

**Internet for All Webinar Series: Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment
(BEAD) Program**

**Moderator: Nicole Ugarte
May 17, 2022**

Nicole Ugarte

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Hello I'd like to welcome you to the second session in our Internet for All webinar series to discuss the new bipartisan infrastructure law high speed internet grant programs.

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My name is Nicole Ugarte and I'm a broadband program specialist with the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth here at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration or NTIA. I will be serving as today's moderator. Today will be providing a general overview of the Broadband Equity Access and deployment program, also known as BEAD.

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Before we begin, I'd like to take a moment to review our agenda and introduce our speakers. We'll start today's session with a welcome from Assistant Secretary of commerce for communications and information an NTIA administrator, Alan Davidson. We will be joined by the 14th US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. We'll then move to the formal presentation and an overview of BEAD by our program director Evan Feinman.

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Finally, we'll move to a moderated Q&A session where Evan and I will be joined by the office of Internet connectivity and growth's acting director for technical assistance, Amanda Herrera. I'll now turn it over to Assistant Secretary Alan Davidson and Secretary of Commerce Raimondo.

Alan Davidson

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Hi. I'm Alan Davidson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce and head of the national telecommunications and information administration. Thank you so much for joining us to hear more about our Internet for All initiative.

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This is an exciting time for our country. The internet for all initiative is a historic step towards achieving a critical goal, a fully connected America. We have been talking about the digital divide in this country for more than 20 years. Now, thanks to the bipartisan infrastructure law and President Biden's leadership we finally have the resources to do something serious about it.

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The laws \$48 billion investment in our nation's internet infrastructure will open opportunities for millions of Americans. The bipartisan infrastructure law will also

give all Americans that access and skills they need to thrive in the modern digital economy.

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This is an all-hands-on deck moment. Your partnership is critical to ensure that everyone in this country gains access to reliable, affordable, high-speed internet. I hope you'll listen today, ask questions, give us feedback and then join us as we roll up our sleeves and get to work. Thank you again for being here.

Gina Raimondo

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Hi, I'm the Secretary of Commerce, Gina Raimondo. Thank you for joining us to learn more about our newly launched Internet for All. Fast Internet access is vital for everyday life, but unfortunately that access isn't always available or affordable.

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More than 30 million Americans lack access to reliable internet and the problem is much worse in minority and rural communities. Gaps in access mean gaps in opportunity but help is on the way. President Biden's bipartisan infrastructure law includes nearly \$43 billion in grants to states and territories to achieve the goal of universal high-speed internet. Every state will receive at least 100 million dollars for broadband expansion, equity, and affordability.

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As a former governor, I know the crucial role that states play in deploying infrastructure. And for this effort to succeed, we need everyone to be at the table. You're on the front lines of the fight to close the digital divide, so we need to hear from you and support you so that you get the resources you need.

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Thank you for being among the first to step up. Your work will give Americans more power over their own lives. The ability to work where they choose, to study how they want, and to live in the places they love and it will spur innovation and drive a marketplace with lower costs for higher speeds.

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I'm so excited about the opportunity ahead of us if we work hard and work together, we are going to close the digital divide for good and strengthen our communities to ensure America's competitiveness in the 21st century.

Evan Feinman

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Thank you very much, and thank you guys for joining us today, this is a really exciting moment. We are launching the broadband equity access and deployment Program. This is a huge component of the recently passed bipartisan infrastructure law and I'm thrilled that folks decided to join us today and really excited to talk about it so let's dive right in. Right off the bat, I think it's important for folks to understand that this program is fundamentally different from previous efforts that the Federal Government has undertaken related to broadband. With this program we're going to make sure that every single American has access to high quality,

affordable, high-speed internet that's from the President, all the way down and when we talk about high quality, we mean very fast networks that are going to serve the needs of our families and our economies, for years, and generations to come and when we say affordable, we mean folks need to be able to get online at prices that work for them.

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So, moving forward, we are making sure that we one, are building the infrastructure that provides reliable high speed internet access today that, as I said, will last.

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Two, we're building those networks in a way that make sure that folks have prices that they can afford and then for those folks who need a little extra help, our colleagues at FCC are providing support through the affordable connectivity program. And finally, we're going to do a tremendous amount of work in the digital equity space, ensuring that the resources that are needed by marginalized communities and others who have not previously been served well by our internet expansion efforts are going to be served well by these.

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Our communities absolutely need connectivity to high-speed internet. There is no debate that it is a requirement to compete globally, that every single home and business in the United States have access to a high-speed Internet connection, this is incredibly important across all different walks of life, but just to highlight a couple of top line items maximizing savings for education is critically important. Students who use the Internet to complete homework do research apply to college trade schools. Students who don't have access to the Internet are not able to do that. We know in study after study that post-secondary outcomes for our K through 12 pre-K through 12 students are not as strong if they don't have access to internet at home. It's critically important for the growth of our economy. By connecting our workforce, we can ensure that Americans are competing globally, that all of our communities are able to compete for new jobs and new economic opportunities.

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By lowering the costs for health care, we can ensure that folks get the care they need, where they need it. We can support the elderly in aging in place, we can support people who have mental health issues and availing themselves of tele-psychiatry and we can reduce overall health care costs both for providers and, most importantly, for Americans who are bill payers. And then, finally, we know that this is a technology that's fundamentally based around connectivity. Pulling together our communities and ensuring that people are able to connect with their neighbors, with their local government, but also with their communities of interest. They can connect with their families, their friends, the people who share their same hobbies. It's a tremendously important way for all Americans and people around the world to come together.

