

# Connecting British Columbia Program

## Economic Recovery Intake Application Guide

*Fall 2020*

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## 1. Intake Overview

The Connecting British Columbia program (“Program”) is a province-wide program administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust (Northern Development) and is available to all eligible applicants. The Program is funded by the Province of British Columbia.

As part of B.C.’s Economic Recovery Plan, the Program has been granted \$90 million to encourage rapid expansion of connectivity to drive regional economic development in rural areas, Indigenous communities and along B.C.’s highways. The new Economic Recovery Intake (“Intake”) is a one-time commitment that will fund connectivity infrastructure projects that will quickly help realize the benefits of connectivity to British Columbians.

This guide is intended to help applicants apply for funding to the Intake and as such, the criteria outlined is based on an applicant applying to this as a stand-alone Intake only.

### 1.1 Intake Objectives

To support B.C.’s Economic Recovery Plan, the Intake is intended to help accelerate investments to expand or improve connectivity in 200 communities, including 75 Indigenous communities, and 140 kms of B.C.’s highways. Broadband projects or technologies proposed under the Intake may not deliver 50/10 Mbps solutions, but their quick deployment can deliver 25/5 Mbps speeds and significantly improve the services in communities.

For the projects to have an immediate benefit, the goal is for the funds to be allocated by March 31, 2021 and projects completed by October 31, 2021.

### 1.2 Project Scope

Multiple technology solutions are eligible for funding to either expand coverage or improve existing connectivity in communities or along B.C.’s highways to benefit residents or the travelling public.

A single applicant may submit more than one application to the Intake however the maximum grant request is \$10M per project or broken into separate projects without dependencies on approving more than one project. If more than one application is submitted, there cannot be any geographic coverage overlap between the projects.

The table below lists the technology solutions eligible for funding in communities and highways including rest areas along highways. Please visit the [website](#) for maps and data showing communities and highways that are underserved which may show opportunities for applicants.

CATEGORY	TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS					NOTES
	Broadband	Public Wi-Fi Hotspot	Cellular	Satellite	Call Boxes	
<b>Community</b>	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible	N/A <sup>1</sup>	Broadband to include FTTH, Coax, DSL, and fixed wireless
<b>Highways</b>	N/A	N/A	Eligible	N/A	N/A	
<b>Highway Rest Areas</b>	N/A	Eligible	Eligible	N/A	Eligible	May include Campsites adjacent to highway; may also include Inland ferry terminals

<sup>1</sup> N/A: Not applicable and eligible technology solution for the category.

### 1.2.1 Transport Projects

Transport projects are not eligible for funding unless they support an eligible category and the applicant can demonstrate they can be completed by October 31, 2021. Transport projects and other projects that will take more than a year to complete should apply to [Phase Three: Last-Mile, Transport](#) of the Provincial Connecting British Columbia Program and the upcoming Federal Universal Broadband Fund.

## 1.3 Application Process Overview

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The intake will invite applications for funding through two mechanisms:

### A. Open Intake

Applicants can apply for funding for any category or technology in the ‘open’ intake. The [Pre-Screen Application Form](#) must be submitted and approved prior to submitting a complete application package. Applicants must ensure that the [Application Form](#) and all required information and attachments are completed and submitted to Northern Development to [connectingbc@northerndevelopment.bc.ca](mailto:connectingbc@northerndevelopment.bc.ca).

**Fully complete applications will receive a decision by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the following month.**

It is expected that proposals will be varied in both size and scope and the open intake alone may not allow the fund to meet all its performance targets.

### B. Call(s) for Applications

To ensure connectivity gaps in the open intake application process are mitigated and Intake objectives are met, a series of Calls for Applications will inform potential eligible applicants of specific categories in need of expanded connectivity.

More information on the Call(s) for Applications will be posted on [Northern Development’s website](#).

### 1.3.1 Project Timelines

Applications should demonstrate that the project is to be completed by October 31, 2021 in accordance with the funding agreement signed between the applicant and Northern Development.

Applications for projects with an immediate start date will be ranked more favourably in the assessment and review process.

