

IJA Broadband Grant Programs Public Virtual Listening Session #1

Moderator: Scott Woods

December 15, 2021

Carole Garner

2:04

Hello, and thank you for joining us. Due to the format of our webinar, we regret that phone dial-in audio is not available for the first 30 minutes of this webinar. This is the presentation portion of the webinar before we get to audience feedback.

2:19

Dial in will be functioning for the second portion when we take audience feedback. If you would like to listen to the webinar on your mobile device, you must download the GoToWebinar app for Android or Apple devices. If you're not able to download the app, rest assured this webinar will also be available for on demand viewing at broadbandUSA.gov/past-event, no later than December 22nd. Thank you, and we'll get underway.

Scott Woods

2:59

Good morning, and good afternoon, everyone. We are excited to have you here for the first session of our Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act, broadband Programs, The Public Virtual Listening Series. I am Scott Woods. I'm the Director of the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives here at NTIA's Office of Internet, Connectivity, and Growth, and I will serve as your moderator for today's session.

3:26

Before we get started, let's quickly review key housekeeping items. First, the presentation, along with the transcript and recording of today's session, will be available on the Broadband USA website within seven days, under the Events Past Events tab.

3:46

Second, if at any time you experience technical issues with the virtual platform, please use the Q&A box to send a message to our event organizers, or you can send an e-mail to broadbandforall@NTIA.gov.

4:05

We're excited to have so many of you join us today as you represent a wide array of stakeholder groups to provide input on our Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act broadband programs.

4:17

Our collective collaboration and your input will be key factors in the success of these programs, and today, we will open up the microphone to hear from as many attendee participants as we can. Again, your constructive feedback is critical to our next steps to design and implement these programs.

4:43

Given our time constraints, however, it will not be possible to hear from everyone who would like to speak. If we do not get to you, or if you prefer to

provide written comments, please feel free to provide your input on the discussion questions for today, by submitting them in the Q and A box in the GoToWebinar module, or by e-mailing them to again, broadbandforall@NTIA.gov at any time.

5:16

We will also release a formal request for comments on these programs soon, so stay tuned for that, and more details will be coming and be released shortly.

5:28

With that, let's go over today's agenda. We will start by hearing from our leadership, the Honorable Gina M. Raimondo, the 40th Secretary of the Department of Commerce and then followed by Evelyn Remaley, our acting Assistant Secretary of Commerce for communications and information over NTIA.

5:53

We'll have Doug Kinkoph, the Associate Administrator for NTIA, and the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth who will provide more formal introductions shortly.

6:09

Next, we will provide a quick overview of the broadband programs authorized under the broadband infrastructure law or the IJJA, and we will have three speakers covering this section. As I just mentioned, Doug Kinkoph is our associate administrator, and he had joined the Department of Commerce in 2010 and has served in several leadership roles, including acting assistant Secretary.

6:38

In his current role, Mr. Kinkoph is responsible for all of NTIA's broadband programs, which includes our current grant programs we launched this year includes the BroadbandUSA brand, the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives, and the development, implementation, and management of the roughly \$48 billion broadband programs under the IJJA.

7:08

Next, we have Russell Hanser, who was the director of communications policy initiatives in the Office of Policy Analysis and Development here at NTIA. He currently is leading the NTIA policy team working to design and implement the broadband programs.

7:28

Previously Russ spent 15 years as a partner at the Washington, DC law firm of Wilkinson, Barker, and Naur, where he represented network operators, equipment manufacturers, trade associations, and investment funds, and telecommunications regulatory matters.

7:50

Next, we'll have Adam Geisler recently joined NTIA's Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth as a National Tribal Government Liaison. His leadership

has been critical in the design and implementation of our Tribal Broadband Connectivity Grant Program that you will hear more about today. Adam was previously a national tribal government liaison with FirstNet, the First Responder Network Authority.

8:19

He is a member of the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians near San Diego and has served in an elected leadership role with his tribe running tribal governments and shaping national policy.

8:36

During our final segment, we will launch the Listening session, which I will moderate, and I will provide additional details later. And with that, I will pass it over to Doug Kinkoph to introduce our special guests for their introductory remarks. Mr. Kinkoph, over to you.

Doug Kinkoph

9:03

Thank you, Scott. Good afternoon, everyone, and thanks again for joining us. We have a historic opportunity in front of us to connect all Americans to reliable, high speed, affordable broadband, so that all Americans can share in the benefits of the digital economy. We look forward to receiving input from all stakeholders as we begin to shape these programs. I have the honor today of introducing both our special guests.

9:29

For today's event, first allow me to introduce the Honorable Gina Raimondo, our 40th US Secretary of Commerce. Secretary Raimondo is focused on a simple but vital mission to spur good paying jobs, empower entrepreneurs to innovate and grow, and help American workers and businesses compete.

9:53

Secretary Raimondo formerly served two terms as the 75th governor of Rhode Island and its first woman Governor. Please join me in welcoming Secretary Raimondo.