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Looking specifically at the BEAD program, this is a program that devotes right around 42 and a half billion dollars to get all Americans online by funding partnerships, and I want to emphasize that word partnership. You're going to hear it throughout our presentations, throughout the week, and you're going to hear it throughout every time that we talk about the BEAD program. This is about partnerships between states and territories, partnerships between the Federal Government and the states and territories partnerships between the states and territories and local governments and stakeholders. We're going to build infrastructure, where it needs to go. We're going to ensure that community anchor institutions are connected and we're going to ensure that significant resources are put into digital equity. So, diving down a little bit into the detail.

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This pool is designed to do first, infrastructure planning and implementation, and so we want to be really clear that the first priority of the BEAD program is the access problem. getting infrastructure to those American locations that need it. All 50 states plus the territories are eligible for use of our funds. And the timeline is a little varied depending on when you meet some of your guidelines, but in general, or some of your deadlines. But in general, what you're going to want to think about is right now, your state or territory should be submitting or have already submitted a letter of intent to our program and then follow that up with a budget for how you want to spend the initial \$5 million planning funds. You can then generate a five-year plan that you're going to you're going to be able to use to start working getting all residents and businesses and community anchors in your state connected. Then you'll submit to us an initial proposal that will unlock a significant amount of funds for your territory. Then over the course of the following year, you'll develop your final proposal that final proposal, which you'll still want to update every single year, should reflect the holistic plan for how every single resident and business and community anchor institution is going to get access to the internet in your state or territory. And, additionally, how you're going to do, how you're going to use additional remaining resources to ensure that you are doing digital equity work.

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So, let's talk about who's getting this money. First, the eligible entity, the prime movers here for this program are the 50 US States, DC, Puerto Rico, and the other territories. Each of these entities are going to be in large part determining the future of the way the program works within their borders. As you might imagine, writing a program with a set of rules that will work for both Alaska and Arizona mean that there are a lot of different ways to engage with the BEAD Program.

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What we want to make sure happens is that each of our eligible, and it is our state or territory level actors, have the resources they need and the support from NTIA's team to ensure that they develop a program that meets the specific needs of your state or territory so that we can make sure that we're achieving program goals. To do that, what's going to happen is the eligible entities that received the grants are going to develop a program by which sub grantees which are ISP's, localities, electric

providers, etc. are able to both build out infrastructure adequate to get every single resident online and ensure that where there are additional resources in a given territory, that digital equity programming, that is strong, accountable and high quality is funded. So, looking at how the funding is distributed. What you see is that BEAD funding really composed is composed of three different tranches. First, everybody should understand that there's a minimum amount of funding that they're going to get based on who they are as an entity, which is 100 million dollars for every single state. The District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, the remaining territories have a minimum allocation of 25 million, but that is just the beginning of the way in which funding is distributed. Second, 10% of the funds are reserved for what we're calling our high-cost allocation. This is going to be driven in part by decisions made by numbers driven from the FCC maps and the decisions made inside NTIA.

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Determining how many high-cost locations exist in which area and then how we're going to distribute those funds on a state by state or territory by territory basis related to high-cost locations. And then, finally, the remaining funds will be distributed based on the FCC maps that are going to be forthcoming at the end of the year. And I think we want to be really, really, really clear that those FCC maps are, we're aware it's not going to be perfect. FCC is aware that those maps are not going to be perfect but they are going to be the beginning of a conversation about who's unserved and who's not. And they're going to help us determine how to distribute the funds overall. So, looking at the first step in your five-year action plan. You are going to be able to get \$5 million really as soon as you send us your letter of intent and a budget for the use of that funding. We really want you to develop your five-year action plan using these funds and other existing resources that you have, if you've got a state broadband office that has additional resources.

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Things you want to think about that are really important. One, is their office capacity adequate to run this program? Very, very few state and territory offices right now have the capacity they're going to need to manage hundreds of millions or a program in excess of a billion dollars. Two, research and data collection, this is going to be really important. You're going to need to engage meaningfully with the FCC maps. You're going to need to engage meaningfully with your ISP's. And you're going to need to be able to engage meaningfully with us as we determine who's served and who's unserved. You're definitely going to want a budget for what you're going to spend.

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You're definitely going to want to come up with ways to do outreach and communication support, and I want to be really, really, really clear there that there is an expectation that lives throughout this program. That folks are going to engage really thoroughly in an ongoing way with their stakeholders. And so, we want to make sure that that stakeholder outreach and engagement starts early and lives throughout the program. And you can see a number of different other potential uses for the funds there. All locations that are unserved, that is to say, under 25

megabits per second download, three megabits per second upload and with the latency below 100 milliseconds must be served first. Second, underserved locations must be served, that's anybody below 100 megabits per second over 20 megabits per second. And then, finally, we must get gigabit service to all community anchor institutions. Now I've listed those in order and I've said first, second, finally, but what I want to be really clear about is that's not a division in time, that's a division in priority.

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So, you could certainly say this project that gets all of these under all of these underserved locations in this corner of a county can also go ahead and get underserved locations adjacent served at the same time. What we want to make sure is that there's adequate resources to get all of the unserved locations and all of the underserved locations hooked up before we, for example, move to community anchor institutions. There's no reason all of that work couldn't and shouldn't happen all at once in a given state or territory.

