

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Back and Forth: Playbook Update Answers BEAD NOFO Questions

NTIA filled in a lot of blanks when it released its Notice of Funding Opportunity for the \$42 billion BEAD program two months ago, but it also left program participants with plenty of questions.

The **Fiber Broadband Association**, **NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association** and **Cartesian** are hoping to answer some of those with an update to the trio's Broadband Infrastructure Playbook, a guide walking states through the process of how to set up a broadband office, working with NTIA and awarding funds to subgrantees. Now the resource includes a detailed review of the content within the NOFO, including project selection criteria and obligations of both states and subgrantees.

But perhaps the largest area of uncertainty surrounds the FCC's revamped broadband maps, and a new section in the playbook highlights the need for states to review and validate those maps. Policy experts on a Tuesday webinar discussing the playbook update agreed that the first version of the map coming later this year will not be accurate, and the accuracy could vary quite a bit.

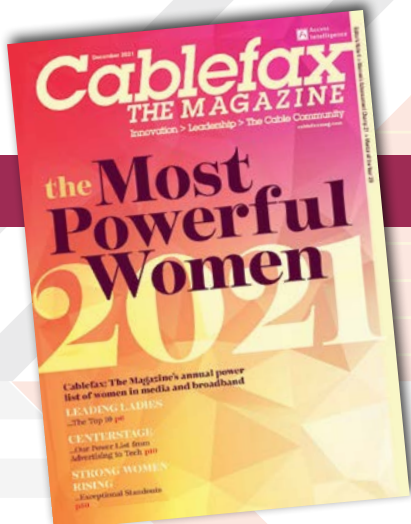
Tom Cohen, FBA's Regulatory Chief Counsel and Partner at **Kelley Drye & Warren LLP**, believes fiber and coax location data is more likely to be accurate while any based on wireless technologies is more likely to be a little off. Of course, it's NTIA's call on when to move forward with the FCC's map and begin allocating funding to states. "Will they choose the

first one? Will they wait for the FCC challenge process to go forward? For how long? Because this is always a work in progress. You can challenge that map at any time," Cohen said. "There's going to be new data on availability coming in next March at the FCC, so there's another version of the map. So the question is when will NTIA say, 'pencils down?'"

NTCA SVP, Industry Affairs and Business Development *Michael Romano* said he's already heard a number of questions from members about the broadband serviceable fabric itself with many identifying marked locations that they know aren't actually serviceable locations. One example was a trailer sales outlet that showed on the fabric as several dozen serviceable locations because of the trailers parked around the lot. Stories like that have Romano thinking that when the map comes out, there may be some states that have been asking the NTIA to hurry to get the money out not wanting it to be used at all because it won't accurately reflect the unserved areas within a given jurisdiction.

"I do think there's going to be a lot of discussion when the FCC map first comes out about whether it's good enough to be used for the allocation. It will not be good enough to be used for distribution and determining eligibility, but will it be good enough for allocation initially?" he said. "That's going to be a tough judgment call on the part of the agencies."

Other issues include the BEAD program's Buy America provisions. NTIA has indicated that it doesn't intend to offer any sort of blanket waivers, but Romano does think the agency could be helpful in offering more information and reaching out to



## Nominate for The Most Powerful Women

Every year, Cablefax recognizes the Most Powerful Women in the industry across all disciplines including advertising, communications, corporate culture, sales, content, consultants, distribution, digital, finance, legal, operations and more.

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assist those providers that will need help in acquiring waivers.

“Having more information available, especially for smaller applicants and participants in the program, defining the goalposts more clearly, providing any streamlining of the waiver process that can be provided given that there’s not a blanket waiver opportunity in all likelihood is going to be so important,” he said. “And it’s going to be important not just to help providers get through the process, but to even encourage them to participate in the process.”