Secretary Gina
Raimondo

10:12

Welcome to today's Virtual Listening Session for the Department of Commerce is Broadband Grant Programs, under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. We're here thanks to the leadership of President Biden, who secured a transformational deal for the American people.

10:27

Today, we're focusing on the portion of this landmark law that will bring our entire economy online and allow America's entrepreneurs and businesses to better compete globally. The bipartisan infrastructure law provides \$65 billion to expand broadband and communities all across America, \$48 billion of which is allocated to the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications Information Administration, or NTIA. We're not only here to share with the Department of Commerce is doing, but we're also here to get your feedback, which will be essential as we begin to shape programs that will connect all Americans to reliable, affordable high speed internet.

11:14

COVID-19 made it crystal clear that the Internet is a necessity for everyday life, but more than 30 million Americans lack access to reliable broadband. And, the problem is worse in the minority and rural communities. Specifically, the bipartisan infrastructure law provides the Commerce Department with the following funding: more than \$42 billion in grants to states and territories to fund high speed broadband to households and businesses that lack access to such services. \$2 billion for tribal broadband grants, which is more than double the funding for NTIA's existing tribal programs.

12:00

And nearly \$3 billion to fund the Digital Equity Act, which promotes digital inclusion and equity for communities that lack the skills, technologies, and support, necessary to take advantage of Broadband connections.

12:16

Now, beyond the grant programs, the law also addresses affordability. If America's families can't afford to pay their monthly internet bill, it doesn't matter how much fiber we put down. That's why funding recipients will be required to offer low-cost plans and providers will be required to offer transparent pricing.

12:39

I know there's so much to cover, and we only have a short period of time, but don't worry, engagement with each and every underserved community is extremely important to the success of these programs, and it's a priority of mine. The Department of Commerce and NTIA are committed to getting input from as many stakeholders as possible. Today and every day, we want to make sure your voice is heard, and our program designs fit your needs. I'm so excited about the opportunity ahead for us. If we work hard and work together, we will close the digital divide for good.

13:17

Thank you.

13:20

Thank you again, Secretary Raimondo, for joining us today. Now, it's my privilege to introduce Evelyn Remaley, Acting Assistant Secretary for Commerce for Communications and Information.

13:32

Ms. Remaley was named Acting Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information, an Acting NTIA Administrator in January 2021. She also serves as Associate Administrator for NTIA's Office of Policy, Analysis and Development.

13:50

In this role, this Remaley leads a team of experts providing senior policy support to the Secretary of Commerce and the White House on Issues impacting the Internet and digital economy.

Doug Kinkoph

14:03

In addition, Ms. Remaley leads the Department's Cybersecurity policy efforts, please join me in welcoming Acting Assistant Secretary of normality.

Evelyn Remaley

14:16

Thank you, Doug.

14:17

Welcome, everyone, to today's Virtual Listening session. I want to thank the secretary for being with us today and for her leadership in getting the bipartisan infrastructure law passed. Her direct involvement and negotiations with lawmakers helped ensure that one of the main goals of the law was ending the digital divide.

14:39

As you know, when he came into Office, President Biden set an ambitious goal of connecting every American to high speed, affordable Internet, that bipartisan infrastructure a lot delivers the resources to help us reach that goal. As the secretary explained so well, NTIA is excited and ready for this responsibility.

15:01

For years, we have been building relationships with all 50 states, five territories, and the District of Columbia through our State Broadband Leaders Network. These relationships will help us focus and scale, technical assistance to states to ensure success of the program. But I want to be clear today that we need your help. This is a historic investment, and it requires an all hands on deck moment. This will be more than a whole of government effort. This needs to be a whole of country effort.

15:33

We're focused on getting this right, and are closely tracking best practices, and potential lessons learned from our other programs but we need your feedback on vital issues that help us shape these programs. Today is just the first step.

15:47

In the weeks to come, we will hold additional listening sessions and issue a request for comment together input. This is a pivotal moment. The pathway set over the next few month will have a huge impact on how competitive our economy is 50 years from now. NTIA is committed to getting this right in partnership with all of you. We look forward to hearing from you today. Thank you.

Scott Woods

16:17

Thank you, Evelyn, and thank you again to Secretary Raimondo for joining us today. We will now go into the next item of our Agenda, which is an overview of the IJA broadband programs by the Doug Kinkoph, Russ Hanser, and Adam Geisler.

16:36

Please note, we will not have a Q and A session following these presentations, but we'll take your questions on the discussion topics and ensure that we will

have as much time as possible to collect your input from our audience on these programs.

16:54

If you have any specific questions regarding any of the IJA programs, please send them to the e-mail. broadbandforall@ntia.gov, again, broadbandforall@ntia.gov. Without further ado, I will hand it back over to Doug Kinkoph to kick off our IJA broadband programs. Doug, over to you.

Doug Kinkoph

17:26

Thank you, Scott. Now, I'd like to provide a high-level overview of the Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act. Congress allocated \$65 billion in broadband funding, of which \$48 billion of this new funding will come to NTIA and will be applied across four different programs.

