**Notice of Funding Opportunity**

**Rural Broadband I.D. Expenses Trust Fund Grant**

*Issued August 13, 2020*

Administered through the:

State of Arkansas

Managed through the:

University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Institute for Digital Health & Innovation

Deadline: Accepted on a rolling basis beginning the date of the NOFO release and continuing until funds are exhausted.

***—Arkansas Applicants Only—***

**Purpose of the Award**

Generally, local entities do not budget for or have funds available for broadband due-diligence business studies, which are necessary before applying for federal broadband development grant and loan funds. Expenses associated with broadband due-diligence business studies can be burdensome to rural Arkansas communities, and it is in the best interest of all Arkansans to make this investment.

The purpose of the *Rural Broadband I.D. Expenses Trust Fund Grant*, awarded through the State of Arkansas and managed by UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation, is to provide funds to local entities to cover costs for broadband due-diligence business studies. Grantees will conduct these studies in preparation for federal grant and loan applications for broadband development programs administered by the Federal Communications Commission, the United States Department of Agriculture, or other federal agencies to spur federally defined broadband development in rural Arkansas.

**Eligible Entities**

For this funding opportunity, eligible entities are

* Local entities within Arkansas, defined as a county, including without limitation an unincorporated community within a county, a city of the first class, a city of the second class, and an incorporated town.

An applicant may be a prospective and *qualified* applicant for a federal grant or loan for a broadband development program under the federal regulations promulgated by the Federal Communications Commission, the United States Department of Agriculture, or other governmental agencies.

**Funding Limits, Award Duration, and Number of Expected Awards**

The Rural Broadband I.D. Expenses Trust Fund Grant is a one-time grant to eligible entities to cover expenses for broadband due-diligence business studies incurred by prospective federal broadband program applicants, in anticipation of and before applying for funding from these agencies:

1. The Federal Communications Commission’s Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Program,
2. The United States Department of Agriculture’s Rural eConnectivity Pilot Program (ReConnect),
3. The United States Department of Agriculture’s Farm Bill; and
4. Other federal grants or loans for broadband development programs.

The Rural Broadband I.D. Expenses Trust Fund will:

* Not exceed seventy-five thousand dollars ($75,000) per grant;
* Be limited to thirty (30) total one-time grant awards; and
* Be made to a federally deposit-insured financial institution designated by the local entity that is a Rural Broadband I.D. Expenses Trust Fund grantee.

To the extent possible, this grant will be awarded with equitable geographic distribution, so all parts of Arkansas can benefit. Awards are limited to one per applicant. Matching funds are not required but encouraged.

Broadband due-diligence business studies must be conducted and concluded within one hundred eighty (180) days (approximately six months) of the receipt of the Rural Broadband I.D. Expenses Trust Fund Grant. Any funds not spent on the broadband due-diligence business study must be paid back to the Treasurer of State within nine (9) months after receipt of the award.

**Additional Conditional, Future Funding**

If the United States Government makes an award for broadband support to the local entity after the funded due-diligence business study, additional funds will be disbursed to the local entity to initiate the broadband project. The additional awards will be in the amount of two hundred thousand dollars ($200,000).

It is anticipated these funds shall defray expenses related to the conclusion of the federal grant or loan, including without limitation the expenses of obtaining a letter of credit, a bankruptcy opinion, or eligible telecommunications carrier application expenses, as required by the federal grant or loan awarded.