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Moving forward, we want to talk about how we're going to do this. The BEAD program must include a low-cost broadband service option for all eligible subscribers. And eligible subscriber means frankly anybody who wants to sign up or for anybody that wants to sign up that is qualified for the affordable connectivity program. Eligible entities which are to say, states and territories are going to define the parameters for low-cost plans. And we're going to want you to think about our providers participating in the ACP, are you going to, what are the expected costs after subsidies. And, frankly, you know, what is the quality of this plan. And so, let's take a look at what an example of a good low-cost plan could be. It's got to have less than 30 dollars including taxes and fees are less than 75 on tribal lands. You can apply affordable connectivity benefits subsidies to that cost and it's got to be over 100 over 20 and you can't have any, there can't be anything sneaky about it, right. There can't be extra fees, there can't be data caps that can't be surcharges, and we've got to make sure that those plans are designed so that they can upgrade along with the rest of society as we improve and take advantage of you know, new technology over time. Looking forward, we're going to want to make sure that eligible entities conduct local coordination activities. I talked about this earlier, but I want to emphasize that again. There must be a robust ongoing dialogue between state and territory governments and all of the relevant stakeholders. If you have significant diversity of communities in your state or territory, you need to hear from all of them, and our staff needs to hear from them that you are hearing from all of them. We've got to make sure that you're geographically robust in your in your conversations. Don't just talk to folks around the capital, don't just talk to folks in your traditional trouble spots, make sure that you're hearing from everybody.

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We want to make sure that we're reaching people where they are, and that means talking to people in more than one kind of way. We are not, for example at NTIA, just doing these webinars. We think it's great that folks have signed up for the webinars. We're also traveling, we're also releasing documents and through a

variety of different channels and we expect our state and territory partners to do that as well. Of course, we have to be transparent as we do this work.

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You want to make sure that everything you're doing is out in the open, and that folks have a clear understanding of both what your state or territory is planning to do and how you're planning to do it, nobody should be surprised at any point during this process. In fact, it should be a very clear open process throughout. Everybody should have absolute clarity about what's happening when and how in each of their territories and states. And then finally, we've got to make sure that folks as we do our outreach that are unrepresented in underrepresented communities are given a seat at the table. Very often it's easy to overlook a small group or a quiet group or a group that doesn't engage in the same language that we do.

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Those days are over. We're going to need to make sure that we are working closely with everybody, and that includes communities that have traditionally not been a part of governmental outreach. Looking forward, there's also a couple of other changes in the way that the BEAD program works relative to some past efforts. First you got to comply with federal labor and employment laws, and we want to promote fair labor practices. We do not want to do cheaper projects if the way we're doing cheaper projects is we're just doing them on the back of workers, that is not progress that we want to support.

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Secondarily, we got to make sure that we're building up the workforce that we need. Job training is key, and we can in fact use these funds to do job training work as well as leverage other existing job training efforts.

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And then, finally, the climate is changing that has significant implications for the way in which we invest in infrastructure. We need to make sure that the investments that we're making are going to last. That includes making sure that they're scalable from a data standpoint. It includes making sure that low-cost plans are going to be able to grow as people's usage grows. And it means being sure that if they're going to be increased storm activities, sea level is going to rise. If there's going to be a following of areas of tundra permafrost that we thought were solid, that there's a plan for making sure that this infrastructure is going to last over time. Looking at the next slide I just want to do a quick overview really clearly.

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Number one priority, access. We're going to get unserved and underserved homes online. We're going to do that in a way that is affordable and that ensures long term sustainable solutions so that folks can stay online without breaking the bank.

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And then finally, we're going to invest really significantly in digital skills training, in digital literacy training, in affordability programming and in a variety of other highly

accountable highly effective programmatic designs that are going to make sure that Americans are easily able to get online. So, let's talk about who can engage with the program and how they can do it as a stakeholder. So, folks that are obviously going to care a lot about this, our telecom providers right. You all have been getting people online today and we're going to help you get more customers and make sure that you're able to offer high quality, affordable service. So, figure out who the program leads are in your state. We're going to have both NTIA staff and members of the Governor's office or, in some instances, the public utility commission. But in either instance, the state lead, and then a federal lead, get in touch with them early and often and make sure you're applying to be a sub grantee.

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If you're a tribal government, there is a tribal program that you should already be in dialogue with. But we want to be very clear that that program and this program exists side by side, not separate from each other. So, make sure that you're talking as well to whomever the BEAD staff person is in the state and the state office so that your plans and what you need in your tribal community rolled into what we're doing. If your community anchor institution that you don't already have gigabit service, raise your hand jump up and down. Shout, let somebody know we're going to make sure you've got at least gigabit service, if you were at the conclusion of this program.

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If you're a local government, wow, this is such a huge moment for you, you get you get to make sure that every single resident in your county or city or town is going to be able to get online, but first we got to figure out where those boats are. You all are closer to the ground than we are, and so we need your help to get it done. On the other side, we're going to make sure the resources exist. In meditation, engage early and often and make sure that everybody in your community is going to be online. At the conclusion of this program by commenting early and often on plans that are put forward. If you're a community organization, make sure you're engaged in the planning and execution and make sure you're developing the kind of programs that we're going to need to get everybody online and get everybody online affordably and get folks the skills they need. And finally, if you're an individual citizen who's joining this webinar, good for you. That's really cool.

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Make sure you participate in the courses, as they exist. Contact your local leadership to ensure that they are participating fully with the program and be a local leader. Be an advocate. If you're a member of a membership organization or civic organization, make sure they're joining any coalitions or other support activities around getting everybody online.

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So, finally talking about some additional resources. Go to Internetforall.gov for additional information regarding our programs. Engage with your state or territory.

