

IJA Broadband Grant Programs Public Virtual Listening Session #3
Moderator: Margaret Gutierrez
January 26, 2022

Carole Garner

0:11

Hello, and thank you for joining us today. We will begin shortly.

0:14

Due to the format of a webinar, we do regret that the phone dial in audio is not available for the first 25 minutes of this webinar. This is the recorded portion of our webinar. The remainder of the webinar will be available if you'd like to comment during our listening session portion and you are on a dial in phone, you will be able to do that.

0:40

If you would like to listen to the webinar on your mobile device, you must download the GoToWebinar app for Android or Apple devices in order to hear the first portion of it.

0:50

If you are not able to download the app, rest assured, this webinar will also be available for on demand viewing at [broadband USA.gov/past-event](https://broadband.usa.gov/past-event), no later than February 7th.

1:17

Good morning, and good afternoon, everyone. We're excited to have you here for our third session of our IJA Broadband Programs Public Virtual Listening Series.

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

1:25

My name is Margaret Gutierrez, and I'm a broadband program specialist and the Tribal Connectivity and Nation to Nation co-ordination Department at NTIA's Office of Internet Connectivity, and Growth.

1:34

I will be the moderator for today's session.

1:36

Before we get started, let's quickly review key housekeeping items. First, the presentation, along with a transcript and recording of today's session, will be available on the BroadbandUSA website within seven days under the event's Past Events tab.

1:50

If at any time you are having technical issues with our platform, please use the Q&A box to send a message to our event organizers, or you can send an e-mail to broadbandforall@NTIA.gov.

2:01

Today, we're excited to have so many of you join us, represented a wide array of stakeholder groups to provide input on our broadband equity access and deployment program, also known as BEAD.

2:11

Our collaborations and your input will be key factors in the success of these programs, and we will open the mic to hear from as many participants as we can.

2:18

Again, your constructive feedback is critical to our next steps of designing and implementing these programs. Given our time constraints, however, it will not be possible to hear from everyone who would like to speak. If we did not get to you, or if you would prefer to provide written comments, please feel free to provide your input on the discussion questions, or today by submitting them in the Q&A box in the GoToWebinar module or by e-mailing them to broadband for all at NTIA dot gov at any time.

2:44

With that said, let's go over today's agenda.

2:47

We will start by hearing from Alan Davidson, our Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information and NTIA Administrator who will provide some welcoming remarks.

2:56

Next, Doug Kinkoph, the Associate Administrator of the Office of Internet Connectivity and growth at NTIA, we'll provide a quick welcome and request for comment and update.

3:05

Nick Alexander, an NTIA Senior Telecommunications Policy Analyst, will provide a high-level overview of the NTIA's BEAD program.

3:13

Julia Pulidindi the Broadband program specialist here at NTIA, will review our BEAD policy questions that we're going to be asking you for feedback on today.

3:21

During our final segment, we will launch the Listening Session, which I will moderate. I will provide, additionally, detailed on that later.

3:28

And with that, let's get started.

3:31

I have the honor of introducing to you our new Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information and NTIA Administrator Alan Davidson. Alan is an internet policy expert with over 20 years of experience as an executive, public interest advocate, technologist, and attorney. He was most recently a Senior Advisor at the Mozilla Foundation, a global non-profit that promotes openness, innovation, and participation on the Internet.

3:55

He was previously Mozilla's Vice President of Global Policy, Trust and Security, where he led public policy and privacy teams promoting an open Internet and a healthy web. Alan served in the Obama/Biden Ministry Administration as the first Director of Digital Economy at the US. Department of Commerce. He started Google's Public Policy Office in Washington, DC, leading government relations and policy in North and South America for seven years until 2012. Alan has been a longtime leader in the Internet non-profit community serving as Director of New America's Open Technology Institute, where he worked to promote equitable broadband access and adoption. As associate director of the Center for Democracy and Technology, Alan was an advocate for civil liberties and human rights online in some of the earliest internet policy debates.

4:41

I will now turn it over to Alan.

Alan Davidson, Assistant
Secretary of Commerce

4:49

Thank you, and welcome, everyone, to today's Virtual Listening Session! I am excited and grateful to be joining you as the new head of NTIA at a time of great promise for our country. We have a once in a generation opportunity in front of us to close the digital divide and bring high speed affordable Internet to millions. President Biden, when he took Office, declared that bringing affordable, high-speed Internet to every American, is as critical in the 21st century as rural electrification and universal water systems were in an earlier generation. He and Commerce Secretary Raimondo worked with Congress and delivered the bipartisan infrastructure law. A historic investment to fix our nation's aging infrastructure, create jobs, address inequities, and invest in American competitiveness. The Commerce Department that I joined this month is eager and ready to take on our role in implementing the infrastructure law. Today, our conversation will focus on a portion of this landmark law that contains the lion's share of funding for affordable, high-speed Internet.

6:04

But it's called the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment or BEAD Program. You'll hear that term a lot. The BEAD program includes almost \$42.5 billion for states, territories, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and others to use for broadband deployment, mapping, and adoption projects. States will receive an initial allocation of up to \$5 million to support planning efforts, including building capacity in state broadband offices and outreach and coordination with local communities. States will then have to submit a 5 year action plan, which should be informed by collaborations, with local and regional entities. Then the funding will be distributed based on a formula that considers the number of unserved and high cost locations in the state and based on the maps to be developed and published by the FCC in 2022.

7:04

NTIA has also developed deep relationships with States and Territories through the State Broadband Leaders Network. I was able to attend their meeting a meeting of the network just yesterday and I am heartened by the close collaborations being forged through that work. We know that states have been

working diligently to build their capacity to support broadband expansion, and their efforts will be instrumental in the success of this program.

7:33

Our purpose in this meeting today is to get your feedback. It's essential if we're going to begin shaping the programs that are going to connect all Americans to reliable, affordable, and highspeed internet. Earlier this month, we also released a request for comment on many of the broadband programs and infrastructure law. That's another great chance for you to make your voice heard and ensure that we know what's really happening on the ground as we design these programs.

8:01

The deadlines for comments in that request are, is February 4th, coming up soon? We encourage you all to participate and stay tuned for more about this request. You'll hear more about it later in our program. I don't think I'll say is just that this is a pivotal moment. The path that we set in the coming months, the choices that we make, will have a huge impact on how competitive and how equitable our economy will be for decades to come. We can't do this alone.

8:32

We look forward to hearing from you, the stakeholders in this space, today, and in the weeks and months to come. Thank you.

8:45

Our NTIA is thrilled to have you on board, as we implement these historic programs, and thank you to all of you for joining us today on NTIA's third Listening Session on the BEAD Broadband Program. I would like to remind everyone that responses to NTIA's request for comments are due on February 4th. We recognize there are a lot of questions. You do not have to answer all of them. You can, if you wish, or you can just answer the ones that are pertinent to your area of interest. Please submit comments through [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov). In addition, we are holding these listening sessions as another way of gathering input from all the stakeholders. We have two more listening sessions on our middle mile, On February 9th and one on digital equity on February 23rd. Please plan to join us for both of these programs.

