

# BEAD INITIAL PROPOSAL

*Volume 1*



**ConnectLA**

Louisiana Office of Broadband  
Development & Connectivity

# Message from the Executive Director

*ConnectLA is proud to present the first volume of Louisiana's draft initial proposal for the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment program. We ask you, as a broadband stakeholder, to review this draft proposal with a critical eye and provide as much constructive feedback as you can.*

*Established by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, the BEAD program allocated more than \$42 billion for the construction of broadband networks, the establishment of subsidies to offset the cost of internet service for qualifying households and the creation of training programs to equip users with a digital skillset. The program provides grants to states for these purposes.*

*The public comment period will last 30 days following the publication of this document, and the feedback form can be found at [connect.la.gov](https://connect.la.gov) under the Comment tab. Vol. 1 of this report will focus on ConnectLA's responses to the **third, fifth, sixth** and **seventh** questions of the initial proposal. We do expect our proposal to be updated based on new data and the public's suggestions. This process will be repeated for the second volume of our initial proposal, which will be released in June.*

*Since our office was created in March 2021, we have traveled to 88 cities, towns and villages and hosted more than 100 stakeholder meetings. We have been developing our state's Digital Equity Plan, for which we have held seven regional stakeholder meetings, 30 focus group discussions with covered populations, visits with each of the state's federally recognized Indian tribes and meetings with several voices from our state's historically black colleges and universities. Each of these interactions has informed this proposal.*

*We could not have completed this so quickly without the help of our incredible partners throughout the state, from tribal leaders to the Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs to internet service providers to the very communities affected by the digital divide.*

*We are truly excited to hear your feedback. If you have any questions about the proposal or need clarification on any points, please do not hesitate to contact us at [connect@la.gov](mailto:connect@la.gov).*



Veneeth Iyengar, Executive Director

# **Initial Proposal Volume I**

## SECTION 1.1 Existing Broadband Funding

(Requirement 3)

### 1.1.1 Supporting Documentation for Funding Sources

Addressed below are the existing efforts funded by the federal and state government within Louisiana to deploy broadband and close the digital divide, including on Tribal Lands, as documented in the Louisiana 5 Year Action Plan. Key federal agencies and the documentation available publicly were beneficial to compiling the efforts below, especially the recently released [Investing in Internet for All Dashboard](#) released by NTIA and OICG. As a result of our office's increasing engagement with stakeholders across the state to coordinate and plan the myriad of implementation efforts resulting from these federal funding activities, ConnectLA has substantially bolstered its implementation capabilities to administer our BEAD efforts, including the growing experience and knowledge of our core ConnectLA staff, close efforts with other stakeholders such as Gov. John Bel Edwards' administration, the Louisiana Municipal Association, Police Jury Association of Louisiana, Louisiana Association of Planning and Development Districts, Board of Regents, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, state legislators, and numerous other nonprofit organizations, and seasoned contractor resources with capabilities in GIS modeling and data management; broadband deployment cost modeling and strategic planning; and federal grant program planning and reporting.