This conditional, future funding is only available from **July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.**

**Eligible Costs**

Eligible costs include broadband due-diligence business studies, defined as analytical research designed to acquire the data necessary to support applications for federal grants or loans for broadband development programs. Without limitation, broadband due-diligence business studies include:

* Full feasibility determinations, including economic business plans
* Twenty-year financial break-even analysis
* Competitive broadband analysis
* Demographic analysis, with comparison to other projects
* The ordering of construction plans to maximize return
* Analysis of federal funding opportunities

Some examples of eligible expenses include but are not limited to:

* Broadband needs assessments through which community members can be surveyed for desire for broadband, current accessibility to broadband, and limitations of current broadband, while broadband coverage can also be tested and mapped to correct any inaccuracies in advertised speeds.
* Mentorships through consultation with other local governments and/or electrical cooperatives that have secured foundation, state, or federal broadband funding or have leveraged taxes or private investments to fund improved broadband infrastructure.
* Formation of a Broadband Taskforce, comprising of community officials and community members to carry out the activities of the broadband due diligence business studies.
* Securing consultative or contractual support as necessary to enhance local government knowledge in the diversity of options to improve broadband infrastructure, to include private contractors, broadband lawyers, and others with the expertise to advise on a broadband due diligence business plan for local government.
* Securing broadband lawyers to better negotiate and mediate with Internet Service Providers and/or electric cooperatives that could enhance targeted area broadband infrastructure.
* Participation in education, both local or nationally, to improve the understanding of broadband and grant writing among local government leaders.
* Hiring a Certified Public Accountant to perform audits and other financial analyses required for grant proposals.
* Hiring contractors as necessary to assist in pursuing and writing broadband funding grants and loans, including foundation, state, and federal opportunities.

**Reporting Requirements**

These provisions shall be in effect only from **July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021**:

1. File, upon receipt of a Rural Broadband I.D. Expenses Trust Fund Grant, a surety bond for the benefit of the State of Arkansas with the Treasurer of State in the amount of the Rural Broadband I.D. Expenses Trust Fund Grant for assurance that the Rural Broadband I.D. Expenses Trust Fund Grant is utilized for broadband due-diligence business studies;
2. File with the UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation within four months of the award date an audited accounting of disbursed funds for conducting the broadband due-diligence business studies, including information concerning the organizations conducting the broadband due-diligence business studies, the amount paid to those organizations, and the due date of the broadband due-diligence business studies.
	* 1. File with the UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation an additional accounting described above at the conclusion of the broadband due diligence study.

4) Report to the UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation semiannually the status of the local entity’s broadband due diligence business study.

5) Cite reports and analyses finalized as a consequence of the Rural Broadband I.D. Expenses Trust Fund grant award.

6) Report any awarded federal grant or loan for a broadband development program within thirty (30) days to the UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation, Governor, Legislative Council or the Joint Budget Committee should the General Assembly be in session, and the Joint Committee on Advanced Communications and Information Technology.

7) Coordinate with the Arkansas Geographic Information Systems Office to provide mapping information to the Arkansas Spatial Data Infrastructure (ASDI) for preparation of legal descriptions and digital mapping for the relevant incorporated or unincorporated areas.

8) A local entity that has been awarded a state or federal grant or loan shall provide information concerning broadband mapping to the Arkansas Geographic Information Systems Office in compliance with the Arkansas Geographic Information Systems Office Policy Statement PS-01, Arkansas Spatial Data Infrastructure (ASDI) Data Loading and Retirement Procedures.

1. Report the status of any awarded federal grant or loan for a broadband development program to UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation within nine (9) months of the federal grant or loan award.

**Due Date and Submission Information**

Accepted on a rolling basis beginning the date of the NOFO release and continuing until funds are exhausted. For online applications, please follow these instructions for submission at:

<https://idhi.uams.edu/rural-broadband-grant/>

For paper applications, please submit the original and two copies:

*UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation*

*c/o: Rural Broadband ID Application*

*Attn: Roy Kitchen*

*4301 W. Markham St. Slot 519*

*Little Rock, AR 72205*

**Expected Award Dates**

Awarded on a first-come, first-reviewed basis. Applicants should expect to learn of their funding status one month following submission.

**For Questions**

If you have questions, please email:

idhi@uams.edu

Or call:

855-234-3348

A written response will be posted on the “Frequently Asked Questions” page at

<https://idhi.uams.edu/rural-broadband-grant/> within seven (7) days of receipt of your question.