17:47

The first is the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program, or BEAD, in which it will receive funding of \$42.45 billion. \$2.75 will be allocated to the digital equity program, and \$2 billion will be allocated to the current tribal program that NTIA is currently overseeing.

18:09

And \$1 billion dollars will be applied to a new middle mile program. In addition to this approximately \$48 billion coming to NTIA, there is \$14.2 billion dollars that will be allocated to the FCC for the Affordable Connectivity program, which will replace the BBB program that's currently underway.

18:31

USDA via the rural utility service will receive an additional \$2 billion for broadband and \$600 million will be made available via private activity bonds for state and local governments.

18:48

Now, let me provide a little bit deeper dive on the BEAD program. Again, \$42.45 billion will be allocated to this program. It is targeted to states and territories based upon formula.

19:02

And that formula really is driven by two elements. One, the number of high-cost areas at each stage, relative to the country and the number of unserved locations relative to the number of uncertain locations in the country.

19:18

The program has three primary objectives or priorities. The first is connecting unserved locations. Those are locations that have no access 25 megabits down, or three megabits up.

19:31

The second priority is unserved locations. Those locations that have no access to 100 megabits down are 20 megabits up.

19:41

And the third priority is community the anchor institutions that do not have access to gigabit connections. In addition to these priorities, eligible entities must also prioritize persistent poverty and high poverty areas in our state, the speed of a proposed network, the buildout timeline, how quickly can we get citizens connected, and a demonstrated record of compliance with federal labor and employment laws?

20:09

There are several other key features with this program, one being that any network built out with BEAD money must have a minimum speed of 100 megabits down and 20 megabits.

20:22

There's also a match or a requirement of 25%, which either can be provided by the eligible entity or a sub grantee. This can be waived by the assistant secretary upon a strong showing.

20:36

There's also a requirement to offer a low-cost plan to eligible subscribers, and that plan will be ultimately determined by NTIA. As I stated earlier, the eligible entities for this program are states and territories. For the purpose of allocation of funding, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico will be treated as a state. Each state will receive a minimal allocation of \$100 million, and territories will receive an allocation of \$25 million each.

21:10

On the right-hand side here, we have a list of eligible costs and activities, both for pre planning for planning and pre deployment funds. Each state will be able to receive up to 5% of their minimum allocation, or 5% of \$100 million, \$5 million for each state, for planning and pre deployment funds. Territories will be eligible for \$1,250,000 for their activities.

21:39

Now, let me turn it over to Russ Hanser who will walk you through the digital equity programs.

Russell Hanser

21:49

Thank you so much, Doug. I'm Russ Hanser and I'm going to be discussing the digital equity programs.

21:56

So, the Digital Equity Act, which is passed as part of the bipartisan infrastructure legislation creates three sequence programs to promote digital equity and digital inclusion. Together those total about \$2.75 billion. And their goal is to ensure that individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in society and economy of the United States.

22:21

And when the act considers digital inclusion and equity, it thinks very broadly in terms of the communities that it is intended to help run. From veterans to low-

income Americans to aging individuals, incarcerated individuals, individuals with disabilities, individuals who face language barriers, individuals who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups, and individuals residing in rural areas.

22:45

And the three programs two have to do with the states. Those are the state planning grant program, which will give about the way that \$60 million. And then after that, the State Capacity Grant Program, which would be about \$1.44 billion and then finally the competitive grant program, which is going to be dispersing it at \$1.25 billion. And I'm going to be describing each of those now.

23:09

So first is the Digital Equity State Planning Program Planning Grant Program. This program created \$60 million for state digital equity planning efforts. The recipients are states or their designated entities, I'll talk about that in a second, and the objective there is to ensure that states have the capacity and appropriate plans to achieve digital equity and digital inclusion.

23:33

So eligible entities here are any US state, or the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The state government in each case has to appoint an administering entity, which will be the entity that engages in the activities that we're funding. There's a wide range of entities that can serve in that role. It can be the state itself, or a political subdivision of the state, or instrumentality of the state. You can get foundation or corporation or an association or coalition. That can be a community anchor institution other than a school. It can be an educational agency or variety of other agencies or it can be a combination of those agencies that are designated by the state to work in tandem to administer these planning grants.

24:19

Costs that are eligible once the planning grants get distributed. Eligible uses include developing of a digital equity plan. And then making sub grants to certain entities to assist in the development of the state digital equity plan.

24:32

So, this is very much a planning phase grant, and then that will lead directly into next plan. The next plan is the states, if they have received money for digital equity planning grant, and use those and implemented and created their plans, they can then apply for digital equity capacity grants. And, again, that program is going to total \$1.44 billion. and it's based on formulas. And money goes to states and territories that have satisfied the first phase of the plan and participate in that first phase. And the idea here is to support the implementation of the state digital equity plans, and digital equity, excuse me, digital inclusion activities.

