

**DOC-NTIA-OTIA (US)
CMC Pilot Program**

**Moderator: Gilbert Resendez
May 6th, 2021**

Gilbert Resendez:

2:10

Hello, everyone. My name is Gilbert Resendez. I'm a Broadband Program Specialist here at NTIA. I just wanted to jump on here before we get our webinar underway. A number of folks are still joining our conversation that we're going to have today.

2:25

I did want to bring to your attention that for a good chunk of this webinar we will be playing a video which we have discovered is not audible if you're dialing on the phone or using your phone as your audio source for this webinar. We're very sorry.

2:43

We're working to understand more about what that technical challenge is. The solution that we have right now is to hear the webinar or the webinar video, you want me to download the GoToWebinar app onto your smartphone or smart device, is available on the Apple App Store, as well as the Google Play Store. There are more instructions on the screen right now, and we look forward to starting this webinar soon. Thank you very much.

4:02

Hello. And welcome to today's next installment of BroadbandUSA, NTIA 2021 Grants Webinar series. My name is Gilbert Resendez and I'm a Broadband program specialist here on the BroadbandUSA program. I support our state partnerships. Today, I'll be your host moderator for our Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program webinar.

4:26

Before I get started today, I do have a number of housekeeping items I want to make sure I bring to everyone's attention before we get started. First, please put any questions that you may have in the questions box, which can be found on the right-hand side of your screen on the webinar console. We'll be sure to take those questions, put them on our FAQ page once that's available.

4:48

Next, we do have an overview of all of NTIA's grants, which were appropriated under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, available on our website. Please consult that page for more information or

questions that you may have on grant programs that we don't cover in today's webinar.

5:06

Next, this presentation, a recording and a transcript of the webinar will be available on the Broadband USA website, under the Past Events section, on or before May 12th.

5:19

And finally, as always, if you have any additional questions, please feel free to consult the BroadbandUSA website. That website can be found at <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov>. Or by emailing us at broadbandusa@ntia.gov.

5:35

Today, I'm joined by a number of my colleagues that I'd like to introduce to discuss with us the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program.

5:43

First, I'm joined by Mr. Doug Kinkoph. Doug Kinkoph serves NTIA as the Associate Administrator of the Office and Telecommunications and Information Applications, or referred to as NTIA's broadband programs. Doug comes to us after a number of years in industry in the telecommunications industry. Doug also served from 2019 to 2020 as the Acting Administrator of NTIA, and we're very lucky to have him here today.

6:13

I'm also joined by my colleague, Scott Woods, who is NTIA's Manager of the Technical Assistance Program for BroadbandUSA. Scott comes to us with a number of years of working as a telecommunications attorney and joined NTIA under the BTOP program.

6:33

I'm also joined by my colleague, Dr. Francine Alkisswani. Francine comes to us with a number of years of telecommunications information policy experience and even helped at her Alma Mater Cheyney University of Pennsylvania when she led and won a grant to outfit the campus in telecommunications infrastructure.

6:55

Last, but certainly not least, I'm joined by my colleague Karen Archer Perry. Karen Perry comes to us with a number of years of experience in telecommunications policy, both from private sector, non-profit sector, and government. Karen worked for 20 years at Bell Labs, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the FCC working on the National Broadband Plan.

7:16

Thank you to all of our panelists.

7:18

Last, I'd like to go over today's agenda.

7:21

First, you will hear from Mr. Doug Kinkoph about the Biden Administration Plans for Broadband. Next, we will pass it over to my colleague, Scott Woods, who will give us an overview of Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program. We'll then pass it over to Francine who will talk to us about some of the feedback that we heard from our stakeholders when we did outreach on the Connecting Minority Communities pilot program.

7:47

We will then turn it over to Karen Perry who will discuss the publicly available broadband planning resources. And then we'll turn it back to Mr. Scott Woods, who will talk to us about the next steps in the Connecting Minority Communities Program. Finally, we'll open it up to the participants for Q&A.

8:09

And now without further ado, I'd like to pass it off to Mr. Doug Kinkoph.

8:15

Doug Kinkoph:

Thank you, Gilbert. Good afternoon, I'm Doug Kinkoph, the Associate Administrator of NTIA's Broadband programs.

8:23

The quote on this page is applicable to all types of infrastructure, but I believe this particularly underscores the critical importance of broadband and the need to connect 100% of Americans.

8:35

Connecting 100% of Americans to broadband is necessary to ensure all Americans have the opportunity to fully participate in the digital economy, whether that's utilizing distance learning, telehealth, launching home based businesses, or helping communities attract new businesses.

8:55

NTIA has always worked to connect Americans in one way or another since its inception. In connecting all Americans, we need to first focus on communities with the greatest need, and by connecting all Americans we will support job creation, workforce development by ensuring that Americans have access, not only to broadband, but devices and digital skills.

9:18

To achieve this goal, it will require collaborations with states, Tribes, industry, and federal agencies, and it will also require accurate data to inform these policies and investments.

9:32

Today, millions of Americans don't have reliable broadband. 17 million Americans do not have access to basic broadband at 25/3 megabits per

second, nearly 21% of Tribal lands and 17% of rural lands do not have 25 megabits per second download and three megabits per second upload broadband.

9:54

And while 95.6% of households have access to 25/3 megabits per second broadband, only 68.9% of households subscribe to services at that level or higher. The map to the right, the red area indicates where wireline broadband service is unavailable at the basic FCC benchmark speed of 25/3. This is based on the FCC 477 Carrier Report data.

10:24

Broadband adoption is uneven across communities. 65 million Americans do not use the internet at all. 10 million internet users rely solely on mobile data plans. Five million households, not online, identified cost is the main reason for not using the internet. Under-connected Americans are disproportionately likely to be low-income, non-white, rural, Tribal, elder, and differently abled. The map to the right, I think highlights this issue. Red areas indicate places where more than 35% of the households in that area have no internet at all. And this is based on the American Community Survey data. So, the issue is that it's time to now invest in the American workforce.

11:12

77% of all jobs require at least some technical skills, 48% of hiring managers say candidates lack the skills needed to fill open jobs. 29% of students without basic digital skills, say they will not consider post-secondary studies, and more than 12 million households lack access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone.

11:37

The map to the right on this page highlights our residents without devices and we know that the darker areas represent more than 30% of the households that area lack access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone. And, without those devices, those residents, those Americans, have fewer opportunities to hone their digital skills, access educational opportunities, and advance in the workforce.

12:05

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 provided funding to NTIA to launch three grant programs. While these grant programs will not solve all the issues I touched on, this is a good start in addressing the problem.

12:19

The Tribal program is a one billion dollars funded program. It will be open to Tribal governments, Tribal colleges and universities, the Department of Hawaiian Homeland, on behalf of the Native Hawaiian community, Tribal organizations, and Alaska Native corporations.

12:35

These grants will be focused on the deployment of adoption of broadband services on Tribal lands, and for programs such as remote learning, telehealth, and telework.

