INTERNET FOR ALL

State Digital Equity Plan
External Best Practices

U.S. Department of Commerce
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
**Note:** This document is intended to provide external examples of well-formed digital equity plans that may serve as helpful references to States/Territories in the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program. The examples featured in this document are third party resources and thus do not adhere to the requirements of the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Each State/Territory should review the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance document and speak with their designated Federal Program Officer (FPO) prior to referencing this document. This document does not and is not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, or the specific requirements set forth in the program’s NOFO. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the program’s NOFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in the guidance below.
Table of Contents

How to Use this Document............................................................................................................. 3
Examples: Executive Summary ........................................................................................................ 3
Examples: Introduction and Vision for Digital Equity................................................................. 5
  Vision............................................................................................................................................ 5
  Alignment with Existing Efforts to Improve Outcomes............................................................ 1
  Strategy and Objectives................................................................................................................ 2
Examples: Current State of Digital Equity ..................................................................................... 4
  Asset Inventory ........................................................................................................................... 4
  Needs Assessment....................................................................................................................... 5
Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement.................................................................................... 6
  Coordination and Outreach Strategy .......................................................................................... 6
Implementation................................................................................................................................. 7
  Implementation Strategy & Key Activities................................................................................... 7
  Timeline ...................................................................................................................................... 8
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How to Use this Document

This resource compiles third-party resources that demonstrate existing practices and tools to complete your Digital Equity Plans. Users of this document should consult the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), the State Digital Equity Plan Template, and the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance in order to write their plans in accordance with program requirements. Read through the examples and click on the provided links. While these documents are examples of generally accepted best practices for building comprehensive digital equity plans, they were created before the Digital Equity Act and NOFO requirements were published and should be referenced with that in mind. The examples are not intended to be prescriptive nor are they intended to communicate new requirements. The State Digital Equity Planning Grant NOFO supersedes any guidance or references featured in this document.

Examples: Executive Summary

Refer to Section 1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

The State should provide a clear and concise summary of the Digital Equity Plan. The Executive Summary should restate the purpose and summarize the key points of the Digital Equity Plan.

Tips for writing the Executive Summary include:

1. Write the Executive Summary at the end of the planning process. This an opportunity to focus on key highlights of the entire plan. Waiting to write at the end helps to summarize important information
2. Keep it brief and outline the high-level goals and objectives
3. Use positive language. The summary can create excitement about the plan
4. Identify the target audience. Tailor the summary to the people who are expected to read the plan and how it will be socialized
Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision Statement</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The New York City Internet Master Plan presents the importance of Internet affordability and outlines the vision and principles of the plan to enhance broadband infrastructure and service in the city.</td>
<td>The New York City Internet Master Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The City of Bloomington’s executive summary for the Digital Equity Strategic Plan outlines the high-level goals of the plan and sets a common definition of the term “digital equity” in order to help the reader understand the problem the plan was developed to mitigate.</td>
<td>City of Bloomington, IN Digital Equity Strategic Plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples: Introduction and Vision for Digital Equity

**Vision**

Refer to Section 2.1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

A vision statement is a brief description of the long-term goals and objectives for the Digital Equity Plan.

In developing the vision statement for your State here are some questions to consider:

1. What will digital equity look like within the context of the state’s goals and objectives?
2. What are the broad goals that should be accomplished in executing the plan?

Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision Statement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Forsyth County is a thriving, inclusive community where all residents—especially residents of underserved communities—have equal access to learn, participate, and contribute to society through robust and digital information technology.”</td>
<td>Forsyth County, NC - Digital Equity Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ensure all residents, businesses, and organizations can participate in and benefit from the prosperity and culture of innovation in Silicon Valley.”</td>
<td>San Jose, CA - Digital Equity Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Broaden access to basic digital infrastructure to all residents, especially our youth, through enabling free or low cost, high-speed, 1 gigabit or faster broadband service in several low-income communities, and increasing access to hardware, including tablets and laptops, for low-income students.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“All residents of Portland/Multnomah County will have barrier-free access to high-speed broadband Internet at home and school, and affordable computing device and the training to use them effectively.”</td>
<td>Portland, OR Digital Equity Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We want every Detroiter to have affordable, reliable, and abundant digital access that elevates local communities and accelerates opportunities.”</td>
<td>City of Detroit, MI Digital Access Infrastructure Overview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alignment with Existing Efforts to Improve Outcomes