## 2. Applicant Eligibility

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Eligible applicants:

- Local, regional or national service providers
- Local governments as established by British Columbia legislation
- First Nations or First Nations organizations (i.e. band council or a corporation controlled by a First Nation)
- Registered not-for-profit organizations, registered and active in B.C.

Ineligible applicants:

- Individuals cannot apply to the Program

Eligible applicants must meet the following General Conditions:

- Eligible applicants must agree to own and operate the proposed network for three years after the project is complete
  - If the applicant does not maintain and operate the network for three years, a pro-rated repayment of the funds would be required
- All eligible applicants should have experience deploying and operating the proposed technology solution for a minimum of three years in Canada. Entities without sufficient experience may partner with an established service provider to complete a project
  - For partnership arrangements, an agreement should be established outlining how the two parties will work together with the ongoing and active involvement of the ISP for the initial 3-year duration of the network

### 3. Project Type(s)

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Projects should to the greatest extent possible, be scalable and support priority objectives for the region.

There are two categories of projects that are eligible for funding:

- **Community Projects:** Projects in this category will directly benefit the residents and will achieve at least one or more of the following in an underserved community:
  - Connect households to a Point of Presence (Pop), by upgrading or installing new network infrastructure
  - Provide or expand cellular connectivity
  - Provide a public Wi-Fi hotspot location(s)
- **Highways Projects:** Projects in this category will benefit the travelling public and achieve at least one or more of the following along B.C.'s highways:
  - Provide or expand cellular connectivity
  - Provide connectivity at rest areas along highways including campsites and inland ferries

#### 3.1 Community Projects

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Eligible connectivity solutions in a community include:

- **Broadband Internet:** Projects that provide connectivity to households in communities using fibre, coaxial cable, DSL, or fixed wireless
- **Wi-Fi Hotspots:** Projects that will deploy a public Wi-Fi hotspots solution at public building(s) such as a library, recreational center, etc. located in the community hub where connectivity will be made available to the residents
- **Cellular:** Projects that provide end-users with the ability to access voice and data applications while being mobile, using the latest generally deployed mobile wireless technology (currently long-term evolution or LTE)
- **Satellite:** Projects that provide or upgrade connectivity services to a community, where fibre transport is not feasible, using satellite transport capacity in conjunction with other last-mile technologies

Projects that provide broadband internet to underserved Named Communities or any other underserved community or location(s) should achieve the following:

- Provide a last-mile solution that delivers a minimum of 50/10 Mbps to underserved Named Communities is preferred
- Applications that provide a minimum of 25/5 Mbps to households in other underserved locales are also eligible for funding
- Invest in infrastructure that has potential for long-term usage and expansion. This may include: Fibre-to-the-Premise (FTTP), coaxial cable, Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), and fixed-wireless Long-Term Evolution (LTE) technologies
- Provide complete coverage for as many households as possible in the community and not just the most desirable core areas
- Leveraging existing last-mile infrastructure is highly recommended

Eligibility:

- Preference will be for connectivity projects that expand connectivity to an *underserved Named Community* with internet access at a minimum speed of 50Mbps (download) and 10Mbps (upload)
  - *Underserved Named Community refers to a collection of geolocated placenames in British Columbia which include large and small cities, villages, Indigenous Communities, small hamlets etc. See [Template 2 – Application Workbook](#) for a list of communities in B.C.*
- Additionally, applications to serve other underserved communities/locations at a minimum speed of 25Mbps (download) and 5 Mbps (upload) are also eligible for funding.

## 3.2 Highway Projects

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Highway projects will provide or expand connectivity along major highways across BC including at designated rest areas including adjacent campsites and inland ferry terminals.

