

CHAPTER 22  
BROADBAND GRANTS PROGRAM

**129—22.1(8B) Definitions.** The definitions in rule 129—20.1(8B,427) shall apply to this chapter. In addition, for purposes of this chapter, the following definitions shall also apply:

“*Grantee*” means a communications service provider awarded grant funds by the office pursuant to and in accordance with Iowa Code section 8B.11 and these rules.

“*Project*” means an installation of broadband infrastructure by a communications service provider in one or more targeted service areas. Except in limited circumstances otherwise permitted herein, a project may not be comprised of, in whole or in part, census blocks that are not targeted service areas. [ARC 4098C, IAB 10/24/18, effective 11/28/18]

**129—22.2(8B) Purpose and scope.** This chapter applies to the broadband grants program established by Iowa Code section 8B.11 and administered by the office. As authorized by Iowa Code section 8B.11(8), this chapter establishes program process, management, and measurement rules designed to ensure the effective and efficient administration and oversight of the program, the key objective of which is to reduce or eliminate targeted service areas in the state of Iowa by incentivizing the installation of broadband infrastructure by communications service providers therein. [ARC 4098C, IAB 10/24/18, effective 11/28/18]

**129—22.3(8B) Notice accepting grant funds.**

**22.3(1)** The office shall provide notice to communications service providers when grant funds become available for distribution by the office by posting a “Notice of Funding Availability” (NOFA) online at [iowagrants.gov](http://iowagrants.gov) and [ocio.iowa.gov/broadband](http://ocio.iowa.gov/broadband).

**22.3(2)** Such NOFA shall:

- a. Generally describe the application process.
- b. State the date, time, and manner by which applications for such grant funds must be submitted to the office in order to be eligible for consideration by the office for an award of grant funds.
- c. State the total amount of grant funds available for distribution under the applicable NOFA and provide an estimate of the date by which the office anticipates it will issue award(s).
- d. Describe the factors the office will consider in determining whether, to which communications service providers, and in what amount(s) to award grant funds.
- e. Set forth any measurement, technical, scoring, or other similar standards, formulas, or criteria the office will utilize in applying any factors considered by the office in determining whether, to which communications service providers, and in what amount(s) to award grant funds.
- f. Identify allowable and not disallowed expenditures which may be included in an applicant’s total project costs and set forth what constitutes sufficient and appropriate documentation for purposes of substantiating subsequent requests for reimbursement for allowable and not disallowed expenditures.
- g. State any other terms, conditions, requirements, or processes applicable to communications service providers submitting applications for grant funds, including but not limited to any grant agreement the office may require a grantee to enter into as a condition of receiving grant funds pursuant to subrule 22.6(1).

[ARC 4098C, IAB 10/24/18, effective 11/28/18]

**129—22.4(8B) Applications for grant funds.**

**22.4(1) Application process.** Following the issuance of a NOFA by the office, communications service providers may apply to the office for grant funds for the installation of broadband infrastructure at or above 25 megabits per second of download speed and 3 megabits per second of upload speed in targeted service areas. Applications shall be made and submitted in accordance with the terms of the NOFA.

**22.4(2) Contents of application.** In addition to any other questions or requirements established by the NOFA, an application shall, at a minimum, include:

- a. The communications service provider’s legal and business name and address;

b. The name, address, telephone number, and email address of the person authorized by the communications service provider to respond to inquiries regarding the application;

c. The census block number(s) as provided on the statewide map referenced in rule 129—20.4(8B,427) for the targeted service area(s) forming the basis of the application/project (i.e., the targeted service area(s) in which the proposed installation of broadband infrastructure will occur);

d. Attestation that the broadband infrastructure installed in the targeted service area(s) will facilitate broadband service at or above 25 megabits per second of download speed and 3 megabits per second of upload speed;

e. An anticipated project completion date, which shall not exceed five years from the date the NOFA is issued. An applicant's anticipated project completion date shall be used to determine whether a grantee's failure to complete a project in a timely manner warrants a finding of noncompliance for purposes of subparagraph 22.6(4) "b"(2).

**22.4(3) Deadlines.** The office will only consider applications received on or before the applicable deadline as stated in the NOFA, unless the office, in its sole discretion, establishes a different deadline for the submission of applications. The office may establish a different deadline for all applicants, but will not change the deadline for or at the request of any individual applicant.

