

Introduction to the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program for States and Territories

April 2, 2024





Housekeeping



Questions

• Type questions in the Q&A box on the right-hand side of the screen.

Presentation

• The presentation along with a recording of the webinar will be available on the BroadbandUSA website under Events/Past Events.





Disclaimer



This document is intended solely to assist recipients in better understanding the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program (SDECGP) and the requirements set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for this program. This document does not and is not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, or the specific application requirements set forth in the NOFO. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the NOFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in this document.

This document pertains to SDECGP requirements as they pertain to States and Territories. While the NOFO contains information about the Capacity Grant Program for Native Entities, the requirements and details of that program and timelines will be covered at a later date.





Speakers



- Angela Thi Bennett, Digital Equity Director, Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, NTIA
- Doug Kinkoph, Associate Administrator, Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, NTIA
- Charles McKee, Senior Policy Analyst, Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, NTIA





Introduction to Digital Equity

Defining Equity



According to the White House Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, 'Equity" is defined as:

- Sec. 2. Definitions. For purposes of this order: (a) The term "equity" means the **consistent** and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. 1
 - (b) The term "underserved communities" refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of "equity." ²

1 https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communitiesthrough-the-federal-government/

Internet For All





² Ibid.

Defining Other Key Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Terms





Diversity

REPRESENTATION

Inclusion

BEHAVIOR

Belonging

FEELING

Equity

SYSTEMS

Justice

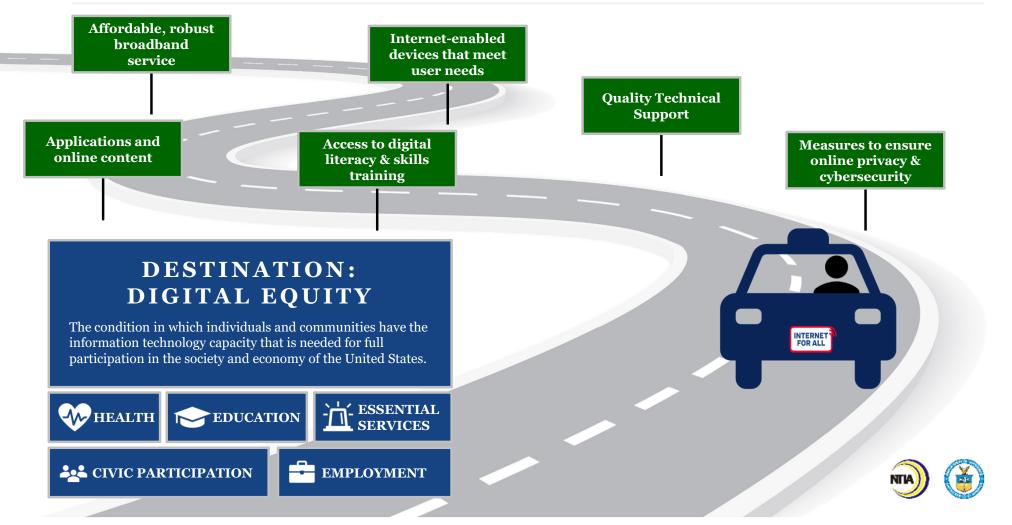
RESULTS





Digital inclusion activities collectively build to advance and ensure digital equity & improve outcomes for unconnected communities





Update on the Digital Equity Act Programs

Focus on the Digital Equity Act



BEAD

\$42.45B

Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment Program

A program to get all Americans online by funding partnerships between states or territories, communities, and stakeholders to build infrastructure where we need it to and increase adoption of high-speed Internet.

Presentation focus

DIGITAL EQUITY

\$2.75B

Digital Equity Act

Three programs that provide funding to **promote digital inclusion and advance equity for all**. They aim to ensure that all communities can access and use affordable, reliable high-speed Internet to meet their needs and improve their lives.

TRIBAL

\$2.00B

Tribal Connectivity Technical Amendments

A program to help tribal communities expand high-speed Internet access and adoption on tribal lands

MIDDLE MILE

\$1.00B

Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure

A program to expand middle mile infrastructure, to reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas.