**CABLE CENTER WELCOMES FORMICA**

After more than 12 years at **NCTI**, *Camilla Formica* has joined **The Cable Center** as Chief Program Officer. She’ll work with President and CEO *Diane Christman* on the next steps of the organization’s Vision 2025 plan, will oversee programs like the Intrapreneurship Academy and work with the Cable Hall of Fame. The decision to leave NCTI wasn’t easy for Formica. She spent over a third of her 33-year career at the training and education provider, most recently serving as CRO and minority owner. However, she told **Cablefax** it “feels like a natural bridge” to work for an organization that teaches innovative thinking among workers—something she’s developed a devotion to over the years. “I’m very passionate about [education in cable] and it’s what’s driven me to come here,” Formica said. “I see the mission that we have here to bring this next level of education to our leaders and to turn our leaders into innovators and the big thinkers in our industry. So I think it’s just a great opportunity for me personally to be able to bring my expertise and to bring it onto a bigger scale.” Formica is keeping her minority ownership and spot on NCTI’s board as she remains invested in the success of its mission. But not only

is she transitioning to a new organization, she’s switching up her title. Her previous role was focused on revenue and program/relationship building, but that business development lens is what’ll help advance The Cable Center’s programs. Formica also has the benefit of being close to the person who held her position before. Christman was SVP and Chief Program Officer for over three years before she was appointed to her current leadership duties, allowing her to guide Formica in her early stages with the company. “When I come into here, it feels like such a great organization that’s all going toward the same mission and really passionate about it,” Formica said. “It’s led by someone who is the person that’s really modeling that, and that’s Diane.” As VP of **WICT**’s Rocky Mountain Chapter, Formica holds diversity as a high priority for her own list of goals. She’s also looking at ways to enhance the courses within Intrapreneurship Academy that’ll extend beyond Vision 2025. “We don’t just have a myopic view. You’re going to see things that are going to be even more interesting, more growth, more connectivity related,” Formica said. “We will always have cable as a focus, but we really want to make sure that we’re welcoming others in as well.”

**HBO/HBO MAX AGAIN LEAD EMMYS**

**HBO** and **HBO Max** were flying high Tuesday, together receiving 140 Emmy nominations and besting their previous combined record of 137 nominations in 2019. Drama “Succession” led the way for the HBO contingent, earning 25 nominations, but “The White Lotus” (20 noms), “Hacks” (17), “Euphoria” (16) and “Barry” (14) all contributed to the cause. **Netflix** pulled in 105 nominations, down from the 129 it scored last year, thanks to megahits like “Squid Game” (14), “Ozark” (13) and “Stranger Things” (13).

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**Hulu** surged ahead from last year's numbers, growing its presence from 25 nods to 58 this year with help from "Only Murders in the Building" (17) while **Apple TV+** brought in 51 nominations, 20 of those being goals from "Ted Lasso." Wrapping up the streamers were **Disney+** (down from 71 noms to 34), **Amazon Prime Video** (30, up from 20) and **Paramount+** with 11 noms. Among cable networks, **FX** has 23 nods, **Showtime** brought in 17 with seven coming from "Yellowjackets," **CNN** celebrated five for its original "Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy" and **AMC Networks** had 10 with "Better Call Saul" receiving seven noms. Others included in the fold were **VH1** (9), **Comedy Central** (7), **National Geographic** (2) and **TBS** (2). Also appearing in the Emmy noms was **The Roku Channel**, earning spots in the Outstanding Choreography For Scripted Programming and Outstanding Television categories for "Zoey's Extraordinary Christmas" and in the Outstanding Actor in a Short Form Comedy or Drama Series category for *Bill Burr* in "Immoral Compass."

#### D.C. CIRCUIT VACATES FCC SPONSORSHIP RULES

The **National Association of Broadcasters** scored a victory over the **FCC** at the D.C. Circuit Court Tuesday with the court ruling striking down the Commission's 2021 sponsorship identification requirements. The rules required broadcasters to disclose when foreign governments or their representatives lease time on U.S. airwaves. "The FCC's verification requirement ignores the limits that the statute places on broadcasters' narrow duty of inquiry. It instead tells a broadcaster to seek information from two federal sources in addition to the two sources that the statute prescribes. That is not the law that Congress wrote," Circuit Judge *Justin Walker* wrote in the court's opinion. "Here Congress chose the means for broadcasters to obtain the information necessary to announce who paid for programming: Ask employees and sponsors. The FCC cannot alter Congress's choice." FCC Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* responded with a statement, arguing the public has a right to transparency when it comes to broadcasting.

