

The Public Wireless Supply Chain Innovation Fund



INNOVATION

COMPETITION

SECURITY

What is the Innovation Fund?

The Innovation Fund is a **ten-year, \$1.5 billion grant program, focused on advancing open wireless network technologies**. Today's wireless equipment market is concentrated. Some leading suppliers pose security risks. Open solutions can revitalize the market. Funded through the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, the Innovation Fund will make major wireless investments as part of the Biden-Harris Administration's "Investing in America" agenda.

The Innovation Fund will:

- **Promote** 5G+ technologies that are secure, open, and virtualized.
- **Advance** the deployment of open and interoperable equipment.
- **Support** the integration of networks with multiple brands of equipment.
- **Identify** criteria to decide if equipment follows open standards.

What is Open RAN?

Unlike traditional radio access networks (RAN), Open RAN is interoperable. Operators can mix and match the best network elements. They no longer need to lock in to one supplier's solution.

Open RAN also:

- **Improves Market Diversity.** Small vendors don't need end-to-end solutions to enter the market.
- **Enhances Security.** Operators can better identify and address security threats in open networks.
- **Strengthens the Supply Chain.** The telecom supply chain will draw on new, trusted sources for open elements.
- **Reduces Cost.** Open RAN promotes vendor competition. Competition will drive down the costs of building networks for operators. They can pass these savings onto consumers.

Like any new technology, Open RAN faces some challenges. Open RAN does not always perform at the same level as traditional RAN. The costs of integration dissuade some carriers. Finally, the current market is not hospitable to small Open RAN vendors. More deployments can help address these issues.

What's Next?

NTIA will convene the best of industry, academia, and the public to deliver on this initiative.

- **Funding:** NTIA began awarding grants for the first Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) on August 8th, 2023. NOFO #1 awards will continue through January 2024. More funding opportunities are on the horizon.
- **Feedback:** NTIA gathered feedback through a Request for Comment, an industry listening session, and a technical information session. The Fund will host more sessions ahead of the next NOFO.
- **Federal Advisory:** NTIA will soon form a federal advisory committee. This committee will inform Fund vision and strategy.

Interested in learning more?