Note: Funding amounts inclusive of all administrative set-asides

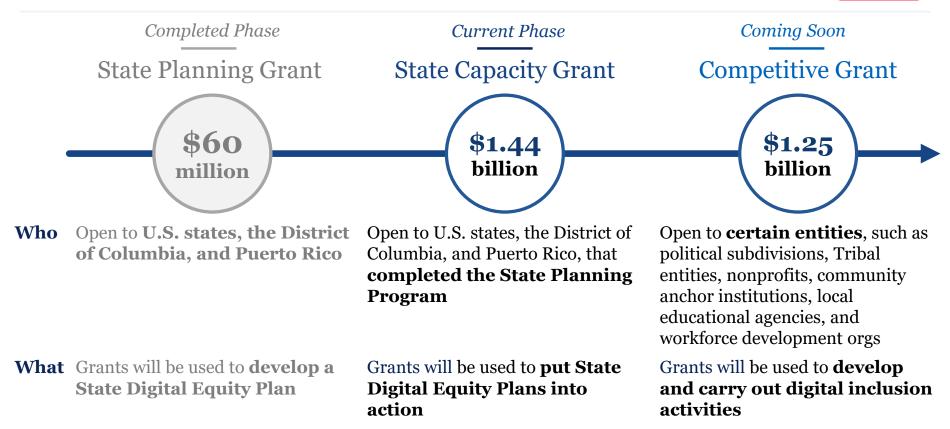
Internet For All





Three Programs to Promote Digital Inclusion & Advance Equity





Other U.S. territories, Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, and Native Hawaiian orgs have a statutory set-aside and separate program requirements under the State Planning and Capacity Programs





State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program

Purpose of the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program



The purpose of the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program is to **create the conditions where individuals** and communities have the information technology capacity that is needed for full participation in the society and economy of the United States.

This Program will make funds available for States and Territories to begin implementing their accepted State and U.S. **Territory Digital Equity Plans** (and related purposes as detailed in the NOFO).

COVERED POPULATIONS 2



Individuals who live in covered households (defined as households with income of not more than 150% of the poverty level)



Aging individuals aged 60 and older



Incarcerated individuals (as defined by the State or Territory), other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility



Veterans



Individuals with disabilities



Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners and have low levels of literacy



Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group; and



Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area

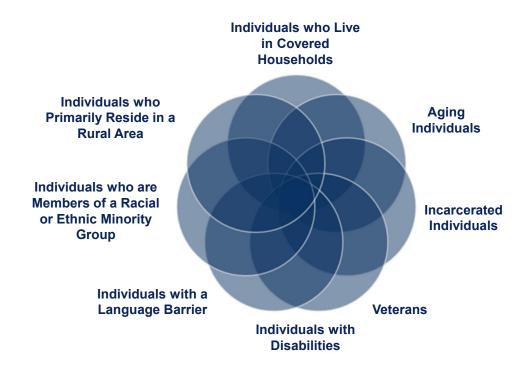




Intersectionality of Covered Populations



Individuals can embody multiple identities. The Capacity Grant Program is intended to support States and Territories as they serve Covered Populations, many of which may have overlapping identities and needs.







Serving Covered Populations



Achieving digital equity is vital to promoting personal welfare and civic engagement of the Covered Populations, focusing on issues like lack of telehealth services, online jobs, etc.

IMPACTS OF DIGITAL EQUITY:



Economic and Workforce Growth

Through increased job opportunities and business growth



Educational Expansion

By tailoring accessible learning and upskilling opportunities to individual needs and preferences



More Individual Control of Health

From improved access to telehealth and increased health literacy



Improved Civic/Social Engagement & Delivery of Essential Services

Through increased participation in community events and access to services to improve their quality of life.



COMMITMENT TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, HIGH-SPEED INTERNET

Recognizing the devastating impact of digital exclusion, President Biden made a commitment that everyone in America will have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet service.





Making These Funds Available



The Digital Equity Act creates a carefully structured process to address the core concerns of achieving digital equity and supporting digital inclusion activities for the members of the Covered Populations₁.





NTIA launched the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program on May 13, 2022



All States and Territories
Developed Their Digital
Equity Plans

With this funding, for the first time in America's history, all 56 States and Territories now have a State Digital Equity Plan





NTIA will Make Funds
Available to
Implement these Plans

The Capacity Notice of Funding
Opportunity (NOFO) will make
funds available to begin
implementation of accepted State
and U.S. Territory Digital Equity
Plans.