25:14

The eligibility for these grants are identical to the eligibility criteria for the state planning grants. Again, in order to apply for the state digital equity capacity

grants, state or territory must have applied for and received, and then completed the activities associated with the Planning grant program.

25:32

So, once they get this money, eligible costs and activities are fairly broad. They can use some of the money to update or maintain their state digital equity plans. But then they can use the money to award sub grants to other eligible entities that can assist in the implementation of the state's plan, or to pursue other digital inclusion activities consistent with the plan, to report back to the state on related activities, and then to determine the efficacy of their efforts.

26:00

It's worth noting here that an entity that has served as the administering entity for the State, for purposes of the state planning grant process, cannot be a sub grantee from this for the State with respect to these brands. So, an entity that has been given the responsibility for creating the program, and not then turn around and be the sub grantee for monies from the state.

26:23

Finally, we have the Digital Equity Capacity grant. This is a competitive grant program that will start off after we begin awarding the State Capacity Brands. This program is a \$1.25 billion program.

26:36

Again, a competitive grant program. And it's designed to support the efforts, support efforts in the states to promote digital inclusion, chief digital equity, and improved broadband adoption in the state or territory.

26:48

This one has very broad eligibility criteria. So in the first two cases, the money was going directly to the state, or its administering entity. Here as a political subdivision agency or instrumentality of a state may be an applicant and may be awarded money but money can also be applied for by, and then awarded directly to a tribe and Alaskan native entity and Native Hawaiian organization, foundation preparation institution or association that is not for-profit, or not for-profit, but not a school, local education agency, an entity that carries out workforce development programs, or a partnership between or among these kinds of organizations. So again, the eligibility is pretty broad. And these are going to be applications made directly to NTIA and grants paid directly to these entities.

27:34

Eligible activities under these grants are quite broad as well. It must support at least one of the following to benefit covered populations, again, that list of entities that lists that was the population that I mentioned earlier.

27:47

So those include developing and implementing digital inclusion activities, working on broadband adoption to provide educational employment opportunities for the members of the cover communities, implementing

training and workforce development programs, making equipment or networking capability, or hardware software, et cetera, available.

28:06

Ordered the construction or upgrading or expenditures on new or existing public access computer Centers through community anchor institutions. So again, a broad range of activities that can be supported. And the money can go to a broad range of entities who are going to be eligible to apply for and receive those monies. So collectively, those are the digital equity and inclusion plans and programs that we are working on, implementing the recent legislation.

28:31

And with that, I'm going to turn things over to Adam, who's going to discuss the tribal broadband connectivity program.

Adam Geisler

28:41

Well, thanks, Russ, and hello, again, everybody.

28:44

My name is Adam Geisler, and I am the National Tribal Government Liaison here with the Department of Commerce NTIA, within the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth.

29:00

So, obviously, that we've been talking a lot about broadband as it relates to the IJIA. And of course, there has been an update to the tribal connectivity components related to that tribal broadband connectivity program.

29:13

So we have a few amendments that we want to talk about with you today so, with that, we'll go ahead and move on to the next slide.

29:21

In terms of the technical amendments to the new funding, we're excited because we believe it's really going to strengthen the current tribal broadband connectivity program in a few different ways.

29:31

Before we get into the amendments specifically, I do want to talk just a little bit about the official name. So, the tribal broadband connectivity technical amendments, the funding amount that we're talking about is an exciting additional \$2 billion that has come within the program that is already up and operational here.

29:50

The type of program continues to be grants to eligible entities with approved applications and again, these are all, was once used definition within the NOFO, within the existing statute.

30:03

In terms of program objectives, providing new funds and extending expenditure deadlines for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, and as a reminder,

this was established under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. So, for those of you that just want to go back and take a look at where the foundation of this particular program is at, that's your location.

30:23

Now, let's talk a little bit about the amendments. So, Congress has had an additional \$2 billion for NTIA to distribute to eligible entities, including to fund previously proposed programs.

30:35

I'm also, thank goodness, they heard you loud and clear, relaxing time requirements of the original program. After receipt of funding, eligible entities, now have up to six months to submit application. So, in the event that we open up an additional window I just wanted to point out that we're not pressed into this 90 day timeline like we were before.

30:58

There's actually a 16 month timeline to submit those applications. Additionally, 18 months to commit the funds to the projects.

31:06

And here's another one that I know all of you are excited about, four years to fully expend the grant. So we're no longer looking at a compressed timeline of one year for infrastructure and one year for broadband use and adoption we're actually talking about full four years, which is a great reprieve, as we heard so many of you expressed your concerns about building something like a broadband facility in one year's time frame

31:32

We're talking about a four year amendment there. Number three, allowing infrastructure grantees to extend up to 2.5%, the total project costs related to planning, feasibility, and sustainability studies. Then the fourth item is reserving unused allocated funds for other tribal broadband projects, instead of reverting back to the Treasury.

31:53

So again, this is one of those programs where we're going to spend those dollars until we've exhausted the funding. No new restrictions have been imposed on the eligible entities are used.