Eligible connectivity solutions along highways include:

- **Cellular:** Projects that will provide cellular connectivity along highway corridors that currently do not have cellular connectivity are eligible for funding. The projects could also include rest areas, inland ferries, and campsites adjacent to the highway corridor where the project is being proposed
- **Wi-Fi Hotspots and Call Boxes:** Projects that can provide connectivity for the travelling public at locations along the highway where it is safe for the public to pull off using wi-fi hotspots or call boxes are eligible for funding

Eligibility:

- Projects that will provide or expand cellular connectivity along unconnected highway sections including designated rest areas and inland ferry terminals are eligible for funding
- Projects that will provide public Wi-Fi hotspots at designated rest areas and inland ferry terminals are eligible for funding

## 4. Funding

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Applicants may apply for funding up to a **maximum of 90% of total eligible project costs**. The remaining funds will come from other sources such as the applicant, other connectivity funding programs, or other levels of government.

#### General Conditions:

- The **maximum grant request is \$10M per project** or broken into separate projects without dependencies on approving more than one project
- Applications that request a lower percentage of Program funding will be viewed more favourably
- Applicants who received funding from previous intakes are not restricted from applying
- Provide value for money utilizing public funding to leverage investments from other sources
- All funding decisions are final

### 4.1 Awarding of Funding

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Approval of funding to successful applicants will be conditional upon signing of a funding agreement that sets out the terms and conditions of the project. The Program reserves the right to award partial contributions towards the total funding request.

#### General Conditions:

- Funding agreements will require the applicant to follow the Intake guidelines and requirements, including submitting progress and final reports and financial reporting documents
- Failure to meet the requirements of the grant agreement could result in the requirement for the repayment of funding to the Program and disqualify the applicant from further applications

### 4.2 Eligible/Ineligible Costs

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Northern Development will then assess the eligibility of the costs.

#### 4.2.1 Eligible Costs

Eligible costs under the Program are the reasonable and essential expenses required to complete the project and include, but not limited to, the following:

- Equipment hardware and software (including licenses) which can be specifically identified and measured as having been used or will be used in the implementation of the project including: servers, switches, fibre-optic cable, repeaters, radio equipment, towers, poles, shelters and enclosures, back-up power supplies, network broadband connectivity devices including upgrades and adaptations
- Material which can be specifically identified and measured as having been used or will be used in the implementation of the project including: cost of materials which can be specifically identified and measured as having been used or to be used in the performance of the project
- Direct satellite capacity costs: the portion of the direct purchase or lease of bandwidth or capacity delivered over the physical medium of satellite which can be specifically identified and measured as having been used or to be used on the implementation of the project. These costs will be measured in units of Mbps, MHz, or a quantity of satellite transponders
- Direct labour including: gross wages or salaries, work that can be specifically identified and measured as having been performed on the project
- Contracted services related to the build of the network
- Project management (PMP)
- Third party project validation (P.Eng)
- Engineering and design: network architecture and systems design and integration

- Travel: cost of travel which is deemed necessary to the performance of the project
  - Travel expenses, at economy rates, shall be charged at actual costs. To be eligible, travel costs must clearly document the purpose of each trip and be considered reasonable by the Program
- Freight and/or shipping
- Other direct costs: related to development and implementation of the project
- PST

#### 4.2.2 *Ineligible Costs*

Funding will not be provided under the Program to cover ineligible costs including, but not limited to, the following:

- Costs incurred prior to the date of written conditional approval of the application by Northern Development
- Costs related to funding application development
- GST
- Customer-Premises Equipment (CPE)
- Radio and spectrum licensing fees
- Insurance (e.g. construction, general liability, commercial, etc.)
- Financing or carrying costs, loan costs, and interest payments
- Legal fees, survey fees, right-of way/access fees, audit fees, rent, land applications and co-location
- Land acquisition and/or leasing buildings, and other facilities, including permanent shelters for housing network-related equipment (except for temporary facilities directly related to project construction)
- Purchase of capital assets including: land, buildings, and vehicles, as well as other indirect, fixed, and/or capital costs
- Overhead administration and labour costs including: administration, management, finance, general business overhead
- Vacation pay, overtime, shift differential, bonuses, stock shares, allowances CPP, EI, WCB, and other benefits
- Operational costs to run infrastructure built as a result of the project; general repairs and ongoing maintenance resulting from the project and related structures
- All software except software to operate the network of the project
- Warranties including warranties for equipment, software and hardware
- Ongoing operation expenses such as vehicle leases, general office space, office equipment (e.g. photocopiers, furniture, telephones, computers, printers and office software)
- Project administration including: maintenance costs, research and development of pilot projects, operational costs resulting from the project such as customer service, progress reports, etc.
- Fees paid to members of a Board of Directors for their time
- Advertising and/or promotional activities related to the project
- Project contingency costs
- Any goods and services that are received through donations or in-kind



## 5. Application Process

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Applying to the Program is a two-step process. Applicants must have submitted a pre-screen application form and be approved before a fillable application form will be provided.

