award to a consultant in early 2025. The subgrantee selection process in BEAD Round 1 will commence before the consultant is selected and under contract.
11.	What challenges did MBI face when developing Massachusetts's Initial Proposal that it hopes to avoid when developing the Final Proposal?	MBI seeks a consultant that can quickly and effectively analyze the requirements outlined in the BEAD NOFO, Final Guidance and other relevant documents issued by NTIA and establish a strategic process for addressing each requirement. The consultant should be able to effectively communicate questions or challenges associated with resolving outstanding BEAD requirements and ensure that the content being created is directly relevant to MBI as an organization. MBI seeks a consultant that can avoid overcomplications whenever necessary.
12.	What specific risks does MBI seek to mitigate by hiring a Consultant to support the development of the Final Proposal?	Please refer to the answer to Question #11.
13.	With which stakeholders (at MBI, its consultants, and otherwise) should the Consultant expect to engage when conducting project management and coordination?	The selected consultant should be prepared to work with MBI's internal BEAD team on a regular basis. The selected consultant may periodically need to engage with other consultants and external stakeholders, such as MBI's Broadband and Digital Equity Working Group. MBI will lead coordination between consultants.
14.	Does MBI have experience providing oversight of broadband infrastructure projects, including compliance tracking and subgrantee monitoring plans? To what	Yes, MBI has experience providing oversight of state-funded broadband infrastructure projects, including compliance tracking and subgrantee monitoring under the Last Mile

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	<p>extent does MBI have an existing plan or advisors to provide oversight of broadband infrastructure projects?</p>	<p>program. -MBI has also administered a BTOP-funded Middle Mile project., MBI is coordinating closely with the Executive Office of Economic Development on BEAD and ARPA Capital Projects Fund compliance.</p>
15.	<p>Will MBI use NTIA's Eligible Entity Planning Toolkit to develop a cost model for the Extremely High Cost Per Location Threshold or is MBI open to an alternative approach for developing a cost model for the Extremely High Cost Per Location Threshold? If the latter, what specifications should such a cost model meet?</p>	<p>MBI's BEAD Initial Proposal, Volume II states the following: "To set an appropriate EHCPLT, MBI will develop a cost model by analyzing data available from all awards issued under the Gap Networks Program, CostQuest data, and data from the tentative awards made under Round 1 of the BEAD Program. MBI will utilize the data generated by the cost model to establish the EHCPLT to inform subgrantee selection determinations that maximize the deployment of end-to-end fiber solutions while achieving the dual objectives of (1) ensuring that there is sufficient funding to serve all remaining unserved and underserved locations; and (2) investing BEAD funds on economically reasonable projects."</p>
16.	<p>Other than documentation, what type of support does MBI require regarding outreach and engagement efforts to units of local government, Tribal entities, and community-based organizations?</p>	<p>MBI anticipates needing support on public engagement efforts for the 14-day public comment period. MBI will need support developing the intake method, reviewing comments, and integrating comments into the Final Proposal.</p>
17.	<p>What goals does MBI have for community engagement during the 30-day public comment period for the Final Proposal? Are there particular stakeholders that MBI hopes to engage with (e.g., internet service providers, community organizations, historically underrepresented and marginalized groups and/or communities)?</p>	<p>Updated NTIA guidance has shortened the public comment period from 30 days to 14 days. MBI seeks to maximize awareness among stakeholders of the draft Final Proposal, including ISPs, community based organizations, municipalities and vulnerable populations.</p>
18.	<p>What is the current state of geospatial data and analysis that will need to be reported within Service #5? Will the Consultant be required to conduct analysis of geospatial data or will such analysis be conducted by MBI or a third party engaged by MBI?</p>	<p>Geospatial data analysis is ongoing and will be performed by MBI or a third party engaged by MBI up until submission of the Final Proposal. MBI expects data updates to be required following the release of a new FCC Fabric version on 6/30/2025. The Final</p>

