May 13, 2022

Dear FBA Members,

Today is arguably one of the biggest days in the Fiber Broadband Association’s history. Early this morning, the Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) issued the Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for three Infrastructure Act broadband programs: the $42.5B for Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD), $2.65B Digital Equity Act, and $1B Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure programs. We have been most focused on the BEAD program, which provides funding to deploy broadband to unserved and underserved locations, as it is the critical foundation that the other programs build upon. As you know, the Fiber Broadband Association wrote lengthy comments at the beginning of the year urging NTIA to prioritize fiber builds, and we joined forces with NTCA and research firm Cartesian to deliver the Broadband Infrastructure Playbook to help accelerate efforts for the State Broadband Offices. Our work on these comments and on the Playbook, as well our follow-up advocacy efforts, have paid off. I am pleased to report that the Fiber Broadband Association’s voice was heard loud and clear by the Administration, the Department of Commerce and by NTIA. The NOFO makes the strongest possible statement in prioritizing end-to-end fiber for our nation’s critical broadband infrastructure.

**NTIA has determined that “Priority Broadband Projects” are those that use end-to-end fiber-optic architecture.**

- Only end-to-end fiber will “ensure that the network built by the project can easily scale speeds over time to ... meet the evolving connectivity needs of households and businesses” and “support the deployment of 5G, successor wireless technologies, and other advanced services.”
- End-to-end fiber networks can be updated by replacing equipment attached to the ends of the fiber-optic facilities, allowing for quick and relatively inexpensive network scaling as compared to other technologies.
- Moreover, new fiber deployments will facilitate the deployment and growth of 5G and other advanced wireless services, which rely extensively on fiber for essential backhaul.

As I read through the 98 pages of the NTIA BEAD NOFO, I could not be more pleased with the extent of alignment between NTIA and the Fiber Broadband Association and the adoption of the recommendations in our comments and of some of the best practices that we outlined in our Playbook. That said, there are a few areas
where we will have to stay very vigilant. For example, the States will define an “Extremely High Cost Per Location Threshold” to allow less expensive technology alternatives.

While today was a huge victory for fiber broadband, the fight is long from over. The NOFO rules are in our favor, but we will need to work diligently with every State and Territory Broadband Office and State policymakers to ensure that the nation’s critical broadband infrastructure is built with future-proof fiber.

We are in the process of updating our Broadband Playbook based on the NOFOs released today. My call to action for each of our members is to meet with your Governor, State Broadband Office, State Legislature, and State and Local policymakers to help ensure the acceleration of fiber broadband.

I would like to thank the Fiber Broadband Association’s board, our staff, FBA’s Public Policy co-chairs – Ariane Schaffer (Google Fiber) and Chris Champion (C Spire), our Public Policy Board Liaisons – Joanne Hovis (CTC) and Ben Moncrief (C Spire), FBA’s Public Policy Committee, our regulatory attorney and general counsel – Tom Cohen, our lobbyist team from PerryBayliss, our strategic partners and all of our members who have been instrumental in helping to drive the fiber industry to this pivotal moment in time. Today’s victory has been over 20 years in the making, and we are just getting started. I look forward to seeing everyone at Fiber Connect ’22 in Nashville in about 4 weeks.

Sincerely,

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