



## The Daily Dish

# State BEAD Plans To Kick Off Important Review

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Earlier this week, New Mexico released its final [\\$432.9 million Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment \(BEAD\) plan for review](#) by the Trump Administration. But upon its release, the plan [raised eyebrows](#) regarding the total cost to deploy high-speed internet to individual locations, with some costing upward of \$40,000 to connect per location. While these are likely the most difficult areas to reach, the staggering figures raise questions regarding whether the state fully considered its options.

For those unfamiliar with the \$42.5 billion BEAD program, Congress created the subsidy as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to spur the deployment of broadband to the hardest-to-reach areas at the lowest cost. Unfortunately, in implementing the program, the Biden Administration [imposed a variety of conditions](#) that went beyond the statute, driving up costs and limiting participation by providers. Most notably, the Biden Administration had a strong [preference for fiber builds](#), which it argued are future-proof against new technological developments and provide the best service to customers. Not all broadband projects are created equally, however, and often building out fiber just isn't economically feasible. Instead, many of these locations can be covered at a much lower cost by alternative technologies such as fixed wireless or low-earth orbital satellites.

That is why the Trump Administration [revised many of the requirements](#) of the BEAD program, which now specify that states take a technology-neutral approach: If a broadband technology can meet the minimum service standards, it should be allowed to have a fair bid in the process. The New Mexico proposal raises concerns not just because many projects' cost-per-location is staggering but because it casts into doubt whether the state fully considered these alternative technologies. New Mexico isn't an outlier in this regard, and as we see more states release their final plans for National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) review, the scrutiny on the plans will only increase.

That leaves the Trump Administration in a difficult position. Clearly the NTIA should prioritize cost and push back against states that preference fiber despite the changed guidance. But at the same time, the more review is undertaken, the longer it takes for the actual deployment process to begin. And as Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr has made clear, the Trump Administration has made [getting America building again](#) a key priority.

The next few months at the NTIA will be critical for the success of the BEAD program. The agency must carefully scrutinize each state's plan to ensure that taxpayer dollars do not go to waste. Meanwhile, federal regulators shouldn't block state plans just because fiber won a bid, as the longer we delay, the more it costs providers and the customers waiting for coverage.

It is not a glamorous job, but if BEAD is to succeed, the Trump Administration will need to find the right balance between saving taxpayer dollars and speeding up deployment.