

Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program: Engagement and Endorsement Scoring Criteria

What are the support and engagement scoring criteria?

As established in the approved [Initial Proposal Volume 2](#), scoring criteria for Local and Tribal Coordination Support and Engagement provide applicants points for demonstrated community support and local and/or Tribal coordination. Applicants have the opportunity to demonstrate their outreach to, engagement with, and support from local governments, Tribes, and any applicable school districts, libraries or community organizations that serve covered populations (for covered populations definitions see [Census Bureau resource on the Digital Equity Act](#)). Applicants will receive points based on evidence and documentation provided that demonstrates specific engagement activities and/or specific letters of support.

<u>Support and Engagement Scoring Criteria</u>		
<i>Points available</i>	<i>Support and Engagement Activities</i>	<i>Examples of documentation</i>
Up to 2	Evidence of a public meeting(s) to engage the community in the project planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting agenda (including date, time and location) with meeting minutes - Presentation materials used for public meetings - Explanation of how the public meeting informed the project proposal - Photos or attendance lists indicating level of participation
Up to 2	Letter(s) of support from any local government (not county, regional, or state) included in the project area	- Signed and dated letter (after April 29, 2024) from local government including city, village, or town (not county, regional, or state) from authorized government representative stating support for the BEAD applicant within the local government boundary.
Up to 1	Letter(s) of support from the school district, the local public library or organization that supports one or more covered populations in the project area.	- Signed and dated letter (after April 29, 2024) from an authorized representative for the entity providing support for the BEAD applicant within the area the entity (school district, library or organization) operates.

Contact: PSCBEADGrants@wisconsin.gov

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Frequently Asked Questions: Support and Engagement

How many engagement points are available and what type of engagement is required?

Up to 5 points (of 100 total) are available for the support and engagement scoring criteria. See the table above for types of engagement and examples of documentation for each sub-category within this scoring criteria.

Will partial points be awarded for the subcategories of the engagement scoring criteria?

Yes, applicants may receive up to the total number of points available for each sub-category listed in the support and engagement table above depending on the quality of the engagement and the extent to which it is documented.

How is the scoring used in the BEAD Program subgranting process?

All applications will be scored. For project units with only one project proposal, the application must reach the minimum threshold of 40 points to be awarded funding in round 1 or round 2. In the event two project proposals are competing for the same locations, score will be used to compare project proposals using the same technology type. Score is primarily used when there are competing proposals using the same technology type for the same geographic area. (See Initial Proposal Volume 2 for complete scoring details.)

Does an applicant need to provide evidence that shows engagement with all possible engagement stakeholders referenced in each sub-category? For example, if there are multiple municipal governments or school districts within an applicant's proposed project area, must the applicant receive letters of support from all of them to be considered for the full point allotment for the respective sub-category?

Applicants are encouraged but not required to seek engagement with local government and key stakeholders. Higher points will be provided for engagement that demonstrates robust and representative sampling of the most impacted local governments, school districts, libraries, etc. In general, larger projects affecting a broad geographic area should expect to document more engagements and letters of support to earn higher points.

Should the letters of support be provided directly from the signatory to the Commission or included in the application?

Letters of support must be provided within the application submission and are due at the time of the application. Any letters submitted outside of the application system will not be considered.

Who should letters of support be addressed to?

Cru Stublely

Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, Wisconsin 53705

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What are the endorsement scoring criteria?

As established in the approved [Initial Proposal Volume 2](#), scoring criteria for Local and Tribal Coordination: Endorsement by County and/or Tribe provide applicants the opportunity to work directly with counties and/or Tribes to receive an official endorsement. The County and/or Tribe where the project is located must take an official action at a noticed, open meeting to affirmatively endorse the project.

<u>County and/or Tribal Endorsement Scoring Criteria</u>		
<i>Points available</i>	<i>Endorsement Activities</i>	<i>Required documentation</i>
<p>Up to 7</p>	<p>Official endorsement by county government and/or Tribe, occurring at a noticed meeting that is open to the public.</p> <p>The endorsement will specify the applicant for funding. If a project scope is not specified, all locations an applicant pursues within the county/Tribal boundary will be given endorsement points.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Documentation submitted during the application phase will consist of two parts: (1) the minutes that establish the endorsement action and any relevant supplemental material, and (2) a letter addressed to the Public Service Commission from the clerk, chair or similar of the governing body certifying the date of the meeting, and nature of the endorsement including any geographic boundary. - Documentation must clearly and affirmatively endorse the BEAD applicant(s). The documentation may indicate the entire jurisdiction or specify a geographic boundary to the endorsement. - The official action does not need to be a resolution and can be simple proposed action with a voice vote.

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Frequently Asked Questions: Endorsement

How many endorsement criteria points are available and what type of endorsement is required?

Up to 7 points (of 100 total) are available for endorsement from a County and/or Tribe. See the table above for documentation required for endorsement.

How is the scoring used in the BEAD Program subgranting process?