32:04

So, for those of you that got to know our program in the previous NOFO and previously route doing our technical assistance and engagements, nothing new here, tribal governments, tribal colleges or universities, The Department of Hawaiian homeland's, on behalf of the Native Hawaiian community including Native Hawaiian education programs, obviously tribal organizations, and native corporations. Eligible uses, in terms of what you can use the funding for. Again, nothing big in terms of any changes here.

32:34

So we're still looking at broadband infrastructure deployment, including support for the establishment of carrier neutral submarine cable landing stations. We're still looking at affordable broadband programs, including providing free or reduced, cost broadband service.

32:49

We're still looking at preventing disconnections of existing broadband service. Of course, distance learning and telehealth, as well as digital inclusion efforts. Let's also not forget broadband adoption activities.

33:01

And as a reminder, eligible activities can use no more than 2% of the funds for administrative purposes or indirect costs.

33:10

In terms of the priority, the priorities haven't changed. I also just want to make sure I'm highlighting this on the slide as well.

33:16

Eligible entities shall prioritize projects that deploy broadband infrastructure to unserved households. So again, the focal point of this program is to get that connectivity and the connections to unserved households prosody.

33:32

So with that, I'm going to go ahead and turn it now over to Mr. Douglas Kinkoph, over to you Doug.

Doug Kinkoph

33:41

Thank you, Adam.

33:42

Now, let me just provide a high level overview of our final program that we're going to talk about today and that's the middle mile program. Congress allocated \$1 billion dollars to the middle mile program. It is a competitive grant program and technology neutral program.

33:58

Purpose of the program is to encourage expansion extension of mental mile to reduce the cost of connecting, unserved and underserved areas of the country.

34:08

The program has several required priorities for eligible entities meeting at least two of these five conditions.

34:15

You have to adopt fiscally sustainable middle mile strategies commit to offering non discriminatory interconnect. Identify specific documented and sustainable demand for middle mile interconnect.

34:29

Identify conditions and resources to speed up the middle mile project and demonstrate benefits to national security interests.

34:38

Eligible entities must also though agree to prioritize conducting unserved areas, connecting two contiguous trust lands, or offering wholesale carrier neutral services at reasonable rates. Eligible entities must also offer interconnection, in perpetuity, unreasonable rates in terms.

35:01

Eligible entities for this program is pretty wide. States, tribal governments, tech companies, electric utilities, co-operatives, telecom companies, non-profit foundations, regional planning councils, native entities, and economic development authorities can all the eligible entities and apply for the program.

35:25

On the right side here, we talk a little bit about eligible costs and activities. You know, Middle Mile Grants can be used for the construction, improvement, or acquisition of the middle mile infrastructure.

35:36

And then the definition of middle mile basically means any broadband infrastructure that does not connect directly to an end user location, including an anchor institution, and includes at least dark fiber in rapid transport, submarine cable landing stations, wired or private wireless broadband infrastructure, etcetera.

35:56

And with that, let me turn it over, back over to Scott Woods, who will take us through the rest of today's program. Thank you.

Scott Woods

36:13

OK, we are back and ready to go. Yes, thank you Doug, Russ, and Adam for the overview of all of our IJA broadband programs.

36:24

Now, we will start the part of the program that everyone has been waiting for, the Listening portion, the input portion of today's session. Before we begin, let's go over a few Rules and Logistics, and then we'll get started.

36:40

This session will be structured around two focus discussion questions that we seek your input on. I will provide the questions in just a moment. You may choose to provide input verbally or any writing on one or both of the questions.

36:58

If you would like the opportunity to provide verbal comments, please see the instructions on your screen. Please be respectful in your remarks and try not to exceed your allotted time.

37:12

If you are joining us from the computer or on the GoToWebinar mobile app, please use the raise your hand feature on the module to indicate you would like to speak.

37:23

If you are utilizing the data in phone only audio mode, please press star six to indicate that you would like to speak, and our organizers will send you a private message when you are up. I want to note, we will definitely call on a diverse cross-section of representative attendees today.

37:45

Now, this is very important. When I call your name, your mic will be unmuted and you will have the opportunity to speak. We will limit comments to 1 to 2 minutes each, so two minutes max. So please keep your comments brief to allow time for others to speak.

38:06

And I'm going to enforce this via my timer that I have right here with me and I will respectfully cut you off when your time is up. So don't try, right?

38:17

Another important note: Please begin your efforts by providing your name and the organization that you represent. Representing yourself is totally OK. I will start the clock after your very short introductions.

38:33

And remember, at any time, you can also provide written comments in response to the discussion questions, and you may do that either by submitting them by the Q&A box on the goto Webinar module or you may e-mail comments directly to broadband for all NTIA dot gov.

38:54

Please make sure to identify yourself in your remarks. Finally, please remember that this time is for you to provide input on the discussions questions that I'm about to pose today.

39:08

And we ask that you do not ask specific questions about the implementation of the IJIA broadband programs, we will address that as appropriate in the future.

