

Project Management Plan for the BEAD Grant for the Virgin Islands Broadband Office (VIBO)

1. Introduction

This **Project Management Plan (PMP)** outlines the processes, procedures, and policies that will be followed by the Virgin Islands Broadband Office (VIBO) in the management and execution of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Grant.

The goal of this PMP is to ensure that all projects funded under the BEAD Grant are managed efficiently, effectively, and transparently, ensuring that they align with the overarching objectives of broadband expansion in underserved communities throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands.

This PMP focuses on managing the overall progress of BEAD-funded projects, including:

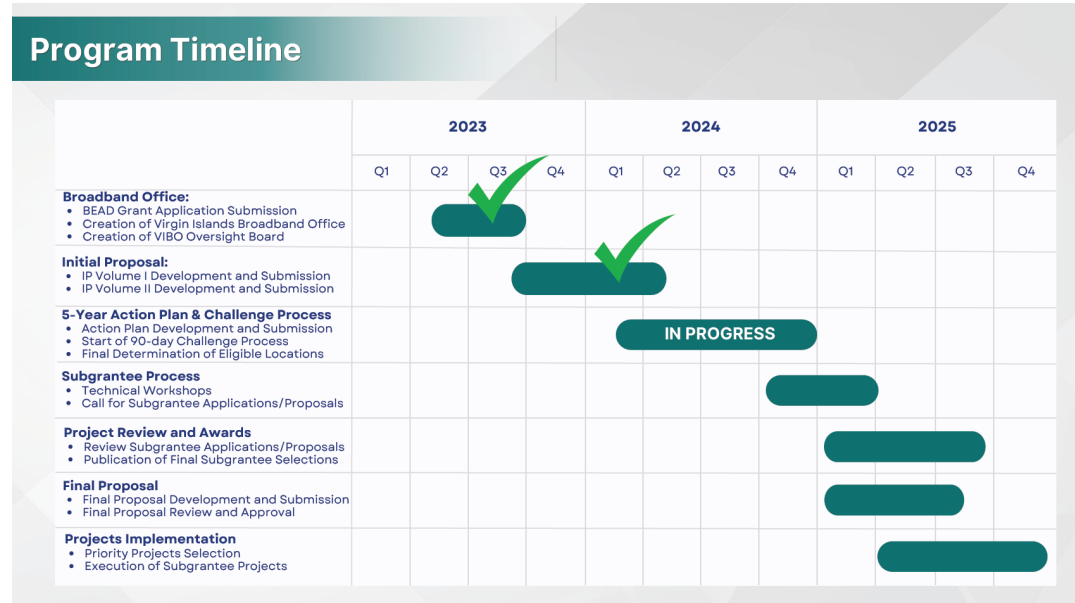
- Creation and publication of the **NOFO** for non-deployment projects.
 - Establishing criteria for **valid and invalid proposed projects**.
 - Implementing a fair and transparent **selection process** for provisional awards.
 - Avoiding **project overlaps** and ensuring strategic alignment.
 - Developing a clear **subgrantee application process**, including budget proposals and project timelines.
 - Defining the **community impact** and outreach mandate for the projects.
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2. Project Phases and Timeline

The BEAD Grant will follow a structured approach to ensure successful project implementation. The project phases include:

