

# PLANNING A STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

## A GUIDE FOR STATES AND LOCALITIES

This is the first document in a two-part series on stakeholder engagement for States and Localities as they prepare for upcoming Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) broadband programs. Both documents contain suggestions for engagement; Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) will detail requirements for local coordination.

### Overview

There are 3 questions to address as you develop your engagement strategy

**1** Who will you engage?

**2** What processes and relationships currently exist?






**3** How will you get the work done?

### 1 Who will you engage?

Consider ways to engage a large and diverse group of stakeholders, including individuals, groups, and/or organizations **involved in, impacted by or interested in** your broadband efforts, regardless of sector

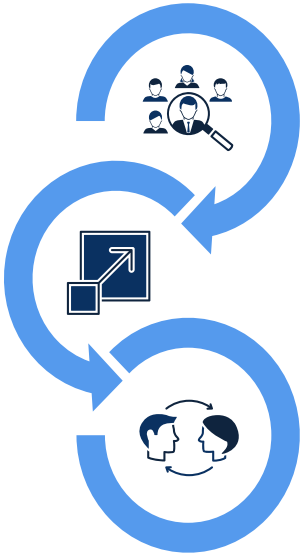
Public service		Private sector	Community-serving	
Federal government	Local agencies (Counties, cities, and other political subdivisions)	Broadband service providers (e.g. private providers, municipal providers, electric co-ops)	Nonprofit organizations	Community anchor institutions (e.g., libraries, academic institutions, healthcare Institutions)
Elected officials	State agencies (e.g., housing, transportation, and public works)	Economic development orgs and/or chambers of commerce	Faith-based organizations	Community-based organizations
Tribal governments	Public utilities commissions	Local businesses	Community activists, residents, and other community leaders	Coalitions or associations of any stakeholders

### 2 What processes and relationships currently exist?

 <p><b>Process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How are existing partners engaged? (e.g., how often do you reach out, on which topics, using what mechanisms)</li> <li>Who currently oversees engagement?</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Representation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are current stakeholders, representative of all broadband-impacted groups (e.g., geographically, demographically, served status, covered populations)?</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Capabilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What skills, expertise, and resources do existing partners have?</li> <li>Which stakeholders have previously been involved with broadband efforts? How?</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Broadband Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the anticipated degree of impact of your plans on each group of stakeholders?</li> <li>Which groups are most likely to have the largest impact on your plan's success?</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Previous success</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have stakeholders been previously mobilized on a different topic? What worked well?</li> <li>What might get in the way of effective collaborations?</li> </ul>
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Evaluate your current processes—what needs to change for the success of your IIJA programs?

### 3 How will you get the work done?



#### ESTABLISH ENGAGEMENT ROLES

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

- As you assign responsibility, keep in mind that someone on your staff with a strong engagement track-record may be upskilled on broadband

Note that inter-agency or inter-department coordination might be needed as you engage with stakeholders: How will you track and/or coordinate engagement internally?

#### MANAGE CAPACITY

Increasing stakeholder engagement will likely require an escalation of time and resource commitments—but needs will vary depending on the type of engagement

- How will you balance stakeholder engagement with other priorities?
- How will you ensure all voices are heard?

#### TRACK IMPACT

What would successful engagement look like? Create quantitative and qualitative metrics that measure stakeholder engagement progress towards that goal.

## As you develop your strategy, consider tailoring your approach for key stakeholder group



### COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

- ✓ **Invest early:** Building strong relationships may be time- and resource-intensive. Engage early and often on impactful topics
- ✓ **Commit to transparency:** Offer clear guidance on how to give input, consider periodic public reports, and make data available
- ✓ **Create a feedback loop:** Proactively communicate changes, solicit input, incorporate feedback, and continue to provide options for commentary
- ✓ **Prioritize activities:** Both high-touch and low-touch tactics may be appropriate at different times. Ensure your approach is practical and varied
- ✓ **Recognize the link between broadband and other goals:** Learn how broadband relates to other goals and community concerns. Stress that connectivity is foundational to meeting other needs



### PROVIDERS

- ✓ **Understand their perspective:** Success will require provider buy-in and aligned interests. Develop an understanding of provider's business and needs
- ✓ **Find the right stakeholder to engage:** Identify who has the right influence. Consider leveraging an umbrella org (like an industry association) to facilitate communications
- ✓ **Simplify the process:** Providers will appreciate efforts to remove roadblocks and standardize processes (e.g., streamlined permitting, transparent rights of-way)

This document contains suggestions for engagement; the NOFO will detail requirements for local coordination.

### Want to learn more?

To stay up to date on the latest available information, including Notices of Funding Opportunity when released, visit our website.



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