



Cochise County Board of Supervisors

Public Programs...Personal Service
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August 13, 2024

Sandip Bhowmick
State Broadband Director
Arizona Commerce Authority
100 N. 7th Avenue, Suite 400
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Mr. Bhowmick:

Cochise County is requesting your support and submission to the NTIA a waiver that would allow Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding to be used for all areas designated under the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) program within Cochise County. This waiver is crucial to ensure that our rural and underserved communities receive the necessary broadband infrastructure and are not left behind in the digital age.

As you are aware, the current situation with RDOF-funded projects poses significant challenges. The selected RDOF awardee for Cochise County has shown limited progress and is at high risk of default, which prevents numerous unserved and underserved areas from qualifying for BEAD funding. This significantly impacts our ability to achieve universal broadband coverage and exacerbates the digital divide.

We strongly urge your support and approval of Cochise County's waiver. Specifically, we request the following action:

Submission and Support of Waivers for BEAD Funding in RDOF Locations: Support the waiver submitted by Cochise County to make RDOF locations serviceable by the BEAD program. This should apply to all areas in Cochise County where the RDOF awardee has not made significant material deployment progress before the BEAD program sub-grantee selection process begins.

Cochise County supports the CSA's proposed resolution adopted by the National Association of Counties (NACo) urging the NTIA and the FCC to collaborate and take action to ensure communities are not left behind in broadband deployment. The BEAD program represents an unprecedented opportunity to deploy affordable, reliable high-speed internet coverage for all Cochise County residents. Without the flexibility to use BEAD funding in RDOF areas, thousands of households in Arizona, including many in Cochise County, may be left without reliable internet access.

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We appreciate your consideration and your efforts to support our rural and underserved communities. We are committed to working with your office to ensure that all residents have access to the necessary broadband infrastructure.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Ann English
Chairman of the Board