Grant Name	Recipients	Purpose	Total	Expended
NTIA Broadband Infrastructure Program	Acadia Parish St. Landry Parish *Expected to serve 30k locations	Planning, Access	\$29.9m	TBD
NTIA Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program	Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana	Planning, Digital Skills	\$2.5m \$366k	\$2.5m \$366k
NTIA Connecting Minority Communities Pilot	Grambling State University Southern University Law Center Southern University at New Orleans Southern University and A&M College	Access, Affordability, Devices, Digital Skills, Workforce Development	\$2.2m \$3.0m \$3.0m \$6.2m	TBD
US Treasury Capital Projects Fund (GUMBO)	Statewide *Expected to serve 80k locations	Access	\$176m	\$130m
FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund	Statewide *Expected to serve 176k locations	Access	\$342m	TBD
FCC CAF Broadband Loop Support	Statewide	Access	\$30.9m <sup>1</sup>	\$30.9m <sup>1</sup>
FCC Connect America Fund II	Statewide	Access	\$2.9m	TBD
FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit Program	Statewide	Affordability	\$47m <sup>2</sup>	\$47m <sup>2</sup>
FCC Affordable Connectivity Program	Statewide *Beneficiaries 433k as of 5/16/23	Affordability	\$140m <sup>3</sup>	\$140m <sup>3</sup>
FCC Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant	Calcasieu Planning Commission City of Natchitoches City of New Orleans St. Landry Parish Government	Affordability	\$946k	TBD
FCC Alternative Connect America Cost Model	Statewide	Access	\$6.3m	TBD
FCC Emergency Connectivity Fund	Statewide	Access, Devices	\$18.8m \$83.3m	\$18.8m \$77m
FCC E-RATE	Statewide	Access	\$16.1b <sup>4</sup>	\$10.9b <sup>4</sup>
FCC Lifeline	Statewide	Affordability	\$481m <sup>5</sup>	\$481m <sup>5</sup>

FCC Connected Care Pilot Program	Primary Care Providers for a Healthy Feliciana	Access	\$80k	\$80k
FCC Covid-19 Telehealth Award	Access Health Louisiana Odyssey House Louisiana CMC University of Louisiana-Lafayette Louisiana Primary Care Association Louisiana Independent Hospital Network Coalition	Access	\$930k \$143k \$272k \$891k \$453k	\$930k \$143k \$272k \$891k \$453k
USDA Reconnect	Iberville Parish Pointe Coupee Parish St. Landry Parish *Expected to serve 3k locations	Access	\$7.7m	TBD
Louisiana LCTCS Broadband Curriculum Expansion Program	Statewide *State supplemental budget 2022	Workforce Development	\$10.3m	\$10.3m

·Expended January 2020 – December 2022

·Expended May 2021 – December 2021

·Expended January 2022 – May 2023

·Expended January 2017 – May 2023

·Expended January 2004 – May 2023

## SECTION 1.2 Unserved and Underserved Locations

*(Requirement 5)*

### 1.2.1 Supporting Documentation for Data Sources

Two .csv files are available for download (titled “[unserved.csv](#)” and “[underserved.csv](#)”) listing unserved and underserved location IDs. The data is sourced from the Broadband DATA Map as of June 15, 2023.

### 1.2.2 Broadband DATA Map Date Selection

The state of Louisiana plans to use version two of the Broadband DATA Map to identify unserved and underserved locations. Files were included categorizing the locations as follows:

- Served: locations with speeds greater than 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload (100/20)
- Underserved: locations less than 100/20 Mbps and greater than or equal to 25/3 Mbps
- Unserved: locations with speeds less than 25/3 Mbps
- Note: Unlicensed fixed wireless and satellite are excluded.
- Note 2: Data related to tribal lands was pulled from the US Census TIGER/line shapefile source.

As a note, the publication date of the National Broadband Map does not predate the submission of Volume 1 of the Initial proposal by more than 59 days.

## SECTION 1.3 Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs)

*(Requirement 6)*

### 1.3.1 Definition of Community Anchor Institutions

Based on the statutory definition of “community anchor institution” as defined in 47 USC 1702 (a)(2)(E), the broadband office applied the definition of “community anchor institution” to mean a school, library, health clinic, health center, hospital or other medical provider, public safety entity, institution of higher education, public housing organization (including any public housing agency, HUD-assisted housing organization, or Tribal housing organization), or community support organization that facilitates greater use of broadband service by

vulnerable populations, including, but not limited to, low- income individuals, unemployed individuals, children, the incarcerated, and aged individuals.

Louisiana has received data through a license with CostQuest Associates who has sourced this data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, IMLS, American Red Cross, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Data included as part of this source is as of August 2021. The office relies upon this data, as well as version two of the Broadband DATA Map to ensure all CAIs as defined above are accounted for.