There is going to be tool kits and a wide variety of other different documents that are in plain language for folks to use.

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Go ahead and send us a question or just an attaboy. We enjoy seeing that too at BEAD.NTIA.gov, and make sure you come to future webinars. We're doing one every single day this week. This first week that the program has launched, they will be recorded and then we're going to be doing additional webinars throughout. So, I really appreciate everybody joining us today and I'm looking forward to the Q & A. Thank you very much.

Nicole Ugarte

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Thank you Evan so much for your presentation. I'd like to thank all of our speakers. Welcome back Evan. And then, of course welcome acting director for technical assistance, Amanda Herrera. For all of you on the webinar, please enter your questions into the Q&A function.

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We have been receiving a ton of questions. We'll do our best to get through all of them. Anything we don't answer today, we'll make sure to integrate into future informational materials and FAQs.

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I think that you presented a really great overview, Evan, of the whole program but just to be extra clear to underscore it for everybody, can you start off with who is eligible to apply for this program.

Evan Feinman

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Sure, so the folks who are going to apply to NTIA are states and territories, the reason we're doing that is because we don't want to be picking this individual ISP is going to build these locations in this corner of this county. This community organization is going to run this program in this city. That isn't, we have less knowledge and less ability to evaluate that, then our partners in the states do. And in particular than our partners in the states will, once they have gotten into direct and ongoing partnership with local leaders, civic organizations, and other stakeholders. And so, we are going to we're going to evaluate plans that are constructed by state and territory governments and then they're going to implement those plans with our support.

Nicole Ugarte

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Great, thank you so much. And this question goes for the both of you both. Within NTIA we have programs like tribal broadband connectivity program. We have our digital equity work which will be the focus of tomorrow's webinar as well as other broadband expansion programs. How do those programs work with BEAD? Can they be layered together? Are they separate? How would a locality determine that?

Evan Feinman 00:26:50.430 --> 00:26:52.260
So, Amanda, if you want to go.

Amanda Herrera 00:26:54.510 --> 00:26:55.230
Go ahead.

Evan Feinman 00:26:55.320 --> 00:26:58.230
Sure, so the really short answer is it's a little complicated at the end of the day. You're going to write a plan that talks about broadband activities in your state as a component of your BEAD application. And that plan should include all of the different things that you're doing, right. And so, your digital equity plan should be a part of your ultimate BEAD plan. A middle mile plan should be a part of your ultimate BEAD plan. All of your engagement through our tribal program and your future plans to use BEAD funds in supportive tribal communities should be a part of your plan.

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Now some of the components of that the plan in service to those other programs that have earlier deadlines, you're going to need to develop first. Think of that is getting a head start. That's not a bad thing, that's a good opportunity to start putting pen to paper and get to the places where you know, just start work on those programs that have sooner deadlines. But by and large you know, when you write your initial proposal, when you write your five-year action plan, then your initial proposal, and then your final proposal, those should be holistic approaches to universal connectivity in your state or territory.

Amanda Herrera 00:27:56.610 --> 00:28:02.820
One thing that I'll just add is we really want states to be able to look at this holistically. The goal of this is to get a reliable high-speed internet access, affordable reliable high-speed internet access to everyone. And so, that's going to require states taking advantage of a number of different programs that are out there. In addition to the BEAD program, so that's the digital equity program that may be capital project funds being dedicated to broadband. Any resources that are out there to help us reach this goal; we want the state to put it all together towards this holistic objective.

Nicole Ugarte 00:28:29.370 --> 00:28:45.330
Thank you so much. I think another part of this program is not only the different funding sources coming in, but the different types of stakeholders that are really coming together. Amanda, can you talk a little bit about the role of academic institutions in coordination?

Amanda Herrera 00:28:46.620 --> 00:28:53.100
Absolutely. One of the requirements of the program that states have to engage in is local coordination. That involves bringing a number of different stakeholders to the table to help develop the plan, to help understand local needs, to help develop strategies for implementation. And that includes community anchor institutions like

academic institutions. And so, if you're an academic institution and you want to get involved, now's the time to get involved as the state starts its planning process. So, by reaching out to your state's broadband office, you can get involved with what's going on at the state level.

Nicole Ugarte

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Wonderful. Evan, you talked a little bit about applying to be a sub grantee. Can you talk a little bit about the process or is the process going to be up to each state?

Evan Feinman

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Each state is going to design a program that works for them. Probably I would strongly suspect there will be at least two programs. One program that would be infrastructure focused and one program that would be digital equity and literacy focused. Those but there could be more, right. You can certainly say that states that have specific or unique challenges will, will you know, set up a program to do you know, one in denser areas to serve underserved folks and one in more rural areas to serve unserved folks. You could see there being locations within the programs. But ultimately, each state is going to tailor their approach to with again, with our support and oversight.

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To developing programs of sub grantee selection, they're going to lead to every single resident of that state getting online. That's the really critical. Part of the reason, and I know people are frustrated, you know believe me, I can see the questions moving. We had to write a very broad program because what we've seen before is that highly specific top-down approaches to solving this problem don't work. That's why we're here.

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So, we're instead taking a very different approach that's going to be about leadership at the state level, supported by NTIA staff on the ground, developing a whole of society approach. That means local leaders, that means stakeholder groups, that means state government, that means the Federal Government, all coming together around plans that are specific to each state that lead to first a process, and then a set of sub grantee selections via that process to get us to accomplishing the program's goals.