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		<p>Proposal Consultant will be expected to (1) identify spatial analysis requirements relating to the Final Proposal; (2) coordinate with other GIS consultants engaged by MBI; (3) review and format or edit csv files, evidence files and spatial analysis methodology documentation provided by MBI to ensure compliance with Final Proposal requirements.</p>
19.	<p>What level of GIS-specific support do you anticipate needing from the RFP winner for collection and reporting of BSL data?</p>	<p>See the answer to Question #18 above.</p>
20.	<p>What level of in-person interaction with towns and COGs do you anticipate will be required?</p>	<p>MBI does not anticipate the need for in person meetings.</p>
21.	<p>What is the timeline for the Non-Deployment RFP and are there any specific Non-Deployment requirements (beyond coordination with a consultant) associated with this RFP No. 2025-MBI-04?</p>	<p>The timeline for the non-deployment RFP has not yet been established. The selected consultant will be required to integrate into the Final Proposal the non-deployment materials developed by the consultant selected through the separate non-deployment RFP.</p>
22.	<p>Do you currently have or plan to implement a system where proposals, selection criteria, evaluation grids, and related documentation are centralized and accessible in one location? If not, are you seeking assistance in developing or implementing such a system?</p>	<p>MBI will establish a SharePoint site with all necessary documentation needed to develop the Final Proposal, including collaboration on drafts of Final Proposal documentation.</p>
23.	<p>How many public meetings do you anticipate requiring support for, and what is the anticipated split between in-person and online formats?</p>	<p>Updated NTIA guidance has shortened the public comment period from 30 days to 14 days. MBI does not anticipate any in-person outreach and engagement with stakeholders. MBI expects engagement to be virtual and may include options, such as office hours and webinars.</p>
24.	<p>Do you currently have a portal for collecting and managing public comments? If not, are you looking for a vendor to provide or integrate a platform for this purpose?</p>	<p>Yes, MBI has a portal to collect and manage public comments and is not seeking a vendor to provide those services.</p>
25.	<p>Do you have a portal to track broadband service locations, perform spatial analyses, and associate project maps with specific service areas or locations?</p>	<p>MBI has a BEAD Challenge Portal, but is not currently planning to use it to perform BSL tracking, spatial analysis, and project specific</p>

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		mapping. This work will be done outside of the portal by MBI and its GIS consultants. MBI and its GIS consultants will coordinate with the selected Final Proposal consultants as necessary.
26.	<p>Subgrantee Selection and Associated Documentation: Under this section, it is mentioned that assistance with cost modeling is required. Do you expect the vendor to evaluate the financial and technology impacts of EHCPLT scenarios (or similarly categorized areas)?</p> <p>Will you provide a summary of all bids received, including geolocation mapping, to facilitate this scenario analysis?</p> <p>If vendor negotiations are needed to adjust bids to meet EHCPLT thresholds, is the vendor expected to support or facilitate these negotiations?</p>	Please refer to the answer to Question #15 for a description of the variables that will inform the development of the EHCPLT. The selected consultant is not expected to directly facilitate negotiations with providers related to adjusting bids to meet the EHCPLT.
27.	Are there any specific compliance concerns or challenges from previous projects that we should anticipate and address in this proposal?	See response to question 11.
28.	Can MBI provide further details on the expected timeline of the subgrantee selection process?	MBI is anticipating launching BEAD Deployment Round 1 on January 8, 2025. The round will remain open for 6 weeks.
29.	Does the expected work include reviewing applications, evaluating and scoring proposals, or is it just the documentation of those processes and results?	MBI will review and score proposals for Subgrantee selection. The selected consultant will be responsible for documenting the processes and results, adhering to all NTIA requirements.
30.	Is it the intention of MBI to use the submittal process, using www.submittable.com , that was used in the pre-qualification grant application process?	Yes.
31.	Please clarify what “assisting with the EHCPLH model” means. Will the winning bidder be responsible for development of the model or any portion of the model?	The selected consultant will be responsible for developing the cost model (subject to MBI’s review and approval). Please refer to the answer to Question #15 for more information on the cost model.
32.	Are there existing outreach materials or community engagement strategies that have been successful in the past that might help inform this effort?	During the Challenge Process phase of the BEAD Program, MBI utilized a combination of webinars, virtual office hours and written communication materials to engage in public

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		outreach. These archived materials can be found at the bottom of the BEAD Program webpage here .
33.	Will the winning bidder be responsible for any of the spatial analysis or simply documentation of the processes and results?	Please refer to the answer to Question #18.
34.	Does the work require creation or modification of maps or transformation of mapping data into charts and reports?	The work will not require creation or modification of maps, but may require the creation of charts or reports based on the mapping data if beneficial to the Final Proposal narrative. MBI will provide mapping data in a tabular form (such as csv or Excel) if needed.
35.	Will the winning bidder be responsible for writing the narrative description of the data and findings?	Yes.
36.	Are there fixed deadlines for each phase of the proposal development, such as initial and updated drafts (aside from 30-day public comment & final submission)?	No, the selected consultant will develop a timeline that is subject to MBI's review and approval. Updated NTIA guidance has shortened the public comment period from 30 to 14 days.
37.	In connection with Task 3 "Subgrantee Selection and Associated Documentation" in the Scope of Work, does MBI expect the winning Respondents to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. contribute to decision-making on BEAD subgrantee selection in any way, other than through the EHCPLT cost model? b. participate in the scoring of BEAD applications? c. participate in or help inform negotiations with ISPs in case any BSLs remain unaddressed? 	No on bullets (a) and (b). MBI may request that the consultant provide advice and guidance on negotiations related to remaining BSLs that are not addressed through an open and competitive procurement process. However, the selected consultant will not be required to participate in those negotiations.
38.	Are Tasks 3 and 5 limited to Round 1 of the BEAD program or are Respondents expected to support MBI in designing and/or implementing Round 2 and the CAI deployment Round 3 included in the Initial Proposal?	The BEAD Final RFP does not reference program implementation in terms of distinct "rounds." . MBI will be primarily responsible for designing and implementing all rounds of the BEAD program consistent with Volume II of MBI's BEAD Initial Proposal.
39.	Does MBI anticipate a public- or stakeholder-facing role for the respondent as part of this work, particularly stakeholder engagement? Or will this public-facing role	MBI will facilitate public facing stakeholder engagement and expects the selected consultant to support in documenting activities. MBI may request that the