12:47

The infrastructure broadband program is a \$300 million project. The infrastructure grant program will be open to covered partnerships defined as states, or one or more political subdivisions of the state, and a provider of fixed broadband services.

13:04

These will be competitive grants for infrastructure projects for the deployment of fixed broadband services that provide qualified broadband services in an eligible service area.

13:16

Finally, the Connecting Minority Communities is \$285 million program. It's open to primarily HBCUs, our historically black colleges, universities, Tribal colleges, and universities, minority serving institutions. You'll hear much more about this program here, shortly. The grants under this program are for the purpose of broadband Internet access, or any eligible equipment, or to hire, and train information technology personnel.

13:45

I would like to thank you for joining us here today, and now I'm going to turn it over to my counterpart, Scott Woods.

13:54

Scott Woods:

Thank you, Doug, for the introduction and overview and good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Scott Woods and I will be providing an overview of the eligibility criteria for the CMC Pilot program.

14:11

So, as you recall from our previous webinar, we did an overview of the CMC, and this slide is just, again, an overview of just the basic information.

14:21

As you all know, it's \$285 million pilot program, and who can apply? Historically, black colleges or universities, HBCUs, Tribal colleges, or universities, TCU's, Minority Serving Institutions, MSI's, or consortiums, that are led by HBCUs, TCU's, or MSI's that include either a minority business enterprise, or a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization.

14:51

And for what?

14:53

The CMC purpose is for the purchase of broadband internet access service, or any eligible equipment, or to hire and train information technology personnel. For the educational institution, to facilitate educational instruction and learning, including the remote instruction, or

for MBEs to operate the Minority Business Enterprise or for the tax-exempt organization to operate the 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization.

15:25

We'll have more details when we release the NOFO on specific purposes and the allowable costs, et cetera and that will be forthcoming.

15:33

And again, we anticipate accepting applications for the pilot program in the summer of this year.

15:41

So, I want to spend a little bit of time here talking about the eligible entities. So as again, the previous slide and this slide talks about HBCUs, TCU's, consortium's, and then the various categories of minority serving institutions, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Hispanic serving, predominantly Black, Asian American, and Native American Pacific Islander serving institutions, AANAPISI, or the Native Americans serving non Tribal institutions.

16:13

So, we're going to spend a little bit of time on the eligible criteria or the eligible entities to establish that criteria.

16:23

So, if you recall from the Consolidated Appropriations Act, for eligible entities, Congress directed NTIA to develop new methods to establish and to verify CMC eligibility.

16:37

We're going to talk about four of those and one we're going to reserve and I'll talk about that in a later webinar. But for today, we're going to talk about number one to our charge is to identify and verify that an applicant is an HBCU, TCU or MSI.

16:55

Number two, Congress also directed NTIA to identify and to map those anchor communities that are within a 15-mile radius of each eligible HBCU, TCU, or MSI and that meets the estimated median household income of not more than 250% of the poverty threshold.

17:17

Number three, in consultation with the Secretary of Interior, we can determine a comparable maximum distance for TCU's, anchor communities that are located in land held in trust by the United States and to ensure that that is statistically comparable to anchor communities defined in the 15-mile radius that we talked about above.

17:40

Number four: Identify which eligible recipients have the greatest unmet financial need.

17:46

Number five, verify that a designated MBE or tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization is applying as a member of a consortium is indeed an eligible entity for that consortium.

18:00

So, for the purposes of today, we're going to talk about number one, number two, number four, and number five. The consultation with the Secretary of Interior is ongoing right now and that will be used specifically for those Tribal colleges and universities that again, that are on land held in trust. So, we're going to talk about those other four. And we're going to hold number three for a later date.

18:25

So, to establish and verify CMC eligible entities, we're going to rely on the Department of Education data specifically. The National Center for Education Statistics, as well as the Department of Education's eligibility Matrix. As of right now, the 2020 version is available.

18:44

So, as you can see from this slide, the current number of schools are identified. So, for HBCU's, they're 102. And again, you can verify that through the NCES database. For TCU's the NCES database, we're going to use that to validate eligibility as well. But for specific categories of MSI's, the HSI's, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, predominantly black, AANAPISI's and the Native American serving non Tribal institutions we're going to rely on the latest version, in this case, 2020 version of the Department of Education's eligibility matrix.

19:24

So again, if you can see here on this slide, we have the current number of schools that are identified, but that is, and that will represent the universe of eligible institutions in step one of our eligibility criteria.

19:39

Next slide.

19:42

So, as you can see here, I'm going to spend a little bit of time on prong number two, which is the anchor community prong. The Act defines Anchor Community as any area that is one, not more than 15 miles from an HBCU, TCU, or MSI., and two, has an estimated median annual household income, of not more than 250% of the poverty line.

20:07

We're going to test that in four prongs.

20:09

Number one, the 250% threshold will be determined for household size based on the 2019 poverty threshold data that's available from the US. Census Bureau.

20:22

Step two, that 250% poverty threshold data by household size will then be applied to the average household size in each Census tract, according to the 2015 to 2019 American Community Survey Data, also from the US. Census Bureau.

20:42

Step three: Utilizing the capabilities within our National Broadband Availability Map Platform, a 15-mile buffer will be drawn around each eligible institution as described above.

20:54

Then, finally, a digital overlay will be used to select all Census Tracts for each Anchor Community boundary.

21:02

The median household income in each Anchor Community Census tract will be compared to the 250% poverty threshold as defined above to determine if the Anchor community tract does not exceed the prescribed poverty threshold.

21:18

OK, I know that's a lot, but we've got an example for you in the next couple of slides to show you how we're going to do that. And indeed, verify the anchor community status, OK.

21:31

So, first, the poverty threshold data: I have a link here to the Census Government's, Census Bureau's, excuse me, data table that we're going to use, and I'll show that in a second. And, again, just reminding everyone that we're validating this criterion by creating the 15-mile buffer around each eligible recipient, and that will include median household data, average household size, and the poverty threshold for each individual census tract within that 15-mile buffer.

22:01

All right, so, if you go to the Census Bureau and you look for their poverty threshold for 2019, here's what that table looks like. And, again, we're using 2019 data because it corresponds with the annual Median Household Income data from 2015 to 2019 that the Census put out just recently. So, we're comparing apples to apples, if you will, to ensure that the median income corresponds to the poverty threshold. So, as you can see here, we've identified the weighted average threshold by size of the family unit that we're going to use to determine the poverty threshold for each census tract.

22:43

And so, what we've done here is just added that 250% calculation to each of those poverty thresholds. It's a simple multiplication of 2.5 times that weighted average threshold number. That's how you get 250% poverty

threshold, or not exceed poverty threshold line for purposes of determining the anchor community eligibility.

23:10

So, what does this look like? This next slide is a visual representation, and this is hypothetical for our purposes for today.