9:36

Now, I would like to introduce Nick Alexander, who is a Senior Telecommunications Policy Analyst with the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth. Nick will now provide a deep dive of the broadband Equity Access and Deployment program.

9:49

Thank you for joining us today. Nick, over to you.

9:58

Thank you, Doug. My name is Nicolas Alexander. I'm a Senior Telecommunications Policy Analyst with the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth and I will be providing an overview of the BEAD program. The BEAD program will provide \$42.5 billion for infrastructure planning and

Doug Kinkoph, Associate
Administrator, Office of Internet
Connectivity and Growth, NTIA

Nick Alexander, Senior
Telecommunications
Policy Analyst, Office
of Internet
Connectivity and
Growth NTIA

implementation. The official name of the program is the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program. Funding pool \$42.5 billion type of programs at the state and territory formula program. And the objective is to close the availability gap as Congress finds that access to affordable, reliable, high speed broadband is essential to full participation in modern life in the United States. The priorities of the Bead Program focus on unserved and underserved, then eligible community anchor institutions. Unserved locations have no access at all or access to broadband under 25 megabits per second down three megabits per second up. Underserved locations have no access to broadband at 100 down and 20 up, and then community anchor institutions are considered unserved if they do not have gigabit connections. Eligible entities also must prioritize persistent poverty and high poverty areas. Speed of the proposed network, build time, and demonstrated record on compliance with federal labor and employment laws. States and certain US territories are eligible for funding under the program.

11:30

Eligible entities are defined as the 50 US states, the District of Columbia, and the five US territories and Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The Act specifies several eligible costs and activities that are possible uses of BEAD funds. Planning and pre deployment funds: no more than 5% of the minimum allocation, which we'll discuss later. Include research and data collection, the development of preliminary budget for pre-planning activities, publications, outreach, and communication support, provision of technical assistance, employee training for eligible entity or political subdivision staff, establishing operating or increasing capacity in the eligible entities' office responsible for the program. Grant and deployment funds can be used for unserved and underserved service projects, connecting eligible community anchor institutions, data collection, broadband mapping and planning, broadband adoption, including affordable device provision, installing Internet and WI fi infrastructure, or providing reduced cost broadband and multi-family residential buildings, and any use determined necessary by the Assistant Secretary to achieve the program's goals. Note that eligible entities can use no more than 2% of the total funding allocation for administrative purposes.

13:02

There are three key steps for eligible entities to receive funding, as well as one additional optional step. After the NOFO is released, eligible entities will have to decide whether participate, and if they choose to do so, they need to submit a letter of intent to NTIA. At that point, there's an optional step. Eligible entities may elect via a letter of intent to access planning funds and receive 5% of their minimum allocation up to \$5 million states. If they do so, they must develop a 5 year action plan. After NTIA, notifies eligible entities at their estimated allocations, eligible entities will prepare and submit their initial proposal or plan. NTIA will review those plans and once they are approved, 20% or more of each state or territories allocation will be awarded.

13:58

After initial proposals or are approved, eligible entities need to develop and submit their final proposals or plans, NTIA will review the final proposals or plans. If once they are approved, the remaining allocation of funding will be awarded. Eligible entities will then sub grant for implementation and regularly monitor the process if their sub grantees and contractors.

14:26

With respect to the letter of intent, there are a set of possible requirements established in the act. In order to participate, eligible entities must submit a letter of intent to the Assistant Secretary in the form and with the contents as the assistant Secretary prescribes. The contents may include details of the existing broadband program, or the office of the eligible entity, to include current activities of the program or office, prior awards, existing plans, and goals, or other funding to include the amount of funding that the eligible entity has available for broadband deployment, or other broadband related activities, and the sources of that funding. Details on the number of full-time and part-time employees of the eligible entity, who will assist in administering the funds, and the duties assigned to those employees, as well as details of relevant contracted support. Details of the goals of the eligible entity for the use of the funds, and the process that the eligible entity will use to distribute to sub grantees, as well as a timeline, and plans for oversight and reporting requirements.

15:37

Identification of known barriers or challenges to developing and administering grants received under the program. Identification of additional capacity needed by eligible entities to implement the requirements, including enhancing the capacity of the broadband or program office, hiring additional employees, or obtaining additional contract support, acquiring additional programmatic information or data through surveys or asset inventories.

16:06

An explanation of how the capacity needs described above were identified and how funds may be used to address those needs. Details of any relevant partners, such as organizations that may inform broadband deployment and adoption planning, and any other information deemed relevant by the Assistant Secretary. With respect to the 5 year plan, an eligible entity that receives planning funds shall submit a 5 year action plan to the Assistant Secretary. This plan must be informed by collaborations with local and regional entities. In detail, investment priorities, associated cost and the alignment plan to spending with economic development telehealth and other related connectivity goals. The Assistant Secretary will establish requirements for the plan, potentially including mandates designed to address local and regional needs for Broadband service and the eligible entity.

Proposed deployment solutions for affordable broadband service.

17:03

Include localized data with respect to the development of broadband service and the eligible entity, including by identifying locations that should be

prioritized for federal support with respect to that deployment. Ascertain how best to serve unserved locations in the eligible entity, whether through the establishment of co-operatives or public private partnerships.

17:24

Identify the technical assistance needed to carry out the plan. And assess the amount of time it would take to build out a universal broadband service in the eligible entity.

17:35

After the assistant secretary issues, notices of available amounts to eligible entities, each eligible entity must submit an initial proposal using the online application to be developed by the assistant secretary. That outlines the long term objectives of deploying broadband, closing the digital divide, and enhancing economic growth and job creation, including where applicable information developed by the eligible entity as part of the five year action plan submitted, and information from any comparable strategic plan, otherwise developed by the eligible entity. Identifies an outline: steps to support local and regional broadband planning processes, or other ongoing efforts to deploy broadband or close the digital divide. And subsequently describes co-ordination with both local and regional planning processes and local governments. Identifies existing efforts funded by the federal government or a state within the jurisdiction of the eligible entity to deploy broadband and close the digital divide.

18:37

Includes a plan to competitively award sub grants to ensure timely broadband deployment. Identifies each unserved and underserved location in each eligible community anchor institution within the jurisdiction of the eligible entity. Certifies the eligible entities intent to comply with all applicable requirements. Eligible entities must also meet local co-ordination requirements as established by the Assistant Secretary. After an eligible entities initial proposal is approved, the eligible entity may submit a final proposal using the online application, that includes a detailed plan that specifies how the eligible entity will first allocate grant funds for the deployment of broadband networks to unserved locations and underserved locations, and, second, align the grant funds allocated to the eligible entity where practicable with the use of other funds that the eligible entity receives from the federal government, state, or private entity for related purposes. A timeline for implementation. Processes for oversight and accountability to ensure proper use of the funds allocated to the eligible entity. A description of co-ordination with local governments, along with local and regional broadband planning processes.

19:58

In this stage, eligible entities also must meet local co-ordination requirements established by the Assistant Secretary and, to the greatest extent practicable, align the use of grant funds proposed in the final proposal with funds available from other federal programs that support broadband deployment and access.

