# BEAD NEPA Frequently Asked Questions

# What is considered an allowable cost before my project is considered NEPA Compliant?

According to the General Terms and Conditions for NTIA BEAD Program Funds, the following pre-implementation activities are permissible:

- **Pre-construction planning**, including collecting information necessary to complete environmental reviews;
- Applications for environmental **permits**;
- **Studies** including, but not limited to, Environmental Assessments (EA), wetland delineations, biological assessments, archaeological surveys, and other environmental reviews and analyses;
- **Administrative costs**;
- **Pre-award application costs**;
- **Activities supporting consultations** required under the National Historic Preservation Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Clean Water Act; and/or
- **Limited, preliminary procurement**, including the purchase or lease of equipment, or entering into binding contracts to do so; the purchase of applicable or conditional insurance; and/or funds used to secure land or building leases (including right-of-way easements).

# If I get approval from one of my consultations, does that mean my project can start construction?

**No.** A project is not allowed to start construction until:

1. The Awardee signs a **grant agreement** with the PSC,
2. NTIA provides a **NEPA Decision Document** (Example: Categorical Exclusion) to the PSC/Awardee, **AND**
3. The Awardee acquires all necessary **federal, state, county, and municipal permits**

# Once I am notified that I was awarded a BEAD Project, do I need to submit the necessary NEPA Documents and Permits as soon as possible?

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BEAD Awardees should submit **NEPA Documents** for all projects **as soon as possible.**

BEAD Awardees should begin to acquire necessary **Permits** at least **one year** before they plan to begin construction. However, if implementation is to begin as soon as possible, BEAD Awardees should acquire necessary permits as soon as possible.

# There's a lot to accomplish for NEPA. Are there any options for our organization for us to get assistance with this?

Some entities are considering hiring a consultant to assist in obtaining the NEPA documents required by NTIA, as well as the potential permitting needed for project(s).

# Do I need to have my permits in hand before my project is considered NEPA compliant?

**No.** Permits should be in progress simultaneously with the NEPA Review but are not required to be considered NEPA Compliant. While the PSC does not have permit authority, staff will help identify what state or federal agencies may need to be contacted to receive appropriate permits.

# What happens if my project changes **after** my project is considered NEPA Compliant?

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If a project changes (construction method, location, technology type, etc.) after it is considered NEPA compliant, **the Awardee shall pause all project actions and contact the Broadband Office.**

# Is there an approximate timeline for how long the NEPA Review will take?

While we cannot speculate on the length of time it may take for each project, the PSC and NTIA developed many interagency efficiencies to streamline NEPA Reviews:

- **Section 106 Consultation:** Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Program Comment, Delegation Notice
- **Section 7 Consultation:** Non-Federal Designation, IPaC experience
- NTIA is developing an online screening tool and permitting tracker to organize NEPA Reviews
- U.S. Forest Service established the **Broadband Action Team** to streamline and organize BEAD projects
- The PSC collaborated with other state agencies to establish our own efficiencies

# Any other recommendations to ensure I am doing everything I can to get my project NEPA compliant as quickly as possible?

**Yes.** Here are just a few suggestions to ensure the PSC team can review your project efficiently:

- Design your project to follow NTIA's **Best Management Practices (BMP) and Mitigation Measures Document**
- **Consider potential environmental impacts** during your project design (example: avoiding wetlands, low impact installation methods, etc.)
- Maintain **good correspondence** with PSC staff, especially if they have questions about your project
- **Complete** all necessary NEPA documents, providing as much information as requested.

# Contact Information

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