Nicole Ugarte

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Thank you so much. Amanda, could you talk a little bit about what would be unserved versus underserved? I think I know we talked a little bit about it during the presentation, but just being really clear so folks have the numbers in their mind.

Amanda Herrera

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Absolutely. So, there are I'd say three kind of standards that interested parties should be aware of. First, it's the definition of unserved areas, the second is the

definition of underserved areas, and the last is the minimum build out requirements for an area that's funded with BEAD funds. So, in order to be covered, to be considered unserved, an area has to lack a 25 megabyte download speed three-megabyte upload speed connection. In order to be unserved, it's an area that's in order to be underserved, it's an area that's not unserved but it lacks a 120 connection. Any network, the bare minimum standards set by statute for a network that's funded with BEAD funding, that network must provide a minimum of 100 megabytes download speed, 20 megabytes upload speed once it's completed.

Nicole Ugarte

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Thank you so much. Also, in the presentation we talked a bit about community anchor institutions. So, we can clarify. Evan, can you talk about the difference between a community anchor institution and a community organization?

Nicole Ugarte

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Sure, I mean there may be community organizations that run community anchor institutions or there may be community organizations that are run out of community anchor institutions. But anchor institutions are things like community centers, libraries, schools, daycare facilities, community action organization headquarters that are open to the public. Those kinds of entities, where we think a lot of members of the community may be coming to, you know. The library is the classic quintessential example where a bunch of people out in the community are going to come to your anchor institution to do civic work. You can have a public meeting there. You can apply for jobs there. You can get some support from a program maybe to set up your small business there, you know. Those are the kinds of anchor institutions we want to make sure have at least a gigabit connection.

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And, you know there are the community organizations are nonprofit, civic, religious, etc. organizations that are out there doing good work in the community. And so, to the extent that they want one state have set up their process to get funding in support of digital literacy digital equity. And affordability programming, you know the states will have programs, by which those community organizations can access those funds.

Nicole Ugarte

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Thank you, that's really helpful. You know, you mentioned, you touched on the process for this program which sort of comes in tranches. Would you talk about you know, the first step looking into what's the letter of intent process? How do folks, how do states and eligible entities get started?

Evan Feinman

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Sure. So, states and governor's offices need to send us a letter of intent that states their intent to participate in the program. We absolutely need to see that it, by the way, we have what I'm not going to call anybody out, we did get one letter today, that was not signed by the Governor. Guys, it's not an it's not a properly done letter if it's not signed by your governor. But you know, when we're following up at that state, but we need that letter and then immediately following that letter we need a

very simple and, believe me, I know people have heard this from the Federal Government before, this is a lightweight easy lift application process and budget process to tell us just how you're planning to spend the \$5 million of planning money. Once we have those, we will get those funds out to you extremely expeditiously. Afterward, then, you know we're going to start working with y'all in the lead up to the release of FCC maps toward the end of the year. But those are the, you know, the what states should focus on right now is, do we have our letter of intent in and have we submitted a budget for how we're going to spend our \$5 million of planning money. You could ask for less than 5 million, I don't know why you would.

Nicole Ugarte

00:35:36.180 --> 00:35:38.070

Helpful advice, that's wonderful. Amanda, Evan mentioned the FCC maps, can you talk about what's different about these maps, as compared to what folks have seen before?

Amanda Herrera

00:35:48.870 --> 00:36:04.260

Sure, so the FCC has created a new mapping process. So, previously FCC maps were done at a census block level and so service was kind of determined as to whether it was available to at least one location within a census block. As many people I'm sure on this call are aware that created some challenges because you could have one home in a census block that had service available and one home that didn't. And so, what the FCC has been doing is really going to a location-by-location map. So, they have worked and created a location fabric that establishes all of the broadband serviceable locations in the country and now are looking at the maps in a much more granular level.

Nicole Ugarte

00:36:35.400 --> 00:36:39.420

That's really helpful and a really key component of this application process. Thank you. Evan, we're getting a lot of questions about, what is the definition of a low-cost option? I know, affordability is such a key component of BEAD.

Evan Feinman

00:36:49.980 --> 00:37:06.240

Sure. So, you know that's an interesting question and one that we had a lot of conversations about internally. When it comes to, you know, what's a low-cost plan, what's not. Certainly a low-cost plan is a plan that works for ACP subscribers that is at no cost to the recipient family, right. So, that would be \$30 a month or less, and I think everybody saw or most folks who are engaged with this webinar will have seen the announcement from the White House about the overwhelming success and adoption already of the ACP by many, many providers. We hope even more join. Unfortunately, I can't say a plan must cost X or deliver Y.

00:37:37.830 --> 00:37:51.750

We do not have legal authority to do that via this program. But what I can tell you is that we're going to look very hard at what costs are imposed upon folks and you know, in particular, those low-cost plans are going to have to be at the speed benchmarks that we've talked about. The expected cost to eligible subscribers, which is to say, somebody who wants to take part in a low-cost plan must be very

clearly laid out and must be affordable relative to the economics of the state or region or sub region of the state. Folks can, of course, put the affordable connectivity benefits into their calculus for what the ultimate cost is. And again, you know those plans are going to need to look like what the standard offering is by that internet service provider, so this is not about providing bargain basement service to low-income Americans. This is about providing good quality service at a price that folks can afford, you know. I wish I could say it's got to be X dollars a month, that's not something we're able to do. Instead, it's going to be, we're going to have to evaluate each plan as they come in.

Nicole Ugarte

00:38:44.970 --> 00:38:53.430

Thank you. Then, more at the macro level, how is the amount going to each eligible entity determined?