Refer to Section 2.2 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

The purpose of this section is to describe how the Digital Equity Plan is aligned to the State’s priorities and other existing or planned efforts in the State, and how the State will coordinate its use of funds from the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program, the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program, and/or any other federal or private sources. States should detail how the stated objectives for digital equity will impact and interact with the broader efforts and goals of the State.

Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North Carolina</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In North Carolina, efforts are underway to track the various digital equity plans in cities and counties throughout the state, using the map as a visualization.</td>
<td>North Carolina State University – Institute for Emerging Issues Resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Philadelphia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The City of Philadelphia’s digital equity plan provides its key and long-term strategies for its device distribution and ownership goal. The plan also details its work with other government agencies, current programs, and how the work will be sustained. Also outlined in the documents are additional strategies for each goal.</td>
<td>City of Philadelphia Office of Innovation and Technology: Digital Equity Plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strategy and Objectives

Refer to Section 2.3 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

Consider using Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound (SMART) Goals to develop the State Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for digital equity.

Questions to consider when creating measurable objectives:

- What does your state want to achieve in one year? Five years?
- What is needed to do to achieve it?
- What is within scope and what is out of scope?
- Among the covered populations, what is a priority for your state?
- Are there other groups, including and beyond the covered populations, that your plan will serve?
### Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>San Antonio and Bexar County</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reference</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

We have identified key performance measures to track progress against our strategy and will capture key metrics on a public dashboard.

![Key performance measures](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>San Francisco, CA</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</table>

![San Francisco Digital Equity Strategic Plan 2019-2024](image)
**Examples: Current State of Digital Equity**

**Asset Inventory**

*Refer to Section 3.1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance, as well as the NTIA Asset Mapping Guide.*

The purpose of this section is to catalogue the applicant’s unique assets that promote digital equity for each of the State’s covered populations, including current resources, programs, and strategies. Both publicly and privately funded assets should be included. The asset inventory should also include existing digital equity plans and programs among municipal, regional, and Tribal governments.

The asset inventory will identify the resources available to implement the Digital Equity Plan and to address the needs and gaps to achieve the State’s goals and objectives for digital equity. An asset mapping resource will be released to aid States in documenting digital equity assets.

**Examples:**

| Description                                                                 | Reference                                                                 |
|                                                                            |                                                                          |
| The Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD) is located at the Steans Center for Community-Based Service Learning at DePaul University in Chicago, IL, offers comprehensive resources for community asset mapping. | Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD)                        |
| This guide describes the elements essential to effective asset mapping, as well as how to speak with community residents and stakeholders to understand how to effectively engage and mobilize existing assets. | Benton Institute for Broadband and Society - Getting a BEAD on Community Asset Mapping |
| In Seattle-King County, the Workforce Development Council created a visualization of their digital equity asset inventory to help community members locate programs with digital skills training, access to affordable devices, and technical support and to advocate for digital inclusion and identify service gaps. | Seattle-King County, WA - Digital Equity Asset Map                      |
| Connect Chicago used their asset inventory to map their network of more than 250 places in the city where Internet and computer access, digital skills training, and online learning resources are available—for free. | Chicago, IL - Connect Chicago                                             |
| In Chapter 4 of its Digital Inclusion plan, Carteret County describes all the assets it inventoried to characterize the state of | Carteret County, NC - Connecting Carteret                                |
broadband in the county. Chapter 5 of the plan also identified the gaps with a needs inventory.