Capacity Grant Program Funding Determinations



Funding amounts for Eligible States will be based on the statutory formula set forth at 47 U.S.C. §1723(d)(3)(A)(i) (Digital Equity Act) and the Capacity Grant Program NOFO. The set aside for Territories will be divided equally among the four territories.

STATUTORY FORMULA, IN A GIVEN FISCAL YEAR:



50% Based on Total Population

Fifty percent is based on the population of the Eligible State in proportion to the total population of all Eligible State



25% Based on Covered Populations

Twenty five percent is based on the number of individuals in the Eligible State who are members of a covered population in proportion to the total number of individuals in Covered Populations in all Eligible State



25% Based on Broadband Availability and Adoption

Twenty five percent is based on the comparative lack of availability and adoption of broadband in the Eligible State relative to all Eligible States

1. SDECGP NOFO Section II.A.4: Funding amounts for Eligible States will be determined pursuant to the statutory formula set forth at 47 U.S.C. §1723(d)(3)(A)(i) and this NOFO. U.S. Territories will receive equal shares of the Capacity Grant Program funding set aside for U.S. Territories consistent with 47 U.S.C. §1723(i)(3)



Tentative Funding Allocations for the Capacity Grant



Below is a list of tentative allocations for each State and Territory.*

STATE/TERRITORY	TENTATIVE ALLOCATED AMOUNT	STATE/TERRITORY	TENTATIVE ALLOCATED AMOUNT
Alabama	\$13,702,566.00	Minnesota	\$12,033,288.01
Alaska	\$5,631,769.64	Mississippi	\$10,752,090.73
Arizona	\$16,170,760.44	Missouri	\$14,237,940.09
Arkansas	\$10,161,429.01	Montana	\$6,938,534.64
California	\$70,226,453.82	Nebraska	\$6,500,627.76
Colorado	\$12,368,261.03	Nevada	\$9,200,546.13
Connecticut	\$9,183,114.07	New Hampshire	\$4,942,018.62
Delaware	\$4,816,482.10	New Jersey	\$18,094,857.62
District of Columbia	\$3,804,000.00	New Mexico	\$8,673,975.84
Florida	\$41,748,794.74	New York	\$36,984,641.81
Georgia	\$22,455,639.68	North Carolina	\$22,456,097.01
Hawaii	\$6,017,160.03	North Dakota	\$4,549,772.25
Idaho	\$6,305,226.45	Ohio	\$23,291,991.74
Illinois	\$23,732,912.78	Oklahoma	\$11,233,311.64
Indiana	\$15,096,770.19	Oregon	\$9,947,586.17
lowa	\$8,442,129.37	Pennsylvania	\$25,508,473.61
Kansas	\$8,229,246.17	Puerto Rico	\$9,807,187.39
Kentucky	\$12,123,531.39	Rhode Island	\$4,540,059.53
Louisiana	\$12,727,887.98	South Carolina	\$12,846,583.30
Maine	\$5,784,349.60	South Dakota	\$5,010,234.08
Maryland	\$13,427,134.17	Tennessee	\$15,814,288.00
Massachusetts	\$14,133,924.00	Texas	\$55,641,147.86
Michigan	\$20,585,775.60	Utah	\$7,795,149.91

^{*} NTIA emphasizes that these allocations are tentative, and that a State's final allocation could be higher or lower than the amount listed here, depending on factors including the number of States that elect to participate in the program and the results of any challenges to this allocation

¹⁸ Internet For All

Tentative Funding Allocations for the Capacity Grant, Cont. [FOR ALL]



Below is a list of tentative allocations for each State and Territory.*

STATE/TERRITORY	TENTATIVE ALLOCATED AMOUNT	STATE/TERRITORY	TENTATIVE ALLOCATED AMOUNT
Vermont	\$5,299,150.18		
Virginia	\$18,330,732.47		
Washington	\$15,983,291.58		
West Virginia	\$9,011,588.00		
Wisconsin	\$13,248,029.83		
Wyoming	\$5,251,485.99		

^{*} NTIA emphasizes that these allocations are tentative, and that a State's final allocation could be higher or lower than the amount listed here, depending on factors including the number of States that elect to participate in the program and the results of any challenges to this allocation



Who Should Apply



Each State and Territory of the United States that has **developed an accepted Digital Equity Plan** is eligible to apply for grants under the Capacity Grant Program.