39:20

But with that, I'm holding my breath, we're going to open up the mic and we're going to begin. So let's go to the discussion questions.

39:30

So I am going to frame these questions, the questions for today are as follows. #1: What do you see as the most significant barrier to ensuring broadband access to all unserved locations and achieving universal adoption?

39:48

Again, I'm gonna repeat that again for those who are joining on the phone.

39:51

What do you see as the most significant barrier to ensuring broadband access to all unserved locations and achieving universal adoption?

40:04

Question #2: what assistance can NTIA provide prospective applicants and their partners as they prepare for the IJJA broadband program Notices of Funding Opportunity. Let me state that again.

40:22

As you all know, we are preparing the Notices of Funding Opportunity that contains all of the information that you'll need, the criteria, the information to apply for these awards, so, what assistance can NTIA provide prospective applicants and their partners as they prepare for the IJJA broadband program, Notices of Funding Opportunity covering the four programs that our speakers cover today.

40:50

All right, there we go. With that said, we're going to go to the microphone.

40:56

Our first speaker. James Ritter. You are up, sir.

41:07

All right. I'm unmuted now. There you go. There we go. Thank you very much for your patience. there. I'm James Ritter. I'm the state librarian here in Maine. And I'm also a Director of the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies on their board and oversee Digital Equity Act discussions within console as well. Really addressing part of question number two, you know, it touches on question number one as well, think, having the right organizations around the table, and making sure that, you know, through your assistance.

41:41

You're able to refer. constituency is for people applying for the Grant, State governments applying for the grant, especially during the planning stages, to libraries, and making sure libraries are critical partners. State libraries ensure digital equity planning, grants and capacity. Grants are efficiently and effectively developed and implemented. So, we have a role to play there, And in all 50 states, libraries have a long history of being digital equity champions. We're experts at identifying equity gaps in, partnering to implement solutions, so, I would say really, you know, in terms of assistance and as you develop rules, and guidelines.

42:23

I'd urge you to adopt language that makes clear that states administering entities and whatnot must include state library agencies in terms of digital equity planning, and implementation.

42:38

I'll offer just an example in Maine.

42:41

We oversee a network of local libraries that are community cornerstones for access to broadband technology, relevant digital resources, or workforce or education, health fair, health care, and civic engagement, as well.

42:55

James Ritter

And all these libraries have dedicated staff to provide digital programming when you, again, look at assistance and why libraries might be so critical. In Maine, half of our 256 libraries serve communities under 3000 people, So they're very small and rural anchor institutions, but yet, the smallest libraries have access to get a gigabit broadband. So we're already ahead of the curve there, and I think we can play an integral part of the discussion in terms of ensuring that access reaches residents.

43:30

Scott Woods

I would match that. your time is up. Thank you so much. I do appreciate it. We have to get to more attendees. That was two minutes, everyone, so you can get a sense of how long two minutes is. Thank you, Mr. Ritter for those comments.

43:43

So, next, we're gonna have Thomas Seidel, You're up. He didn't come on.

44:01

OK, Thomas is a little camera shy today, let's go to our next participant, Iris O'donnel. Iris is not there.

Debbie Swicker. Not there either.

45:16

Alright, Ali, you're ready to go.

45:18

Ali Dias

Hi, this is our ideas with the California Department of Education, and I was just going to address the first question.

45:25

One of the most significant barriers that we face within the Department of Education is just the infrastructure itself, building it on certain terrains, or the right to access lands. And so those are some of the barriers we have experienced within our agency. We just can't.

45:44

Nobody wants to, spend the money, I guess, is basically what it does or put the time into build on some of the terrain up in the mountains or lands where there is common landslides, you know, so the infrastructure gets wiped out. And then, again, we are in California.

46:01

And so sometimes people just don't want us on their land due to what they're doing, so we can't build through their land to get the connectivity to the schools or to the county offices of education.

46:14

Scott Woods

Thank you for that, OK, all right, there are two up, next Todd Smith.

46:23

Can you hear me?

46:25

Todd Smith

My name is Todd Smith, I'm an attorney, a DC's Chief Technology officer, and I'm just going to respond to number two. What a system can NTIA provide prospective applicants.

46:38

The thing that I'm running into sort of a more pressing need for is just more detail on what some of the terms used in the Language of the Act itself mean. You know, things like where affordability plays into access or the definition of term access.

46:54

What a broadband serviceable location is going to actually mean, yeah, I've been digging for weeks and I'm finding a lot of different answers from the SEC and other places because all of that is necessary for us to start the planning process to know where we can plan on.

47:10

Building out in terms of the three, like nested priority levels or whatever that are in the BEAD program.

47:19

So the sooner we get those answers, the sooner we can start planning on our end to be able to like buyer as soon as the, the application window opens up.

47:28

So, that's what, what I would need the most is, just a little more specificity on some of the terms upon which each jurisdiction's, the allocation, are going to turn and that are going to affect sort of our freedom to spend geographically. Right.