23:18

So, for this in this hypothetical urban area, right, we would draw the 15-mile radius around the institution and then apply the poverty in annual median household factors. We would identify those census tracts indeed, that would qualify. In this urban example, you see there are a number of different census tracts within that 15-mile radius buffer. In this case, in this hypothetical example, there are almost 200 census tracts that are identified in this 15-mile buffer radius.

23:51

So, again, if we were to extract this data into a table form, you would see here that, for each census tract, we would have the median, median household, income, the household size, the poverty threshold, and then a determination of whether it would qualify for the CMC Pilot Program or not. So, for this particular example, if you look at census tract one, we have a median household income of \$72,733. The average household size in that census tract is 2.61.

24:28

We would bump that up to the three-household size so that poverty threshold level cap, if you will, would be \$50,838. But since the median household income size is above the poverty threshold, that census tract would not apply.

24:45

So, again, in table form, you know, again, what you would see is for each Census tract, you have the corresponding household income data, the household size, the poverty threshold calculation, and then a determination of whether that individual census tract would indeed qualify under the CMC pilot.

25:04

I would also add that for household size, corresponding to the poverty threshold data in, this tracks with the CMC Final Rule using between 2 and 3 household size as an example, if the household size was 2.5 or above, we would correspond that to a household size of three for poverty threshold determination.

25:29

If it's under 2.5 or between 2 and 2.5, we, of course, will correspond that data to the household size of two, and that poverty threshold data, \$41,303.

25:43

So, again, and we detail this methodology and the rationale in the Act, and you'll be able to see that and walk that through. And more importantly, when we release a Notice of Funding Opportunity, again, we will go into more detail on our method and our rationale of how we calculate Anchor Community eligibility.

26:05

This next slide is a rural exam, again, hypothetical for our purposes today, but this is a rural example. Again, we have the school location. We have the 15-mile buffer, but we don't have as many census tracts in this example. In this example, we only captured nine. But we're going to walk you through, again, what that would look like in table function, so this is the graphical illustration and here is the table function, extracting that data in tabular form.

26:36

So, again, you know, you have your census tract number, the median household income, the corresponding household size, the poverty threshold calculation, and again, finally, a determination of whether that individual census tract would indeed qualify for the CMC Pilot program. I would like to add that all of this data is publicly available from the American Community Survey and the Census Bureau. And very shortly, my colleague will walk you through how you can access all of this publicly available data for yourselves. The individual data tables, the underlying rationale and, again, how to apply all of these data, the datasets to those census tracts within your community. So, stay tuned for that. That will be coming here very shortly.

27:26

So, next, we're going to talk about the consortium eligibility, particularly for Minority Business Enterprises and 501(c)(3) tax exempt organizations. For minority business enterprises, it will be a self-certification process. That certification will be included in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, so stay tuned for that. And for 501(c)(3) tax exempt organizations, the program office will check that status during that initial application review phase, and we're going to use the tax-exempt organization search function by the IRS by its website.

28:02

So, the IRS, excuse me, has a search portal on its website, and we're going to use that portal just to verify and validate whether the organization in the consortium is indeed a tax exempt organization under the IRS designation.

28:21

So next, we're going to talk about greatest unmet financial need requirement. So, what we've determined from, from the rule is, you know, the Act as Congress has directed us to determine which eligible recipients, you know, have the students with the greatest unmet financial need.

28:37

And so, we're going to apply that eligible institution, will have to include that information and has to include that information in their application for funding, to include any supplementary information, to explain that data, and the data's really around six factors.

28:55

Number one, student population size. Number two, the number and percentage of students that are eligible to receive Federal Pell Grants. Number three: the number and percentage of students that receive other need based financial aid from the federal government, a state, or that institution itself.

29:15

Number four: the number and percentage of students that qualify as low-income consumers. Number five: the number and percentage of students that are low-income, individuals. Number six: the number and percentage of students that have been approved to receive unemployment insurance benefits under any Federal or State law, since March first of 2020.

29:39

So, when the applicant includes that information in the application, we'll review that information in the merit review phase, we'll analyze it, then we'll do a rank order, if you will. The assessments will be ranked and compared across all submitted applications during the merit review phase, and then make a determination during program eligibility, whether the data will, in fact meet the greatest unmet financial need requirement.

30:06

Again, no need to overthink this right now. We will go into more detail in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, but we wanted to give you a preview of our method and rationale. And that's what we're doing today. So, again, we'll be available to answer any questions about this, particularly in our technical assistance and outreach phase. And I'll cover that a little bit shortly, in a little bit.

30:31

So next, I want to talk about program requirements. So, these are the fundamental program requirements as prescribed by the act that we must do.

30:41

Number one, at least 40% of grant funds awarded will be made to historically black colleges or universities. At least 20% of all grants, grant funds awarded to eligible entities must be used to provide broadband access and or devices and equipment to students. And so, we have to ensure programmatically, that those two prongs are met.

31:05

For eligible recipients, that specifically receive a grant to provide broadband Internet access service, or eligible equipment to students, those

recipients must prioritize students are in need, those students are who are in need per the needs criteria factors. And we talked about those in this in the slide previous.

31:26

And, again, so when we do our merit review for checks again, we're checking to ensure that those applicants that have this specific programmatic function, we'll prioritize those students who are in need in the application.

31:42

If an eligible recipient will have a component of a purchase or lease of equipment, those eligible entities, again, must prioritize any lending or providing of equipment to students and, or patrons who do not have access to such equipment. So, again, we're prioritizing those individuals and students who are in need or who don't have access to that equipment.

32:06

And then finally, we will build into the program, program evaluation, and data collection requirements. We'll go into more detail in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, but we are planning for these activities to be allowable costs. So again, that we're ensuring that we can properly evaluate and collect the appropriate amount of data, to gage the effectiveness of this program.

32:32

So that's it for now. I want to thank you for your time and attention. Now I turn it over to my colleague, Dr. Francine Alkisswani who will give an overview of our stakeholder outreach and feedback that we've conducted to date.

32:46

Francine, over to you and thank you everyone for joining us today.

32:51

Francine Alkisswani:

Hello there and thank you, Scott. You did a fantastic job of laying out the details for establishing the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program.

33:04

Now, we have had several outreach conversations regarding the pilot program with umbrella organizations that represent the eligible entities for the program. These groups include NAFEO, AIHEC, Thurgood Marshall College Fund, HACU, and UNCF, as well as the telecom industry and other stakeholder groups.

33:33

I would now like to share our responses to some of their questions. This should shed light on some residual questions that you might have, as you think about developing grant proposals.

33:49

First of all, very important question: Will NTIA include innovation or innovative methods as a core component of eligible program activities?

34:04

Absolutely.

34:05

For sure, the Connecting Minority Communities Grant Program is a pilot program funded under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, and it is a spending bill. That includes \$900 billion in stimulus, really, for the Covid-19 pandemic. 285 million was allocated for the Connecting Minority Communities, which I'm going to shorten to CMC and that bill is an extension of the Cares Act.

34:42

With regard to addressing the problems confronted by historically black colleges and universities, by Tribal colleges and universities and minority serving institutions in response to Covid-19.

