# Fact Sheet

December 2022



## FCC Broadband Maps: Bulk Challenge Data Vs. Crowdsource Data

### Background

As policymakers work to close the digital divide, accurate broadband availability maps are crucially important. The FCC recently updated it's national broadband maps, but numerous errors persist. Since these maps will guide policymakers as they determine where billions of dollars are spent on rural broadband deployment, taking swift action to ensure these maps are accurate is essential.

The FCC map will be updated continuously by the FCC to improve accuracy. Stakeholders including individuals, service providers, governments, and other entities are able to submit challenges to the data displayed by the map. Challenges are meant to dispute the availability data submitted by a provider, not the quality of service a provider offers, with the exception of crowdsource data, which can cover information about broadband speeds in addition to availability.

### Bulk Data Challenge Overview

Service providers, governments, and other entities can file bulk data challenges in response to the fixed broadband availability data reported by broadband providers. To do this, entities must upload data to the BDC system, identifying the locations, the provider being challenged, and a specific reason for the challenge. Reasons for a challenge include:

- Provider failed to schedule a service installation within 10 business days of a request;
- Provider did not install the service at the agreed upon time;
- Provider requrested more than the standard installation fee to connect the location;
- Provider denied a request for service;
- Provider does not offer the technology at the location;
- Provider does not offer the speed shown on the National Broadband Map for purchase at the location;
- No wireless or satellite signal is available at the location; or
- New, non-standard equipment is required to connect the location.

Entities submitting a challenge must enter information about the methodology used to collect the bulk data challenge information. Methodology can include knowledge of infrastructure, based on local building permits, rights-of-way records, franchise agreements, or an on-the-ground examination of broadband infrastructure in a particular structure. Filers must include evidence to suport the information in the challenge. Information collected from individual consumers is also a methodology option, however it requires contact information for each individual consumer whose information is used to support the challenge. Evidence to support the challenge is mandatory.

The results of fixed speed tests cannot be used as a methodology for bulk data challenges. Broadband speed-based challenges are only able to be submitted as part of a crowdsource challenge.

Submitting a challenge initiates a formal process in which the challenge is presented to the service provier in question. That provider must respond to the challenge within 60 days. There is a time frame for a challenger and provider to attempt to resolve the challenge themselves, or the FCC will step in to adjudicate.

Additional information on crowdsource data submissions can be found on the FCC's website here.

## Crowdsource Data Challenge Overview

Governments, service providers, and other entities are also able to submit bulk crowdsource challenge information in response to the data reported by broadband providers. The FCC will use crowdsource data to verify and supplement information in their new maps. Importantly, crowdsource data challenges are the only way to challenge observed speeds at a location in situations where observed speeds does not match the provider's advertised speed.

Entities seeking to crowdsource a challenge must upload data to the BDC system, identifying the locations and provider being challenged as well as a specific reason for a challenge. Those mirror the challenge justifications listed under the bulk data challenge earlier in this document. Unlike the bulk data challenge, filers of bulk crowdsource data may, but are not required to, provide evidence supporting the information in their submission. The submission of evidence to support crowdsourced information is highly encouraged.

Once a crowdsource challenge is submitted to the FCC, the provider is notified that a crowdsource challenge has been submitted about their availability or service, but they are under no obligation to respond. Rather, this informaiton may be used by the FCC to identify instances or patterns of potentially incomplete or inaccurate data that warrants further investigation or review.

Additional information on crowdsource data submissions can be found on the FCC's website here.

## Timing

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) will use the FCC's new maps to allocate $42.5 billion in infrastructure funding to rural broadband projects. NTIA expects to decide where to allocate this funding by June of 2023. NTIA recognizes there may be errors in the FCC's maps. With that in mind, they are encouraging stakeholders to submit challenges to the FCC maps by January 13, 2023 in order for challenges to be considered by the time NTIA makes it's allocations.

## Conclusion

These new broadband maps identify where broadband is or is not available. $42.5 billion in federal funding is currently available to expand broadband access and connect rural America. Where that funding goes and how it gets spent will be based on the information shown on these maps. By participating in the challenge process, American families and businesses can help ensure the maps are accurate and make sure this funding goes to connect rural communities.

More details on the National Broadband Maps, Bulk Challenges, and Crowdsource Data can be found on the FCC's website here.