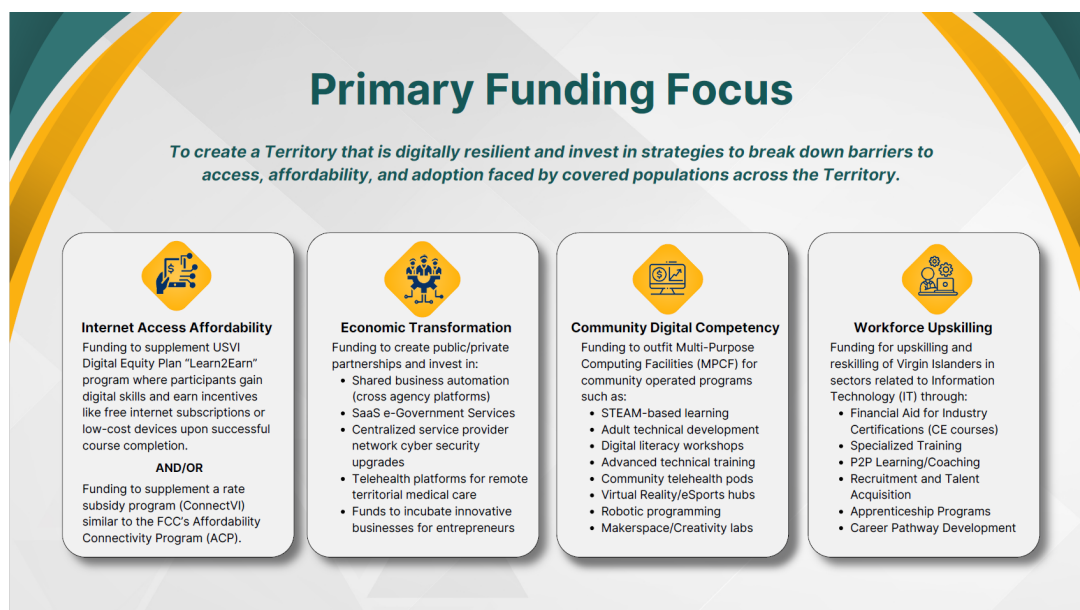
1. **Planning Phase:** Develop challenge process, release NOFO, define eligibility criteria, and establish selection process.
2. **Application Phase:** Open subgrantee application window, collect project proposals.
3. **Selection Phase:** Review proposals, select provisional awardees, and finalize awards.
4. **Implementation Phase:** implement non-deployment projects and services, monitor progress.
5. **Post-Implementation Phase:** Measure impact, report to stakeholders, evaluate project success.

Timeline Overview



4. Creation of Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for Non-Deployment Projects

The **NOFO** will be designed to solicit applications for non-deployment projects that support the overall objectives of the BEAD Grant. These projects can include activities like:



4.1 NOFO Structure

The NOFO will include the following sections:

1. **Introduction:** Overview of the BEAD Grant objectives and the Virgin Islands' broadband needs.
2. **Eligibility Criteria:** Who can apply (e.g., nonprofit organizations, local governments, educational institutions).
3. **Project Types:** Specific focus areas for non-deployment projects.
4. **Application Instructions:** Detailed guidance on how to apply, what documents are needed, and submission deadlines.
5. **Evaluation Criteria:** How applications will be evaluated (e.g., community impact, feasibility, sustainability).
6. **Funding Amounts and Budget Guidance:** Available funding for each project, including budget limits and allowable costs.
7. **Reporting and Accountability:** Reporting requirements and monitoring for awarded projects.

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For more information see the VIBO NOFO Structure Document.

5. Examples of Valid and Invalid Proposed Projects

5.1 Valid Proposed Projects

- **Digital Literacy Training:** A program designed to teach low-income residents essential digital skills for remote work, education, and daily life.

- **Community Wi-Fi Initiatives:** Establishing public Wi-Fi hubs in underserved neighborhoods to provide internet access to residents.
- **Telehealth Access:** Expanding telehealth infrastructure and broadband access for medical centers in rural communities.
- **E-Government Services:** Projects that promote access to local government services online for underserved communities.