34:58

Now, while the purpose is explicit, that is the CMC pilot program, will provide grants for the purchase of broadband, Internet access service, or eligible equipment, or hire and train information technology personnel to facilitate educational instruction and learning, including remote instruction.

35:25

So, I think you can see from the specified purposes of the grant, what that intent is as related to overcoming Covid-19 and its effects on your campuses.

35:40

Now, NTIA will be looking to institutions to provide a description of the problem. The problem that the institution seeks to address, and how the purposes of the grants program, the use of these technologies and services, will help to solve those problems that you've identified.

36:01

Since this is a pilot program, NTIA will be looking for innovative methods, innovative solutions, to these identified problems that will serve as models, templates for replication, and that will be the basis for recommendations to the administration.

36:23

So, the short answer is, will NTIA include innovation or innovative methods as a core component of eligible programs and program activities? The short answer is yes, definitely so.

36:39

Now, another question that has arisen is: What advice would you give to be best positioned to have a winning proposal?

36:50

Well, let me say at the outset, I can't give you advice for what will be a winning proposal since these will be competitive grants, and they will be reviewed. But we can give you some advice with respect to how to be more or less competitive with respect to them.

37:08

So, the first point is, does the proposal show how it is closing the gap left by Cares Act funding?

37:21

Does it show how it will supplement Title III and other Cares Act funding.

37:28

What problems has your institution faced as a result of Covid that are a function of limited, or non-existent broadband access, and how will this proposal solve that problem?

37:43

What gap did it leave with respect to funding? What gap did it leave with respect to the needs of your institution meeting its mission, and its goals?

37:56

So, what we ask that you do, or suggest, is to provide a clear statement of the problem.

38:04

Clearly articulate a program description that includes a solution to the problem, including your target population, the anticipated outputs, the short-term outcomes, because we know full well that that outcomes, as typically defined, can only be expected to occur several years after full implementation of a project.

38:34

What are your plans for sustainability?

38:38

Provide a clear implementation plan. Include a thoroughly thought-out evaluation plan and give a detailed budget narrative that maps to the implementation plan.

38:53

I want to understand, underscore the relevance and importance of the budget narrative. That budget narratives should, in effect, be, a description of what your project is. It should map very clearly to your implementation plan.

39:11

Over the years, we've learned that a number of projects fall short in not being fully descriptive in the budget narrative component of a grant submission, so we're under scoring and underlying that point.

39:27

Next, a question came up as to whether NTIA will focus on the best investments and best projects to ensure and demonstrate CMC program success?

39:46

That is a very critical point that has arisen and the best means just that. The CMC is a pilot program, and we want to be able to support the development of stellar programs, of stellar projects that can serve as templates for replication and that will provide evidence of success that will serve as a basis for recommendations to the Congress, and to this administration for the future.

40:25

So, are we looking for, and will we focus on best investments and best projects?

40:31

Yes, because we want the best in order to demonstrate that this pilot program has been successful.

40:43

Another question that often comes up, and I'm sure it's on all of your minds.

40:49

Will there be an evaluation and reporting requirement? Yes, indeed.

40:55

How will NTIA effectively develop, track, and manage data collection, evaluation, and reporting methods?

41:05

Well, first of all, an evaluation plan is a requirement of your project proposal, and you will be expected to submit a report of your evaluation at the close out of the project.

41:24

Your contribution in this area is extremely important.

41:30

Accurate data is clearly what is needed in order to support our recommendations.

41:39

Accurate data, reporting mechanisms, and the reports that you submit help inform this notion of evidence-based program planning. It supports evidence-based reports and recommendations to Congress.

42:01

So, there will be a bi-annual reporting requirement and report due at the end of the grant period.

42:10

Additionally, want to point out what NTIA's requirements are and that your reports will help us meet our reporting requirements.

42:21

So, not later than 90 days after the end of the program, NTIA is required to submit to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate, and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives.

42:40

A report that describes the manner in which the pilot was carried out. This report must also identify each recipient of a grant.

42:53

The report next, must contain information regarding the effectiveness of the pilot. The data you submit in your bi-annual report, and at your end of grant will help us to deliver on that requirement.

43:13

So, this report must also include lessons learned in carrying out the program and recommendations for future actions.

43:23

So, again, I'd like to underscore the point that your bi-annual reports, your evaluation reports, and the end of the grant reports, will be the foundation for NTIA's reporting requirements. So, we are counting on all of our grant recipients to meet those conditions.

43:45

Another question that comes up is, what do we mean by a consortium?

43:51

Well, as the legislation defines that a consortium is a group that is comprised of one or another, or more, of the eligible institutions. It must be led by one of the eligible institutions. And furthermore, that consortium must include a minority business enterprise, or, and, or a nonprofit, a tax-exempt non-profit, I might add and members of eligible institutions. So that's it in a nutshell.

44:36

So, by consortium, we mean a group that is led by an eligible institution that is comprised of minority business enterprise, or a tax-exempt non-profit, and one or another, or more of one of the eligible institutions.

45:00

And my next point is pertaining to merit reviewers. Since NTIA is soliciting volunteer reviewers, which, I think you heard, what will be the time commitment for reviewers?

45:17

We anticipate reviewers will receive 12 to 20 proposals to review over a two-week period. And we expect to then convene a panel that will discuss

up to 2 to 4 hours that would facilitate final scores and address specific reviewer concerns.

45:42

So, we would expect that this would be the equivalent of about a week of time for each reviewer. And let me underscore here the fact that reviewers are volunteers.

45:58

We are soliciting volunteer reviewers, for this commitment to help with the Connecting Minority Communities pilot program.

46:10

Now, we hope that these points will be of help to you as you think about projects you wish to develop for the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot program.

46:20

I want to thank you so much for joining us today.

46:24

So, let's now go to Karen Perry for additional information that will be useful in planning and developing your proposals.

46:34

So, Karen, please take over now. Thank you.

46:39

Karen Perry:

Thank you very much, Francine. Gilbert, Scott, Francine, and all of us at NTIA are very excited to be with you today and to be supporting this program here at NTIA.

46:51

I want to remind you that we also welcome your questions, so please do put those questions in the chat box so that we can answer them at the end of the presentation.

47:03

I want to come back to the objectives of this program. The ones that Scott and Francine have both mentioned. The program is about connecting minority communities through community anchor institutions.

47:14

Of course, community anchor institutions are beacons for learning, but they're also engines for change in their communities. It's a mission that's important, too, me, as well as important to their communities.

47:27

And we believe that those engines for change can also be engines for connectivity. So we're very excited to be supporting a program that can drive that change in communities.

47:38

I also wanted to remind you; this is not the only program that supports broadband that's happening right now. NTIA supports two other programs, one for Tribal broadband and one for infrastructure.

47:49

And there are other grant funds that are available through other agencies and through states right now. So please keep your ear tuned for other programs that might be available, that would augment or complement this program, if you have bolder issues than ones that are just covered here, My focus is to cover the two datasets that support this program.