Over the past two years, the state of Louisiana Office of Broadband Development and Connectivity has visited numerous Parish and municipalities to discuss realities surrounding broadband access issues. The office has been active in stakeholder engagement across the state to facilitate conversations between community stakeholders, CAI representatives, local municipalities and elected officials to understand challenges and to assess the needs of individual CAIs.

The Office understands that the data received through the sources noted is continuously being updated with better information. To ensure full inclusiveness of CAIs across state jurisdiction and in applicable tribal lands, the office will utilize the NTIA model challenge process to ensure proper public comments and challenges are accounted for. Using the responses received, the broadband office will then include new additions to the list of those CAIs that do not have adequate broadband service, attached in question 1.3.2. As of the date of submission, the Office has not added any new CAIs or declined to classify other institutions as CAIs. The office expects that as the challenge process progresses, further detail will be provided by challengers to ensure that all CAIs across the state and their access needs are accounted for and will allow them to be included as eligible locations for grant funding.

As an added note, data sources related to some of the required items in the template do not have a definitive link to Fabric IDs for locations and will be adjudicated through the required challenge process. For example, the eligible CAI documentation provided in 1.3.2 will require additional details relating to fields "Entity Name", "Entity Number", "CMS Number", "FRN", and "Explanation" for future revisions and additions. Also it will be likely to see a revision to the notations in "CAI Type", as the current file relies on CQA data for the type, and has not been reconciled with the NTIA specific CAI codes. As of the date of submission, since no such publicly available database exists linking the fields noted to Fabric IDs identified, the Office expects to enlist assistant from non-profit entities within the state to work with local stakeholders to update the existing CAI list. Using the responses received, the broadband office will then include new additions to the list of those CAIs that do not have adequate broadband service, attached in question 1.3.2.

The following definitions and sources based on the data provided through the license noted above were used to identify the types of community anchor institutions:

- **Schools:** K-12 schools include all K-12 schools participating in the FCC E-Rate program or that have an NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) ID in the categories “public schools” or “private schools”.
- **Libraries:** Including all libraries participating in the FCC E-Rate program as well as all member libraries, and their branches, of the American Library Association (ALA).
- **Health clinic, health center, hospital, or other medical providers:** The list of health clinics, health centers, hospitals and other medical providers includes all institutions that have a Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) identifier.
- **Public safety entity:** The list includes entities such as fire houses, emergency medical service stations, police stations, sheriff and constable offices, and public safety answering points (PSAP), based on records maintained by the Eligible Entity and units of local government. The list of public safety answering points (PSAPs) includes all PSAPs in the FCC PSAP registry.

- **Institutions of higher education:** Institutions of higher education include all institutions that have an NCES ID in the category “college”, including junior colleges, community colleges, minority serving institutions, historically black colleges and universities, other universities, or other educational institutions.
- **Public housing organizations:** Public housing organizations were identified by contacting the Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) for the state or territory enumerated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The nonprofit organizations Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation (PAHRC) and National Low-Income Housing Coalition maintain a database of nationwide public housing units at the National Housing Preservation Database (NHPD).
- **Community support organizations:** The Eligible Entity included any organizations that facilitate greater use of broadband service by vulnerable populations, including low-income individuals, unemployed individuals, and aged individuals. The Eligible Entity included senior centers and job training centers in this category. The Department of Labor maintains a database of “American Job Training” training centers, established as part of the Workforce Investment Act, and reauthorized in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act of 2014. The database can be accessed at the American Job Center Finder. The National Council on Aging (NCOA) helped identify senior centers.

### 1.3.2 Supporting Documentation for Eligible CAIs

One .csv file is available for download (titled “cai.csv”) with the current list of eligible CAI locations, location ID, and/or latitude and longitude.