5.2 Invalid Proposed Projects

- **Commercial-Only Broadband Expansion:** Projects that focus solely on broadband expansion for private commercial entities without clear community benefits.
 - **Non-Broadband Related Projects:** Initiatives that do not align with the objectives of broadband equity, such as unrelated infrastructure projects or technology training unrelated to broadband use.
 - **Unjustified Budgets:** Proposals with budget requests that are not substantiated by detailed cost breakdowns or are inconsistent with the project's scale.
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6. Selection Process to Provisionally Award Projects

The selection process will ensure that only the most qualified and impactful projects receive BEAD funding. The process will include the following steps:

6.1 Application Review

1. **Eligibility Check:** Ensure all applicants meet the eligibility criteria defined in the NOFO.
2. **Project Evaluation:** Projects will be evaluated based on:
 - **Community Impact:** How well the project addresses the broadband needs of underserved populations.
 - **Feasibility:** The technical and financial feasibility of the proposed project.
 - **Sustainability:** The long-term impact and sustainability of the project after BEAD funds are expended.
 - **Compliance:** Ensuring the project complies with BEAD Grant guidelines and requirements.

6.2 Scoring System

Each project proposal will be scored using a standardized evaluation form, with a maximum score of 100 points. The scoring criteria may include:

Total Points: 100

Technical Merit (45 points possible)

- **Project purpose (15 points):** Reviewers will consider the extent to which potential subgrantees propose a project that aligns with one or more of the program's objectives.

Reviewers will consider how proposed projects will prioritize the needs of the community and the project outcomes of the proposed program, especially those projects that align with the goals of the Vision 2040 plan.

- **Level of need/impact in proposed service areas (15 points):** Applications will receive full points for this section if a proposed project can demonstrate specific needs in a service area that VIBO has identified as low-income and/or unserved. The locations will be identified on a service area map that will be published on the BEAD website. Prospective subgrantees will need to provide comprehensive community statistics that reflect the potential need in the community for the proposed program, including but not limited to the estimated number of households or residents that may benefit from the program, the demographics of the impacted community (social, education, age, financial, and any covered populations as identified in the Digital Equity Act. Subgrantees will need to provide context as to how and why they selected their proposed project area.
- **Project feasibility (15 points):** Potential subgrantees will be scored on the comprehensiveness and appropriateness of the project, including the clarity and level of detail of the proposed project plan. Reviewers will assess the extent to which proposed programs stimulate the adoption of broadband for telehealth, distance learning, telework and entrepreneurship, economic growth, and job creation. Reviewers will also consider the reasonableness of the program timeline and the likeliness of program success.

Qualifications and Expertise (20 points possible)

- **Technical and operational capability (10 points):** Potential subgrantees will need to, at minimum, demonstrate capability of operating the proposed program with appropriately skilled staffing with high technical understanding of proposed digital literacy activities.
- **Financial and managerial capacity (10 points):** Potential subgrantees will need to show proof of financial good standing and must demonstrate a substantial workforce able to fulfill the needs of the proposed program in a timely manner.

Local Coordination (10 points possible)

- **Proof of community engagement in proposed service area (5 points):** Potential subgrantees will need to provide record that they engaged the community for which they are submitting a proposal to serve, documenting that they considered the needs of the community when developing their proposal. Potential subgrantees who do not provide proof of engagement will receive no points in the category.
- **Letter(s) of support (5 points):** Potential subgrantees are requested to submit at least one letter of support from collaborating organizations (e.g., CAI where proposed services will be implemented). All collaborating organizations are encouraged to submit a letter of support in the application package submitted by the potential subgrantee for full points. Potential subgrantees who do not submit any letter(s) of support will receive no points in this category.

Project Budget (15 points possible)

- **Reasonableness of the budget (10 points):** When assessing points for reasonableness

of the budget, there shall be a maximum number of points awarded to the lowest priced bidder. The points allocated to higher-priced bidders should be equal to the lowest bidder's price multiplied by the maximum points available for price, divided by the higher proposal price. In instances where projects are vastly different in scope, points will be awarded to potential subgrantees that address the needs of impacted community and/or service areas.

Community Impact (5 points): How well the proposed project addresses the broadband needs of the target community.

Other (10 points possible) – The VIBO will assess an additional ten points to projects that are similar in scope to determine which will be funded to avoid duplicative initiatives.

