STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

IN PREPARATION FOR IIJA BROADBAND PROGRAMS

MARCH 2022

AGENDA

Welcoming Remarks

Andy Berke, Special Representative for Broadband, NTIA

Engagement & Partnerships Overview

Gilbert Resendez, Broadband Program Specialist, Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, NTIA

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

Michell Morton, Broadband Program Specialist, Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, NTIA

Questions & Answers Discussion

Moderator: **Gilbert Resendez**, Broadband Program Specialist, Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, NTIA

WELCOMING REMARKS

Andy Berke, Special Representative for Broadband, NTIA

ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS OVERVIEW

Gilbert Resendez, Broadband Program Specialist, Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, NTIA

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

Michell Morton, Broadband Program Specialist, Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, NTIA

TODAY'S FOCUS

What this webinar **is**

Stakeholder engagement thought-starters and tips for <u>States and Localities</u>

What this webinar **is not**

Guidance on **outreach requirements** that will be included in IIJA Notices of Funding Opportunities

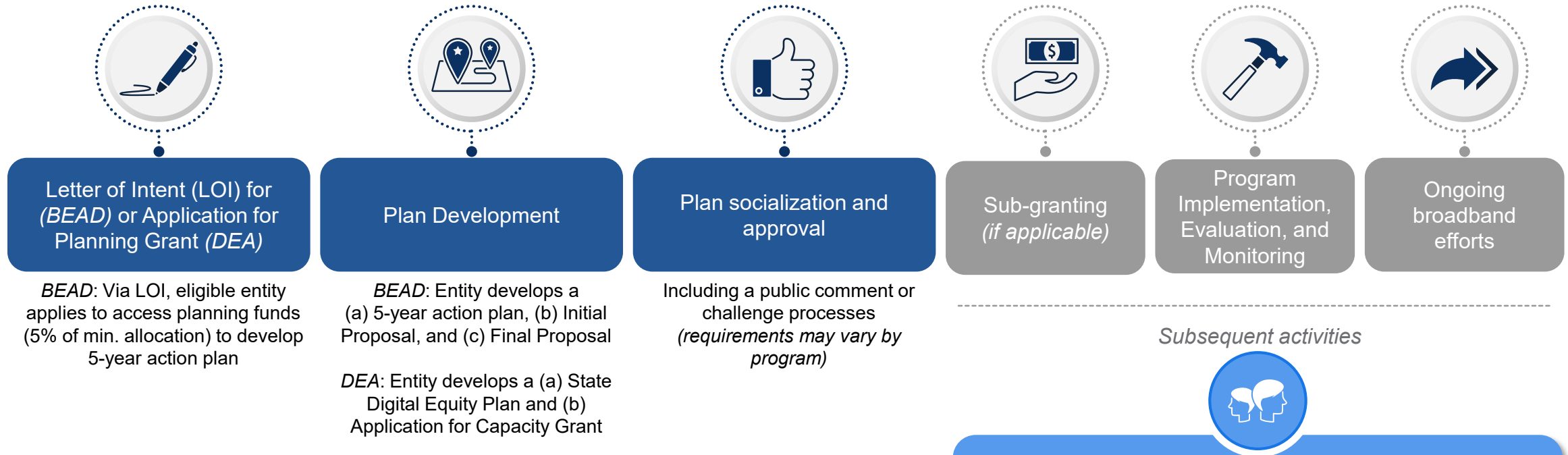# OVERVIEW | NTIA WILL BE ADMINISTERING ~$48B IN NEW BROADBAND FUNDING CREATED BY THE INFRASTRUCTURE ACT*

	BEAD $42.45B	DEA $2.75B	Middle Mile $1B	Tribal $2B
Official program(s) names	Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program	Digital Equity Act • State Planning Grant Program • State Capacity Grant Program • Competitive Grant Program	Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure	Tribal Broadband Connectivity Technical Amendments
Type of program	State and Territory *formula* program	*Varies*	Direct *competitive grant* on technology-neutral basis	*Grants* to eligible entities with approved applications
Program Objective	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."	Support *the closure of the digital divide & promote equity and digital inclusion,* so that "individuals and communities have the information technology capacity that is needed for full participation in the society and economy of the United States."	"Encourage *the expansion and extension of middle mile infrastructure* to reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas … and to promote broadband connection resiliency…."	Providing *new funds and extending expenditure deadlines* for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program

* Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Division F, Pub. L. 117-58 (Nov. 15, 2021) (IIJA).
Note: funding amounts inclusive of all administrative set-asides

Sample state activities during IIJA programs

Activities are illustrative and may be iterative

Letter of Intent (LOI) for *(BEAD)* or Application for Planning Grant *(DEA)*	Plan Development	Plan socialization and approval	Sub-granting *(if applicable)*	Program Implementation, Evaluation, and Monitoring	Ongoing broadband efforts

BEAD: Via LOI, eligible entity applies to access planning funds (5% of min. allocation) to develop 5-year action plan

BEAD: Entity develops a (a) 5-year action plan, (b) Initial Proposal, and (c) Final Proposal

DEA: Entity develops a (a) State Digital Equity Plan and (b) Application for Capacity Grant

Including a public comment or challenge processes *(requirements may vary by program)*

Subsequent activities

Activities during the first 6-12 months post-NOFO (approximate)

Today's focus: Potential stakeholder engagement activities and considerations before and during broadband plan development

Note: While our main audience today is States and Localities, blue boxes throughout this presentations will indicate tips or considerations for stakeholders.

BUILDING A BETTER AMERICA
PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN
BUILD.GOV

OVERVIEW | STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IS BOTH REQUIRED BY IIJA STATUTE AND KEY TO PROGRAM SUCCESS

IIJA introduced minimum collaboration requirements, for example:

BEAD

- 5-year action plans shall be informed by collaboration with local and regional entities
- Initial & Final proposals shall include a description of coordination with local governments, along with local and regional broadband planning processes

DEA Programs

- State Digital Equity Plans shall include:
  - A description of how the State plans to collaborate with key stakeholders
  - A list of organizations with which the State's administering entity collaborated in developing and implementing the Plan

Until NTIA releases Notices of Funding Opportunity, these statutory mandates are <u>minimum</u> program requirements

Several benefits from local stakeholder engagement

- ✓ **Opens a dialogue** to better identify and understand community priorities and needs
- ✓ Allows you to tap into **diverse expertise**
- ✓ **Builds early buy-in** for your broadband plan
- ✓ **Fosters joint ownership of your mission** through partnership
- ✓ **Improves transparency**, which can build trust by demonstrating responsible stewardship of state and local resources
- ✓ **Energizes stakeholders**, mobilizing others to take action towards your broader goals

OVERVIEW | THREE KEY COMPONENTS OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TO THINK ABOUT

Plan your engagement strategy

- Who will you engage?
- How should states and localities work together on engagement?
- What engagement processes and relationships currently exist?
- Who will be responsible for engagement and how will you manage capacity?
- How will you track the impact of engagement?

Tailor your approach by stakeholder

Consider stakeholder groups key to broadband plan development, including:

- Community-based organizations
- Providers

Set-up initial engagement

- What are your objectives for engaging each stakeholder?
- How will you approach each engagement?
- What will you discuss with stakeholders? (e.g., topics)

PLAN ENGAGEMENT | POTENTIAL TO ENGAGE A LARGE AND DIVERSE GROUP OF STAKEHOLDERS

Potential stakeholders include any individuals, groups, and/or organizations **involved in, impacted by, or interested in** State and Local broadband efforts

Public service stakeholders

Federal government

Localities
(counties, cities, & other political subdivisions)

State agencies
(e.g. housing, transportation, and public works)

Tribal governments

Elected officials

Public utilities commissions

Private sector stakeholders

Broadband service providers

Economic development organizations and/or chambers of commerce

Local businesses

Community-serving stakeholders

Nonprofit organizations

Community anchor institutions
(e.g., libraries, academic institutions, healthcare institutions)