**Grant guidelines**

The grant proposal will consist of five (5) **required** sections

1. Cover Sheet
2. Project Narrative
3. Budget
4. Budget Justification
5. Supporting Documentation

***Cover Sheet***

The cover sheet is limited to one single-spaced page containing the following information:

* Applicant Name
* Applicant Address
* Applicant Phone Number
* Applicant Email Address
* Applicant Tax ID or EIN Number
* Key Contact Person for matters related to this proposal
* Total Amount Requested
* One paragraph description of your proposal

***Project Narrative***

Limit the Project Narrative to 15 single-spaced pages.

1-inch margins.

12-point Times New Roman font.

Introduction (up to 30 points)

Define your proposed service area by providing a boundary map and numerical, narrative, and/or illustrative responses for the following metrics:

* Define the percent of your proposed service area that is unserved by 25/3 broadband for 95% of the time over a 24-hour period. (up to 10 points) (*Suggested source:* [*https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/#/*](https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/#/))
* Define the total population of your proposed service area, specifying the number of residents who live in rural areas and the number that live in urban areas (up to 10 points) (*Suggested source*: [*https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html*](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html))
* Define the percent of individuals in your proposed service area who are living in poverty according to the latest US Census estimates. (up to 5 points) (*Suggested source:* [*https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219*](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219) - Type in location)
* Identify medically underserved areas within your proposed service area. (up to 5 points) (*Suggested source:* [*https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/mua-find*](https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/mua-find))

Description of need (up to 30 points)

* Staffing needs: Explain the expertise of your staff available to conduct the activities in your proposed broadband due diligence business plan and the deficiencies in your staff expertise to create such a plan.
* Population needs: Explain the demographic and other characteristics of the population living in your proposed service area to establish need.
* Broadband needs: Explain the perceived deficiencies of broadband in the targeted area. Provide maps, quantitative data, and/or other evidence (to include anecdotal observations) to establish need. Explain who will benefit from enhanced broadband capacity and how they will benefit. In addition, identify any broadband grants and/or loans, awarded to the applicant or its partners in the last two calendar years. For any grants or loans previously received, indicate the purpose and amount of the funds. *:*
* Internet Service Provider relationship needs: Explain your relationship and past interactions with Internet Service Providers in both your targeted area (or those ISPs being considered to enter your targeted area). Explain whether Electric Cooperatives serving your targeted area have been or will be considered to provide broadband services in your targeted area.
* Financial needs: Please provide your total annual operating budget and describe why your organization cannot conduct the proposed broadband due diligence business plan without aid of this grant funding.
* Community relationship needs: Explain your relationship and past interactions with the community leaders to be served in your targeted area. Explain why these community leaders support the idea of improving broadband in your proposed service area.

Description of plan (up to 25 points)

Describe your plans in completing the proposed broadband due diligence business plan. Each proposed activity should directly relate to the stated needs. If applicable, provide a list of consultants or vendors being considered for use in the development of such a plan. Also, provide goals and objectives that capture the expectations of your plan; indicate when each objective will be achieved; and provide a list of final products. Explain grants and funding opportunities you intend to target during or following the completion of the broadband due diligence business plan.

***Budget***

Provide an itemized six-month budget of your proposed activities using the OMB Form 424A, completing only Section B. Please also complete Section C if providing a match, cash or in-kind. Additional instructions are included with the OMB Form 424A.

***Budget Justification (up to 15 points)***

Using the “object class categories” in Section B of the OMB Form 424A, please provide a detailed budget justification describing each line item expense, all the expenses that comprise that line item, and their necessity to the project. If vendor quotes are available, please provide them as scanned images in your budget justification.

***Supporting documents (up to 10 bonus points)***

* Letters of support from targeted area business owners, community anchor institutions, and individuals that would benefit from enhanced broadband infrastructure.
* Letters of support from Internet Service Providers or Electric Cooperatives that wish to enhance existing or bring new broadband services to the targeted area.
* Letters of support from the local government officials whose communities would benefit from enhanced broadband infrastructure.