Eligible States & Territories

Grantees that have completed a Digital Equity Plan that meets the requirements of 47 U.S.C. §1723(c) can apply for grants under this Program₁.



Eligible States

• All 50 states and Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico₁



One Percent (1%) Territory Set-Aside

 United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands₂





Purpose of Capacity Grant Program Funds



Capacity Grant Program funds must support the adoption of sustainable, long-term programs that address digital equity through defined projects and activities₁.



States and Territories will Use Capacity Funds to Implement their Digital Equity Plans

States and U.S. Territories will receive funding to **invest in strategic and sustainable interventions** aimed at achieving digital equity (and related purposes as detailed in the NOFO).



Monitoring Progress and Adjusting for Success

The success of the States and Territories in meeting these goals will be tracked through the reporting requirements on the applicable performance metrics.





Integration with BEAD (Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment)

Integration with the BEAD Program



The Digital Equity Act is closely tied to the broader infrastructure deployment goals of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program₁.

What is BEAD?

How do they Relate?

The BEAD program is a historic, last mile investment for:



Broadband Planning,



Deployment,



Mapping,



Equity,



Adoption, and



Meaningful use projects.

The two programs complement each other and require high levels of coordination to make sure **resources are working in a non-duplicative manner**. States, Territories, and Native Entities should do the following to reinforce coordination:



Establish **formal and direct communications** and **collaboration pathways**



Ensure projects are coordinated with other broadbandrelated projects

This is important to **reduce the burden and confusion on community stakeholders** when fulfilling the local coordination, outreach, and stakeholder engagement requirements of both programs.





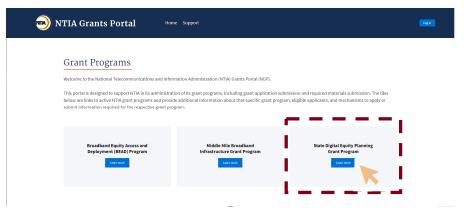


How to Apply

How to Apply for the Grant



The DE Grant programs have specific forms and requirements that are unique to the programs and require special attention₁.



Application forms and instructions are available on the NTIA Grants Portal at https://grants.ntia.gov and on its BroadbandUSA website https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov. Applicants should follow instructions carefully and are encouraged to submit their applications early.

1. SDECGP NOFO Section II.C.1





Submission Requirements



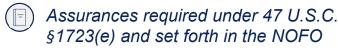
The NOFO provides States and U.S. Territories with instructions on how to complete and apply for Capacity Grants under the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the full list of requirements in the NOFO.

SAMPLE APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS 1:



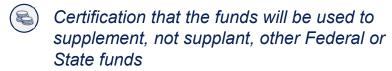








Description of how the State or Territory's implementation will benefit each of the Covered Populations in the State or Territory



Description of all other funding sources to implement the Digital Equity Plan



NOTE

Bolded items will have additional Technical Assistance and trainings provided.





Challenging Allocations

Challenge Process for Allocations



NTIA emphasizes that these allocations are *tentative*. A State or Territory's final allocation could be higher or lower than the amount listed in the NOFO.

How to Challenge Allocations₁

A State or Territory must submit a letter to the Assistant Secretary signed by its governor or equivalent official. The letter shall describe, in as much detail as practicable, the error or other defect that the State believes to have occurred in NTIA's application of the formula or statutory requirements.

WHEN TO CHALLENGE AWARDS:



Within 14 days of NOFO publication* or

(Preferred method)



After receiving awards

*Note for the Challenge Award Option of Within 14 Days of NOFO Publication:

The **Assistant Secretary** will **determine the validity of the challenge** and **respond** to the State. If the Assistant Secretary determines that a recalculation of formula amounts is appropriate, the **Assistant Secretary** will promptly **notify the other States of this occurrence and of the results of any amendment to award amounts for all States within <u>twenty-one (21) calendar days.</u>**

1. SDECGP NOFO Section II.A.4.c





Appropriate Use of Funds

Use of Digital Equity Funds



Eligible States and Territories must use their State Digital Equity Capacity Grant funds for specific purposes that are outlined in the NOFO. **Those with a * indicate additional guidance will be provided.**

ELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS 1:



Updating or Maintaining Plans



Making Subgrants*



Implementing Plans



Evaluation*



Administrative Costs*





Subgrantee Selection Process (Continued on Next Slide)



Eligible States and Territories may choose to subgrant some or all of their awards to carry out their digital equity projects. Note that eligible subrecipients are limited by statute/in the NOFO and applicants should look to the NOFO for more explicit instructions.