General Conditions:

- Applications can be submitted in coordination with federally led connectivity funding programs, or as stand-alone applications
- Projects involving a combination of highway and community projects must meet the eligibility for each project type

### 5.1 Step One – Pre-Screen Application

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All applicants must complete a [Pre-Screen Application Form](#) before completing a full application for Program funding. The pre-screen will assess the technical merit of the applicant and not the project itself. Applicants will select the type of project and technology they intent to apply for funding. Program staff will evaluate pre-screen applications to determine if the applicant is eligible to apply for funding.

Note: Applicants who previously submitted a pre-screen as part of the Phase 3 regular intake (Last-Mile, Transport) and were approved are not required to submit a pre-screen under this intake if they are using the same technology to deliver services.

### 5.2 Step Two – Full Project Application

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If the applicant pre-screen is approved, Northern Development will provide a fillable application form by email. The application materials can be viewed on [Northern Development's website](#).

### 5.3 Required Attachments

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All attachments must be specific to the legal entity applying for funding and may not be from a related organization such as a parent company or subsidiary. If information is missing from the application, the application will not be reviewed.

- Completed [Template 1 – Project Plan](#)
- Completed [Template 2 – Application Workbook](#)
- Corporate Profile of Service Provider
- Certificate of Incorporation
- Most recently filed Annual Report
- Financial statement (2018 fiscal year or newer):
  - Must be specific to the legal entity applying for funding and may not be from a related organization
  - Statements submitted must be in the final approved form, including signatures from the organization's representatives
  - Statements must be submitted in their entirety; partial documents will not be accepted
  - The following types may be submitted:
    - Notice to reader financial statements
    - Review engagement financial statements
    - Audited financial statements

- Mapping Data in a geo-coded format (*i.e. Google Earth KMZ, ESRI shp file, or similar. **NOTE: Not accepted - PDF maps or static images***)
  - ✦ *Note: information will be used for assessing applications and used for internal purposes only*
    - Mapping must include the following layers and information:
      - Current Network Infrastructure:
        - All applicant-owned or operated fibre lines within British Columbia. Fibre data must show long-haul, regional and core community lines; applicants do not need to show fibre drops to the premise
        - All applicant-owned or operated PoPs, COs, towers, and microwave links within British Columbia.
        - Current coverage for the communities proposed in the project; identify available speeds (*required for community projects*)
        - The location of project specific backhaul/backbone access points
        - PTP microwave paths between towers within the project area (*if applicable*)
      - Proposed or Upgraded Network Infrastructure (project specific):
        - Proposed coverage for the communities proposed in the project; identify available speeds
        - Locations (colour differentiated) of new and upgraded: towers, PoPs, fibre, PTP microwave links, COs.
        - New PTP microwave paths (colour differentiated) between towers (*required for fixed wireless and LTE projects*)
  - Diagrams must include the following items and information:
    - All current and proposed network devices (colour differentiated) from the point of transport to the last-mile drop point
    - All current and proposed links between devices (colour differentiated) from the point of transport to the last-mile drop point
    - Labelled throughput capacity between devices
    - Labeling should match labels found within the application workbook and mapping layers
- Letter(s) of support or resolution(s) of support of the project (*required for community projects*):
  - For municipalities, a Municipal Council letter or resolution is required
  - For unincorporated communities and villages, a Regional District Board letter or resolution is required
  - For Indigenous communities, a Band Council or Tribal Council letter or resolution is required
  - Must be signed, recently dated and reference the project
- Funding approval letters from other sources (if applicable)
- Regional District or First Nation connectivity infrastructure strategy (if available)
- Letters of support (optional)

## 6. Application Assessment

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Applications will be assessed on the following categories and criteria.