**22.4(4) Confidentiality of contents of applications.** The office's release of public records is governed by 129—Chapter 2 and Iowa Code chapter 22. Applicants or other persons or parties submitting information to the office are encouraged to familiarize themselves with 129—Chapter 2 and Iowa Code chapter 22 before submitting applications or other information to the office. The office will copy and produce public records upon request as required to comply with Iowa Code chapter 22 and will treat all information submitted by applicants or other persons or parties as public, nonconfidential records unless an applicant or other person or party requests that specific parts of the evidence or information submitted be treated as confidential at the time of the submission to the office.

a. In addition to any other administrative requirements established by the NOFA, an applicant or other person or party requesting confidential treatment of portions of an application or other information submitted to the office must:

- (1) Fully complete and submit to the office Form 22 as provided by the office.
- (2) Identify the request in the NOFA, or if other information is submitted to the office, identify the request in the transmittal email or cover letter for the written correspondence.
- (3) Conspicuously mark the outside of any submission as containing confidential information.
- (4) Mark each page upon which confidential evidence or information appears.
- (5) Submit a public copy from which claimed confidential evidence and information has been excised. Confidential information must be excised in such a way as to allow the public to determine the general nature of the information removed and to retain as much of the otherwise public evidence and information as possible.

b. Form 22 will not be considered fully complete unless, for each request for confidential treatment, the applicant or other person or party:

- (1) Enumerates the specific grounds in Iowa Code chapter 22 or other applicable law that support treatment of the specific information as confidential.
- (2) Justifies why the specific information should be maintained in confidence.
- (3) Explains why disclosure of the specific information would not be in the best interest of the public.
- (4) Sets forth the name, address, telephone number, and email address of the individual authorized by the applicant or other person or party submitting such information to respond to inquiries from the office concerning the confidential status of such information.

c. Failure to request that information be treated as confidential as specified herein shall relieve the office and state personnel from any responsibility for maintaining the information in confidence. Applicants or other persons or parties may not request confidential treatment with respect to information specifically identified by the office in the NOFA as being subject to public disclosure. Blanket requests to maintain an entire application or all information otherwise submitted to the office as confidential will be categorically rejected.

**22.4(5) Limited exception for broadband infrastructure installed outside of targeted service areas.** These rules generally limit the use of grant funds to and for broadband infrastructure installed within targeted service areas. This limitation is designed to ensure that the use of grant funds has the greatest possible impact on eliminating targeted service areas and to ensure the office's effective, efficient, and responsible management and oversight of the program. Notwithstanding this limitation, the office may, on a limited basis and in the office's sole discretion, permit communications service providers to apply for and utilize grant funds for broadband infrastructure installed outside of targeted service areas that facilitates or is essential to and inextricably intertwined with facilitating broadband infrastructure within targeted service areas forming the basis of a project, provided that a communications service provider applying for any such exception shall be required to clearly demonstrate, to the office's sole satisfaction:

*a.* Why and how reimbursement for such broadband infrastructure deployed outside of a targeted service area(s) facilitates or is essential to and inextricably intertwined with facilitating broadband service at or above 25 megabits per second of download speed and 3 megabits per second of upload speed in a targeted service area(s) forming the basis of a project and cannot otherwise be excluded from the application; and

*b.* The specific methods or formulas the communications service provider will utilize in proportionally allocating the costs of and for such broadband infrastructure to targeted service area(s) forming the basis of the project to which broadband service is facilitated by such infrastructure.

[ARC 4098C, IAB 10/24/18, effective 11/28/18]

#### **129—22.5(8B) Application review process and award of grant funds.**

**22.5(1) Optional period for public comment.** Following the expiration of the deadline for the receipt of applications stated in the NOFA, the office may, in its sole discretion, open a period for public comment as it relates to such applications through the state of Iowa's public comment website: [comment.iowa.gov](http://comment.iowa.gov). If the office elects to solicit public comment pursuant to this rule, any member of the public will be permitted to submit comments regarding applications received by the office.

**22.5(2) Review committee.** Following the expiration of the deadline for the receipt of applications stated in the NOFA, the office will supply all applications received by the deadline and otherwise warranting review in accordance with the terms, conditions, and requirements of the NOFA, these rules, and Iowa Code chapter 8B to a review committee established by the office comprised of representatives selected by the office from schools, communities, agriculture, industry, and other areas. The review committee will review the applications and provide input/make recommendations to the office regarding whether, to which projects, and in what amount(s) to award grant funds, in accordance with the terms, conditions, and requirements of the NOFA, these rules, and Iowa Code chapter 8B.

**22.5(3) Office final decision.** Following the office's receipt of the review committee's input or recommendations and the closure of the period for public comment, if any, the office will review all applications received by the deadline and otherwise warranting review in accordance with the terms, conditions, and requirements of the NOFA, these rules, and Iowa Code chapter 8B, the input/recommendations made by the review committee, and any public comment solicited/received, all in accordance with the terms, conditions, and requirements of the NOFA, these rules, and Iowa Code chapter 8B, and make a final agency decision regarding whether, to which projects, and in what amount(s) to award grant funds.