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	be preserved by MBI supported in the background by the respondent?	selected consultant attend public or stakeholder-facing meetings to observe and document the proceedings.
40.	Are Respondent also expected to provide compliance tracking and subgrantee monitoring plans in relation to Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) requirements? Or does MBI plan to engage an environmental consultant to support with EHP related requirements.	MB. The selected consultant will be responsible for supporting MBI with the development of narrative plans and other content that was not developed and incorporated into MBI's BEAD Initial Proposal but is necessary to comply with the Final Proposal submission requirements. However, the selected consultant will not be responsible for implementation activities, such as performing the actual compliance, monitoring or tracking activities.
41.	In attachment C: Budget Template, the Budget Invoice Reporting tab allows Respondents to provide information of up to only 4 invoices? Does these 4 invoices align with MBI's expected milestones or timeline? If yes, can MBI provide this information? If no, can Respondents add new columns for additional invoices?	The selected consultant will be able to add additional columns for invoicing.
42.	Please confirm that MBI will provide Respondents with all information necessary to complete certain sections of the Final proposal such as Challenge Process Results, Implementation Status of Plans for Cost and Barrier Reduction, Labor and Workforce Activities, Utilization of Minority Businesses, Women-owned Business, and Labor Surplus Area Firms, Low-Cost Plans, and Climate Change and Resilience), and Middle-Class Affordability Plans, Environmental and Historic Preservation Documentation, Report of Unsuccessful Applications due to Eligible Entity Regulations, etc.	MBI will establish a SharePoint site that will service as a depository for necessary documentation needed to develop the Final Proposal. The selected consultant will be responsible for supporting MBI with the development of narrative plans and other content necessary to comply the Final Proposal submission guidance. MBI will provide information and documentation related to implementation status on plans identified in MBI's BEAD Initial Proposal; provided that where there are plans to be developed and described in the Final Proposal that were not described in the Initial Proposal, the selected consultant will support the development of those narrative plans as needed to comply with the Final Proposal submission requirements.
43.	Since the level of effort necessary for Final Proposal curing with NTIA is highly unpredictable, may Respondents propose their hourly rates for this	Bids that go beyond the \$800,000 price cap will not be considered.

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	additional effort go over and above the \$800,000 price cap or will their bid be considered as non-compliant?	
44.	Does MBI anticipate any requirement for physical presence as part of the services solicited through this RFP?	No, MBI does not anticipate any requirement for physical presence as part of the services solicited through this RFP. All tasks and deliverables can be completed remotely, leveraging virtual communication and collaboration tools.
45.	Will the Respondent who wins this RFP run any risk of disqualification or creation of conflicts that would impede potential future engagement in assisting MBI with BEAD subgrantee management or monitoring?	See Answer to Question #1.
46.	What is “spatial analysis referring” to in the RFP scope? Is it referring to preparing the csv files required for the Final Proposal Data Submission, or analysis in addition to that?	It is primarily referring to the preparation of csv files for the Final Proposal Data Submission. See the answers to Questions # 18 and 34 for more detail.
47.	What stage of the subgrantee selection process does MBI anticipate reaching by the time the selected consultant is brought on board? Is it anticipated that the selected consultant would support the selection process?	MBI anticipates selecting a consultant after the launch of the BEAD Deployment Round 1 application. The selected consultant is expected to be under contract before provisional Round 1 awards are finalized. No, the selected consultant will not be involved in reviewing or evaluating Round 1 applications.
48.	Can you provide more information on the expected level of involvement with the BEAD Subgrantee Selection process?	-The selected consultant will not be directly involved in evaluating BEAD subgrantee applications.
49.	Will the bidder be expected to play any role in subgrantee evaluation or solely focused on documenting outcomes for Final Proposal drafting?	The bidder’s role, as outlined in the RFP, is primarily centered on documenting outcomes to support the Final Proposal drafting. While the documentation process may involve analyzing data and summarizing findings from subgrantee activities, the RFP does not specify a direct role in subgrantee evaluation. Instead, the emphasis is on capturing program impacts, aligning outcomes with BEAD objectives, and ensuring comprehensive reporting for the Final Proposal submission. Please note that there are answers to other questions that

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		further clarify the selected consultant's responsibilities.