47:45

Scott Woods

OK, thank you very much, and just a technical note, for the first couple of people who raised their hands. If you have technical difficulties, and you need to come back in, please raise your hand, and we'll get back to you.

47:59

Next, I want to queue up as Angelina Panettieri, from NLC.

48:13

Angelina Panettieri

Can you hear me?

48:14

Super, thank you. So this is Angelina Panettieri from the National League of Cities. I'd like to address both questions. So on what we see as the most significant barriers, I would say we break this into two categories. The first being systemic disinvestment in our communities and neighborhoods, which may not be reflected in current FCC data. I think we all agree on that.

48:37

So looking forward to hearing from NTIA, how they're going to reconcile those data issues, and also how we can address those disinvestment and ensure in particular that urban and suburban and lower income communities are not

inadvertently blocked from being due to the prioritization system or left with lower quality infrastructure options by state plans. And then, second, we see another barrier, is quality of service and cost of service. We want to make sure that the BEAD program in particular is promoting competition affordability, and especially active participation by public owners of broadband infrastructure, and public private owners of broadband infrastructure, like, community broadband networks. And then on the second question about assistance at two things that we're flagging are robust requirements for stakeholder engagement on those state plans, particularly local governments, who are critical, partner here.

49:29

And making sure that there's a wide representation from wide diversity of communities, large, small, rural, urban, and also strong encouragement and support to state broadband offices. A lot of them are very new and are going to need help building capacity, especially around things like engagement and planning. Just to make sure that plans and implementation really reflect the needs of communities throughout the state, and not just broadband providers and tackle some of that digital redlining and disinvestment concerns that I mentioned earlier.

50:01

Thanks.

50:03

Scott Woods

Great. Thank you very much. Appreciate that insight, and that input next to it.

50:13

Wow.

50:32

Yeah, sorry, I didn't unmute myself.

50:37

Sachin Gupta

My name is Sachin Gupta. I am with fiber Group, we are subsidiary for Rural Electric Co-operative in Oklahoma, people like services to our members is not central Oklahoma. I have comments about both of these questions.

50:55

On the first one, up, above the significant barrier, actually, I have two separate topics. One is about timing.

51:04

If you put in too much time between you know for any deployment, then essentially things just sit on the back burner for a long time and they don't get done, the second one is about scalability.

51:21

If you're going to apply 100 MBPS, symmetric today in five years, you wouldn't want that to be scalable up to one thousand MBPS symmetric.

51:30

So you would want to show that there's some language in your rules about technologies that I use that will be scalable in five years to get to that speed.

51:41

Then the third one is, about bad actors, which companies who come in and will get funded if it doesn't make promises but then they never act upon the default. Or do something, and they are mostly do that to keep competition out of an area where they are in.

52:05

So, those are the three barriers that I see. On the spot. if you can arrange for some webinars or presentations or state legislature, legislators or their age, the state broadband office, educating them about technology, telling them a little bit about what kind of technology would be best suited for their state. That would help.

52:31

Scott Woods

Great, thank you for that, I appreciate that.

52:34

Thank you. Let's go back to Debbie Slicker. Debbie couldn't speak.

52:42

Apologize, everyone, for technical difficulties. Of course, these things always work in practice and as soon as we go live.

53:34

Ready to go. Very good, Nancy Cornell.

53:43

Let me double check here. Unmute request. There we go.

53:54

We have Nancy Cornell, thank you.

53:56

Nancy Cornell

I'm the Vice Chair of one of the Vermont Communications districts, which are not for-profit municipal corporations that are charged with supplying fiber to the home broadband in their territories.

54:15

Um, I guess, I think, significant barrier for our communications union districts is to be able to get, try to fund most of our build, or as much of our build as possible with grant funds, rather than municipal bonds.

54:34

Because the sooner we can, the less we have to borrow money, the quicker we'll be able to find ways to not only offer subsidies to low-income subscribers, but also be able to have to have funds for the actual installation? Well, that's a huge piece.

54:54

And I would also just say, in terms of the assistance we need, would really be helpful if the grant applications, to individual providers and municipal providers, such as ourselves, would be simple, as I've looked at a number of government grant opportunities and applications, it seems to me that many of them are needlessly complex.

55:26

And that certainly is daunting. Especially when you know where we are mostly volunteers, and we don't have people or employees to hire to write those grants.

55:48

Scott Woods

OK, thank you very much for your comments, let's go, Jonathan Gormley.

56:05

Jonathan Gormley

Hello, this is Jonathan. I wasn't exactly sure how the icons worked with raising hands or not. But I'll just take the opportunity to mention that. In Ohio, we're really focused on both the needs in our urban areas, but also an Appalachian. So we'll be interested to see if there's some insights to provide on, in particular, the Appalachian states of America and their needs in those regions. Thanks for the chance.

Scott Woods

And, Jonathan, who are you with? If you don't mind me, asking?

Jonathan Gormley

I'm with the Ohio Department of Development.

56:46

Scott Woods

And thank you. All right, thank you very much for your comments.