Subgrantee Selection Process

Each State or U.S. Territory applying for Capacity Grant funds must **establish a fair, transparent, equitable, and inclusive process for** selecting subgrantees₁.

SUBGRANTS MUST:

- 1 It will carry out the activities required under items (a), (b), and (c) of the Subgrantee subsection of the NOFO; these items include:
 - a. Assist in the implementation of the Digital Equity Plan and/or digital equity programs and activities identified:
 - b. Pursue digital inclusion activities consistent with the Digital Equity Plan and/or digital equity programs and activities identified:
 - c. Report to the State/Territory regarding the digital inclusion activities of the entity.





Subgrantee Selection Process, Continued



Eligible States and Territories may choose to subgrant some or all of their awards to carry out their digital equity projects. Note that eligible subrecipients are limited by statute/in the NOFO and applicants should look to the NOFO for more explicit instructions.

ADDITIONALLY, SUBGRANTS MUST:

- 2 Not result in unjust enrichment of the entity.
- 3 Cooperate with any evaluation of the program as it relates to a grant awarded to the entity.

NTIA strongly encourages States and Territories to take deliberate steps to ensure that subgrant opportunities are accessible to a diverse range of organizations, particularly those owned, led and/or managed by members of the Covered Populations.



Projects and activities, even if being conducted by subgrantees, must serve Covered Populations.





Capacity Grant Program Permitted Activities



In examining whether a proposed strategy or intervention furthers the goals of the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program and the State or Territory's Digital Equity Plan, grant recipients must consider the criteria and focal points outlined in the NOFO.

Permitted Activities₁:

Grant recipients should think through the following criteria below:



Focus on Covered Populations



Stakeholder Engagement



Long-lasting and Meaningful Change



Measurable Implementation Strategies





Examples of Capacity Grant Program Allowable Uses



Digital Equity grantees can use their funds in multiple ways to achieve the equitable adoption of highspeed internet and empower their communities to learn and the services they provide to grow₁.



Digital Literacy and Skills Training | *Encourage digital literacy and skills programs that provide training and education to members of the Covered Populations*



E-Government and Civic Engagement | Develop digital tools that enable online community engagement and that empower individuals to participate in the democratic process



Device Deployment Programs | Coordinate deployment of accessible devices such as laptops, smartphones, tablets, or other internet-enabled devices for those that need it most



Economic Development | Support digital entrepreneurship, online job training, and remote work opportunities to foster economic empowerment and reduce disparities



Online Access to Health and Mental Wellness Services | Build or strengthen tools that directly help patients and end users within the Covered Populations to access healthcare services online



Online Accessibility | Coach programs to ensure that websites and applications are designed with accessibility in mind



Access to Affordable Broadband Service | Promote programs to provide low-cost services





Ensuring All Covered Populations are Reached

Alternative Funding



NTIA encourages States and Territories to use the Capacity Grant and other available funding sources, as applicable, to carry out their Digital Equity Plans and serve all Covered Populations.



Leverage Multiple Funding Sources

In many cases, State Digital Equity Plans are designed to leverage multiple funding sources and partnerships to achieve their objectives



Submitting Other Funding Sources

If using multiple funding sources, one must submit a description of all other funding sources the State or Territory intends to use



Examples of Alternative Sources

States and Territories can utilize other federal grants (such as the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program)

NO MATCH REQUIREMENT,

The Digital Equity Act authorizing the establishment of this program does not contain a statutory non-federal cost sharing or matching funds requirement.





Measuring Success

Measuring Success and Program Evaluation



Capacity Grant recipients and subrecipients are required to incorporate **program evaluation**activities to understand population level outcomes. More content is continued on the next slide.

