

Rural Community Broadband Fund

Guidance and notes

This document provides some supporting guidance that may be helpful in preparing an Expression of Interest to the Rural Community Broadband Fund (RCBF), together with some notes on how to complete the data-book.

Business models

BDUK and DEFRA have identified a total of five broad models, falling into two groups, for delivering superfast broadband (defined as capable of providing speeds greater than 24 Mbps) into the final 10% of the UK least likely to see such investment otherwise. This is the key focus area of the RCBF.

The five models are:

- Facilitating investment by companies installing broadband networks under contract to the Local Authority:
 - Demand Registration Your community formally pledges to sign contracts which may help to lower the risk for your Local Authority's broadband network providers and may help extend the superfast broadband footprint.
 - Build & benefit Your community formally offer to help deliver your superfast solution by, for example, digging trenches, arranging way-leaves or paying higher installation charges to lower the costs for the Local Authority's broadband network providers
- Community Enterprise:
 - Partnership Your community raise some of the finance but need a partner to bring the rest of the investment and to design, build and operate the network on your behalf
 - Concession Your community are prepared to raise all of the finance but offer a concession to a company to design, build and operate the network on your behalf
 - DIY Your community is prepared to raise the finance as well as design, build and operate the network

The first two models rely on the companies providing broadband networks under contract to the Local Authority to deliver the solution, working very closely with your community, while the second group rely on a Community Enterprise to deliver the broadband networks.

It should be understood that whichever model is preferred by your community the resulting solution will need to be delivered to the same industry standards and for it to become a part of the national strategic infrastructure.

Your application to the RCBF will need to indicate which of these models you intend to follow.

Toolkit

BDUK are in the process of developing a more comprehensive community broadband toolkit; a resource that promotes best practice and a wider understanding of smaller scale broadband programmes. Its aim is not to be prescriptive, and instead to draw upon the learning and experience of expert organisations structured and facilitated by BDUK.

At the moment, some aspects of this evidence base may appear contradictory or useful only in specific scenarios so BDUK have commenced a process to bring this information together in a single location with any apparent contradictions resolved and explained.

Until this toolkit is collated into a single source, the following links may provide useful sources of information in preparing your broadband project:

- Erisa <http://www.broadband-europe.eu/Pages/Home.aspx>
- FttH Council Europe http://wiki.ftthcouncil.eu/index.php/FTTH_Business_Guide
- INCA <http://www.inca.coop/beyond-broadband>
- Rural Broadband Partnership <http://www.ruralbroadband.com/for-communities/>

You are strongly encouraged to make contact with your Local Authority to make them aware of your plans and to understand what support they may be able to offer you as you progress your project.

Supporting Notes for the RCBF Data-book

An application to the Rural Community Broadband Fund requires an accompanying “data-book” to help demonstrate an initial viability for the proposed project and to formally describe the geographical coverage.

The data-book is a simple Excel workbook containing four sheets:

- Summary sheet
- Demographics
- Demand
- Broadband landscape

These sheets contain information that would typically be needed to inform a business case for a broadband project, whether it was supported by public funds or not.

Summary sheet

If the workbook is filled in carefully this first sheet should be largely calculated automatically; the only information that needs to be added is your project’s name in the pale-blue box.

Demographics

The aim of the demographics sheet is to summarise the kind of area you intend to provide a broadband solution to. The data refers to “lower super output areas” (LSOA); these are the geographical areas used by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) to report statistics about an area from the National Census, for example.

A LSOA has both a name and a code in the form:

- “Fenland 010C” and “E01018111”

You may find the Office of National Statistics NESS Neighbourhood website useful¹ in finding the information required for the data-book as well as a host of other information that may help to inform your project.

Entering a postcode in the left-hand box of the NESS Neighbourhood site, selecting “Lower Super Output Area”, and clicking the search button will return a large amount of information for your area. Firstly note down the LSOA names for your area.

¹ NESS Neighbourhood website: <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/>

Under “Census Areas Statistics” you will find “Key figures”

This will provide you with the household counts as well as percentage of homes rented from the council or another social landlord.

Knowing how many homes you could reach with your project is a critical piece of information when considering the possible revenue levels you could achieve and whether your project could be sustainable.

Social landlords may be a useful contact for a broadband project so understanding the level of social housing may be very useful to your project, especially if your project has social aims.

Again under “Census Area Statistics” you will find “Population Density “

Understanding the number of people per hectare can give you an indication of what technologies may be appropriate for your area as well as the potential cost of civil engineering.

A more sparse population will typically cost more to deliver broadband to than a more densely populated one.

DCLG Traffic Lights

It can be difficult to know how likely it will be that a superfast solution may become available. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) commissioned a model² that attempts to predict which areas may see investment in superfast broadband at different sensitivities using a traffic light system – Red (R) being unlikely and Green (G) more likely.

Currently industry has committed to enabling access to superfast broadband to around 70% of the UK population, and the BDUK funding allocations to Local Authorities are targeting to extend this to up to 90% of the UK population, with the remainder having access to standard broadband capable of download speeds of at least 2 Mbps.

Download the dataset as a spread-sheet and look-up your LSOA codes³ in the “RAG_local” sheet – you will need the RAG_local_70 and RAG_local_90 results.

² The DCLG data-set is available here:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/assessmentngafinalreport>

³ If you only have the LSOA name, then the code can be checked using the ONS look-up table at http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/images/LSOA_STward_LA_Apr05_xls_tcm97-51044.zip

Demand

You will need to have completed your own demand survey in order to fill in the Demand sheet.

At this stage you will need to have a strong indication of the levels of likely demand from the homes, businesses and public organisations in your community that may buy a broadband service. The more information you are able to collect and verify at this stage, the more confident you can be of your project's likely success.

Provide a summary by postcode of your results in the data-book, and separately include the full results you collected with a copy of the questions you asked.

Broadband landscape

Understanding what the broadband landscape looks like will help you to understand the scale of the problem you are trying to resolve and whether a solution may already be being developed.

Exchange name	This is the name of the main BT telephone exchange that services the postcode.
Ofcom Market Classification	<p>Ofcom classifies telephone exchanges according to the level of competition for services. Public funds can only be used to support investment in "Ofcom Market 1" areas where only a single network operator is providing services.</p> <p>Market 2 and 3 areas indicate that at least one other operator has "unbundled" the telephone exchange with their own equipment.</p>
Expected ADSL connection speed	<p>Measuring the speed of broadband is a complex area but for understanding the capability of the local broadband infrastructure it's important to have an indication of the local connection speed – this is the best likely speed between a customer and the telephone exchange without reference to the added complexity of the service providers' packages and network.</p> <p>This speed can be found from BT Wholesale's ADSL⁴ checker or via Samknows broadband checker⁵.</p>
eSociety eType	<p>Having an understanding of the kinds of uses your community are likely to put a better broadband service to can be useful in planning your engagement and managing expectations.</p> <p>A university project from the Centre for Spatial Literacy has created a model⁶ that profiles areas according to a set of 8 groups and 23 eTypes.</p> <p>For example "H22 : E-committed" or "D13 : E for entertainment"</p>

⁴ BT Wholesale ADSL checker:

https://www.btwholesale.com/pages/static/Community/Broadband_Community/Coverage/ADSL_Availability_Checker.html

⁵ Samknows broadband checker: http://www.samknows.com/broadband/broadband_checker

⁶ E-Society public profiler: <http://esociety.publicprofiler.org/>