## SECTION 1.4 Challenge Process

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*(Requirement 7)*

### NTIA BEAD Model Challenge Process Adoption

#### 1.4.1 Certification of NTIA BEAD Model Challenge Process Adoption

The state of Louisiana will adopt the model challenge process as provided by NTIA.

#### 1.4.2 Modification to BSL Classification

The broadband office will modify locations that the National Broadband Map shows to have available qualifying broadband service (i.e., a location that is “served”) based exclusively on the presence of DSL service as “underserved.” This modification will better reflect the locations eligible for BEAD funding because it will facilitate the phase-out of legacy copper facilities and ensure the delivery of “future-proof” broadband service.

### Deduplication of Funding

#### 1.4.3 Certification for BEAD Eligible Entity Planning Toolkit

The state of Louisiana will adopt the BEAD Eligible Entity Planning Toolkit.

#### 1.4.4. Process for Enforceable Commitments

The broadband office will enumerate locations subject to enforceable commitments by using the BEAD Eligible Entity Planning Toolkit, and consult at least the following data sets:

- The Broadband Funding Map published by the FCC pursuant to IJIA § 60105.8
- Data sets from state broadband deployment programs that rely on funds from the Capital Projects Fund and the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds administered by the U.S. Treasury.
- Louisiana and local data collections of existing enforceable commitments or obligations.

The broadband office will make a best effort to create a list of BSLs subject to enforceable commitments based on state/territory or local grants or loans. If necessary, the broadband office will translate polygons or other geographic designations (e.g., a county or utility district) describing the area to a list of Fabric locations. The

broadband office will submit this list, in the format specified by the FCC Broadband Funding Map, to NTIA. The broadband office will review its repository of existing state and local broadband grant programs to validate the upload and download speeds of existing binding agreements to deploy broadband infrastructure. In situations in which the Louisiana or local program did not specify broadband speeds, or when there was reason to believe a provider deployed higher broadband speeds than required, the broadband office will reach out to the provider to verify the deployment speeds of the binding commitment. The broadband office will document this process by requiring providers to sign a binding agreement certifying the actual broadband deployment speeds deployed. The broadband office drew on these provider agreements, along with its existing database on state and local broadband funding programs' binding agreements, to determine the set of state and local enforceable commitments.

#### 1.4.5 Supporting Documentation for Removing Enforceable Commitments

The state of Louisiana has compiled a list of federal, state and local enforceable commitments as documented in Item 3 of Volume 1 of the Initial Proposal. See Section 1.1.1 of this document.

### Challenge Process Design

#### 1.4.6 Fair, Expeditious, and Evidenced-Based Challenge Process

Based on the NTIA BEAD Challenge Process Policy Notice, as well as the Office's understanding of the goals of the BEAD program, the proposal represents a transparent, fair, expeditious and evidence-based challenge process.

##### *Permissible Challenges*

The broadband office will only allow challenges on the following grounds:

- The identification of eligible community anchor institutions, as defined by the Eligible Entity.
- Community anchor institution BEAD eligibility determinations.
- BEAD eligibility determinations for existing broadband serviceable locations (BSLs).
- Enforceable commitments, or
- Planned service.

##### *Permissible Challengers*

During the BEAD Challenge Process, the broadband office will only allow challenges from nonprofit organizations, units of local and tribal governments, and broadband service providers.

##### *Challenge Process Overview*

The challenge process conducted by the broadband office will include four phases, spanning up to 90 days. Implementation efforts around the challenge process are supported through capable state contractor and support teams that provide GIS capabilities, data analytics and technical audit skills. These subcontractors will assist in development of the state challenge portal, intake process, and adjudication methods. The office staff will directly review challenges and verify for accuracy of submission. Decisions will ultimately be made by the Executive Director and staff. The state of Louisiana will adopt the model challenge process as provided by NTIA, and described below:

1. **Publication of Eligible Locations:** Prior to beginning the Challenge Phase, the broadband office will publish the set of locations eligible for BEAD funding, which consists of the locations resulting from the activities outlined in Sections 5 and 6 of the NTIA BEAD Challenge Process Policy Notice (e.g., administering the deduplication of funding process). The office will also publish locations considered



served, as they may be challenged. A set of eligible locations would be tentatively published on October 2nd, 2023.