20:20

Funds appropriated for the BEAD program are allocated through three buckets after the broadband data maps are released. First, high cost areas. 10% of the total amount is appropriated allocated to eligible entities based on their share of unserved locations in high cost areas in the US. Second, minimum initial allocations. \$100 million is allocated to each state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. \$100 million is allocated to and then divided equally among the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Third, allocation of remaining funds. After allocating funds in buckets 1 and 2, the amount remaining shall be allocated across eligible entities based on their share of unserved locations in the United States.

21:19

The Act sets several key requirements, such as local co-ordination, for participation in this program. They include local co-ordination. Secretary shall establish local co-ordination requirements for eligible entities to follow in the initial and final proposal stages. At a minimum, these will include an opportunity for political subdivisions of an eligible entity to submit plans for consideration by the eligible entity. And an opportunity for political subdivisions of an eligible entity to comment on the initial and final proposals of the eligible entity before submission to the Assistant Secretary.

21:59

There's a matching requirement. Eligible entities must ensure that they or a sub grantee provide at least 25% matching contribution derived from non-federal funds, except in high cost areas or as otherwise provided in the act. Unless a waiver or a reduction in this match is requested by the eligible entity or sub grantee granted by the assistant secretary.

22:24

There's also a challenge process. After submitting an initial proposal and before allocating grant funds received for deployment, an eligible entity shall ensure a transparent, evidence based and expeditious challenge process by which a unit of local government, non-profit organization or other broadband service provider can challenge the determination made by the eligible entity in the initial proposal as to whether a particular location or community anchor institution within the jurisdiction of the eligible entity is eligible for the grant funds, including whether a particular location is unserved or underserved.

23:03

The Act also sets many deployment and service requirements for sub grantees. Among the service requirements are a speed requirement, speed must be no less than 100 megabits per second down and 20 megabits per second up.

23:18

A latency requirement. Providers must provide service for the latency that is sufficiently low to allow reasonably foreseeable, real-time, interactive applications.

23:29

An outage requirement. Networks must provide service with network outages that do not exceed on average 48 hours over any 365 day period.

23:40

And availability requirement. Providers must provide access to each customer, served by the project that desires broadband service, and providers must provide service compliant with cybersecurity and supply chain risk management practices to be specified by NTIA.

23:59

Other key requirements include a low-cost broadband service option, providers are required to offer at least one low cost plan option to eligible subscribers, the definition of which is proposed by the eligible entities and approved by NTIA.

24:16

Providers must deploy the network and begin offering service within 4 years of receiving funds, unless needing a specified exception. Once the network is deployed, the providers must provide public notice online and through other means of the fact that the locations and areas to which broadband services provided. In addition, they must carry out public awareness campaigns and service areas to highlight the value and benefits of broadband service to increase adoption.

24:48

Further, any project that involves the laying of fiber optic cable or conduit underground or along a roadway shall include interspersed conduit access points at regular and short intervals.

25:04

Closing the digital divide requires adoption, as well as access, as evidenced by the program's name, the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program. Promoting digital equity is critical to the success of the program. It's highlighted by Congress, quote the persistent digital divide in the United States as a barrier to the economic competitiveness of the United States, and equitable distribution of essential public services, including health care and education. The digital divide disproportionately affects communities of color, lower income areas and rural areas, and the benefits of broadband should be broadly enjoyed by all. As a result, Congress created adjacent digital equity programs the Digital Equity Act and the IJA created \$2.75 billion dollars, three, new digital equity programs, state planning grant programs, state capacity grant programs, and competitive grant programs.

26:01

So, with that, I will turn it over to Julia.

26:05

Thanks, Nick.

26:06

My name is Julia Pulidindi, Broadband Program Specialist, in the Office of Internet Connectivity, and Growth at NTIA.

Julia Pulidindi,
Broadband Program
Analyst, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

26:13

Today, for our listening session, we'll be going over the four following questions.

26:19

1. What criteria should sub grantees are required to meet to demonstrate that they are financially, technically, and operationally capable of deploying and operating broadband network infrastructure pursuant to the BEAD program?

26:32

2. How should NTIA defined the term “eligible subscriber” for purposes of the BEAD program’s low-cost broadband service option requirement?

3. To what extent should BEAD funding be utilized to fund deployment of middle mile infrastructure?

4. And our final question is: What processes and requirements should NTIA put in place to ensure transparency, accountability, and oversight of BEAD funding?

26:58

Without further ado, we'll pass it off to Margaret to moderate the discussion.

27:08

Thank you to all of our speakers today. Now we will start the part that everyone has been waiting for the listening portion of our session.

27:15

Let's go over a few logistics and then we'll get started. This conversation will be structured around the four questions Julia just reviewed. If you would like the opportunity to provide verbal comments, please see the instructions on your screen. If you are joining us from your computer or on the GoToWebinar mobile app, please use the raise your hand feature on the GoToWebinar module to indicate you would like to speak. If you are utilizing dial in phone audio only, and do not have access to the GoToWebinar module, please press star six to indicate you would like to speak, our event organizers will send you a private message when it is nearing your time, provide input.

27:47

When I call your name, your mic will be unmuted, and you will have the opportunity to speak. Please begin by providing your name and organization you represent. Important to note, we will have to limit comments to 1 to 2 minutes each, so please keep comments brief to allow time for others to also weigh in. During that 1 to 2 minute window, you may respond to one or more of the questions on the screen. At any time, you can also provide written comments in regards, to the proposed questions. You can do that by either submitting them via the Q&A box on the GoToWebinar module, or you can e-mail them directly to broadbandforall@NTIA.gov Please remember that this time is for you to provide input on the questions we are collecting input on today.

28:24

We ask that you please do not use the Raise your Hand feature to ask questions about the IJA broadband programs, if you have any specific questions. Please

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

send those to broadbandforall@NTIA.gov or submit them to the Q&A box. Again, if we do not have a chance to get to you to provide verbal comments during this listening session, we still want to hear from you. Your thoughts are very important to us, and we are taking all your input seriously, so please submit your written comments to broadbandforall@NTIA.gov, if time runs out, so that we collect them. With that, let's begin.

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

29:30

All right, so let's start answering some of these questions, first up as Paul G.

30:16

Margaret, I showed that Paul should be able to speak, but I'm not sure if he's hearing us or not.

30:26

All right. Why don't we move on to Jim or Cathy and then we'll come back to Paul.

Jim Mercante,
Southern Chester
Country PA

30:38

OK, I'm really interested in question number two I am in southern Chester County, which is in the State of Pennsylvania. We started a digital assessment project as a local community organization and we are trying to get maps for broadband coverage in our particular area, which is very, very difficult. We also started a digital literacy program, is eligible subscriber just for political entities or, if local organizations partner with community and county organizations, would they be considered eligible subscribers for the purposes of the BEAD Program?

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

31:54

OK, sorry, I lost video, but I'm still here. Thank you for that question.

32:11

Paul G Are you able to come up? Paul G, can you hear me?

32:43

I don't think we have Paul. Sorry, you will be up after Elizabeth. Elizabeth, go ahead.