### 6.1 Connectivity Benefits

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#### **Community Projects:**

- Underserved communities, households, and businesses will be connected by the project
- Project demonstrate value for money based on number of households to be served per grant dollar requested
- Applications that provide 50/10 Mbps in Named Communities are preferred
- Project that deliver a minimum speed of 25/5 Mbps should be scalable to 50/10 Mbps
- The applicant provides written documentation that provides evidence that the project is consistent with the community's needs and will result in anticipated benefits
- The project aims to serve the entire community and not just in the core desirable areas

#### **Highway Projects (Cellular):**

- The number of kilometers to receive highway coverage (currently without cellular coverage) per grant dollar requested
- Coverage that includes rest areas and inland ferries are viewed more favourably

#### **Highway Projects (Wi-Fi Hotspots & Call Boxes):**

- The costs of the solution for each eligible location per grant dollar requested that meets the minimum specifications

### 6.2 Corporate Capability

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- The applicant has demonstrated they are an experienced service provider, or are partnering with an experienced service provider, that has the expertise and qualifications to implement the project
- The applicant has demonstrated they have resources and capabilities to complete the project of the size and scope proposed to ensure completed by October 31, 2021

### 6.3 Funding Request

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- Applications that request less than 90% of eligible costs will be assessed more favourably
- Is the funding requested by the applicant necessary to build a viable business case for the project

## 7. Successful Applicant Information

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Successful applicants must review and comply with the criteria outlined in this section.

### 7.1 Site Visits and Audits

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Recipients may be subject to project, financial and performance evaluations or site inspections at any time during the term of the grant agreement and for up to three years following distribution of the Program

funds to the recipient, so that Northern Development can examine project progress, documentation, and stated results.

Annually, for three years after the project has been completed, eligible applicants must sign a declaration confirming that they still own and operate the network resulting from the project.

## 7.2 Progress and Final Reporting Requirements

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Reporting documents will be posted on the [website](#).

Quarterly Reports are required during the duration of the project.

Upon completion of the project, recipients are required to provide final reporting. This includes a complete final reporting form along with all required attachments.

Required attachments include:

- A project ledger detailing all eligible project expenses, printed from your accounting software
- Spreadsheet detailing all project expenses, using the Expenses Claim Form Template

Final reporting required attachments include:

- Finalized quarterly report, using the Quarterly Report Workbook Template
- Letter of attestation, after project completion, from an external third-party professional engineer (P.Eng) *that includes the following:*
  - *Confirmation that the project was completed as described in the application/contract*
  - *Confirmation that any equipment noted in the application/contract is now in place and operational and was the actual equipment used in the project*
    - *For example for broadband: confirmation that speeds prior to the project were not at 25/5 Mbps and once the project is completed the speeds are now at 25/5 Mbps or greater*
- Mapping Data in a geo-coded format (*i.e. Google Earth KMZ, ESRI shp file, or similar. NOTE: Not accepted - PDF maps or static images*)
  - *Mapping must include actual upgraded network infrastructure (project specific) with the following layers and information:*
    - *Coverage for the communities resulting from the project; identify available speeds*
    - *Locations (colour differentiated) of new and upgraded: towers, PoPs, fibre, PTP microwave links, COs.*
    - *New PTP microwave paths (colour differentiated) between towers (required for fixed wireless and LTE projects)*
- Photos and/or video footage of your project (*during and completion*)
- Preferred: Marketing and promotional materials related to the project
- Preferred: Testimonials and success stories (*i.e. any customer testimonials or positive feedback you've received for your network including any social benefits achieved as a result of the build*)
  - *Where possible, please provide names and contact information as they may be contacted in future regarding their support of the project*
- If applicable: New service package and pricing for consumers

Final payments will be withheld until project is validated by an external professional engineer or consultant.