2. Challenge Phase: During the Challenge Phase, the challenger will submit the challenge through the broadband office challenge portal. This challenge will be visible to the service provider whose service availability and performance is being contested. The portal will notify the provider of the challenge through an automated email, which will include related information about timing for the provider’s response. After this stage, the location will enter the “challenged” state.
  - a) Minimum Level of Evidence Sufficient to Establish a Challenge: The challenge portal will verify that the address provided can be found in the Fabric and is a BSL. The challenge portal will confirm that the challenged service is listed in the National Broadband Map and meets the definition of reliable broadband service. [The challenge will confirm that the email address is reachable by sending a confirmation message to the listed contact email.] For scanned images, the challenge portal will determine whether the quality is sufficient to enable optical character recognition (OCR). For availability challenges, the broadband office will manually verify that the evidence submitted falls within the categories stated in the NTIA BEAD Challenge Process Policy Notice and the document is unredacted and dated.
  - b) Timeline: Challengers will have 30 calendar days to submit a challenge from the time the initial list of unserved and underserved locations, community anchor institutions, and existing enforceable commitments are posted. This period would occur from October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 through October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023.
3. Rebuttal Phase: Only the challenged service provider may rebut the reclassification of a location or area with evidence, causing the location or locations to enter the “disputed” state. If a challenge that meets the minimum level of evidence is not rebutted, the challenge is sustained. A provider may also agree with the challenge and thus transition the location to the “sustained” state. Providers must regularly check the challenge portal notification method (e.g., email) for notifications of submitted challenges.
  - a) Timeline: Providers will have 30 calendar days from notification of a challenge to provide rebuttal information to the broadband office. This period would close November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023. A procedure is in place to ensure challenges only have 30 calendar days for a rebuttal to be submitted, whether provided at the beginning or end of the challenge phase.
4. Final Determination Phase: During the Final Determination phase, the broadband office will make the final determination of the classification of the location, either declaring the challenge “sustained” or “rejected.”
  - a) Timeline: Following intake of challenge rebuttals, the broadband office will make a final challenge determination within 30 calendar days of the termination of the challenge rebuttal. Reviews will occur on a rolling basis, as challenges and rebuttals are received. This period would occur from December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 through December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

*Evidence and Review Approach*

To ensure that each challenge is reviewed and adjudicated based on fairness for all participants and relevant stakeholders, the broadband office will ensure that the review of all applicable challenge and rebuttal information is completed in detail without bias, before deciding to sustain or reject a challenge. The broadband office will document the standards of review to be applied in a Standard Operating Procedure and will require reviewers to document their justification for each determination. The broadband office plans to ensure reviewers have sufficient training to apply the standards of review uniformly to all challenges submitted. The broadband office will also require that all reviewers submit affidavits to ensure that there is no conflict of interest in making challenge determinations.