Community-based organizations

Coalitions or associations
of any stakeholders

Community activists, residents, and other community leaders

Faith-based organizations

Strong stakeholder engagement can support the development of an inclusive, ambitious, and responsive broadband plan grounded in a deep understanding of community needs
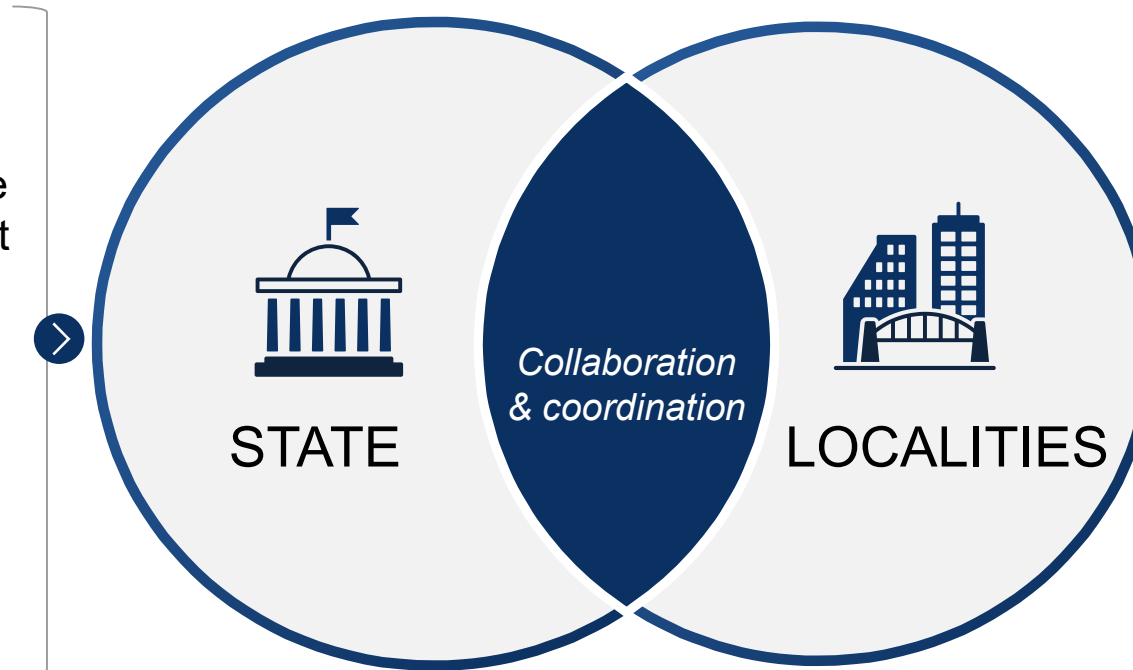
States will likely be the **primary drivers** of statewide broadband plan development

States will either:
- Develop the plan, or
- Identify the administering entity who will create and execute the plan

STATE

Collaboration & coordination

LOCALITIES

Local governments are the **closest government actors to the community** and can play a key role in**:**
a. Understanding community needs, priorities, and current broadband projects
b. Engaging with underrepresented populations to ensure all voices are heard
c. Communicating local insights to the state

Additional stakeholders may work with either, or both, entities to provide recommendations, suggestions, insights, and support

PLAN ENGAGEMENT | SEVERAL AREAS WHERE STATES AND LOCALITIES CAN CONSIDER WORKING TOGETHER

1 Identify all existing engagement processes, mechanisms, and touchpoints

2 Define engagement roles to maximize efficiency and reach, ensuring engagement of underrepresented voices

3 Coordinate on resources and information collected during stakeholder engagement

4 Share and leverage existing state, regional, and local broadband plans, as required

Example activities

Community needs
Locality: Collect new information or update existing information on community broadband needs through mapping efforts, surveys, community townhalls, or other vehicles; share with State
State: Receive, log, and integrate community needs into plan development and implementation

Technical assistance
Locality: Review internal capacity and capability needs; share with State
State: Build tactical technical assistance plan based on established Locality and community needs

PLAN ENGAGEMENT | TAKE STOCK OF EXISTING ENGAGEMENT PROCESSES AND ACTIVITIES
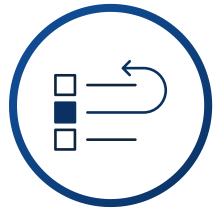
Process

How are existing partners engaged?
- What are the mechanisms and vehicles used?
- On which topics are stakeholders engaged?
- How often are stakeholders engaged?

Who currently oversees engagement?
- Does responsibility vary by stakeholder? (e.g. Dept. of Public Health with health partners, Dept. of Education with school boards)

Representation

Are current stakeholders, especially partners, representative of all broadband-impacted groups?
- Consider whether existing partners represent: (a) broad geographic coverage, (b) a diversity of groups (demographic, private vs. non-profit, etc.), (c) unserved and underserved locations (d) underrepresented groups and covered populations (as defined by the Digital Equity Act).
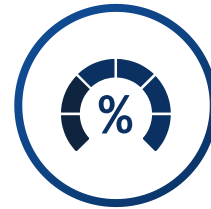
Capabilities

What skills and expertise do existing partners have? (e.g., technical expertise, community building)

What resources do existing partners bring to the table?