**General Sources of Data on Broadband Adoption:**

- American Community Survey
- FCC 477 Form
- Digital Equity Population Viewer
- Broadband USA Indicators of Broadband Need Map

Additional metrics and data sources may be available through ISP partnerships, community partners and other stakeholders.

**Needs Assessment**

*Refer to Section 3.2 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.*

A needs assessment follows the collection of this information and focuses on the analysis of this inventory to identify gaps in support throughout the state and community ecosystems.

**Examples:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Brooklyn Public Library conducted their needs assessment using demographic data research and human-centered design methodologies such as community partner workshops, tabling activities, and collective mapping.</td>
<td>Brooklyn, NY the Brooklyn Public Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Land of Sky region encompasses Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties in North Carolina. Their plan identifies the needs assessed by and across counties.</td>
<td>Land of Sky Regional Council, NC Bridging the Digital Divide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples: Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement

Coordination and Outreach Strategy

Refer to Section 4.1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance and the State Broadband Office Interview Guides for guiding questions.

Collaboration and stakeholder engagement is the activity through which you leverage the assets identified in your asset inventory (section 3.1) to meet the needs identified in your needs assessments (section 3.2).

To begin, have an idea of:

- Key external collaborators you think are missing
- Covered populations that are not being met by existing assets
- Key external collaborators that provide a high level of support to the covered populations in a geography
- Other local funding that you might be able to leverage in support of a state, local or community strategy

This information should be used to determine who should have a seat at the table when discussing the implementation of a coordinated strategy to close the digital divide.

Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Rockingham County, they included quotes from people with lived experience in their Digital Inclusion Plan to highlight community voices.</td>
<td>Rockingham County, NC Digital Inclusion Plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples: Implementation

Implementation Strategy & Key Activities

Refer to Section 5.1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

To develop the strategy and key activities for implementation: identify measurable goals, objectives, covered populations, potential gaps, and metric(s) and resource(s) needed to implement the strategy. Consider how the strategies tie into the digital equity outcomes the state plans to achieve through the implementation of these strategies and key activities.

There may be one or more strategies tied to each digital equity outcome. Outlining the goals and objectives under the strategies and key activities can help develop Section 2 of this template.

Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Baltimore County, the plan maps strategies for affordability, serviceability, and digital literacy. The plan also shows how the strategic plan aligns to the County’s goals and ongoing projects.</td>
<td>Baltimore County, MD Strategic Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The community tech plan above provides strategies and multiple actionable items for each strategy. The plan provides a timeline and goals that are to be accomplished from each strategy.</td>
<td>District of Columbia Community Technology Plan for Ward 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In developing a timeline to implement strategies, some best practices include:

1. Identifying the potential risk(s)
2. Determining the mitigation strategy to eliminate or manage the potential risk
3. Assigning a responsible entity to each strategy
4. Providing a projected timeline for completion and including any milestones for strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>San Antonio and Bexar County</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The City of San Antonio provides timeline by year with milestones to map its implementation of strategies.</td>
<td><strong>San Antonio and Bexar County Digital Inclusion Roadmap</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key milestones for the SA / Bexar digital strategy to implement and achieve over the next 5 years:

- **Month 6**: Where we are today
- **Year 1**:
  - **Month 18**: Activate all initiatives to begin closing the digital divide, prioritizing highest need populations first
  - **Month 30**: Solidify partnerships and forums for engagement across stakeholders, with ongoing mechanisms to activate the community
- **Year 3**:
  - **Month 60**: Maintain universal access and continue to improve service quality
  - **Month 120**: Achieve digital skills leveling across populations and ensure the proper support structures to keep all households connected
- **Year 5**:
  - **Month 90**: Obtain endorsement and funding required for the plan and establish a clear scorecard to track progress and define success
  - **Month 180**: Stand up the resourcing and operating model, defining how the public / private entities collaborate with each other
  - **Month 270**: Achieve universal digital access in which the needed Internet service quality and digital skills support is available and affordable for all households