Code	Challenge Type	Description	Specific Examples	Permissible Rebuttals
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A	Availability	The broadband service identified is not offered at the location, including a unit of a multiple dwelling unit (MDU).	<p>Screenshot of provider webpage.</p> <p>A service request was refused within the last 180 days (e.g., an email or letter from provider).</p> <p>Lack of suitable infrastructure (e.g., no fiber on pole).</p> <p>A letter or email dated within the last 365 days that a provider failed to schedule a service installation or offer an installation date within 10 business days of a request.</p> <p>A letter or email dated within the last 365 days indicating that a provider requested more than the standard installation fee to connect this location or that a Provider quoted an amount in excess of the provider's standard installation charge in order to connect service at the location.</p>	<p>Provider shows that the location subscribes or has subscribed within the last 12 months, e.g., with a copy of a customer bill.</p> <p>If the evidence was a screenshot and believed to be in error, a screenshot that shows service availability.</p> <p>The provider submits evidence that service is now available as a standard installation, e.g., via a copy of an offer sent to the location.</p>
L	Latency	The round-trip latency of the broadband service exceeds 100 ms.	Speed test by subscriber, showing the excessive latency.	Provider has countervailing speed test evidence showing latency at or below 100 ms, e.g., from their own network management system or the CAF performance measurements.
D	Data cap	The only service plans marketed to consumers impose an unreasonable capacity allowance ("data cap") on the consumer.	<p>Screenshot of provider webpage.</p> <p>Service description provided to consumer.</p>	Provider has terms of service showing that it does not impose an unreasonable data cap or offers another plan at the location without an unreasonable cap.
T	Technology	The technology indicated for this location is incorrect.	Manufacturer and model number of residential gateway (CPE) that demonstrates the service is delivered via a specific technology.	Provider has countervailing evidence from their network management system showing an appropriate residential gateway that matches the provided service.
B	Business service only	The location is residential, but the service offered is marketed or available only to businesses.	Screenshot of provider webpage.	Provider documentation that the service listed in the BDC is available at the location and is marketed to consumers.
E	Enforceable Commitment	The challenger has knowledge that broadband will be deployed at this location by the date established in the deployment obligation.	Enforceable commitment by service provider (e.g., authorization letter). In the case of Tribal Lands, the challenger must submit the requisite legally binding agreement between the relevant Tribal Government and the service provider for the location(s) at issue (see Section 6.2 above).	Documentation that the provider has defaulted on the commitment or is otherwise unable to meet the commitment (e.g., is no longer a going concern).
P	Planned service	The challenger has knowledge that	Construction contracts or similar evidence of on-going deployment,	Documentation showing that the provider is no longer able to

		broadband will be deployed at this location by June 30, 2024, without an enforceable commitment or a provider is building out broadband offering performance beyond the requirements of an enforceable commitment.	along with evidence that all necessary permits have been applied for or obtained. Contracts or a similar binding agreement between the Eligible Entity and the provider committing that planned service will meet the BEAD definition and requirements of reliable and qualifying broadband even if not required by its funding source (i.e., a separate federal grant program), including the expected date deployment will be completed, which must be on or before June 30, 2024.	meet the commitment (e.g., is no longer a going concern) or that the planned deployment does not meet the required technology or performance requirements.
N	Not part of enforceable commitment.	This location is in an area that is subject to an enforceable commitment to less than 100% of locations and the location is not covered by that commitment. (See BEAD NOFO at 36, n. 52.)	Declaration by service provider subject to the enforceable commitment.	
C	Location is a CAI	The location should be classified as a CAI.	Evidence that the location falls within the definitions of CAIs set by the Eligible Entity.	Evidence that the location does not fall within the definitions of CAIs set by the Eligible Entity or is no longer in operation.
R	Location is not a CAI	The location is currently labeled as a CAI but is a residence, a non-CAI business, or is no longer in operation.	Evidence that the location does not fall within the definitions of CAIs set by the Eligible Entity or is no longer in operation.	Evidence that the location falls within the definitions of CAIs set by the Eligible Entity or is still operational.

### *Area and MDU Challenge*

The broadband office will administer area and MDU challenges for challenge types A, L, D, and T. An area challenge reverses the burden of proof for availability, latency, data caps and technology if a defined number of challenges for a particular category, across all challengers, have been submitted for a provider. Thus, the provider receiving an area challenge or MDU must demonstrate that they are indeed meeting the availability, latency, data cap and technology requirement, respectively, for all (served) locations within the area or all units within an MDU. The provider can use any of the permissible rebuttals listed above.

An area challenge is triggered if 6 or more broadband serviceable locations using a particular technology and a single provider within a census block group are challenged.