33:22

Hello?

Alex Beaty

33:26

Hello, Is this, Elizabeth? So, this is this is Alex Beaty, for some reason I thought that myself and my co-worker were on, but I must have connected to this with her invitation, but she's my manager. So, I have a question, um, related to question Number three. And basically, what I'm trying to figure out is, will the NTIA be utilizing census blocks as the basis for project areas?

34:12

OK, Thank you very much. We will document that question.

34:17

Seth Whitten, Are you available?

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

Carole Garner

34:27

You are unmuted. The next person after this is Tom Karst.

34:37

Seth, please unmute yourself if you'd like to speak.

34:55

Seth, would you like to speak. If you do, please unmute yourself.

35:13

I think while we're waiting for people to come off mute, I would like to reiterate that we're collecting input and feedback on the questions that you see on the screen. Any other questions will be collected and shared with our leadership, but we will not be answering questions today.

35:27

With that, Seth, if you are able to come off mute, and then Tom Karst you will be up next.

35:41

We can go to Tom. Tom is unmuted.

35:45

And Jeffrey Westling, you are up after Tom.

35:50

Thank you, Tom Karst, Centri-Tech. In regards to, Question two, we would recommend that in addition to eligible subscriber, eligible entity is also added with the various income restrictions that will most likely be applied to eligible subscriber. There is going to be a subset of affordable housing of income restricted housing of various government assistance programs, that if an entity, say a property manager or a developer, is made eligible for a subscription. That could bundle services, reduce costs overall, and provide a single simple-ish application that would both leverage existing programs, increase outreach, and getting help to more people. Thank you.

36:59

Thank you for your comments. Jeffrey Westling and you are up and Dave Schuman, you're up next?

37:05

Thanks. Yeah, this is Jeffrey Westling, Director of Tech and Innovation at the American Action Forum. My point is really just on the first question there about criteria to use. It's a pretty broad point, but I'll get through it pretty quickly. I just want the NTIA to be careful here as they're developing this criteria, that we don't foreclose, different technologies from participating. Especially on a technical question of whether they're capable of deploying and operating a broadband network. We've got a lot of new technologies that are coming in and really developing quickly. And I think it's really important to have those different services available for, different communities to find what best suits their needs. So, that's my main comment, I appreciate it. Thank you.

Margaret Gutierrez,
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and Growth, NTIA

Tom Karst, Centri-Tech

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

Jeffrey Westling,
Director of Tech &
Innovation American
Action Forum

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

37:44
Thank you very much for your comments, Dave Schuman, and Paul you are up next.

37:50
Yep.

Dave Schuman, UCL
Swift Americas

37:50
So I am, I'll take a pass, because my question was not relevant to these four questions. I heard that after I raised my hand and I try to undo my hand raised when I could not. I am good at the moment.

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

38:07
Thank you. Paul Narro, you are up and Timothy Hennessey you are up after.

38:17
Do you hear me?

38:19
Yes. This is Paul Narro and I'm the policy director for Tek Wave. For the first one, I would say that we have been doing a lot of work with Texas, we're based in Texas. But for number one, I really think that the NTIA should consider some of the other programs like the USDA. The FCC have required so that they, like financially, they do require, prior to auditors, auditor financials and then for the technical or they do require engineered samples of approvals. So, that way, they know that it's a well planned proposal. For the second one, the term eligible subscriber. I think a lot of work has been done for some of the other programs like EBB and that, know, that the SEA. And one of those things is, that makes it somebody up, subscriber eligible, is free reduced lunch program, snap, and things like that. So those are very basic things. I think the NTIA should probably look into, if they're eligible for a federal program like that, it should be eligible for subscribers. Then, sort of three. Middle mile, I think, should probably not be considered for BEAD just because there is a separate funding for middle mile projects. But it kind of takes away from the end users and getting those connections to the end user. Even though it is providing that needed infrastructure in those areas, you still have to have those connections to the homes as well. The transparency, oversight and accountability for BEAD, I think it would probably be very well for NTIA to keep track, require grantees or awardees to provide all the people that are connecting for, mapping purposes, and accountability, keeping, track of how the programs are going, maybe bi-annually reports to oversight funding.

Paul Narro, Tek Wave

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

41:23
Perfect. Thank you so much for your comments.

41:28
Timothy Hennessey, and then Juliana Bilowich.

41:36
Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Timothy Hennessey, and I'm with Spy Ego Media. We are a consultant for several Native American tribes across the

Timothy Hennessey, Spy
Ego Media

country. I think these are all great questions. We've had some really good feedback so far. Based on what the previous person said, I would say that we should probably look at having BEAD, not just be limited to providing some extra funds for middle mile, but also, potentially, consider getting all the way in fiber to the premise. I don't think we're going to have enough funding in many areas with everything that's even available to really make a difference in some places, so any funds that are available are going to be needed. Those are going to be some of the most critical places that we can put infrastructure in place and get as close as we are ever to actually future proofing something.

42:21

But the main thing I wanted to comment on here is we've been very fortunate with chat group and the broadband program out of Montana, to have them entertain a request. We have for a feature. They're going to add to their broadband map. I personally think with question number four, that transparency is going to provide accountability and oversight. So many different states and other entities are creating broadband maps, In addition to what's available for NTIA and FCC, the more APIs and programs that can speak to one another, the more information that's available, the more consensus on the data that's there, the better you're able to see the results of the program and all the initiatives that people are putting together. I imagine that, over the next couple of years, these are all going to evolve and they might as well evolve together, and being that these are going to be pretty much public access material, it's got to provide transparency, and if its results are accurate, you're going to have accountability. And it's also going to then provide a mechanism for oversight. So, thank you very much for your time.

43:25

Thank you so much for your comments.

43:27

Juliana, and then Paul Gee will be up next.

43:37

Wonderful, thanks so much for hosting these sessions. I'm with LeadingAge, which is an organization that represents housing providers who serve older adults with low incomes. So essentially, we're taking a look at this investment or excited about it. In terms of how it can reach older adults who don't have a lot of resources and are really disconnected from digital access right now. And one of the issues that we've seen in the past, most recently, with the FCC's efforts on the emergency broadband benefit – now the affordable connectivity program – was some terminology that essentially created barriers for certain participants in certain affordable housing programs to gain easy access. Which is, I think, the opposite of what everybody wanted, right?

44:30

This is in response to a question number two here, if, and somebody already mentioned this, right, the idea of affordable housing and its role in the in these dollars. Currently, some of the language that's used federally in digital access

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

Juliana Bilowich,
LeadingAge

programs references programs, like affordable housing, in terms of public housing only. There are other very similar programs like multi-family housing that serves the same kinds of people and yet there more barriers in that space. So really encourage inclusive language.

44:59

We're looking at eligible subscribers and we'll put this all in writing to you all as well, and echo what a previous person said about entities as well. Not just subscribers because that could mean a whole housing community could become eligible and provide low cost service to all of their residents at once and it would be a more streamlined process. That's been a real barrier in the past, and similarly, not asking subscribers to recertify their income, even though they already do that for a number of other federal assistance programs. Using those same definitions in the same access points. Question number one. We'd really like NTIA to consider a requirement for organizations entities that there would be eligible sub grantees to already have established that they work in areas of underserved access, so that this is an effort to increase the equity and diversity.