48:11

The first is from the National Center for Education Statistics, and the second is from the American Community Survey.

48:21

From the National Center for Education Statistics, we really get the list of the colleges and universities that are eligible for the program. And from the American Community Survey, we get the underlying income eligibility.

48:36

And so let me first talk about the National Center for Education Statistics. It's really an easy to navigate website, where all you have to do is look up the type of college or university that you're interested in order to generate a list and see if your community is on that list. And so, the first list I wanted to highlight is where you could search for HBCU's. And I've just really put this here so that it's easy for you to find the website, and go directly to that list.

49:08

The second one is where you would look to find information on Tribal colleges or universities.

49:14

And the third one is a little bit more, it takes a little bit more digging, but for the additional minority serving institutions, you have to go to look for a slightly more detailed list, but they're also quite easy to find.

49:32

The American Community Survey is really actually a much more comprehensive dataset. We're only using a tiny piece of it for our eligibility as defined by the statute, but I wanted to describe the dataset a little bit more fully for you, so you had a larger context.

49:49

So, the American Community Survey is conducted on a rolling basis. So, every year, the US Census Bureau goes out and asks a number of questions to people to better understand our communities, and the questions are social, housing and economic questions.

50:06

And while we're going to use pieces of that data as a qualifying element of this program, you might find other elements of this dataset useful in your planning, both for this project and for other work you do.

50:20

So, there's information about education level, employment status, computer and Internet subscriptions, as well as economic information about business, occupation, people's work, and type of work, race, ethnicity, and Hispanic origin, and housing unit and living situations. So, I wanted to highlight that the dataset is rich in an awful lot of ways, and it is a very robust dataset.

50:49

So, it is the largest random sample survey that is conducted by the US. Census Bureau. And by large, I mean large.

50:57

So, the Census Bureau surveys 3.5 million households every year and they do it on a rolling basis such that they reach 17 million households over a five-year basis.

51:10

And with that sample size of 17 million households, they are able to make estimates for all 3,142 counties for Tribal areas, for population areas down to 20,000 people, and that's in their one-year estimates. And then in their five-year estimates, they're able to get down all the way to the block group level and the tract level. OK, so what's a block group and what's that track? So, the smallest area that the Census kind of tracks is called a census block. And the census block in a city looks like a block. It's like 200-300 people. In a rural area, it may be is 10 square miles.

51:52

And, in the state of Alaska, a census block might be about the size of the state of Delaware. So, a block is really not defined by geography. Block is defined by a number of people, but in many cases, a block is a lot like a neighborhood. And so, from planning basis, it is a pretty decent kind of a planning unit. And because this data is at the block or the tract level, it can be very, very helpful from a planning basis.

52:23

The other thing that's pretty marvelous about this dataset is it gets refreshed every year. So, the data that we're working with right now, is the data that covers that planning period from 2015 to 2019, And it was released on December 10th of last year. And we'll get a refresh on that data on December 9th of this year.

52:43

And it covers that whole range of topics, including the income data that we're looking for, as well as the housing size, as well as that information on computer and Internet use.

52:57

It's also quite easy to get access to it, in addition to having API's, so that you can download the data if you have a GIS system. And you want to be able to manage it that way. It also has a very easy to use interface that you can really just type in numbers, or words, and pull data out of it. And that's called data.census.gov. I'm going to do a little demo today and show you how to use that.

53:26

You can just type words into data.census.gov to get data, but what I'm going to do is I'm going to show you the steps that you need to take to get the precise information that you need for eligibility. Now, I'm not going to walk through the steps that I've listed here on this chart, and there are two charts like this. I've listed them here for a reference, so that you can get to them later, and I'm referencing two specific tables.

53:54

The first table is a table on median household income, and so this will get you to that median household income table, and allow you to dig down into that median household income to the tracts in your community.

54:11

And the second table is about average household size, and so this will allow you to get down to average household size and to look at that average household size, either in a table format or in a map format. And so, that's what all those steps will allow you to do for yourself.

54:29

And as I said, I'm going to do a demo, you're going to have this on tape so you can do it yourself.

54:36

Now, computer and internet subscription information are not an eligible at eligibility criteria for this grant. However, it is an eligible expense for this grant, and because there's wonderful data in the American Community Survey on that, on computer and internet subscriptions, I wanted you to have easy access to that table information as well.

55:00

And you use the same type of steps to get that information that I've shown you in the previous slides. And so, the table number that you might find useful there is S2801. It's actually a much richer table than the two tables that I've just shown you, and so, there's a little bit more exploring that you might want to do around that table. But, you use very similar steps to kind of dig into those tables.

55:29

There's a little few more drop-down pages, but very similar steps to look at those two tables, and a huge amount of information that you can find using those tables that might be helpful when you're thinking about where you might want to go with your grant application and with your work.

55:49

We've also done a number of webinars and provided a lot of technical assistance in the past. And we will do it again in the future around other tools to access broadband data.

56:00

Before I give you a demonstration of the American Community Survey, data.census.gov tool, I wanted to mention a number of other tools that are available that you might be able to use to support your broadband planning.

56:13

This is kind of a survey of some of the tools that we frequently highlight in the area of broadband planning tools, and we've recently done a couple of great webinars that highlight many of these tools.

56:24

Our February webinar included two wonderful speakers from M-Lab, and Ookla, who talked about their speed test capabilities and provided demos of those. And I also presented on that webinar and gave a demonstration of the American Community Survey, Quick Facts Tool, as well as the Internet as Infrastructure I3 Connectivity Explorer.

56:51

The June 2020 webinar included an overview of the NTIA Data Explorer Tool, and also a presentation from the US. Census Bureau on the American Community Survey, data.census.gov.

57:06

We haven't recently done a demonstration of the Broadband Now tool, but it is an extremely easy to use tool. It's a very consumer friendly view and includes a survey of broadband service providers, so I really recommend that if you have time, you kind of check out those webinars and look at those tools. If you're looking for kind of a broader view of tools to look at broadband. We also will be providing additional technical assistance throughout the grant period and beyond. So, we will be around to help you out if you need more information on broadband tools and broadband data.

57:43

Now, let me turn to the data.census.gov tool and give you a demonstration of how to zero in on the precise data that you need in order to understand the qualification criteria for this grant program.

57:59

So, as I mentioned, the data.census.gov tool is an extremely powerful tool, and as you as you can see, what it says here is just enter something in the search engine.

58:12

So, you just find tables, maps, and more. So, you can really just put into the search engine, a word that is kind of consistent with the type of data

that's in here, and a place name like your town, your city, or your county. But we, we pretty much know what we're looking for here.

58:28

So, what we're going to put in is, we're going to put in B19013. Because that is the name of the table that we want. And that's median household income in the past 12 months.

58:50

And it's giving me, I want to see the whole table, so I'm going to go up here to where it says Table, and I'm going to press that. Actually, I want to see the navigation bar on the left, I want to make sure I have access to that bar.