Which stakeholders have previously been involved with broadband efforts, and how?

Broadband Impact

What is the anticipated level of impact of your plans on the stakeholder?

Which stakeholder groups are most likely to have the largest impact on your broadband effort's success?

Previous success

Have stakeholders been successfully mobilized before on a different topic? If so, what worked well?

What, if anything, might get in the way of effective collaborations?

As States and Localities evaluate their existing engagement, stakeholders may simultaneously assess their previous efforts. What mechanisms worked well during collaborations? Have you identified the right state or local broadband contacts?

PLAN ENGAGEMENT | ESTABLISH ENGAGEMENT ROLES…

Will engagement become **part of someone's existing responsibilities** or **a new role**?

- If creating a new full-time role, consider who they will report to; reporting structures may have implications on scope, goals, and reputation among stakeholders
- Keep in mind that someone on your staff with a strong engagement track-record could potentially be upskilled on broadband

Inter-agency coordination might be needed as you engage with stakeholders: How will you track and/or coordinate engagement internally (with what tools and measures of success)?

…AND THINK ABOUT HOW YOU WILL MANAGE CAPACITY

Increasing stakeholder engagement will likely require an escalation of time and resource commitments.

However, needs will vary depending on the type of engagement: public webinars, for example, may require less sustained capacity than collaborating through a task force.

Consider:
- How will you balance stakeholder engagement with other priorities to optimize the impact of your activities?
- How will you ensure all voices are heard, even if collaboration with every interested group is too high touch for your capacity?

Define success & choose metrics

Start by asking: **What would successful engagement look like in my state or locality?**

Create **quantitative and qualitative metrics** that measure success towards that goal

For example, if your locality's goal is to amplify local group voices to the state, make sure you track both incoming comments and comments relayed to the states.

Stakeholders should remember they have the power to shape state and local engagement processes: As states and localities formalize processes, give honest feedback on what is and isn't working (e.g. frequency of engagements, engagement vehicles).

Illustrative examples of information you might track

Contact information
(e.g., point of contact, contact's title, organizational mission)

Engagement mechanism used (survey, phone call, webinar, committee membership, etc.)

Comments collected and responses (how comments were integrated into plan or reasons they were not incorporated)

TAILOR YOUR APPROACH | BEST PRACTICES FOR WORKING WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS (CBOs)

Invest early: Building strong relationships may be time-consuming and resource-intensive, as you work to identify the right groups, begin outreach, and develop working relationships. Invest early and often, on impactful topics (for example, some localities have coordinated with CBOs during the development of their feasibility studies).

Commit to transparency: Communicate early and often about plan development. Offer clear guidance on how to give input (e.g., an email, website, phone number, or address), consider periodic reports (monthly, quarterly, or annual), and strive to make up-to-date data available.

Create a feedback loop: Proactively solicit input on developing plans, incorporate feedback into the plan, communicate changes, and continue providing options for commentary--responsiveness and continued engagement is one key part of developing trust. One effective way to maintain communications is using data to visualize how plans are developing.

Prioritize activities: Both high-touch and low-touch engagement tactics may be appropriate at different times. Ensure your approach is practical and varied depending on plan needs, the organization, and your capacity. Coordination between states and localities may be particularly helpful as you work to create a network of engaged stakeholders.

Recognize the link between broadband and other goals: CBOs are often triaging a variety of urgent and complex issues. Understand how broadband fits within the context of other community concerns and articulate its relevance and impact by emphasizing that broadband connectivity is foundational to addressing other needs.

Tailor your approach | Advice when engaging providers

Understand their perspective
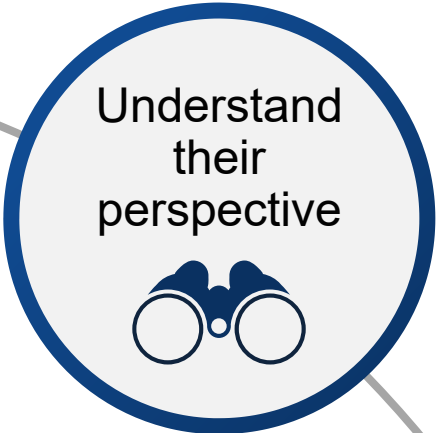
Successful plan development and future deployment will require provider buy-in, shared objectives, and aligned interests. To understand their perspective, develop a technical and operational understanding of provider's business and needs (e.g., network mechanics, provider economics)

Find the right stakeholder to engage

Ensure you have the right provider point of contact for your needs (e.g., External Affairs, Corporate Social Responsibility, Engineers, Strategic Planning). Consider leveraging an umbrella organization (like an industry association) to facilitate communications.