Evan Feinman

00:38:55.500 --> 00:39:04.200

So, the FCC is going to release their maps at the end of this calendar year, thereabouts, right. There was some Congressional testimony that suggested to be in November, I think that's a fair bet that will be FCC's first time using this new approach. So rather than it, you know as Amanda talked about earlier, rather than going by census blocks, this map will be a location-based map.

00:39:22.950 --> 00:39:33.450

That map will not be perfectly accurate right when it comes out. We know that FCC knows that if you think about it, even it's an incredibly challenging undertaking, right. They're going to figure out every single home and business location in the entire United States and put every single one of them on a map. That's going to be hard to do and then they've got to take all of this disparate data and overlay it and figure out who's served and who's not served. So, after those maps come out, there's going to be an opportunity for states to engage with those maps and say hey, we think there are mistakes here and there and the third place, right. And that challenge process will give folks the opportunity to correct the maps.

00:40:00.120 --> 00:40:11.730

After all of the different maps have been worked out in the challenges and worked out, that's when we'll have a good sense of what the final figure is going to be for states in terms of what there'll be able to allocate, you know their slice of the pie, as it were. It's worth remembering that we were also setting aside at the outset, some funds to that we're protecting for very high-cost areas and, no matter how the allocation turns out everybody, can rely on getting at least their minimum.

00:40:24.810 --> 00:40:35.700

But I think you know, if you do some math right, we've got 50 states and six territories. We've got 42 and a half billion dollars; I think it's pretty unlikely too many folks are going to be at we're close to their minimum allocations.

Nicole Ugarte

00:40:37.260 --> 00:40:37.920

Thank you. You know, Amanda, all throughout the NOFO there's a lot of references on the technical assistance that will be provided, could you talk on it and not just a little, but really in depth. What is the technical assistance that folks will receive? What can they expect and how can they plan to accept that sort of help?

Amanda Herrera

00:40:59.760 --> 00:41:03.570

Absolutely. So, technical assistance is a critical component of this program. So, technical assistance is really designed to be able to support states and their implementation of these programs. We will be providing a number of resources and guides to implementation. Everything from things about how to set up a broadband office, how to conduct local coordination. And we will also be responding to inquiries from the states, providing additional training opportunities, helping the states with kind of put together, whatever pieces they may need to be successful in these programs. We really view this as a partnership between NTIA and the states to be able to kind of solve this universal broadband issue for each state.

00:41:47.400 --> 00:41:59.940

And we recognize that there are a variety of different unique circumstances all over the country, and so we want to work with each state and the stakeholders within that state to really help develop that solution that is going to make sense for that state.

Nicole Ugarte

00:42:01.980 --> 00:42:03.870

The perfect lead in, and I have sort of a category of questions for you, both. We're receiving a lot of questions from folks who live in really rural, hard to reach areas, high-cost areas. Even, as you've mentioned before and also from community organizations that want to make sure that they can stay involved. What would you say to the folks listening in today about anxieties about getting their community included? What should folks be doing to make sure that they're reaching out to the right folks? How should folks be preparing to participate?

Evan Feinman

00:42:40.920 --> 00:42:52.110

Good question. So, and I apologize, I let my dog outside because he had a lot to say on this webinar, as well. If you're a community and your concern that your residents are going to be overlooked, what you need to do is start now and get folks prepared to engage with you in your community about what the needs in the community are so that you, as a community leader, are able to accurately report that up to the state. The state is going to be required to be engaged with your community throughout the process. But there's one big really important moment and that's the state is going to put forward a plan that they're going to. They are going to tell us gets everybody in the state connected. That plan will have to permit comment from local governments and political subdivisions.

00:43:32.700 --> 00:43:44.640

So, if we see that a state is put forward a plan that purports to cover everybody and then there's an uproar either a, you know, a loud cry from one community or from

several communities or from lots of communities that are indicating to us that they're still going to be gaps, we're going to take that very seriously and we're going to get to the bottom of it before we approve that plan. And so, you know, there are going to be a lot of opportunities for local leaders and communities to engage with us. I also want to point out that in nearly every state there's going to be an NTIA staffer on the ground. If there's not an NTIA staffer in your state or territory, there will be one in an adjacent territory who's responsible for your state. We simply can't put somebody in every single state, but we're very close.

00:44:12.300 --> 00:44:15.960

And I will tell you those folks want to hear from you as well, they will be speaking to your communities, they will be talking to the county and usable organizations, they will be talking to stakeholder groups. And that is another means by which you can communicate directly with us rather than having to filter your comments through the state office. But we want to hear from you, the state office needs to hear from you to be in compliance with this program. And listen, we're going to take it very seriously. If we get sent a plan that says I'm going to get everybody in Pennsylvania online, and then we hear from a community that there's a flaw in that plan and members of their community are going to get online as a result of that. As a result of that flaw, we're going to get to the bottom of that we're going to figure it out, we're going to figure it out with you, and we're going to figure out what the state.

Nicole Ugarte

00:44:58.590 --> 00:45:07.680

Thank you, that's so helpful. And I'm taking that on as one of the folks working in Pennsylvania. We're going to figure it out, I can promise you all for sure.

Evan Feinman

00:45:08.850 --> 00:45:11.850

Yeah, y'all. Nicole is going to do a great job in Pennsylvania.

Nicole Ugarte

00:45:12.180 --> 00:45:12.780

Very excited.

Evan Feinman

00:45:12.810 --> 00:45:14.760

We're very excited you have you there.