## 7.3 Events and Communications

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Throughout the project there may be a number of occasions that require communication support for events and/or publications. As such, the following is required:

- Funding recipients must keep the Program contact person(s) informed in advance (with a minimum notice period) of any promotional activities or events related to the project
- The Program funder (the Province of British Columbia) and Northern Development Initiative Trust be acknowledged in project communications, events and signage
- The Province is required to provide consent to publish project details in reports and in promotion of the Program (e.g. on websites and in public material). Please contact Northern Development

## 7.4 Freedom of Information

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Applications submitted under the Program are subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The information being collected is for the purpose of administering the Program and evaluating eligibility of the proposal.

## 8. Application Support/Contact Information

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If you have a question that is not addressed in this Program guide, support is available from Program staff at:

**Northern Development Initiative Trust**

301-1268 Fifth Avenue

Prince George, BC V2L 3L2

250-561-2525

[connectingbc@northerndevlopment.bc.ca](mailto:connectingbc@northerndevlopment.bc.ca)

[www.northerndevlopment.bc.ca](http://www.northerndevlopment.bc.ca)

## 9. Appendix 1 – Definitions

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**Backhaul:** A network connection that transports data traffic from one Point-of-Presence to another or from a Point-of-Presence to a location that contains the internet gateway.

**Bandwidth:** The capacity for transferring data over a network as measured in bits per second (bps), kilobits per second (Kbps) or megabits per second (Mbps).

**Breakout:** A location in a transport line where additional transport(s) can be connected or branched out without compromising the integrity of the main or existing line.

**Named Community:** The collection of geolocated placenames in British Columbia which include large and small cities, villages, Indigenous Communities, small hamlets etc. See [Template 2 – Application Workbook](#) for a list of communities in B.C.

**Central Office:** A building structure in a locality to which subscriber home and business lines are connected on what is called a local loop. The term is also known as an end office or exchange.

**Customer Premise Equipment:** Refers to any telecommunications equipment located at a subscriber's premises that is connected to a service provider's telecommunications network at a demarcation point. Examples include wiring, modems (DSL, cable, wireless) as well as antennae or other wireless equipment.

**Dependencies:** Also known as order of build, this is where separate projects depend on the completion of other projects in order to proceed.

**Demarcation Point:** A point that separates the customer premise equipment from the service provider's network infrastructure equipment. In other words, a "Demarcation Point" is the point where the local loop (the network transmission equipment) ends and the inside wire (which is the responsibility of the customer) begins.

**Download:** Data traffic travelling from the internet to the end user.

**Facilities-based provider:** A provider that owns and operates transmission facilities as defined by the CRTC.

**Monetized donations:** Means contributions of goods or services, other than cash from third-parties.

**Internet Gateway:** A network connection that provides access to the internet for the service provider's last-mile distribution system.

**Last-Mile Infrastructure:** The components used to connect homes and businesses to the service provider's Point-of-Presence. This may include routers, towers, antennae, fibre optical, cable, Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) equipment, cable modems, wireless radios and so on.

**Locale:** Can refer to a neighbourhood, community, subdivision, town site, reserve or village in a rural or remote area.

**Long-Term Evolution or LTE:** A standard for wireless communication.

**Milestones:** Significant stages of completion for your project(s).

**National Service Providers:** Service providers who also provide service outside British Columbia.

**Point-of-Presence (PoP):** A facility where service providers house servers, routers, switches and other communications equipment. A PoP is where an service provider's last-mile infrastructure connects to an internet gateway.

**Risks:** When projects depend on outside factors to proceed. This can include order of build, grants from other sources, matching funding, Crown Land applications and so on. For the purposes of the Connecting British Columbia program, any risks must be clearly stated in your application.

**Scalability:** The ability of a network to expand service to a larger area around the vicinity of the existing connected locale and/or ability to expand service or evolve changing technology.

**Service Provider:** An organization that offers its customers connectivity services.

**Settlement:** An unincorporated area/community, for the purpose of application to the Program, is considered to be a settlement area within a regional district electoral area.

**Single End User:** Where a single customer or business is the only user of the network.

**Unincorporated Area:** An unincorporated area/community, for the purpose of application to the Program, is considered to be a settlement area within a regional district electoral area.