59:05

Now, let me go up here to this little drop-down up here on the upper right-hand side. And then, this says, here is 2019 one-year estimates, and that's the product that we're looking at in the US. Census Bureau and I don't want the one-year estimates. I want the five-year estimates for 2019. And, remember, the reason I want the five-year estimates is because if you look over that five-year period, you have the opportunity to have more granular data and I want to go down that tract level. So, I always want to tell it that I want that five-year data estimates.

59:41

Now, right now, I'm looking at data for the entire US, and I know the median income for the entire US was \$62,000. And that's not going to help me very much. So, I need to filter down to something a little bit more specific. So, I'm going to go up here to the Filter button and hit Filter.

59:58

Then, I know I'm going to look at geography, so I'm going to start by saying geography. And in the end, I know that I'm going to look at tract level data. So, I'm going to ask for tracts, And I'm going to take you somewhere in Alabama, because then I don't just scroll too far down. So, I'm going to go Alabama and I'm going to go to Mobile county.

1:00:25

And within Mobile county, I'm going to look at all of the census tracts within Mobile county. Having made all of those selections, I'm going to go up here to the upper right and hit done.

1:00:39

So, I've got geography. I'm telling you that the geography I'm looking for are tracts. I'm going to pick my county, and I'm going to hit Mobile county. I'm going to hit all the tracts. If I wanted to look at two counties at the same time, I could look at two counties.

1:00:58

Now, at first glance, this doesn't look that much different. But if we roll across, you can see I now have the median household, the median

household income for all of the tracts in Mobile county. And I have it in a table format. But I really want to see it in a map format. So, I'm going to go over here to a map, and hit map. I'm going to move this over just a little bit. And I'm really interested in the city, not really the whole county, so I'm going to zoom in a little bit. And now, I can look tract by tract, and I can see that the median household income in this tract was 27,000, 30,000 in that tract, 28,000 in that tract. So, I can look tract by tract, and I can look at the median household income. But, remember, that's not the only piece of information I need. I need a second piece of information to determine eligibility, and that is: I need that household size.

1:02:20

So, for the household size, I'm going to go just up to that same search bar, and I'm going to type in another table number, that's B25010, and you can see, it's telling me that that is the average household size, and I'm going to hit enter right here while I'm still in the same bar, I'm going to hit enter. I'm going to zoom, a little.

1:03:02

And, so, you can see that tract I looked at before, the household size is 2.66, that one up here was 2.97. Downtown, 1.42. So, a big difference in the household size.

1:03:19

So, you can look, tract by tract at your household size. Now, that might not be the most convenient way to look at it. So, you might want to go back to your table view. And, of course, you can also download the table data. In order to download it, you're going to hit the download button, select the table here.

1:03:45

You're not quite done, you'll have to go back here to download selected, and then again, you need to tell it that you want the 2019 data and that you want the five-year data. I'm a little bit stalled here, but you can make selections here. You'll want it on the PDF, the CSV, and what year you want it for. I'm going to drop this right now.

1:04:17

But that gives you a quick overview of how to get the precise data that you were looking for in the American Community Survey, data.census.gov.

1:04:31

Now I'm going to hand it all back to Scott so that he can give you some wrap up information on the CMC Program.

1:04:39

Scott Woods:

Thank you, Karen, for providing an overview of the publicly available data sources and a wonderful demo that applicants can use to access their own data in their location.

1:04:51

So, what I'm going to do on these next few slides is really go through sort of our next steps.

1:04:56

So, right now, we are pending, we're waiting Federal Register publication of the CMC Final Rule. Again, clearance and publication are in process right now. So as soon as that is done, we'll be ready to roll on to the next phase.

1:05:12

We're going to do immediately a call for Merit reviewers, and I will go into some detail on that in the next slide or two.

1:05:19

Followed by that, will have the clearance and publication of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, and that will provide all the essential details to the potential applicants and eligible recipients about the program. All of the details that you will need to apply, will be in the NOFO.

1:05:39

Then we'll open up our pre-application, technical assistance, and stakeholder outreach. We'll open the CMC application window that will be clearly defined in the NOFO. So, you'll have all that information. We'll have a merit review and programmatic review phases. Again, that all will be spelled out in the NOFO. Then finally, Notice of Acceptance and the project funding will actually come from the grant's office or the grants officer for this project, which is the National Institute for Standards and Technology, NIST.

1:06:12

NIST will be serving as the Grants Office/Grants Officer for the CMC Pilot Program. So, those are sort of the next upcoming steps. The next immediate steps that we'll be embarking upon, again after the publication of the CMC Final Rule.

1:06:30

Next, I'm going to briefly talk about our call for merit reviewers. So, we're ramping up this pilot project, and we're seeking qualified broadband use and digital inclusion experts with experience in at least one of the following areas: Telemedicine, telehealth, distance learning, broadband adoption, including specifically digital inclusion programming, including equipment, networks, training, and outreach, right? If you have experience in telework, workforce development, online entrepreneurship programs, we want you to volunteer to serve as a merit reviewer.

1:07:06

Again, all of our criteria that we're looking for, the experience that we're looking for, is on this slide and the checks. You know, please, please, please, consider applying to be a merit reviewer for this program.

1:07:21

So, what we're planning for right now is the merit reviews will start in August, and probably extend through and into October.

1:07:29

Again, we are committed to ensure that our merit reviewers come from diverse backgrounds and from all areas, from the U.S.

1:07:40

To volunteer, please send an e-mail with a resume containing the following information to grantreviewer@NTIA.gov and make sure that that resume has your name, your residents, including city and state, a good e-mail, phone number to contact you. Any employers, including the states, you were employed in, your current position, and title, including previous positions and titles, and the number of years and types of experience and positions in this field related to broadband activities that you possess. OK, we need all that information to conduct a preliminary conflict check, but also will help us make that determination for which merit reviewers indeed will be on the merit review team moving forward.

1:08:26

Also, want to note that, although you will not be compensated for your time and expertise, again, this is a Volunteer Merit Review Program, you will be making a significant contribution to this program. Again, this is a new program, CMC pilot program has never been done before.

1:08:44

We're embarking on new territory, so you will have an opportunity to be on the ground floor, if you will, to review those applications to ensure that we get quality applications to be able to move forward with the CMC program. So, again, if you have this slide, further information is available, click that link, that will take you to our website with information regarding the merit review process and our overall call for Merit Reviewers. Again, not just for the CMC Pilot Program. We're also calling for merit viewers for our Tribal program, as well as the broadband infrastructure. But I'm here with a specific call for Merit reviewers for the CMC, Connecting Minority Communities Program.

1:09:28

So, with that said, I want to thank you again. I want to turn it over to our moderator of the day, Gilbert Resendez, who will facilitate the question-and-answer session. So, thank you, everyone, and we look forward to your questions. Gilbert, over to you. Thank you very much.