#### YOUTUBE TV TALKS FIVE MILLION MILESTONE

**YouTube TV** has surpassed a major milestone, reaching 5 million subscribers and "trialers" since its launch on Feb. 28, 2017. It's a meaningful update from the vMVPD, which hasn't provided subscriber numbers since October 2020 when it had passed the three million mark. In a blog post, *Christian Oestlien*, VP of Product Management for YouTube TV and Connected TV, revealed the top 5 most DVR'd shows across all YouTube TV viewers are, in order, "Yellowstone," "Saturday Night Live," "This is Us," "60 Minutes" and "Grey's Anatomy." He also revealed fun facts about the early days of YouTube TV, including how the service was almost given a different name. "When YouTube TV started out, a group of engineers climbed onto the roof of YouTube headquarters while holding an antenna in order to build a prototype," he said. "Based on this experience, we almost settled on calling the YouTube TV you know and love today as 'YouTube Air.' And within the team that worked on this product, our project codename was 'Unplugged.' (Watching TV without a cable box—get it?)."

#### AMAZON, WBD NEGOTIATING HBO MAX DEAL

**HBO Max** may be revived on **Amazon's** Prime Video Channels

before the end of the year. **Warner Bros. Discovery** is talking with Amazon now about revisiting a previous distribution deal that would allow Prime Video customers to purchase HBO Max through the platform, according to a *Bloomberg* report. Warner Bros. Discovery is reportedly hoping to get Amazon to agree to share data on viewer behavior and other additional terms. HBO Max left Amazon Prime Video Channels on Sept. 15 due to a desire from then-owner **AT&T** to own the customer relationship.

#### FOX, HALLMARK START HOT IN JULY

**Fox News** topped all basic cable in total day and primetime for P2+ and A25-54 for the week of July 4. The network garnered an average of 1.95 million viewers P2+ in prime, followed by **Hallmark Channel's** 1.06 million. Hallmark was boosted by its "Christmas in July" programming event, which included "My Grown-up Christmas List" reeling 2.1 million total viewers. **HGTV** (993,000), **MSNBC** (982,000) and **TLC** (771,000) rounded out the top five for prime. In total day, Fox had 1.31 million viewers, with MSNBC and Hallmark following at 666,000 and 581,000, respectively. HGTV checked in with 539,000, which barely eclipsed **CNN's** average of 538,000 watchers.

#### NEW 'STELLAR' NETWORK

**Central City Productions**, the U.S.' oldest Black-owned and operated TV production company, is debuting the **Stellar TV** network in 4Q. The official announcement will come from National Urban League President and CEO *Marc Morial* on Friday during the Stellar Gospel Music Awards in Atlanta. Stellar TV's programming will include original content and flagship specials, and the network already has carriage deals with **Charter**, **Verizon Fios**, **Xumo** and **Stirr TV**.

#### ON THE HILL

The House passed the Computers for Veterans and Students (COVS) Act on to the Senate. The bill will send out-of-service computers from the federal government to nonprofit refurbishers who will then distribute the computers to veterans, students and low-income consumers. Refurbishers will also provide digital literacy training to recipients.

#### WOW! UPS SPEEDS

**WOW!** launched a 1.2-Gig HSD tier in its entire footprint, making it the highest tier available to residential customers. It also has 50 Mbps upload speeds. WOW! is offering a free modem during the time a customer is subscribed to the plan, unlimited data usage where applicable and a \$5 auto-pay discount.

#### PEOPLE

Longtime **Crown Media** exec *Lisa Barroso* has decided to take a break, leaving her role as SVP, Content Distribution. Barroso, who received the 2022 FAXIES award for Sales Exec of the Year, has been with the **Hallmark Channel**-parent for 22 years, working her way up from accounts receivable coordinator. She just wrapped a big year that included three major renewals and Crown Media's launch on **YouTube TV**. – *Sam Abiad* joined TV measurement and analytics firm **605** as EVP and Head of Sales. Most recently, he served as SVP, Advertising Sales Strategy and Operations at **Univision**.