All applications will be scored. For project units with only one project proposal, the application must reach the minimum threshold of 40 points to be awarded funding in round 1 or round 2. In the event two project proposals are competing for the same locations, score will be used to compare project proposals using the same technology type. Score is primarily used when there are competing proposals using the same technology type for the same geographic area. (See Initial Proposal Volume 2 for complete scoring details)

Can endorsement authority be delegated to a broadband committee or an individual official of the county governmental body?

No. An endorsement must occur by an affirmative vote or official action of the representative body and cannot be delegated to individuals or appointed groups. For a county government, the endorsement must come from the county board.

If an applicant includes project units that span more than one county and/or Tribe in their application, how will points be awarded if the applicant only receives one endorsement from a county/Tribe, for example?

Points are assigned to each project unit individually. Thus, if a project receives endorsement from only some of the counties or Tribal lands it affects, points will be assigned solely to project units within that county's territory and/or that Tribal land. For an entire area to gain full points, an applicant would need to secure endorsement from all impacted counties and Tribal lands.

Can an entity (county/Tribe) endorse for specific geographic boundaries?

Yes. An endorsement may be provided based on the boundary of a political subdivision, such as specifying the BEAD applicant is endorsed for any BEAD broadband deployment within a specific township or municipal boundary. Alternatively, an endorsement may be provided for any application by the applicant within the entire county or Tribal Nation.

Can an entity (county/Tribe) endorse different applicants for different areas?

Yes. An endorsement may specify an applicant is endorsed for only a portion of its geographic area, as long as the boundary is clearly specified as one of the following: a group of project units, or a town, township, village, or city boundary.

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Can an entity (county/Tribe) endorse multiple applicants for the same geographic area?

Yes. An entity may wish to endorse multiple applicants for the same geographic area. For example, an entity may wish to endorse a different applicant for each technology type. Alternatively, an entity may wish to endorse all applicants that meet certain metrics or terms. However, be aware that endorsing every applicant for the same geographic area will result in no impact on the award decision, because scores are compared among proposals for the same project unit.

Can an entity (county/Tribe) offer endorsement conditional on certain commitments or actions from an applicant? For example, can an entity only endorse applicants that commit to constructing service to all eligible community anchor institutions within the project area?

Yes. However, the Commission cannot assume responsibility for reviewing if such conditional commitments have been met. Provision of a formal endorsement letter as an attachment to an application is assumed to be proof that the conditional commitments have been satisfied or the entity has an independent guarantee that it will be met in the future.

Further, the Commission will not award points for endorsements that are provided with a condition that is not related to the improvement of broadband access, affordability, or adoption within a community. In such instances where an endorsement is associated with non-broadband conditions, the Commission reserves the right to withhold endorsement points provided to that applicant.

When should entities (county/Tribe) complete their endorsements?

The exact BEAD timeline has not been finalized and is pending certain approvals. It is anticipated that the BEAD application process will begin in November 2024 and that applications will be due at the end of December 2024. The Commission recommends that entities complete their initial endorsement activities by December 18, 2024.

If an entity(county/Tribe) does not make any endorsement does that mean the entity will get less funding?

No, the intent of the endorsement criteria is when there are two or more competing proposals for the same geographic area. The endorsement will provide additional points for the applicant or applicant(s) that the community has selected to endorse. The endorsement criteria is not intended or designed to determine which communities get funding but which applicant(s) gets endorsement points when there is competition for the same geographic areas.

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The PSC has not published Project Units yet, how can an entity (county/Tribe) endorse without project units?

While project units are not complete (as of August 30, 2024) the initial [BEAD eligibility map](#) is available online <https://maps.psc.wi.gov/apps/BEADEligibilityMap/> and shows the very likely BEAD eligible locations as submitted to NTIA for approval on August 27, 2024. The Commission recommends that entities endorse applicants based on political geographic boundaries either for their entire geographic area or certain applicants for specific towns, villages cities or townships.

Should the Letters of Endorsement be provided directly from the signatory to the Commission or included in the application?

Letters of Endorsement must be provided within the application submission and are due at the time of the application. Any letters submitted outside of the application system will not be considered.

Is there specific language or model language that should be used in a resolution or endorsement letter?

No specific language is required to meet the criteria. Applicants interested in additional technical assistance related to endorsement language or process should contact the University of Wisconsin, Division of Extension (UW Extension) Broadband Technical Assistance Team. Entities may email jessica.beckendorf@wisc.edu for technical assistance on the endorsement language from UW Extension.

Will the Commission accept *draft* minutes that establish the action of the endorsement?

Yes, due to the accelerated timeline of the BEAD sub-granting process the Commission will accept draft minutes that document the endorsement. However, the accompanying letter from the endorsing entity must 1) indicate the minutes are a draft 2) confirm that the signatory of the letter will immediately update the Commission if the minutes change between the draft and approval and 3) commit to provide an approved copy of the minutes when available.

Who should letters of endorsement be addressed to?

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Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
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