An MDU challenge requires challenges by at least 3 units or 10% of the unit count listed in the Fabric within the same broadband serviceable location, whichever is larger.

Each type of challenge and each technology and provider is considered separately, i.e., an availability challenge (A) does not count towards reaching the area threshold for a speed (S) challenge. If a provider offers multiple technologies, such as DSL and fiber, each is treated separately since they are likely to have different availability and performance.

Area challenges for availability need to be rebutted with evidence that service is available for all BSL within the census block group, e.g., by network diagrams that show fiber or HFC infrastructure or customer subscribers.

For fixed wireless service, the challenge system will offer representative random, sample of the area in contention, but no fewer than [10], where the provider has to demonstrate service availability and speed (e.g., with a mobile test unit).<sup>1</sup>

### *Transparency Plan*

To ensure that the challenge process is transparent and open to public and stakeholder scrutiny, the broadband office will, upon approval from NTIA, publicly post an overview of the challenge process phases, challenge timelines, and instructions on how to submit and rebut a challenge. This documentation will be posted publicly for at least a week prior to opening the challenge submission window. The broadband office also plans to actively inform all units of local government of its challenge process and set up informative webinars, in-person meetings and regular touchpoints to address any comments, questions, or concerns from local governments, nonprofit organizations, and Internet service providers. Other public stakeholders can sign up on the broadband office website, [connect.la.gov](http://connect.la.gov), for challenge process updates and newsletters. They can engage with the broadband office by a designated email address ([connect@la.gov](mailto:connect@la.gov)) or calling the Office at the publicly available phone number listed on the website. Providers will be notified of challenges via automatic emails from the portal.

Beyond actively engaging relevant stakeholders, the broadband office will also post all submitted challenges and rebuttals before final challenge determinations are made, including:

- the provider, nonprofit, or unit of local government that submitted the challenge,
- the census block group containing the challenged broadband serviceable location,
- the provider being challenged,
- the type of challenge (e.g., availability or speed), and
- a summary of the challenge, including whether a provider submitted a rebuttal.

The broadband office will not publicly post any personally identifiable information (PII) or proprietary information, including subscriber names, street addresses and customer IP addresses. To ensure all PII is protected, the broadband office will review the basis and summary of all challenges and rebuttals to ensure PII is removed prior to posting them on the website. Additionally, guidance will be provided to all challengers as to which information they submit may be posted publicly.

The broadband office will treat information submitted by an existing broadband service provider designated as proprietary and confidential consistent with applicable federal law and in alignment with Louisiana revised statute. If any of these responses do contain information or data that the submitter deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under state open records laws or is protected under applicable state privacy laws, that information should be identified as privileged or confidential. Otherwise, the responses will be made publicly available.

## **SECTION 1.5 Public Comment**

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The public comment period for Louisiana’s Initial Proposal Volume 1 lasted over 30 days from May 23 – June 30. The document was published on our website with a clear and easy-to-access portal. Upon publication, our office sent a newsletter to all our stakeholders notifying them of the publication and request for public comment.

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<sup>1</sup> A mobile test unit is a testing apparatus that can be easily moved, which simulates the equipment and installation (antenna, antenna mast, subscriber equipment, etc.) that would be used in a typical deployment of fixed wireless access service by the provider.

Public comments include commendations for Louisiana's process, transparency, and commitment to expeditious deployment of broadband funds. Some concerns were in reference to digital equity and Vol. 2 of the Initial Proposal, which have their own comment windows and procedures. For the challenge process, comment included expanding permissible challenges and rebuttals, which the office feels would cause unnecessary complexities. Concerns were also addressed regarding the public use of the unserved and underserved files and their legibility and use to the public. One commenter requested challenging the FCC fabric more often and conducting the deduplication process after grant awards are issued, which would be inconsistent with federal guidelines.

Louisiana takes these comments seriously and maintains its intent to follow federal guidelines while conducting a fair, transparent, and expeditious challenge process.