

ARPA CPF Application Scoring Guidelines

The goal of the NDIT Grant Program is to award grants for projects that exclusively extend broadband service into unserved and underserved areas in North Dakota. Applications are to be received through a competitive grant process that results in awards based on objective and efficient scoring methodologies. Each application received will be validated for its completeness, eligibility, and scored using the following criteria:

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|---------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Speed Delivered | 0-20 points |
| 2. Financial Wherewithal | 0-30 points |
| 3. Project Service Area | 0-50 points |
| 4. Project Timeline | 0-25 points |
| 5. Services Offered | 0-15 points |
| 6. Operational Capability | 0-10 points |

Total Points Possible: 0-150 points

1) Speed Delivered – This grant is focused on delivering broadband service into currently unserved or underserved areas of the state and can scale to meet future connectivity needs of the community. The program defines:

- Unserved Areas as those addresses without broadband service at a speed of at least 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream.
- Underserved Areas as those addresses without broadband service at a speed of at least 100 Mbps downstream and 20 Mbps upstream.

The state will assess each application based on the service capability delivered on project RFT. Bonuses can be assessed on technologies that are deliver or are easily upgradable to higher speeds than what is required. Points can be lost based on any addresses not able to access the required speeds.

2) Financial Wherewithal - The state will assess each application based on the financial stability and commitment of the applicant. Review of the applicant’s financial records, expected long-term sustainability of the network, financial plan for the project, and company match will impact the allocation of points. Applicants should indicate whether they have outstanding broadband loans or grants from other organizations/programs.

3) Project Service Area – One of the key assessment criteria for the CPF is project service area. The goal of the CPF is to provide critical internet services to those addresses that have been lacking in the deployment of highspeed broadband networks. The program is established and designed around the

idea that the likelihood of service providers to build broadband networks to these areas were low without subsidies. The state will assess the application based on the total number of eligible address that meet certain criteria. These criteria are:

- Number of unserved addresses
- Number of underserved addresses
- Number of un/underserved critical community facilities
- Number of addresses falling in tribal lands

4) Project Timeline – This program is available through December 31, 2026. The state encourages service providers to start projects ASAP and complete them as quickly as possible; as such, we will assess points based on the project completion timeline.

5) Services Offered - Applications will be awarded points based on the comprehensiveness of their proposed service offering compared to reasonable and customary services currently available in the state. Applicants must support a subscription plan for low-income or vulnerable populations and the ability to roll in ACP. Bonus points will be given if the service offering includes voice services.

6) Operational Capability – The program encourages applicants to build out these networks owned, operated by/or affiliated with local governments, non-profits, and co-operatives. As such, any type relationships should be included in your project description. The state will also assess the applicant's ability to build, operate, and maintain the proposed network for a minimum of 5 years and whether they have a strong history of successful broadband projects.