Simplify the process of working together

Providers will appreciate efforts to remove roadblocks and standardize processes (e.g., streamlined permitting requirements, transparent processes to gain rights of way access).

INITIAL ENGAGEMENT | ARTICULATE YOUR OBJECTIVES FOR EACH ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement can help you identify and respond to community priorities and/or optimize the efficiency of your resources

Identify and respond to community priorities

Stakeholder engagement that **incorporates a diversity of voices** to develop a 360-degree understanding of the community's needs and focus your efforts on practical solutions

Consider:

- How will you address the needs of key locations, marginalized communities, and underrepresented groups in your plan development?
- Which stakeholders have the experience and resources to best facilitate relationships and trust-building with the community?
- How can you engage stakeholders in the solution creation to improve the responsiveness and sustainability of broadband results?

Optimize the efficiency of your resources

Stakeholder engagement that **improves the efficiency of your effort's resources** by coordinating multiple projects, increasing capacity, supplying expertise, and more

Consider:

- What resources or expertise will you need during plan development?
- What are your capacity needs? Can you partner to meet those needs?
- What information do you need to more efficiently use funds, extending the value you can bring to your state or locality (e.g., identification of broadband assets or understanding ongoing construction projects)?

Articulating a clear purpose for your stakeholder engagement efforts may help you choose the best engagement approaches and prioritize your early engagement activities

INITIAL ENGAGEMENT | FOSTER BROAD PARTICIPATION & AWARENESS BY USING MULTIPLE APPROACHES

Lower Touch ➔ **Higher Touch**

	Communication	Consultation	Coordination	Collaboration
Description	Sharing information and/or updates from state or locality to stakeholder(s)	Direct and targeted outreach to stakeholder(s) to gather input; at times, outreach may be most successful stakeholder-to-stakeholder (e.g. CBO to community)	Coordination of interdependent stakeholder efforts	Working alongside stakeholders, sharing decision making power, data, lessons, and failure
Examples	• State or local website • Social media posts • Newsletters • Brochures, flyers, or other print materials • Public informational webinars	• Townhalls • Door-knocking campaigns • Regional road shows • Listening tours • Focus groups • Surveys soliciting input	• Summits • Network creation (e.g. connecting individuals in different offices working on similar efforts) • Technical assistance	• Working group that co-develops plan(s) through meetings, drafting, and socialization • A sustained council or task force
Best suited for	• Giving visibility to interested stakeholders, often to inform their own efforts	• Collecting input on specific asks • Reaching stakeholders who may be unengaged but are impacted by broadband efforts • Creating buy-in by helping partners feel heard & vested	• Connecting stakeholders already active in broadband efforts • Reducing frictions to accelerate efforts	• Complex efforts that impact a variety of groups • Creating a feeling of ownership and responsibility • Incorporating multiple perspectives

Across engagement approaches, keep accessibility and inclusivity top of mind. For example, ensure materials are available in multiple languages and use a variety of vehicles, like phone calls, in person, virtual, and hybrid.

Communication	Consultation	Coordination	Collaboration
Louisiana • To complement active outreach like a regional road show, Louisiana has **a monthly stakeholder newsletter** and a **centralized site** for news, events, and blogs. • Covered newsletter topics include letters from the Broadband Office Director providing program and office updates, links to broadband news articles, and information on upcoming deadlines and events.	**Detroit, Michigan** • Established **shared values and used data to create a unified understanding**, which served as a solid starting point to appeal to decision makers. • Kept in mind both short term and long-term needs. For example, providing hotspots allowed people to get connected as quickly as possible--but sufficient infrastructure to sustain evolving and increasing demand is another critical need.	**Oakland Undivided** • **A coalition** founded by the City of Oakland, Oakland Unified School District, Oakland Public Education Fund, Oakland Promise, and Tech Exchange, in partnership with other CBOs, coordinated to distribute a Tech Check Survey to collect accurate information about student internet and device access. • Survey helped target efforts to increase home access to a computer and internet for public school students from low-income backgrounds.	**Minnesota** • The **Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access** is made up of 15 cross-sector members who meet monthly. • Task force serves as a bridge entity between coalitions and the state and publishes an annual report on broadband in the state. • Task force is one piece of the "MN Model," which also includes the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition, legislatively mandated state broadband speed goals, and an Office of Broadband Development (OBD).

