

How to Prepare for State Broadband Office (SBO) Engagement



A guide for local stakeholders looking to contribute to State Digital Equity and BEAD Planning efforts

OVERVIEW

The Digital Equity Act planning process is in full swing across the country. States, territories, and the District of Columbia (D.C.) are engaging stakeholders at the local level to inform their plans to close the digital divide. This is a historic opportunity for local community groups, advocacy coalitions, and individuals to tap into local expertise and lived experiences to directly inform broad efforts to address digital inequity. Tribal Entities can also directly shape these efforts and coordinate their digital equity needs in conjunction with state governments. Strong partnerships between local stakeholders and their state will not only result in better digital equity plans but also funding opportunities for local stakeholders and more robust digital inclusion ecosystems. Those looking to contribute to digital equity planning efforts should understand how to prepare for conversations with SBOs in order to contribute meaningfully; without preparation, important perspectives will be lost as SBOs synthesize information from across their states and territories. The purpose of this resource is to guide stakeholders on the types of tangible and actionable information they can bring to the table.

HOW TO PREPARE



Be Familiar with Existing Resources & Program Requirements

- Coordinate with local organizations, government, and education agencies on plans for engagement
- Read the [State Digital Equity Planning Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#) to understand requirements on local engagement and covered populations

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE



Identify & Amplify Local Community Needs

- Share local digital inclusion plans, programs and strategies
- Articulate the unique perspectives of residents in your community
- Advocate for programs and policies that impact the communities they serve
- Participate in SBO stakeholder engagement events and distribute materials to residents
- Define what closing the digital divide may look like in your community
- Share models for community digital inclusion programs, including outreach and engagement methods



Build or Strengthen a Local Digital Inclusion Coalition

- If a digital equity coalition exists, participate. If it does not, identify stakeholders in your community who are conducting digital inclusion programming. Example stakeholders may include libraries, digital inclusion organizations, neighborhood associations, housing organizations, education institutions, health organizations, and faith-based organizations
- Conduct or encourage community asset mapping
 - Identify known digital equity initiatives
 - Collaborate with local partners to streamline efforts around information gathering
- Educate interested stakeholders and local community leaders about digital equity barriers, strategies and current programs
- Promote strategically-aligned digital inclusion programs that uplift organizational strengths



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HOW TO CONTRIBUTE



Help Identify Gaps in Access and Adoption

- Document the availability, quality, and adoption of broadband service through leveraging the FCC Speed Test (see below)
- Leverage public data sources to understand and confirm your community's gaps
- Compile, analyze, and circulate locally collected data
 - Share existing data collection and survey instruments
 - Co-create data collection tools to reflect specific needs of residents
 - Disseminate survey findings and analysis

REVIEW THE NATIONAL BROADBAND MAPS

NTIA and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) have worked closely with states and territories to assist them in the process of improving the National Broadband Map, which provides information about the Internet services available to individual locations across the country along with new maps of mobile coverage.

The National Broadband Map will be a starting point to understand the locations across the country that lack access to high-speed Internet service. States and territories will conduct their own challenge processes that will further refine these maps for the purposes of BEAD funding. As a resident, you should ensure that the status of your home & community are reflected accurately on the map. You can submit a challenge to indicate that a location is not properly recorded on the map or that the level of service is not accurately reflected on the map. These maps will be important to future broadband programs.



[National Broadband Map](#)



[Broadband Data Collection Consumer Information](#)

EXISTING NTIA RESOURCES



[Digital Equity Best Practices](#)

This document gathers best practices and examples for digital inclusion activities from across the country and aligns to each of the Digital Equity Plan requirements



[Digital Equity Plan Guidance](#)

This document takes the reader step-by-step through each Plan requirement, providing expanded detail on how State Broadband Offices can comprehensively meet each requirement



[Asset Mapping Guide](#)

Practical guidelines designed to support asset mapping efforts by digital equity practitioners within State Broadband Offices



[Needs Assessment Guide](#)

Resource that details how to structure a Needs Assessment, as well as examples from existing needs assessments from across the country

Additional resources supporting Digital Equity planning processes can be found at [BroadbandUSA.gov](#)