*a.* In so doing, the office will take into consideration the following factors, in accordance with and in the manner specified by the terms, conditions, and requirements of the NOFA:

(1) The relative need for broadband infrastructure in the area and the existing broadband service speeds. Existing broadband service speeds may be determined by reference to the statewide map referenced in rule 129—20.4(8B,427).

(2) The percentage of the homes, schools, and businesses in the targeted service area(s) forming the basis of the project that will be provided access to broadband service at or above 25 megabits per second of download speed and 3 megabits per second of upload speed as a result of the project.

(3) The geographic diversity of the project areas of all applicants.

- (4) The economic impact the project will have on the area.
- (5) The applicant's total proposed budget for the project, including the amount or percentage of local match, if any. For purposes of this chapter, "local match" shall include any private and public sources of funding available to the applicant and to be utilized in connection with the applicant's proposed project.
- (6) Any other factors deemed relevant by the office as stated in the NOFA.
  - b. In determining whether, to which projects, and in what amount(s) to award grant funds, the office will not:
    - (1) Base its decision on the office's prior knowledge of any applicant except for the information provided in the application; or
    - (2) Make an award that exceeds 15 percent of any communications service provider's total estimated allowable project costs for a proposed installation of broadband infrastructure.

**22.5(4) Notice to applicants of decision and right to appeal.** The office shall notify each communications service provider awarded a grant by the office of the office's decision(s) in accordance with the terms and conditions of the NOFA. The office will also post such decision(s) online at [iowagrants.gov](http://iowagrants.gov) and [ocio.iowa.gov/broadband](http://ocio.iowa.gov/broadband). Unsuccessful applicants are solely responsible for reviewing such websites to determine their award status. Such agency decision(s) shall become final unless, within ten days of such email transmission or posting, an applicant which was adversely affected by a decision of the office files a request for a contested case proceeding pursuant to 129—Chapter 6. Failure to challenge the office's decision under this rule by filing a request for a contested case within the ten-day period shall waive any claims an applicant may have related to the office's administration of the process and otherwise be deemed a failure to exhaust administrative remedies.

[ARC 4098C, IAB 10/24/18, effective 11/28/18]

#### **129—22.6(8B) Administration of award.**

**22.6(1) Grant agreement required.** The office may require a grantee to enter into a grant agreement with the office in accordance with the terms, conditions, and requirements of the NOFA. Such grant agreement may include, but not be limited to, the total amount of the grant funds awarded to the grantee; a description of the project to be completed by the grantee and specifications related thereto; a description of allowable expenditures; conditions related to the disbursement of grant funds; default and termination procedures; performance, certification, and verification requirements/criteria necessary to confirm project success/completion; and repayment requirements in the event the grantee does not fulfill its obligations under the agreement, these rules, or Iowa Code chapter 8B. In addition to any terms, conditions, or requirements specifically set forth in such agreement, any and all requirements established by Iowa Code chapter 8B, these rules, other applicable law, rule, or regulation, or the NOFA shall be deemed incorporated by reference into such grant agreement as if fully set forth therein.

**22.6(2) Mapping data required.** Upon project completion, a grantee must supply the office with geographic information system (GIS) data in a form mutually acceptable to both the office and grantee demonstrating specifically where broadband infrastructure for which grant funds have been utilized, in whole or in part, has been installed, regardless of whether such infrastructure actually serves any customers in targeted service area(s) forming a basis of the application at the time such mapping data is supplied to the office. Such GIS data must enable the office to determine which specific homes, schools, and businesses within each targeted service area forming the basis of the project have access to broadband service at or above 25 megabits per second of download speed and 3 megabits per second of upload speed as a result of the project.

**22.6(3) Reimbursements, record keeping/audits, performance/certification, and repayment.** In the absence of more specific provisions in an agreement executed between a grantee and the office in accordance with these rules establishing conflicting or inconsistent terms and conditions, the following terms and conditions shall apply by default to any award of grant funds made by the office under Iowa Code section 8B.11 and these rules:

*a. Reimbursement.*

- (1) General. A grantee shall only be reimbursed by the office for:

1. Allowable and not disallowed expenditures actually and previously incurred by the grantee. What constitutes allowable or disallowable expenditures shall be further specified in the NOFA or grant agreement;

2. Expenditures for broadband infrastructure installed in targeted service areas; or, in the limited circumstances permitted herein, to the extent any expenditures relate to broadband infrastructure installed outside of targeted service areas but which facilitates broadband service at or above 25 megabits per second of download speed and 3 megabits per second of upload speed within targeted service areas underlying the application, only for the proportionate amount that such broadband infrastructure facilitates broadband service at or above 25 megabits per second of download speed and 3 megabits per second of upload speed within targeted service areas; and

3. Expenditures for which the grantee is able to supply sufficient and appropriate documentation. What constitutes sufficient or appropriate documentation shall be further specified in the NOFA or grant agreement.