- **Minority Business Enterprise, Woman Business Enterprise, or Labor Surplus Area Firm (5 points):** Full points will be awarded to any potential subgrantee meeting one of these designations.
- **Sustainability of the project after the end of funding term (5 points):** Potential subgrantees will need to provide a project sustainability plan after the end of the BEAD funding term (June 2028). Points will be awarded based on a succinct plan for project continuity passed 2028, and how the funded program will be maintained financially and operationally.

6.3 Provisional Award Process

Based on the evaluation scores, a provisional award will be made. Selected projects will receive a provisional award notification and will enter into final negotiations to agree on the terms of the grant. This includes:

- Finalizing project budgets.
- Confirming timelines.
- Signing grant agreements.

7. Avoiding Project Overlaps

To avoid duplication of efforts and project overlap, VIBO will implement the following steps:

1. **Centralized Project Database:** Maintain a centralized database where all proposed projects are logged and tracked.
2. **Geographic Information System (GIS) Mapping:** Use GIS tools to map existing proposed project locations to identify potential overlaps.
3. **Regular Coordination Meetings:** VIBO will host quarterly coordination meetings with other stakeholders (e.g., local governments, utility companies) to ensure that projects complement, rather than duplicate, each other.

4. **Clear Project Boundaries:** Clearly define the geographic and technical boundaries for each project in the grant agreements.
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8. Subgrantee Application Process

The subgrantee application process will include the following steps:

1. **Public Announcement:** Announce funding opportunities for subgrantees through the NOFO and public channels.
 2. **Online Application Portal:** Develop an online portal where subgrantees can submit proposals, budgets, and supporting documentation.
 3. **Application Review:** Applications will be reviewed by VIBO's project management team for eligibility, completeness, and alignment with project objectives.
 4. **Site Visits:** For large or complex projects, VIBO may conduct site visits to assess the feasibility of proposed activities.
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9. Proposed Project Budgets for Subgrantees

Each subgrantee will be required to submit a detailed project budget that aligns with the scope of work and funding limits. The budget will include:

- **Personnel Costs:** Salaries for staff directly involved in the project.
- **Equipment Costs:** Cost hardware, or software.
- **Community Engagement Costs:** Budget for outreach programs, advertising, and public meetings.
- **Operational Costs:** Expenses related to project administration, such as office supplies, utilities, and reporting.

Budgets will be reviewed for reasonableness and alignment with project goals.

10. Project Timelines

Each project will have a defined timeline that includes key milestones. These milestones will be tracked using project management software and will include:

1. **Project Start:** Official project initiation date.
2. **Design and Planning:** Completion of project plans, design, and necessary permits.
3. **Implementation:** Program deployment, community outreach, and service activation.
4. **Completion:** Project wrap-up, final reporting, and handoff to the community.

11. Community Impact and Outreach Mandate

The BEAD Grant requires a strong community impact and outreach component. VIBO will implement the following strategies to meet this mandate:

1. **Community Needs Assessment:** Conduct a baseline assessment of broadband needs across the Virgin Islands to prioritize projects.
 2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Involve local community leaders, residents, and businesses in the planning and decision-making process.
 3. **Public Education Campaigns:** Use media, town halls, and community meetings to inform the public about the project's benefits and how they can get involved.
 4. **Digital Equity Programs:** Create initiatives to promote broadband adoption among vulnerable populations (e.g., seniors, low-income families).
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12. Conclusion

The successful execution of the BEAD Grant in the Virgin Islands requires a well-organized, transparent, and efficient project management approach. This Project Management Plan outlines the processes and frameworks necessary to ensure projects are selected, awarded, and implemented in a manner that maximizes their impact on broadband access and digital equity. By adhering to this plan, VIBO will help expand broadband access across the Virgin Islands, fostering economic development, educational opportunities, and overall community empowerment.