Engagement approaches may vary by stakeholder or objective, and can change over time

Potential topics include:

Building a foundation

Assessing the current state: Identifying community needs with stakeholders can improve the quality of existing data. Ask stakeholders:
- Who lacks broadband access or adoption today?
- What is the status of ongoing efforts? What are the biggest untapped opportunities?
- What do you think is needed to close the digital equity gap in your community (e.g. infrastructure, financing, affordability, adoption)?
- What are the priority use cases for broadband in your community (telehealth, education, workforce, economic development, etc.)?

Identifying barriers: Identify and assess challenges or roadblocks to deployment, examining what has delayed progress so far. Barrier identification may help inform policy or process changes.

Building your stakeholder network: As you talk to stakeholders, always ask, "Who else should we be talking to?"

Offering technical assistance: In consultation with stakeholders, identify ways to support their capacity and capabilities—effective TA can improve your entire network of broadband support.
- Example TA topics include: an introduction to broadband technologies, a mapping primer, or a review of existing broadband grant programs.

Moving towards success

Collecting plan feedback: Solicit direct feedback from stakeholders on the broadband plan as it is developed (during pre-planning and throughout the planning process). Sharing sections while the plan is still under development will improve plan relevancy, transparency, and buy-in.

Defining success and discuss potential solutions: Work with stakeholders to understand what success looks like for your project and build programmatic goals. Then, begin to problem-solve together, -brainstorming: "How can we ensure everyone has broadband?"

Sharing a call to action: Leverage your conversations about anticipated IIJA programs as a call to action for broadband for all today. Collaborating on an existing program with stakeholders can help build strong working relationships in anticipation of incoming IIJA funds.
- For example, you can work with stakeholders to spread awareness about the Affordable Connectivity Program or support ongoing American Rescue Plan Act projects.

INITIAL ENGAGEMENT | ILLUSTRATIVE STATE AND LOCAL ACTIVITIES BY ENGAGEMENT TOPIC

States | Localities

Example Topic	Sample activities per topic	
	States	**Localities**
Current state assessment	Coordinate with agencies and umbrella organizations that are producing and updating maps (e.g., FCC) to review current service maps, understand the upcoming challenge process, and identify any deadlines	Consult with stakeholders and residents to understand priorities and the needs in your community; communicate findings promptly to the state and agree on next steps
Barriers	Work with previous sub-grantees of state broadband programs to understand major pain points	Run through a mock program to assess internal processes: what are the touchpoints for sub-grantees? Where are the biggest delays?
Technical Assistance	Work with localities to identify the largest technical assistance needs (e.g., developing contacts to providers that serve their community, training on broadband technologies)	Consider how you can improve broadband readiness across your community (e.g., brochures, social media)
Broadband plan feedback	Consult directly with umbrella organizations, like municipal associations and industry networks	Leverage existing town halls or community meetings to reach the largest number of impacted and underrepresented residents

A note on data

Stakeholders can improve outcomes for residents in real-time when up-to-date data is made available

As you gather information during your conversations and planning, strive for **transparency and easy-to-use data visualizations**

As states and localities reach out to stakeholders, stakeholders should share which topics they'd like to be involved in and where they can be most helpful. States and localities may still be in the process of figuring out who to reach out to for various aspects of the broadband plan—advice and guidance from stakeholders can help.

WRAPPING UP | NEXT STEPS

Remember: Stakeholder engagement is ongoing during the life cycle of the project

To build trust and collaboration with stakeholders, engagement can't be episodic

As broadband plans mature, the objectives of your stakeholder engagement may change—but you should continue to thoughtfully include stakeholders throughout your broadband efforts

For further guidance, access our additional NTIA materials

NTIA's State and Local Government Page

https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/federal/state-local-governments

To ask questions about IIJA broadband programs or provide additional feedback:

BroadbandForAll@ntia.gov

***

Please join us for our upcoming broadband program public virtual webinars!
April 6, 2022
April 27, 2022
May 11, 2022

For more information about upcoming sessions:
https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/events/latest-events

THANK YOU FOR JOINING TODAY'S SESSION