1:10:12

Gilbert Resendez:

Alright, thank you very much Scott. And thank you to Karen and Francine as well for providing some really great information today on our Connecting Minority Communities Pilot program. Like Scott mentioned, we'll be starting our Q&A session. I see a number of great questions in our Q&A box.

1:10:30

First, I did want to hand it over to Karen. I know we had talked a little bit about a correction you wanted to make and I wanted to mention now before I forget to bring it up.

1:10:43

Karen Perry:

I did want to make a small correction because I made a mistake on my last slide.

1:10:47

There are two Data Explorer tools, and my tongue got a little bit tied. So, on the top of the slide was the NTIA Data Explorer. And on the bottom of the slide, was the I3 Connectivity Data Explorer. And I misspoke and called the first one, the I3 Data Explorer. So, the NTIA Data Explorer gives you access to our NTIA internet and computer use survey, and the I3 Data Explorer is a third-party tool that gives you access to a range of different datasets. So, I misspoke on the last slide, so I wanted to put that correction in.

1:11:29

Gilbert Resendez:

Thank you very much, Karen. Small, but important, and thank you for clarifying for anyone on our call today. I got my first couple of questions. I know oftentimes some people join a little bit late and missed the first half of our logistics part of our webinars.

1:11:46

So, Karen can you talk to our audience a little bit more about when we can expect to see a recording of this webinar, or slides, or a transcript if they need to share that with their stakeholders?

1:11:57

Karen Perry:

Yes, the slides should be available in about a week. They are posted to our new website, we have updated our website and it'll be on the past events tab and you should be able to find the slides, the transcript, and the video, all on our past events tab. It's also a great place to search and find other videos of past events and other slides and transcripts.

1:12:26

Gilbert Resendez:

Great, thank you very much, Karen.

1:12:29

I guess with that, we'll move on to some of our programmatic questions about the CMC. Scott, can you talk a little bit? I know I think the answer to a few of these, maybe we have to wait for the NOFO. Which is hard for

us to say. We want to provide as much information as we can, but can you talk a little bit about from open of application to the final date of the announcement of awards, how long do you anticipate that process to take?

1:12:59

Scott Woods:

Yes. Thank you for that question.

1:13:02

So, consultation right now with the with the grant's office and grants officer. I use those terms interchangeably, because for us it's the grant office, but with the prospective applicants, it will be the grants officer.

1:13:16

But typical application period is generally 90 to 120 days from when the application window is open until when it's closed. So, we have not decided that yet. There will be, again, the standard answer is contained in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. Let me take some time to say this, because you'll hear this a lot, just by way of the authorizing statute that create this program. We have to go to final rule first, which is essentially the statutory codification of the CMC. Then we have to do that step first before we can at least a Notice of Funding Opportunity.

1:13:54

So, that sort of is the process that we are in right now, but all of the details will be provided. All of the substantive details will be provided in the Notice of Funding Opportunity to come at a later date.

1:14:11

Gilbert Resendez:

Great, thank you very much. Can you talk a little bit about if there is an award timeline to use the money awarded under that program?

1:14:25

Scott Woods:

Yes, we're also in consultation with that, but typical, in sort of grants law and grants practice, we're generally looking at a two-year to three-year window of performance, what we call period of performance for a grant recipient. So, I assume that we will keep that standard practice with the grant's office. That's what we anticipate at this point.

1:14:49

Gilbert Resendez:

Great, thank you. And then can you talk a little bit about NTIA and if they are expecting there to be a matching requirement for the CMC Pilot Program, or maybe generally about what we tend to see in grants?

1:15:03

Typically, with most federal funds, there's a matching requirement, however, we understand the urgency of the funds, and, more importantly, the budget status a lot of the eligible institutions. So, we're evaluating both match implications and non-matching implications. And, again, those will be contained in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. But I would suffice it to say, for this audience, you know, we definitely understand how much of

a financial burden a significant match would be. So, without tipping our hand, I think that should tell you something.

1:15:40

Gilbert Resendez:

Great. Thank you very much, Scott. I know, I have more questions around grants and award amounts. Can you talk a little bit about what sort of award range or amounts of awards we expect to make at NTIA under this program?

1:15:57

Scott Woods:

Yeah, that's a good question and we've gotten that a lot with our stakeholder outreach. You know, again, this is a pilot program, so we get an opportunity to really structure and form the program, as we, as we want to see it programmatically, and so we have not made that determination on purpose.

1:16:13

Right, we don't want to set a minimum number or maximum number or an amount. We are, you know, we have statutory guidelines that we have to adhere to. That we have not set those on purpose, because we want to, again, in our outreach, in our stakeholder engagement, in our technical assistance, you know, really craft and fashion innovative approaches. So, we want to make sure that we stay away from prescriptive amounts, that we will do, ABC XYZ. We really want to work with our stakeholders and set those threshold limits as we move forward.

1:16:50

Gilbert Resendez:

All right, thank you. One interesting question I saw in the chat, or in the Q&A box, rather. Are there any examples of case studies or prior successful partnerships between HSI's (Hispanic Serving Institution)/ HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) and a community partner? Are there resources that we can point our audience to if they want to learn more about how to structure their partnership? This goes to Scott or Francine.

1:17:22

Francine Alkisswani:

I'll be happy to take that, if you'd like, and there's quite a bit of literature on the topic, under the heading of Anchor Institutions and Anchor Communities. There are literatures on eds, and meds, and partners with their communities. Another heading is "Communiversities". That is another topic. Under our prior BTOP projects and under the project program before that, TOP, there are many examples in our old files, you might say, of projects that we funded that are relationships between institutions of higher education and communities.

1:18:11

And some examples that come off the top of my head, actually, a State University, for example, North Carolina Central University. And there are a number of Tribal colleges and universities that have partnerships with their communities. But there is a very rich set of literature on that topic, as

well as there being an organization, SHLB, which is Schools, Health, & Libraries Broadband Coalition and their focus is on anchor institutions and their relationships and partnerships with communities.

1:19:05

And that's why our program is focusing on institutions of higher education as anchor institutions. HBCU's, TCU's, and MSI's and you'll notice, throughout, and even in the heading of our grant program, it's anchor communities that we will be serving.

1:19:31

Gilbert Resendez:

Great. Thank you very much Francine.

1:19:33

Karen Perry:

I'll also put another plugin for our website. There is one tab on our website specifically for publications, and we're in the process of updating some of those publications, but some of the case studies are still excellent. And there's one specifically on partnerships, and there's also broadband planning toolkit there, and in the toolkit, there are case studies buried within it. So the toolkit process is excellent, and the case studies within it, many of them are specifically about partnerships, and some of them came from the BTOP era.

1:20:12

That was an era when a lot of funds were available. And when the situation was actually, a lot like it is now. So, it's a great resource for this very time.

Gilbert Resendez:

1:20:24

Great. Thank you, Karen, for a good transition. I had a question on some of the resources that we may have on our website or that we may have previously shared. I know in your section; you talked a little bit about some of the data webinars that we've done.

1:20:37

Is there a place on our website that our audience members or potential applicants can go to learn more about data resources that we have or maybe we have in the field?

