

BEAD Challenge Process FAQs

Updated 4/18/2024.

General Process

Q: Do we have a timeline of the Challenge Process?

A: There is a 25 calendar-day window for each phase of the Challenge Process. There will be 25 days where organizations may submit challenges, a 25 day rebuttal period, and then the ECD Broadband Office will spend 25 days for a Final Determination, where decisions are finalized and submitted to NTIA for approval. Each phase is a separate non-rolling process, meaning that ECD will not take late challenges and that entities cannot rebut until the challenge window has closed. For more information, please view the [Initial Proposal Volume I](#).

Q: What are the eligibility requirements for organizations wanting to submit challenges? Are organizations with an existing CostQuest license eligible?

A: To participate in the Challenge Process, organizations must be either a nonprofit, a local government, or an internet service provider. All eligible entities must first complete the [pre-registration form](#). While a CostQuest license is encouraged for bulk uploads, it is not a requirement to participate in the Challenge Process.

Q: Can you register / invite additional people in the portal?

A: To register for the Challenge Portal, please complete the pre-registration form [here](#). While registered users cannot add people to the portal, there is no limit on how many people can pre-register per organization.

Q: Can more than one person submit challenges in the portal at the same time?

A: We ask that each organization designates one person to handle the submission of the challenges. This measure is to ensure that we are not receiving duplicate challenges and evidence from your institution.

Q: What if an eligible entity hires consultants to submit challenges?

A: TNECD recognizes that organizations may hire consultants or local governments may seek assistance from development districts to submit challenges. If this applies to you, please submit responses to the pre-registration form for the organization you will be challenging on behalf of.

Q: What version of the Fabric and BDC data is the state using to make eligibility determinations?

A: We used CostQuest Fabric 3.2 and BDC from June 30, 2023, the March 19, 2024 update.

Q: Will there be bulk upload option for challenges?

A: Yes. We have created Excel templates that you'll be able to use for bulk uploads of all challenge types. Additionally, bulk uploads are possible from the map as there is a free hand or lasso tool that will allow you to capture groups of locations at one time. That data can then be used to submit a form for each location.

Q: In the case of a bulk challenge submission, will a challenger still have to manually click or select locations on the challenge map tool or will there be a different avenue by which to submit the Excel files?

A: There is a freehand/lasso tool that allows for groups to be circled and captured for bulk upload on the map. That data will carry directly into the portal where you may then complete the remaining needed

information for the challenges in separate forms. Alternatively, the user may obtain a CostQuest license and manually fill out the Excel templates that can be uploaded directly to the portal.

Q: What CostQuest license does the state have?

A: Tennessee has a tier C license, which gives us more freedom to the data. This includes access to the fabric and access for that location based data for the state. Each license that CostQuest puts out are a little bit different, and there are differences between the D and E. If you are unsure of what your organization needs to participate, you can learn more about CostQuest Licensing [here](#).

Q: Is there a requirement to group locations with corresponding evidence for different tech codes?

A: You do not have to group locations together in bulk challenges for the Excel templates, but they do need to be organized by Challenge Type. Additionally, bulk uploads will require one evidence file to support the upload as a whole. This single file should include the rationale and evidence for all locations included in the bulk upload.

Q: Is specific data required to populate templates, downloaded from the portal, in addition to location IDs?

A: Yes, while each Excel template largely asks for the same information, there are additional fields depending on the Challenge Type. For example, availability has a reason code and CAI uploads ask for rationales and explanations.

Q: Will we have access to individual CSVs of the Served/Underserved/Unserved locations as well as the CAIs?

A: Yes, this information has been uploaded to the [BEAD Challenge Process webpage](#).

Submitting Challenges

Q: Does availability also include existing service? For example, the map says location is un/underserved, but it not and a challenger provides evidence.

A: Yes. Availability can indicate that the broadband service identified is not offered at this location or if it's being built out, you can challenge through the planned service option. Depending on technology and speed, all locations will be classified as served, underserved and unserved. If a location is listed as underserved or unserved, it can be challenged under Availability and will be reviewed based on the evidence provided. Please refer to our [BEAD Challenge Process webpage](#) for the definitions of served, underserved, and underserved.

Q: How is partial service (rain, partly occluded) counted by Starlink or retiring service handled (AT&T fixed wireless cutoff of service - end of service)? What are the end points that round trip latency is measured?

A: If the technology does not reliably meet or exceed the 100/20 benchmark of broadband, or the latency is in excess of 100 milliseconds, it will be considered eligible for service. The latency data we are using is from the BDC and is reported by the ISPs and is not from user speed tests. Latency is a round-trip measurement, so the mid-point is the selected server and the end-point would be the point of testing – which are reported by the ISPs or those conducting their speed tests.

Q: How does a challenger submit a challenge for existing serviceable locations that are listed as unserved/underserved in the state's initial BEAD eligibility data?

A: Under the availability challenge type, a challenger can select that the provider does not offer the speed(s) shown on the Broadband Map for purchase or that no wireless signal is available at the location.

Q: How are RDOF BSL locations that expire, or ISP shows no intent to build/request handled?

A: If defaulted or pulled back during the challenge window, one can challenge the location under the Challenge Type N. Any of the relevant locations would also be adjusted for before the BEAD subgrantee selection process where RDOF was contributing factor in eligibility, and per any new BEAD RDOF guidance by the NTIA. The state recognizes that there may be greenfield areas within a Census block group or CBG that is not tied to the enforceable commitment of RDOF – and that would also be a challenge type N.

Q: Will the new map only recognize addresses with wired/cable broadband or will satellite availability be listed, like the current FCC map?

A: Only BEAD reliable technologies are included on the Tennessee map, which does not include satellite.

Q: Is TN accepting speed or latency tests?

A: The state is not accepting speed or latency challenges. As Tennessee did not adopt the Model Challenge Process, we removed a few items from guidance and added specificity to others. For example, we will allow things like geotagged photos using a survey tool or leveraging the metadata already within your smart devices. Most of us have smartphones; iPhones, or androids in our hands, and those already have a pretty extensive array of metadata that we can leverage for latitude, longitude, elevation, etc. TNECD will not accept challenges based on speed or latency as the broadband office has deemed these too tedious when other methods to challenge or rebut are equally, if not more, effective.

Q: For locations that have been already activated since the last FCC map refresh when they showed as unserved, what challenge type code would a challenger use to challenge these locations?

A: Planned service. If you already have those areas that are served or you are in the interim connecting these locations but you're not done with construction, planned service would likely be your best option.

Q: How will any RDOF schedule auction affect this? Is there an end date for RDOF application?

A: Everybody that is involved in RDOF is not necessarily involved on the same timeline. All current RDOF obligations have been factored in the map as enforceable commitments.

Q: Is service considered available if the existing service provider requires the resident to pay for last mile?

A: Yes. If a provider is charging you to connect to your house, and you are a paying customer that now has connection, then service is available.