45:57

And then lastly, number four, you know this idea of how will folks get access to these funds and entities access to the funds, and then, how will they be held accountable?

46:11

And we could recommend something like point system application, where an entity, for example, gets more points if their plan is to serve certain demographics of the populations, is another effort, and diversity. And then annually if they're certifying that they did, in fact, meet that plan to serve different demographics. Or, they essentially lose access to the funds. So, those are some of our ideas. But, again, we'll put this in writing. Thank you.

46:37

Thank you so much for that. Paul Gee you are up and then Lori White, you are on deck.

46:45

Thank you very much for coming back to me. I'll keep this short. I think it's important in question number four, about, you know, who should be getting this money, and how do we have transparency and accountability. That is, to understand that this is a long time coming. This has been the digital divide created by the incumbent providers over the last 25 years. You just have to look at who paid for fiber optic cables that are currently on the ground. The answer is the people of the United States paid for it with a \$5 to \$7 per month charge added to all of our landline phone bills. That money was misappropriated and spent instead of building out the 4G LTE network. This is all in the FCC's public records. This is easily found.

47:23

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

Paul Gee, Wire
America

You cannot allow any of these companies to qualify for any of these funds, because they have already exercised bad faith in creating the digital divide. What you need to do, is make sure that all of this money goes to the local areas, to make sure they can have their own municipal broadband. The most efficient and best way and future proof way obviously is fiber optic to the premises. Wireless is hazardous as known by August 13th, 2021 decision of the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. The FCC must do environmental review on every cell tower in order to continue forward. They haven't done so. So that is a hazardous solution that it is not necessary.

47:58

We need fiber everywhere, that's the point, we can do it locally, not through the incumbents. That's how you get good pricing. Hey, giving people money to then hand over to companies who aren't billions of dollars is not an efficient use of tax dollars. Give those tax dollars to the local communities so they can give service at a fraction of the cost. And now, the costs are lower. We're going to take the money back out from the companies and give it back to the people. That's what we need. Thank you.

48:23

Thank you, Paul. Lori White, you are up, and Anna Higgins's next.

48:35

Lori we saw that you put your hand, and we just wanted to make sure that that wasn't by accident. No, it wasn't.

48:40

OK, thank you. Anna Higgins and then Leonardo Wassilie.

49:21

Great, thank you. My name is Anna Higgins. I'm a Project and Policy Advisor from the Internet Society. I want to echo some comments that I heard earlier. First on being open to new technology regarding a question one. First, being open to new technologies, depending on what communities need. I would also encourage NTIA to be welcoming to community run and operated networks. It's really important that communities and their needs are at the center of broadband deployment, and in the case that a larger entity that's external to the community is working with the community, they need to show that they are engaged with planning, with the community, from the very start, even from the letter of intent stage, and it's really important that they need to be hiring local capacity as well. Thank you.

50:07

Thank you, Anna. Leonardo Wassilie you are up and then Keith Moore you're up after.

50:42

Hello, my name Leonardo Wassilie. I'm from Nenana Alaska, and I definitely want to echo some of the comments made earlier. Especially, for creating

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Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
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and Growth, NTIA

Anna Higgins, Internet
Society

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
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and Growth, NTIA

Leonardo Wassilie,
Salmonberry Tribal
Associates

sustainable jobs in our communities and ensuring that the funding goes to our communities first and in our community organizations, or non-profits, or for-profits. Making sure communities have the ability to sustain these programs and our communities have people who have viable plans to meet these. I think giving priority to local communities and local organizations dedicates that funding towards the little guys and making sure that we'll spend it in our communities and create economic development and that's a huge part of it. Starting with our communities we're being transparent. Accountability should certainly include; showing up in the communities, and being involved in the tribal organizations, and the boards, or the local Chamber of Commerce, but there should definitely be a presence in the local communities in which these are being served. Thank you.

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

52:31

Thank you. Keith Moore, and then Brian Cornish your next.

52:47

Keith Moore, you can go ahead and come off of mute.

53:03

Brian Cornish, can you come off of mute?

Brian Cornish, Kansas
Fiber Network

53:09

I can, Brian Cornish, Kansas Fiber Network, I was going to comment on number three to what extent should be funding be utilized, different deployment of middle mile infrastructure. Last mile and middle mile infrastructure are linked, they have a symbiotic relationship. We can build last mile infrastructure and a new community, but you need middle mile infrastructure to provide service across that network. Every environment is going to be different. But being here in Kansas, as you look at underserved rural markets, middle mile becomes a bigger factor in a project than say, an urban area. So, I think a middle mile infrastructure where needed. But it's a critical component, and I think it's a necessary element for the project to be successful. Thank you.

Thank you. Patrick Coady and then Deborah Watts you're on Deck.

54:28

Patrick Cody, retired Executive Director of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Authority, which is a public broadband authority. I'll address number three first, on the middle mile. To a degree, as the previous speaker said, middle mile also needs a little bit of definition itself. Our network consists, basically, of middle mile distribution to the premise, but our true middle mile is actually our backbone because it's the only way you can get off the shore to get internet connectivity. And then due to the geography. We have a lot of middle mile that stretches out next, divided by creeks, in order to serve the so-called last mile. I was re-muted for some reason. So middle mile will need to be funded in some areas or you're not building a complete network. That will be a definition you're going to have to work with and wrestle with.

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

Patrick Cody, Executive
Director of the Eastern
Shore of VA
Broadband Authority

55:46

On number four, let me address transparency in terms of funding more to the front end on the award. And that is we've been in a situation here where under the challenge process, such as you have incumbents have challenged funding. They are claiming that unserved or underserved areas are in fact served and at the same time put them under confidential restrictions so that the applicant for the grant can't see what areas are being challenged. They're being told in the challenge process that they have to defend their application against an invisible opponent. Instead of those challenges being thrown out on the face of them, they've been allowed. In terms of transparency, mapping is going to be a huge headache because the maps are still awful. I'm not talking about the old FCC map. Our states have recently done some new mapping and while it's closer defined than the old FCC maps, it's still equally inaccurate, because they haven't actually done site surveys as to who has service and who doesn't. The mapping will be a big issue, along with this transparency of challenges. There has to be a way to enforce, that the maps are challengeable and are accurate and if the challenges are hidden, then they've got to be dismissed. Thank you.

57:39

Thank you for your comments. Debra Watts you are up next. And then Alex Beaty you're on deck

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

57:49

And thank you, I'm Deborah White, I'm a partner in Broadband Catalyst a Broadband Planning Organization. Previously I was research and development director for 14 years for the state of North Carolina's broadband authority. I've worked with about, I don't know, close to half the states in the country, one way or another, or local communities within those states. Broadband planning with a focus on digital literacy, digital inclusion, more broadly speaking. My concern about this program and suggestions for addressing some of the deficiencies, though, I see have to do with too often the applications are exclusively focused on infrastructure and digital inclusion is an afterthought. It should be a requirement that they are done concurrently that plans should address both parts of that broadband equation, to ensure there's some progress on both and that you get the best return on investment for resources put into either initiative.