(2) *Timing.* Requests for reimbursement may be submitted to the office in accordance with the terms and conditions in the NOFA or grant agreement.

*b. Performance/certification.* After the completion of a project utilizing, in whole or in part, grant funds, a grantee must:

(1) Certify to the office that the project was completed as proposed in the original application, including but not limited to that the final installation was installed in or otherwise facilitates broadband service at or above 25 megabits per second of download speed and 3 megabits per second of upload speed in each of the applicable targeted service areas identified in the original application, and identify the total number of homes, schools, and businesses actually receiving broadband service in each targeted service areas identified in the original application as a result of the project.

(2) Attest that any claimed, allowable expenditures are true and accurate, were directly related to the installation of broadband infrastructure that facilitates broadband service at or above 25 megabits per second of download speed and 3 megabits per second of upload speed in eligible targeted service areas forming the basis of the project, and were properly allocated in accordance with the terms, conditions, and requirements of the NOFA or grant agreement.

(3) Supply the office with updated GIS data in accordance with subrule 22.6(2).

*c. Field testing.* The office may, in its discretion, conduct field tests, on one or multiple occasions, for compliance with the requirements of Iowa Code sections 8B.1 and 8B.11, these rules, and any grant agreement entered into between a grantee and the office pursuant to subrule 22.6(1) for up to five years after broadband service is certified as complete in accordance with paragraph 22.6(3) "b." The office may exercise this right both before and after reimbursing a grantee for any claimed, allowable expenditures, but if the office elects to do so before reimbursing a grantee for any claimed, allowable expenditures, it will do so within a reasonable time, not to exceed one year, after broadband service is certified as complete in accordance with paragraph 22.6(3) "b." Such field tests may include but not be limited to:

(1) Speed tests anywhere between a grantee's central office and the demarcation at any customer's location in a targeted service area or census block in which the project was to be deployed;

(2) In the case of wireless installations, from any location in a targeted service area or census block in which the project was to be deployed; or

(3) In the case where a grantee does not have a customer in a targeted service area being served by the installation, certification obtained by the grantee and supplied to the office from an independent third party who is a properly licensed engineer that the installation facilitates broadband service at or above 25 megabits per second of download speed and 3 megabits per second of upload speed in applicable targeted service areas identified in the original application. The costs of such certification shall be borne by the grantee.

*d. Disbursement/repayments.*

(1) A grantee shall not be entitled to the applicable portion of any grant funds or shall be obligated to repay the office the applicable portion of any grant funds previously distributed by the office to the grantee if the office determines that:

1. Claimed expenditures or a prior reimbursement, in whole or in part, was comprised of expenditures that were not allowable or were disallowed, were improperly or incorrectly allocated, or were not supported by sufficient and appropriate documentation;

2. Claimed expenditures or the total amount previously reimbursed by the office exceeds 15 percent of the grantee's estimated or final total allowable project costs, whichever is less.

(2) A grantee shall not be entitled to any grant funds or shall be obligated to repay the office the entire amount of any grant funds previously distributed by the office to the grantee if the office determines that:

1. Claimed expenditures or a prior reimbursement, in whole or in part, was used for the installation of broadband infrastructure that was not in or does not facilitate broadband service at or above 25 megabits per second of download speed and 3 megabits per second of upload speed in a targeted service area identified in the original application;

2. A grantee fails to complete the project as proposed in the original application; or

3. Any representation or warranty made by a grantee in an application for grant funds, a grant agreement entered into between a grantee and the office pursuant to subrule 22.6(1), or in any other representation or statement made by the grantee to the office proves untrue in any material respect as of the date of the issuance or making thereof.

*e. Notice of default.* If the office determines a grantee is not entitled to or is otherwise required to repay the office in accordance with paragraph 22.6(3) "d," the office may issue the grantee a "Notice of Default," which shall afford the grantee 30 days to cure the default. Whether a grantee has sufficiently cured the default shall be determined in the sole discretion of the office. If a grantee fails to cure the default within 30 days, the office may issue an order requiring the grantee to reimburse the office for the amount specified in the "Notice of Default."

