

Broadband Infrastructure Residential Retrofit Program- Questions and Answers

#	Question	MBI Response
1.	Who will grants be awarded to in this program?	In the Residential Retrofit Program, grants will be awarded directly to Internet Service Providers (ISPs).
2.	What type of projects can ISPs use the grant for?	<p>These grants will fund the following projects in eligible Public & Affordable Housing units:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build fiber infrastructure into affordable housing buildings. • Install fiber or CAT 6 cabling into units within affordable housing buildings. • Install smart panels or other needed in unit termination points for improved wiring within affordable housing buildings. • Other required cabling, RF, or telecommunications equipment as required by individual building conditions within affordable housing buildings.
3.	When must funds be expended?	Funds for this program must be expended by December 31, 2026.
4.	What is the difference between the Apartment Wi-Fi Program and the Residential Retrofit Program?	The Apartment Wi-Fi Program is run by MAPC on behalf of MBI and allows Wi-Fi service to be shared among residents through a building internet subscription. In this program, MBI pays for capital and one year of operating expenses. The Residential Retrofit Program will be run by MBI and pay for capital expenses related to the unit construction and installation of fiber to allow internet service is delivered to individual units via a traditional internet subscription plan.

5.	What are the eligibility requirements for the Apartment Wi-Fi Program and the Residential Retrofit Program?	Under both programs eligible housing operations include state and federally funded public housing developments, developments supported by Low Income Housing Tax Credits or other deed-restricted affordable housing developments, and housing developments that serve residents falling at or below 300% of Federal Poverty Guidelines for household size or income at or below 65% of Annual Median Income. For the Residential Retrofit Program only, eligible housing developments also include mixed income affordable housing developments only if they are located in "Qualified Census Tracts."
6.	Are there properties that would not qualify for the Residential Retrofit Program?	MBI will not invest in properties where less than 50% of the units are deed restricted affordable unless the property owner can provide sufficient information regarding the long-term affordability of the property and that residents meet US Treasury definitions of "Impacted" or "Disproportionately Impacted." Additionally, MBI will not invest in properties where internal wiring upgrades have been made in the past five years, if there is fiber connectivity to the build and unit, or if CAT 6 ethernet cabling to the unit already exists.
7.	Will interested property owners have to submit two different expressions of interest?	No, both the Apartment Wi-Fi Program and the Residential Retrofit Program will use a unified expression of interest form.
8.	What will happen to residents' current carrier service, will residents need to cancel their current service and register for service under the selected ISP?	For both programs, residents will have the option to choose to maintain their current service or opt in to service with a new ISP, should one be chosen. MBI's goal is to increase capacity and infrastructure through either a new or incumbent ISP. Under either program, there will never be a scenario where a resident will be required to cancel their internet service.

9.	Will the RFI responses be made public?	As a public agency, MassTech is always subject to Public Records Law. MassTech's Public Records policy can be found on our website here: https://masstech.org/procurements/proprietary-information
10.	Is there a housing or unit resident requirement to purchase cyber and ransomware attack insurance?	There is no requirement for any individual to purchase additional insurance or software. The grant program under the Apartment Wi-Fi Program covers the installation of managed service provider network, firewalls, and other basic cybersecurity protection systems found in many public wi-fis. MBI also encourages housing operators to work with their tenants to understand basic, personal cybersecurity.
11.	Are projects currently in lease-up eligible with anticipated full occupancy, or must a building be fully leased to apply?	Should the building meet the eligibility criteria of the program, the housing operator may apply regardless of leasing status.
12.	For the Apartment Wi-Fi Program, who supports end user connectivity issues?	In general, the local resident services staff would provide support. However, properties may choose to take on the recurring expense of hiring a third-party resident Helpdesk service.
13.	If a building has 5.5 CAT, would it be eligible for the Residential Retrofit Program?	Yes, so long as it meets all other eligibility requirements.

14.	Regarding properties that do not pre-populate in the expression of interest form, how would a person go about entering garden-style properties?	The expression of interest form is designed for the housing operator to select the relevant properties they'd like to apply for the program. While MBI's data is expansive, it is not perfect which is why there is an option to provide property information. If a housing operator has a garden-style apartment with multiple addresses they should be listed as "1-10 ABC Drive" or "ABC Housing Development, 1-10 ABC Drive, 1-10 DEF Drive, etc."
15.	If a housing operator previously filled out the expression of interest for the Apartment Wi-Fi Program, will they need to fill out a new expression of interest?	Housing operators will need to re-submit an expression of interest, even if they previously submitted one through MAPC. However, much of the information previously submitted will carry over to the new expression of interest.
16.	Will these programs work with properties with scattered site buildings?	Yes, both programs will work for scattered-site developments so long as they meet the eligibility criteria.
17.	What is the role of the Internet Service Provider (ISP) in this process?	Housing operators will be required to fill out an expression of interest, and ISPs will then have the opportunity to respond to a Request For Proposal (RFP) that will be released in May 2024. ISPs will indicate to MBI which locations they would like to bid on to serve under the Residential Retrofit Program.
18.	How does MBI plan on meeting the encumbrances deadline?	Under the Capital Project Fund, the Residential Retrofit Program is different than SLRF, so there is no encumbrance date. The Residential Retrofit Program must be spent by the end of 2026, and MBI will meet the encumbrance obligation with their contract with MAPC under the Apartment Wi-Fi Program.
19.	What is the requirement for an ISP to participate in this program regarding fiber deployment? How deep into the dwelling is required, to the individual unit or to the building?	ISPs need to meet the US Treasury CPF guidance requirements, which are delivery of 100/100 service. MBI has designed the Residential Retrofit Program to deliver fiber or CAT 6 to the unit, which has to be supported by fiber back haul.
20.	How many letters of interest has MBI received?	As of March 7, 2023, MBI had received about 15 to 20 expressions of interest.

21.	Is there a goal or cutoff for the number of buildings to participate in the program?	At this time, there is no cutoff. MBI encourages housing operators to continue applying until the program funding has been expended.
22.	With shared Wi-Fi under these programs, is there grant funding set aside for 'digital hygiene' training for housing residents?	The Apartment Wi-Fi Program participants have used a virtual LAN setup. While it's a single shared network, when residents sign in using their unique PSK (password) they are connected only to their assigned VLAN. Additionally, the network is managed by an MSP with a firewall. Some written resources to residents on privacy and safety will also be provided.
23.	What is the probability of a housing operator to be selected for the program?	While MBI cannot make guarantees and has a significant amount of capital to dispense for the program, we feel confident that we will be able to serve a large number of housing operators with these programs. However, please note that the probability of selection will depend on program demand.
24.	What is the anticipated cost to housing authorities after the first year of the program?	As of March 7, 2023, MBI was seeing a range of \$1200 to \$1500 to the housing authority for the Apartment Wi-Fi Program. MBI is doing everything in their power to creatively drive down operating expenses. For the Residential Retrofit Program, there are no ongoing operating expenses anticipated for housing operators.