Deborah White,
Partner in Broadband
Catalyst

59:07

The second point is that something like, almost half of the States, have in place laws and restrictions, rules that restrict local governments ability to be directly involved in solving their local connectivity problems. At the very least, these are serious roadblocks, and at the least, it creates a lot of uncertainty. Governments, local governments are not clear exactly what they can do with federal funds and there's a lack of resonance between the federal guidelines that are coming down and the state guidelines. So, anything you can do to try and resolve that, provide some clarity to local governments, to give them some

guidelines on what to do, what are the best practices for identifying partners that do qualify that are eligible for your funds. We're working directly with the states to try and come up with solutions to get around some of these roadblocks. It really, creates barriers. A lot of the local governments that I work with are gun shy, and they don't have deep enough pockets to hire the legal assistance they need to challenge the state laws, and they end up not doing anything. If you want to really move the goalpost, we've got to address that, and if it's not a minor problem, like I said, it's over, I don't know, the number varies somewhere between 20 and 26 states have those sorts of rules in place, and it's, it's a real serious barrier.

1:00:47

And the other final point I would make is maybe shift the balance, and put more money into the digital inclusion side, and where the infrastructure is very expensive. We're at a point in a lot of places where even if the infrastructure is there it's not being used. So from an econometric point of view to get the greatest return on investment, you've got to put some more attention on the digital inclusion side of it. Thank you.

Margaret Gutierrez

1:01:15

Thank you. Alex Beaty you are up and then Patrick Messac, you're on deck.

1:01:21

Thank you. Can you hear me?

1:01:24

I can.

Alex Beaty, Conexon

1:01:25

Thank you so much. My first set of comments are related to, question number one about the criteria of sub grantees. I know we would recommend that a couple of things potentially be added to the sub grantee requirements. One of those being long term sustainability and reliability as well. Particularly related to matters, such as line of sight that can happen when there isn't a physical, fiber, or cable or physical infrastructure connected to the house. I definitely would recommend some sort of long-term sustainability requirements and reliability requirements. Also, I would like to bring up the issue of space, based networks versus a physical infrastructure to the home. There's a national security concern there with providing a physical network that is within US borders versus space based networks are a major security threat to American, United States National Security. That's my comment related to question number one. And, thank you so much, everyone, for putting this together.

My comments related question number four. I think this is really important is that, the burden of proof should be on incumbents to when they challenge the applications that you at NTIA receives local non monopolized companies that have a genuine challenge will be inclined to respond to challenges with real proof, such as speed tests while over extended monopolies we all know are guilty of exaggerating their service areas and will be exposed in this way, and that is going to be really important to actually closing the digital divide. I'm just

kind of echoing and piggyback on what other people have said, thank you so much, that's the extent of my comments. And I hope everyone has a wonderful day.

1:04:19

Thank you.

Margaret Gutierrez

1:04:20

Patrick Messac you're up and Stephanie Loving you are up next.

Patrick Messac,
Oakland Undivided

1:04:27

Hi, my name is Patrick Messac and I'm the Project Director for Oakland Undivided. A Collective Impact initiative to bridge the digital divide for Oakland's 36,000 unconnected households. I want to speak briefly on Point Number four and I'll be sure to follow up in more detail in my written comments. I think any measure of accountability needs to have some reporting of the number of households connected. In thinking about BEAD, this is the lion's share of the NTIA's funding for broadband access. And while urban areas can benefit a lot from the DEA, the much smaller component of the NTIA's funding formula if urban areas are excluded from 90% of the NTIA funding there are real equity issues at hand. The Statute's within the BEAD Grant seemed to have adopted the incumbent ISP talking point, that investment in digitally red lined urban centers where the majority of those suffering from the digital divide lives isn't overbilled. Looking at the slide today that presented the three priorities: First, unserved, underserved, and finally moving on to unconnected, I think we see some really misguided priorities. This is a racial justice issue. When you look at Oakland's most under connected communities and you compare it with the maps being used to determine funding it is an injustice. According to FCC ISP, self-reported data you would think that Oakland has some of the best connectivity in the country. When in reality, we're a duopoly that, the cost of data backhaul is up to 10 times as high as it is in other areas and we have scores of unconnected households that desperately need greater resources. We look to programs like BEAD to find solutions for our community.

1:06:35

Proximity to infrastructure does not predict access. We recognize that there are statutory limitations, however, and we see the best opportunity for us to bring more connection to the folks in Oakland thru the provision around multiple dwelling units. We will follow up in our written comments around the requests we have for what the NTIA should make clear, to ensure that we can use at least some of this BEAD funding to support our community but I do think it behooves us to take a big step back and ask ourselves if we're going to spend 90% of our funding on BEAD, is any of this money going to make it to the urban disconnected core? And I have real concerns about that if we're going to continue to rely on misleading data. Thank you.

1:07:31

Thank you. Stephanie Loving you are up and Betty Buckley, you are on deck.

1:07:42

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

Stephanie, can you come up with new? Yes. I came up with me, I, my apologies, I actually raised my hand an error.

1:07:49

Thank you.

1:07:51

Betty Buckley you are up and Charlie Hopkins you are next.

1:07:57

Good afternoon. Thank you for holding this Listening Session. This is Betty Buckley, and I'm the Executive Director of the Washington Independent Telecommunications Association. I also want to thank those who have parsed out the difference between large incumbent carriers and the little guys. I represent the little guys where private companies who have brought robust broadband to some very rural parts of Washington state, and there are many companies like this across the nation. I want to address two bits in your questions. The first is about criteria and I agree with one of the previous speakers who suggested that you look to other programs, such as the one at USDA that have been providing broadband deployment dollars for some time.

1:08:42

It's really helpful when there are consistent criteria across different programs so that when we're applying for these dollars, especially small companies, that don't have the huge capacity to make sure that we're getting all of the different requirements at the different programs, it's really helpful to have those be more consistent. One thing I would suggest is that, again, in favor of those, smaller communities, that are trying to get involved, as smaller companies that are trying to get involved, having a requirement that full engineering plans be provided as part of the application really prices some people out of that application process. There should be some level of design, but not completed engineering plans. Those can cost \$50,000 and more.

1:09:31

The other thing is about transparency, and I think it's important to ensure that potential challengers can see a complete application so we don't challenge grants that shouldn't be challenged. I agree that incumbents and existing providers also provide a good deal of information that the applicant can see, to ensure that there is that two-way communication about what's real and what's not, and what needs challenged, and what shouldn't be challenged. So, thank you again for your time.

Thank you for your comments. Charlie Hopkins you are up next. And then Mike Brace you're on deck.