**22.6(4) Remedies for noncompliance.** In addition to issuing a "Notice of Default" and subsequent order requiring the grantee to reimburse the office for failing to cure the default pursuant to paragraph 22.6(3) "e" and any other remedies available to the office pursuant to a grant agreement entered into between a grantee and the office pursuant to subrule 22.6(1), the office may, for cause, find that a grantee is not in compliance with the requirements of Iowa Code section 8B.11, these rules, or a grant agreement entered into by the office and a grantee pursuant to subrule 22.6(1).

*a.* At the office's sole discretion, remedies for noncompliance may include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) Issuing a warning letter stating that further failure to comply with program requirements within a stated period of time will result in a more serious action.

(2) Conditioning a future grant on compliance with program requirements within a stated period of time.

(3) Disallowing future reimbursements.

(4) Requiring that some or all previously issued grant funds be reimbursed to the office.

*b.* Reasons for a finding of noncompliance include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

(1) A violation of any of the terms or conditions of a grant agreement entered into between the office and a grantee pursuant to subrule 22.6(1);

(2) A grantee's failure to complete a project in a timely manner;

(3) A grantee's failure to comply with any applicable state laws, rules, or regulations;

(4) Claimed expenditures or a prior reimbursement, in whole or in part, was comprised of expenditures that were not allowable or were disallowed, were improperly or incorrectly allocated, or were not supported by sufficient and appropriate documentation;

(5) Claimed expenditures or a prior reimbursement, in whole or in part, was used for the installation of broadband infrastructure that was not in or that does not facilitate broadband service at or above 25 megabits per second of download speed and 3 megabits per second of upload speed in a targeted service area identified in the original application;

(6) A grantee fails to complete the project as proposed in the original application;

(7) The total claimed expenditures or the amount previously reimbursed by the office exceeds 15 percent of the grantee's estimated or final total allowable project costs, whichever is less;

(8) Any representation or warranty made by a grantee in an application for grant funds, an agreement entered into between a grantee and the office pursuant to subrule 22.6(1), or in any other representation or statement made by the grantee to the office proves untrue in any material respect as of the date of the issuance or making thereof.

**22.6(5) Office's decision and right to appeal.**

*a.* Any decision of the office entitled "proposed decision," "final decision," or other like caption as relating to any issues described in subparagraphs 22.6(5) "a"(1) through (5) below shall become final unless, within 30 days of the transmission of such decision by the office by email to the email address of the individual identified in paragraph 22.4(2) "b" or to the email address of a person otherwise identified by the grantee in writing prior to the issuance of such decision as the person authorized by the grantee to respond to inquiries regarding the administration of the grant, a grantee which is adversely affected by the decision files a request for a contested case proceeding pursuant to 129—Chapter 6.

(1) The interpretation, construction, or application of any terms or conditions or resolution of a dispute under a grant agreement entered into between the office and a grantee or under these rules;

(2) Whether or in what amount a grantee is entitled to reimbursement pursuant to a grant agreement entered into between the office and a grantee, or under these rules;

(3) Whether or in what amount a grantee must repay the office pursuant to a grant agreement entered into between the office and a grantee or under these rules;

(4) The imposition of any remedies for noncompliance in accordance with subrule 22.6(4); or

(5) Any other decision of the office that relates to the administration of a grant awarded pursuant to Iowa Code section 8B.11, these rules, or a grant agreement entered into between the office and a grantee.

*b.* Failure to challenge the office's decision under this rule by filing a request for a contested case within the 30-day period shall waive any claims an applicant may have related to the administration of a grant award and otherwise be deemed a failure to exhaust administrative remedies.

[ARC 4098C, IAB 10/24/18, effective 11/28/18]

**129—22.7(8B) Reallocation of grant funds.** Subject to applicable law, including but not limited to Iowa Code section 8B.11(2) "c," if grant funds that the office had previously committed to specific grantees are not ultimately issued to a grantee (e.g., because applicable expenditures are not allowed or are disallowed, applicable expenditures were improperly or incorrectly allocated, or a grantee fails to provide sufficient or appropriate documentation to support a claim for reimbursement) or are otherwise repaid to the office pursuant to a grant agreement entered into between the office and a grantee or these rules, the office may award the grant funds to other previous grantees or open additional rounds for applications. If the office awards additional grant funds to other grantees, such grantees shall submit documentation establishing how such grant funds will be expended and may, to the extent applicable, be required to execute contract amendments with the office providing for the expenditure of the additional grant funds and will otherwise be subject to Iowa Code section 8B.11 and these rules.

[ARC 4098C, IAB 10/24/18, effective 11/28/18]

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code section 8B.11.

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