Nicole Ugarte

00:45:15.240 --> 00:45:28.050

We're here in South Philadelphia, or at least dialing in. Can you talk a little bit more, as you mentioned that there's going to be a staffer in every state or nearly every state and territory? What is NTIA's role from the basic to the day to day in terms of implementing and distributing this grant?

Evan Feinman

00:45:39.300 --> 00:45:45.330

Sure. I mean it's a really good question. It's an interesting role. So, our state broadband leaders are first and foremost, there to support the state in getting the job done and that means running a high-quality program that accountably, transparently, and affordably accomplishes the programs goals of getting every

single resident online at speeds that will last and serve their needs, as well as running highly accountable metric based and data driven digital literacy and digital equity programming.

00:46:12.360 --> 00:46:23.460

In core, that person is going to be a partner to the state office. They're going to be a spokesperson and advocate for the program in the stakeholder community that surrounds the state office and the broadband effort. They're going to be a resource and a means of communication, both from us to the state office into communities and from communities in the state office back to us. They're going to be a trusted expert on our programs, and to a somewhat limited extent but still a real one on other NTIA and Department of Commerce programs and they're going to be somebody who can talk about what challenges still exist for the state that the state could overcome either through regulatory or policy changes or through alternate program design.

00:46:53.970 --> 00:47:02.400

As the state develops its plan to get the job done so, you know that's a lot of different stuff to throw at you all at once. But at the end of the day, this person and whomever it is that a Governor selects to be the lead, the point person for that executive branch, they are going to be the partnership that is going to be driving the state toward universal broadband coverage.

Nicole Ugarte

00:47:18.240 --> 00:47:19.710

Wonderful, thank you. Looking at, again back to the process, because I know we have this multi-step. Does the request for initial funds begin when you submit your letter of intent? When does the that 270-day time clock start for folks to begin submitting things?

Amanda Herrera

00:47:42.360 --> 00:47:49.560

Happy to talk a little bit about the timeline. So, one thing I want to point out is the letter of intent declares a state's intention to participate the program. In addition to that, if the state would like initial planning funds, they also have to complete whatever mentioned is a very short application that basically lets us know what they're doing with that money. We will process applications as quickly as possible. Just making sure that we've got the budget information that we need to be appropriate stewards of taxpayer dollars. And then, once the eligible entity actually has access to those planning funds, once the planning funds have officially been awarded, then the 270-day clock begins for the state to be able to create the plan.

00:48:28.470 --> 00:48:33.270

And certainly, we recognize that states are at different places in the process, and so, some states may not take all that time. Some states may need all that time to thoroughly engaged in the plan, and so we recognize that states will be at different places in this process. We are also reviewing and awarding grants on a rolling basis, so the sooner a state submit its planning grant application, we will be reviewing the

applications in the order in which there's submitted. So, would encourage states to get their applications in as soon as possible, so we can help get the money out the door even faster.

Nicole Ugarte

00:49:05.610 --> 00:49:22.230

Thank you, Amanda. Well, there's your time clock, right, as soon as possible. We're here to help and eager. Let's see, we have so many questions coming in, I really encourage folks to keep them coming, and we want to make sure that we enter as many of your questions as possible.

Evan Feinman

00:49:22.260 --> 00:49:23.880

One important point while Nicole is looking through them. Y'all, we're keeping track of all these questions there, there are already way more questions than we could possibly have answered if we'd spent the whole webinar just doing Q & A. We're going to do more webinars; we're going to do more Q&A, and we're going to be publishing our Frequently Asked Questions. It's going to include these inquiries, edited and combine when they're folks are asking functionally the same question, but you know, we're going to, you're going to get an answer to all your questions, even if we can't do it today.

Nicole Ugarte

00:49:56.160 --> 00:50:00.600

Thank you. Let me just scroll through to make sure that we're getting at some of the ones that may have been overlooked. Oh, I think that, here's a great one. So, we've talked a lot, or often, we talked about broadband access, as you know, infrastructure. Is use and adoption an allowable activity under this grant program?

Evan Feinman

00:50:19.830 --> 00:50:25.260

Yes, within the priorities team that was laid out. So, to be clear. The thing that must happen under BEAD is that infrastructure is adequate to get everybody online is deployed. You know, there are some breakpoints there, right. And we don't have to do the most expensive version of that infrastructure to every single person, but there has to be infrastructure adequate for everybody to get online.

00:50:45.870 --> 00:50:56.400

When there are funds that are remaining within a given state or territories allocations after they have successfully done that, and by after, I mean after they have accounted for it, doesn't have to be temporarily later. You just need to say we think it's going to cost this much; we're going to set aside that, you know. This additional amount to make sure that we have the resources, but then we have this additional funding that we can start spending on digital equity programming than that, you know, that will be available as well. So, the BEAD funds can be used for both of those exercises.

Nicole Ugarte

00:51:14.490 --> 00:51:15.600

Wonderful, thank you. If a state bill conflicts with some of the objectives of the program, how should a state seek to deconflict those?

Amanda Herrera

00:51:32.310 --> 00:51:46.230

I'm happy to take that one. So, one of the requirements under the law is that states do not exclude particular groups such as municipalities, local governments, and cooperatives from participation in this program and NTIA will be asking states if they have any walls that do that type of action and would encourage states to waive all of those laws for the purposes of this program. NTIA will also look at whether any states enact additional laws after the publication of the NOFO that would indicate that the state is not adhering to that requirement in the legislation. And so, this is something we NTIA, as an organization would really encourage states to take a look at any barriers that the state might have that are preventing broadband deployment and remove those barriers, evaluate what things may be in place. And we will also be asking for information on that and evaluating that and considering the initial and final proposals.