1:10:14

OK, I would, just my name is Charlie Hopkins. I represent the broadband efforts of a small island community and the coast of Maine. My first points were, I just

Betty Buckley,
Executive Director of
the Washington
Independent
Telecommunications
Association

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

Charlie Hopkins, Isle au
Haut Broadband
Committee

want to echo what other people have been saying about, number three, about funding middle mile infrastructure. As you can imagine, an island community is at the end of the line, and our feed from the mainland could technically be considered middle mile, but without it we get nowhere. I would expect a lot of rural communities, you know, in the mid-west or, I guess one of the other commenters was talking about tribal lands, too, are pretty much the same. I've kind of characterize this as in other forums as the last middle mile kind of notation. I do believe the funding should be able to be utilized for that sort of middle mile infrastructure.

1:11:13

Number four, a previous comment was basically suggesting that we don't support any of the big guys doing everything you should go municipal, and that's all well and good if you are a municipality that can afford that but a small community like ours is not going to be able to afford that. We're well right now we're at the mercy of the large company that provides substandard service to us already. Unfortunately, they have the infrastructure, they have some infrastructure in place, so from efficiency, use of funds, continuing to help them and cajole them into working with this program is probably not a bad thing. Just the accountability needs to be there, and the oversight needs to be there. I guess that's pretty much what I have to say. Thank you.

1:12:08

Thank you for your comments.

1:12:09

Mike Brase you are up and then Seth Whitten you are up after.

1:12:16

OK, thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Mike Brase, calling from Fairbanks, Alaska. I'm the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Cloud Services at the University of Alaska. I'd like to speak to question number three today regarding middle mile. This is arguably the most important component of the BEAD program and that it has the potential to have the greatest impact with targeting broadband service delivery into areas previously unserved or underserved. Prioritizing middle mile service where it is effectively non-existent, or with very limited competition, should be a critical goal of this program. Given the investment of several last mile programs to provide assistance in affected areas and also specifically tribal lands, prioritizing middle mile infrastructure investments via this program should be absolutely a core component to make those investments meaningful and able to be delivered. A primary goal of this program should be to truly ensure that last mile investments are not effectively stranded by lack of meaningful middle mile service and that will be implemented in, such a way as to be both affordable and accessible at reasonable access points along the Middle Mile path. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Margaret Gutierrez,
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Mike Brase, Executive
Director of
Infrastructure & Cloud
Services at the
University of Alaska

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
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and Growth, NTIA

Seth Whitten,
Legislative Staffer for
Representative Bryce
Ajman

1:13:30

Thank you for your comments. Seth Whitten you are up and Stan Santos you are up after.

Hi, Yes. Can you hear me?

1:13:39

Excellent. My name is Seth Whitten and I am a legislative staffer for Representative Bryce Edgemon in the Alaska State House of Representatives. Bryce Edgemon represents House District 37, which is the Aleutian Pribilof Islands, and good section of the south-west portion of the state. We, as I'm listening to people, talk about, you know, end of the road, and, these sorts of things. We are one of the most rural areas of the country that you will hear from. I definitely echo some of what I've heard about ensuring that we're working with tribal partners. For us, we have a number of recognized tribes and villages throughout our district. In terms of sub grantees, some of some of our village and tribal entities have got more capacity than others, and so anything that we can do in terms of requirements on them, I don't know, but anything we can do to help them build capacity so that they're able to address these challenges in their communities and have meaningful input is going to be absolutely critical. The next thing I wanted to speak to was number three, the middle mile. I certainly echo the comments of the last gentleman from Fairbanks, funding the deployment of middle mile infrastructure is a critical piece of bridging the digital divide and some of the most rural areas of Alaska. I would encourage everyone to go back and read former FCC Chairman, Ajit Pai dissent of the Alaska plan, which was the FCC's plan for supporting broadband deployment back in 2015, 2016 and what Chairman Ajit Pai had to say back then, was: we had a once in a generation opportunity to solve Alaska's middle mile problem but rather than address the real flaws in the Alaska plan, the FCC, told tens of thousands of rural Alaskans to wait another 10 years for a shot at digital opportunities. You knew that was unacceptable back then and we have seen the consequences of that, so absolutely, the middle mile is critical. The last thing I wanted to say, is, just in terms of processes and requirements for transparency and accountability, I would echo the comments I've heard about accountability for the number of households that are connected. The FCC maps and I'm not telling you anything new. I say, the mapping practice of marking a census block served if there weren't household served, doesn't cut it for Alaska, and probably many other places in the country. The other thing just on that is where there is capacity. One of the things we've seen under the Alaska plan is where there is capacity, that capacity needs to be pushed out, we cannot artificially, and maybe not artificially, but it's expensive to build the middle mile network and it's expensive to provide service, but we have areas where there is capacity, if people just don't have access, because it's priced out. So where we have capacity doing whatever we can to make it accessible to people in those areas is going to be critical.

1:16:43

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

Thank you for your comments. Stan Santos, you are up and Lilibeth Gangas you are up after.

Stan Santos,
Communication
Workers of America

1:16:49

Yes, the Stan Santos with Communication Workers of America. Thank you for the opportunity. This is a great webinar. There are thousands of technician's who have been laid off from AT&T in recent years as AT&T started moving resources into other platforms, such as a provider of content, wireless offerings in video. Now, based on the investment, they see the opportunity to return to their core competencies and business divisions, which are still telecommunications data. They also have huge assets in dark fiber, which would be one method and a very strategic investment for States and for the Federal Government to make use of those public funds in lighting up that dark fiber. However, it would require due diligence, regulatory oversight, adherence to high road employment principles. One of the things that we stress is OSHA training, fiber optic and telecommunications certifications, and construction training. Those pass to a career would be really the building blocks for a whole new generation, young people and displaced workers who could have a future in the telecommunications industry, and advanced communications, but they have to cease the practice of throwing hard-working workers trained men and women out in the street every time they have a change in their business plan. This, again, I see this investment as the opportunity to create a new beginning for those peoples and they can change their lives and bring more people into this industry, which I believe promises exponential growth in the next span of time, 5 to 10 years. However, there has to be transparency and accountability and I hope that there's additional or actually increased oversight than there has been in the past. Thank you very much.

1:19:07

Thank you for your comments.

1:19:09

Lilibeth Gangas you are up and Dora Miranda you are on deck.

1:19:16

Can you hear me?

1:19:17

I can some great, thank you. My name is Lilibeth Gangas, I'm the Chief Technology Community Officer for the Kapor Center, which is a national foundation focused on increasing representation of Black, Latinos, and Indigenous and the tech economy from K through 12, all the way through workplace and entrepreneurship. I've been working very closely on the ground with the Oakland undivided team with the City of Oakland team and also working at the state level. One of my biggest concerns right now is that given that 73% of all the broadband federal monies being managed by the NTIA with no common equity centered framework being applied to a lot of this

Margaret Gutierrez,
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Specialist, Office of
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and Growth, NTIA

Lilibeth Gangas, Chief
Technology
Community Officer &
the Kapor Center

work. Specifically looking at the racial, the economic, their geographic equity, concerns me. We, as there was earlier, and we all know that the FCC maps overestimate the maps won't be ready by the time some of these awards will be done. I'm concerned that if there is not an equity framework that looks at specifically the income levels, whether it's urban or rural, looking at percentage of population being served. We know that some of the deployment, as was mentioned earlier, even though you may be in an urban area, but we have some of the highest poverty levels, specifically in East Oakland. I want to make sure that as this work is being applied, when you're looking at criteria, that there is some common equity focus criteria.