1:20:47

Karen Perry:

Well, we have a lot of favorite pages on our website. One of them is we have a page on state broadband leaders. And oftentimes, your state broadband leader is a great point of coordination in order to find local resources within your state.

1:21:03

We also have a digital inclusion page and two of the great resources for digital inclusion are our page on digital inclusion, but also the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. Which is an external organization, but a great resource for digital inclusion, information, best practices, and networking.

1:21:25

So, those are two places for digital inclusion information. This is not an infrastructure project, so there's really no need for permitting. But we have a great permitting page as well.

1:21:36

Those are some of the ones off the top of my head, but it's a good place to explore. As I said, we've just kind of updated the look and feel of it, and it's a good place to come back to, because we're going to be continuing to increase the content. If you want to be on our mailing list, so that you get news about, also, there's a grants page, of course. If you want to be on the mailing list, so that you get information about our news as it comes up. Then, you can send us an e-mail at BroadbandUSA@NTIA.doc.gov and we will be putting that e-mail address on the last page of the webinar.

1:22:18

Gilbert Resendez:

Thank you very much Karen.

1:22:21

Francine Alkisswani:

Also, you can go to broaden horizons at SHLB.org. But Karen, say what you said again. Schools, libraries, hospitals...

Karen Perry:

It's Schools, Health, & Libraries Broadband Coalition.

1:22:47

Francine Alkisswani:

Thank you. And there are many case studies and resources, as well.

1:22:56

Gilbert Resendez:

Also, a great resource for applicants, or anyone listening to this webinar, just wanting to learn more. Scott, I have one more application question for you that I thought was interesting in the Q&A box. I know we talk a bit about consortia.

1:23:12

Who can apply under that program, and we indicated that it can be part, it can be an institution of higher education partnered with, a qualifying institution of higher education, of course, partnered with the Minority Business Enterprise, or a 501(c)(3) non-profit? Can it be both? Could a project partner with an HBCU, or other sort of MSI, or an MBE and a 501(C)(3) not-profit?

1:23:43

Scott Woods:

Yeah, thank you for that question. You know, the authorizing statute says, "or". Consortia have to be led by either an HBCU, TCU, or MSI. And then it says or MBE or tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization. So again, you know, we are we're bound by limits of the authorizing statute, but we do have some programmatic leeway to interpret and apply the program.

1:24:14

So again, you know, just by common understanding of the terms and phrases used in the authorizing statute, it does say "or" not "and".

1:24:24

But again, one of the good things that we're looking forward to is conducting stakeholder outreach and engagement and really capturing innovative approaches.

1:24:34

So, we don't want to be so dogmatic and bureaucratic and be defined by words. We want to ensure that we're making the greatest impact that we can amongst the institutions and the community. So, stay tuned for our upcoming outreach. And we'll plan more events, like this. More webinars, more stakeholder outreach. And, again, we're committed to innovative approaches, not to get bogged down in dogmatic interpretations of it, including whether or not we have license to called it an inclusive, or?

1:25:12

Francine Alkisswani:

Absolutely. No, one or the other, Or both.

1:25:17

Scott Woods:

We'll take it right? Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah.

1:25:22

Gilbert Resendez:

Thank you. The next set of questions that I'd have are around merit reviews, and I spent a little bit of time at the end of our presentation talking about merit reviewers, the merit review process. Where can individuals go if they want to learn more about volunteering, or if they're interested in volunteering as a merit reviewer, what's the next step for them to take?

1:25:44

Scott Woods:

Those are covered in the presentation. You can send an e-mail to grantreviewer@NTIA.gov, but we also have a site on our website.

1:25:53

So, there's a slide in the presentation. There's a hyperlink. You can search our site on there for a grant reviewer, merit reviewer or call for merit reviewer. We have a governing call for merit reviewer memo that's posted on our site. That has all of the details that we're looking for. And again, I just encourage everyone here just to consider being a merit reviewer, because, you know, we really can make some changes in the lives of students and communities. And so, we're looking for a really good merit review team to really review and recommend applications to move forward in the CMC process.

1:26:36

Gilbert Resendez:

Thank you. Can you talk a little bit more about what the time commitment for a merit reviewer looks like? Are we still too early to determine that?

1:26:45

Scott Woods:

It is generally early. Dr. Alkisswani talked a little bit about it in her presentation. You know, we're looking at that time period from August to October. Merit reviewers would have between around 10-20 applications. Again, we don't know the exact number yet.

1:27:04

You know, but there is precise process that we're working on for the merit review team. It won't be a lot of time. But, it's definitely worth your while, and will definitely will have an impact. Dr. Alkisswani, would you like to talk a little bit more or elaborate more of the information that you provided on your version of the presentation.

Francine Alkisswani:

1:27:27

Well, it is an intense process, I will say that. It would be an investment of about a week of a reviewer's time. And, as you said, that 10 or 12 to 20 proposals each would be looking at and then a panel to discuss them. I think it will be a 2-to-4-hour panel discussion of them, of the proposals that have been under review. And that is the outline of the commitment that we'd be expecting from, in terms of time commitment, to this process.

Scott Woods:

Yes. Our processes and procedures for merit review, we'll cover all of that once the merit review teams are in place. So, if you are selected as a reviewer, everything will be clear from A to Z. The only thing you will use is your expertise. Yes.

1:28:29

Francine Alkisswani:

Now those are our best guesstimates as to the amount of time but we'll know more clearly as we move along in the process.

Karen Perry:

Gilbert, somebody did ask for us to drop those names in the chat, the organization names, and they are in the chat if anybody wants to scoop them up.

1:28:46

Gilbert Resendez:

Great. Thank you very much, Karen. Again, it's the School, Health, & Library Broadband Coalition and NTIA National Digital Inclusion Alliance. Thank you dropping those in the chat Karen.

1:28:59

With that, I think that concludes our Q&A section. Thank you, Scott, Karen and Francine. I appreciate your time with us here today and talking to our audience a little bit more about the Connecting Minority Community Pilot Program.

1:29:12

I believe we have a couple more slides to wrap up with. We'll be continuing these webinars throughout the summer. We have the schedule here. The schedule can also be found on our website, at <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/events/past-events>.

1:29:37

All of them will start at 2:30 Eastern but they vary on what day and what topics being covered. Each grant has two webinars a week on a designated week. I think there's one more slide, I believe.

1:29:56

Just thank you to everyone for attending today. As Karen and I mentioned throughout this webinar slide, a transcript and a recording of this webinar will be available on our website around, on or before May 12th. Please visit our website, <https://broadbandUSA.ntia.doc.gov>, or send us an e-mail. Our e-mail is there on the screen. And, again, thank you to everyone for attending this afternoon from myself, and thank you to our panelists.

Scott Woods:

1:30:28

Thank you very much.

Francine Alkisswani:

1:30:33

Thank you again, everyone.

Gilbert Resendez:

1:30:37

Thank you, everyone.

END TRANSCRIPT.