Evan Feinman

00:52:38.760 --> 00:52:49.170

Yeah, and just to build on to that. You know, that this is a valuable exercise, y'all, that there is a lot of benefit to be gained from taking a look again at what are our permitting rules, what are these main rules how reregulating toll access, what's our big one's policy look like. Have we circled back with, you know when's the last time we as a state circled back to our Department of Transportation to look at things like rules for when you've got a trench versus when you've got a, you know, when you're allowed to a fix of a bridge or overpass? There's a lot of room to be more efficient and effective in these spaces. We're not going to tell folks you must change your state law to read X, but we are going to share best practices and what our views are on how we can be the most efficient and effective when we get these funds out there.

Nicole Ugarte

00:53:29.310 --> 00:53:44.280

Thank you to you both. We received another question asking for a little bit more detail about allocations, wondering if you both could talk about what the allocations are going to be. Thank you.

Amanda Herrera

00:53:46.290 --> 00:53:54.570

I'm happy to take that one. So, the way that the allocation works, so each day obviously has a minimum allocation each state which includes, for the purposes of this program, DC and Puerto Rico will not receive less than 100 million dollars. For our other territories, they will not receive less than 25 million. In terms of the rest of the allocation, there are two parts to it. The first is a high-cost allocation. And so, NTIA will use the information in the FCC maps to determine the number of high-cost areas included in each state. And 10% of the total allocation for the BEAD program will be divided up based on the number of high-cost locations in each state. All of the remaining funds after the minimum allocation and the high-cost allocations are kind of parsed out between the states will be decided based on the percentage of unserved locations according to the FCC new maps out of the whole country. So, for example, if you had 50% of all of the unserved locations in the country, you get 50% of the remaining funds. So, it's really a metric of where which states have the most unserved locations.

Nicole Ugarte

00:55:09.120 --> 00:55:21.600

It's helpful to define out. Thank you so much. You know, we just have a few minutes left in our time together and I wanted to make sure that I gave you both some time for some closing thoughts. Given that this is our webinars specifically dedicated to the BEAD program, Evan, can I pass you the mic for some closing thoughts and what you'd like folks to take away from today's session?

Evan Feinman

00:55:32.520 --> 00:55:40.590

Sure. Thanks a lot, Nicole. Listen, first of all thank you for joining us. It's incredible there's this many people who are taking time out of their workday to watch a webinar about a Federal Government program, right. I mean, this is not exactly a riveting material, but what it is, is an incredibly exciting step forward for us as a society. We know that our economy demands that we get this done, we know that the people who do not have access to broadband right now are demanding it from government, and if we are going to be good government, we have to do a good job providing it.

00:56:09.210 --> 00:56:15.630

But beyond that, I really want everybody to think about the necessity of this program and your support of it through the moral and ethical lens. The simple fact is there's a quality of life and a standard of living that most of us enjoy, but then a subset of Americans based on the zip code in which they currently reside do not. That is not the kind of country we ought to have, that has not been the way we've been as a country when we were meeting our aspirations and it's not who we should be moving forward. So, you know I'm really excited to work on this program. And listen, as you read the NOFO, remember that we tried to write as a broad program as we could to get as many people online as possible in a way that made sense for the various states. There are also a lot of opportunities throughout that NOFO for somebody to petition the Assistant Secretary for relief from X, Y or Z portion of the NOFO. If that doesn't make sense, at the end of the day, the goal of this program is to get all Americans online.

00:57:06.030 --> 00:57:14.640

If there's some problem within the NOFO that's not going to allow your state or territory to accomplish that goal, tell us about it, and we will see if we can make an exception for your state or territory. The end goal of the program is to get this done. That's why we're here, that's why we're doing this and, with your help, we can get it done, we can solve this problem for generations.

Nicole Ugarte

00:57:28.200 --> 00:57:38.370

Thank you so much. And I do want it on record that I find this riveting so I don't know what you're thinking, but I'm very excited about this. Amanda, can I pass the mic to you.

Amanda Herrera

00:57:39.150 --> 00:57:45.690

Absolutely. Evan just did a great job articulating how important this program is. The one kind of lingering piece of wisdom that I would like to impart is to not forget about the digital equity program. And these programs are going to run simultaneously and they have a great deal of inner connection. And so, I hope that you'll join us for the digital equity webinar later this week and we really want to see states bringing these efforts together because we want everybody to have access to a reliable, affordable, high speed internet connection. But we also want them to have the skills, the devices, the resources to be able to take advantage of that, and so we really look forward to working with states on addressing this issue holistically.

Nicole Ugarte

00:58:24.030 --> 00:58:32.580

Thank you so much. I really appreciate Evan and Amanda, you taking the time to answer folks' questions. I know that there were some comments that we didn't have the chance to go through completely. I want to highlight; we will make sure that we answer your questions and additional informational materials, frequently asked questions.

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You are also able to email us at BEAD@NTIA.gov, and we have a whole series of webinars continuing tomorrow. It is going to be digital equity and it really ties into this program, so I really encourage you to dial in. And then the day after, will be middle mile or middle mile program. We'll have more coming next week as well. All of this can be found at Internet for all. Again, thank you so much for your time. Please reach out if you have any questions. We're here to support you and we very much appreciate your time. Thanks everyone.

END TRANSCRIPT.