1:20:39

This is a once in a life, generational opportunity, to really end some of the digital discrimination that has been taking place by a lot of these for-profit organizations. I encourage you all to ask for more data transparency, specifically finding ways to have standardized datasets that can show us not just only who has access, but at what speed. One income, by zip code, and making sure that we are also building infrastructure and middle mile that is setting us up for the future, and that needs to be a minimum of speeds of 100 over 100. I think it's really important as we go whether urban or rural areas that we are really setting us up and using this, once inter-generational funding, towards the future and making sure that we're doing now. It concerns me that cities like Oakland will be overlooked or be under resource and we will miss another opportunity to really bring our infrastructure to where it needs to be.

1:21:36

This not only has implications on current education, but I'm also concerned about the impact that it will have on the future workforce. These are broadband, jobs. Mentioned earlier, we need new models. We need to be able to look at identifying more service providers with new models that are leveraging that technology that is available at a lower cost. I speak as an electrical engineer and telecoms engineer. I've seen a lot of this technology that should have been deployed more than 10 years ago, but we're still not there yet. I hope that you can look at rules and processes and requirements that provide for much more equity centered. Thank you for your time.

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

1:22:18

Thank you for your comments. Miranda, I see that you lowered your hand. I just want to confirm that you did not want to speak before we move on.

1:22:32

OK, next up is Colin Underwood. He's unable to speak. Great. Well, that's all I'm showing in the queue. We have about four more minutes left. If anyone else would like to give feedback, please raise your hand.

1:24:40

George Hetchman.

1:24:45

George Hetchman,
Hetchman Venture
Development

Thank you. I speak to you from the other side of the digital divide. You froze for a minute there. I want to echo some of the things that were said about urban areas. We do some work in HUD promise zones and would be useful for NTIA to work with HUD and understanding of the needs of those promise zones and similar opportunity areas. As indeed there has been demonstrable digital redlining taken place in these urban areas. I want to also make sure that there's some type of sustainability requirement once all this infrastructure money has been spent, then what?

1:25:30

How are these networks going to sustain themselves over time, and continue to provide affordable service to the areas. A lot of plans that I've seen, have not taken that into account, here's how we're going to spend it, here's where we're going to put it, but then what happens after year six. I want to echo what some other people said about digital literacy. It's one thing to bring the service to the premise. It's another thing to teach people who've never had any exposure to true broadband before, how to leverage it, how to improve their lives, how to make the most of it, and create a better economic opportunity. Which leads right into making sure that small businesses a turn key component of some of these areas are very small businesses micro businesses, in some case, are included in those plans, are as such things as community services, such as, you know, security systems, environmental sensors, and so on. I just want to echo some of those things. I think it's important that accountability is in place in a lot of these areas. As others have said, the incumbents have failed by design to provide this service and now we're rushing in to fill that gap. I think that needs to be taken into account. Thank you.

1:27:03

Samantha Goodwin you are up and Mickey Slimp you're next.

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

1:27:09

Hello, I am Samantha Goodwin, The Project Coordinator and American Connection Core Fellow from Tillamook County, Oregon. We are a very rural county. We're currently very much hoping to improve our connectivity for the residents here. I'd like to address question number three about the middle mile infrastructure and repeat, again. The need that rural communities have for extensive middle mile with, you know, a very interesting way to say, at a very low return on investment. We're currently planning an infrastructure bill that is going to be 25 miles of fiber that will serve a few hundred homes, possibly less than that. But it will be a very important connection for our community over the mountains. It will create safety in a very dangerous roadway corridor and it's going to be very important for us. I feel like the distinction between what is middle mile and what is last mile is really confusing and somewhat arbitrary in a rural community when we need to build, you know, tens of miles just to get to a small community. It seems like trying to make this distinction between, oh, you can, and cannot use this for middle mile, but you can use it for last mile is just not very useful to us. When we're trying to look at projects as a whole and we're

Samantha Goodwin,
Project Coordinator,
Tillamook County

trying to do a plan for our entire county. When we're looking at building hundreds of miles of fiber, to try and reach everybody, trying to parcel out into how we can build this but, not this, because this isn't a while, but this isn't, it's just not going to be helpful for us to actually get the job done. I really like to see less restrictions around exactly what type of fiber we're building when we're really trying to look at this bigger picture and get it done. Thank you.

1:29:11

Thank you, and then, in order to be respectful of everyone's time, and ensure that we get you out of here on time, we're going to do one more comment from Mickey Slimp, and then we'll wrap up.

1:29:19

Mickey, go ahead.

1:29:20

Thank you. I'm Micky Slimp. I'm the Broadband Project Manager for the Deep East Texas Council of Governments. We're 12 counties along the border of Louisiana and Texas, it's a very rural area. A couple of concerns related to question number one. We're always talking about census blocks and population in this process, and like the last speaker, a lot of areas Alaska included speaking before the population isn't going to be beneficial when you're trying to do this. Yet, the need is there, we're concerned, and we're committed in our region into making sure that 100% of our population is reached by broadband using some technology or the other. The history has been that the providers have looked at census blocks and looked at population centers, and they deployed the areas where they had a business model that showed them with a good return on investment in that area. They've written off the rest of the Census block with the rest of the areas, because they weren't financially beneficial for them over the long term. We're hoping that there can be some kind of oversight mechanism or implementation mechanism. So that if an award is made to a provider, that they are required to provide all of the citizens in that area, geographically, with connectivity, at a good common price, so that you're not going to have people left out of the process.

1:30:51

Another thing that we see in our area is that we have a population of about a half million people over an area about, oh, this little larger than Delaware, closer to the size of Maryland. We have 10,000 or 10 million acres of forest in that area. This agricultural area, these forested areas, need broadband for internet of things, applications, managing tractors, managing feedlots, managing, other things that are agricultural. The way that the proposal is in place right now, I'm not seeing things that take care, or the analyzes must be on population. And I think that, based on geography, based on agricultural needs, there could be something built into it, so that these networks are deployed out to serve everybody. And I'll finish with that.

1:31:49

Thank you, and thank you everyone, for your comments, and for being here today, and participating.

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

Mickey Slimp,
Broadband Project
Manager, Deep East
Texas Council of
Governments

Margaret Gutierrez,
Broadband Program
Specialist, Office of
Internet Connectivity
and Growth, NTIA

1:31:57

Before we let you go, we know that there were several of you that were unable to get in on our time here today, so please send us written comments also, if you'd like to just provide written comments, please do that as well.

1:32:08

The e-mail address is on the screen at broadbandforall@NTIA.gov as soon as possible, so that we can ensure that we collect those comments. We would love to see you on our upcoming IJJA Broadband Programs Public Virtual Listening Sessions. You can see the dates for those on the screen.

1:32:24

Then the registration links and descriptions for those should be posted shortly on our broadband USA website under our Events tab. Thanks again for joining us today, and we will see you next time.