Evaluation Criteria₁



Number of Covered Population(s) served



Number of people served within each Covered Population



Total number of people served



Number of programs implemented by type



Anecdotal/personal testimony demonstrating the positive impact of the Program



Quantifiable evidence of progress toward the measurable objectives identified in the Digital Equity Plan





Measuring Success and Program Evaluation, Continued



Capacity Grant recipients and subrecipients are required to **incorporate program evaluation** activities **that focus on the impact** on the State or Territory's goals, such as:

Evaluation Criteria that Focuses on Impact on the State or Territory's goals regarding₁:



Economic and workforce development outcomes



Educational outcomes



Health outcomes



Civic and social engagement



Delivery of essential services





Key Dates and Deadlines

Key Dates to Remember



Application submission and grant award dates for the Capacity Grant Program are described in the NOFO₄.



Period of Performance

States and US Territories will be able to spend down grant funds during the **5-year period of performance beginning on the date when the State is awarded grant funds**.



Application Due Date

Applications are due by the following dates for ...:

- States, D.C. and Puerto Rico: 60 days after the NOFO is released, May 28, 2024
- U.S. Territories: The due date for US Territories' Capacity Grant Applications is July 31, 2024
- Native Entities: 315 days after the NOFO is released; the Native Entity <u>application window</u> opens September 25, 2024 and closes February 7, 2025



Issuing Awards

NTIA expects to begin issuing awards to Eligible States on a rolling basis no later than August 28, 2024.





Reviewing and Approving Applications

Reviewing Applications



During the application review process, NTIA can negotiate with the applicant around specific changes to the application.



Initial Eligibility and Administrative Review Review Phase 1

What: Initial eligibility and administrative screening

Why: Confirm the applicant has completed the application AND is eligible to receive funding



What: Merit review of eligible applications

Why: Confirm proposed activities align with program objectives, eligible activities, and related costs/budget as provided in the Digital Equity Act and in the NOFO.



The Assistant Secretary or his designee will recommend applications for funding based on the results of the review phases. Final approval of applications and distribution of awards will be made by the NIST Grants Officer, who serves as the Grants Officer for the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program. Award decisions of the NIST Grants Officer are final₁.





A Closer Look at the Native Entities Section of the NOFO

Native Entities



Native Entities will have a competitive process for obtaining Digital Equity Capacity Grants. This information includes award amounts, eligibility, the application and submission process, and review criteria. Please be sure to note that more information and guidance will be released at a later date.

KEY NOTES FOR NATIVE ENTITIES:



Application Window

Applications for Native Entities are due 315 days after the NOFO is released.

- The Application window opens September 25, 2024.
- The Application window closes February 7, 2025.



Eligibility

Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, and Native Hawaiian organizations (collectively, "Native Entities") are eligible to apply for grants with NTIA to carry out activities contemplated in this program.



Additional guidance and information will be released at a later date. This webinar only touches on States and Territories, so expect more information and technical assistance related to Native and Tribal Entities soon.





Action Items and Ways to Get Involved

Ways to Get Involved



There are plenty of ways for stakeholders to get involved in the DE Program, even if they are not an Administering Entity. Stakeholders should be thinking hard about what they want their involvement to look like.



Engage with your State Broadband Office (SBO)

Reach out to your SBO to learn additional ways stakeholders can get involved, whether it be helping with plan development or with carrying out the plans. SBOs are looking for stakeholder feedback!



Get Familiar with your State/Territory's Subawarding Process

Stakeholders should prioritize getting familiar with their State/Territory's subgrantee selection/subawarding process and learn if they are eligible to apply. Stakeholders can contact their SBO for additional information on the subgrantee selection/subawarding process.



Keep an Eye out for the Competitive Program

Remember, the next round of funding that will be coming from NTIA for Digital Equity will be under a Competitive Grant Program.





What's Next?



As we move forward with Digital Equity, make sure all Plan requirements are complete and that you are closely reading all application/Technical Assistance materials.



Use all Available Technical Assistance

We recommend everyone attend all future webinars, office hours, trainings, and properly review all Technical Assistance material published by NTIA.



Utilize your FPO

FPOs serve as an easy-to-access knowledge base on all things Digital Equity, so be sure to ask any related questions to your FPO.



Complete your Applications

Make sure that you are tracking all program requirements, timelines, and deadlines.







THANK YOU