56:49

Next, let's go to Dave, not David, David Matthews.

56:56

I'm sorry, David Matthews Morgan, I was thinking the other Dave, Dave Matthews. Can you hear me? Yes, we can hear you.

57:02

David Matthews
Morgan

All right, my name is David Matthews Morgan. I'm the primary grant writer for the City of Winterville, Georgia.

57:09

I just submitted a one million dollars plus broadband grant to the state of Georgia for money that had already been allocated. And in my opinion, I'm going to answer question one. The biggest impediment I see, it as shipping bare is having enough backbone capacity to handle how to make a bit per second connections per person.

57:29

And in my opinion, the only way to do that is using single mode fiber optic cabling, which can scale up two terabytes of bandwidth.

57:38

Because if you have a one gigabit connection, you can only support at most actually eight with overhead, 800 megabit connection. With fiber optics, or the dark fiber, or reasonably priced fiber solutions, active fiber solutions from vendors, you can go to 10 gigabits, 100 gigabits single mode fiber. And that is the solution, in my opinion, and that's the barrier because nobody wants to put dark fiber. To light up, to provide the bandwidth is necessary.

58:12

Scott Woods

OK, thank you for your comments. Noted, let's go next to Reneisha Rudder.

Reneisha Rudder

58:27

OK. Well, somebody already kind of answered it, a lot better than I did earlier, but number one, I think the most significant barriers is definitely cost. I'm sorry, let me start by introducing. I am I'm a Digital Inclusion Fellow with the Southeastern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, And so in my talks with the different government representatives that I've met with so far, they seem to be having trouble, basically to get internet service providers to think that expanding service in their area is worth their bottom line.

59:11

I live in a somewhat rural area, and under the jurisdiction under the Planning Commission, where our work is, majority, rural. There's a few pretty sizable cities and towns, but the majority of it is rural here in southeastern Indiana. And there are very limited amount of providers.

59:37

The majority of the people, I believe, rely on RMEC's to provide a lot of their utilities and their intranet, that infrastructure there. So, infrastructure is part of the barrier. But, I do believe that in a lot of the talks between the city or town, governments, and internet service providers, it's hard to just get those providers to think that expanding a service like, you know, half a mile down, where they're going to get 100, 200 more customers. So, from the customer side, you know, we see it as, Oh, well, you're getting more customer this, my money. But to them, to the service providers, they have to, that's, you know, cost. That's expenses that come with those customers, that they don't think it's worth covering, unfortunately, to give those people service, and so, they just won't even bother expanding out there.

1:00:34

Unless there's something like a casino or some other big economic draw out there, they deem worth it. So little. Yeah, that's a little insight into since some of the barriers that some rural areas face OK, thank you very much.

1:00:56

Scott Woods

Next, we're going to tell Louis Peraertz. Then we're going to tee up Frank Smith next after Louis, Mr. Peraertz.

1:01:11

Louis Peraertz

Scott, can you hear me OK?

1:01:13

We can. Thank you. Thank you so much. I want to address both questions with regard to What - So I am Louis Peraertz, the Vice President of Policy for the Wireless Internet Service Providers Association, or WISPA. We represent more than 700 very small broadband ISP companies around the country and many of them, the vast majority of them are deploying to unserved areas. Previously unserved areas using fixed wireless technologies but they are also incorporating fiber into their networks So they're developing hybrid networks.

1:01:52

So, with regard to the first question, in terms of the most significant barrier to ensuring broadband access. We believe that its lack of accurate broadband data about where broadband is and currently is not. So, we were excited to see the requirement in the infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act requiring the FCC to develop the broadband service locations fabric. That's going to help a lot.

1:02:20

What's also going to help a lot is the broadband deployment locations map. That's also a separate mandate requiring the FCC to develop. So, we hope the and so we hope that as NTIA develops its BEAD program, it incorporates in considers and co-ordinates with these broadband location accuracy beta tools that are being developed by the FCC, That's number one.

1:02:48

With regard to number two, what assistance can NTIA provide prospective applicants?

1:02:54

I want to address a point that somebody from California made about 5 or 10 minutes ago, which is, what can we do in areas with terrain that is very difficult. That is exactly the sweet spot for fixed wireless technologies, And that is what our companies can do in areas where fiber may not be the most cost effective or timely tool to use. That is where fixed wireless technologies come in. And so, what we think NTIA should do, is that for areas with terrain, such as and difficult terrain features such as that basin, encourage people to seek other technologies in addition to fiber, to look at fix wireless technologies. Thank you very much.

1:03:42

Scott Woods

Alright. Thank you thank you, Mr. Peraertz. for that. All right.

1:03:45

We're going to call Frank Smith, and we're going to tee up Ryan Collins says, Frank, All right, Mr. Smith.

Frank Smith

1:03:56

Loud and clear good. My name is Frank Smith, I'm the president and CEO of the Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority. We're a municipal broadband authority. And we're in the southwestern part of Virginia, Roanoke County, Roanoke and City of Salem.

1:04:14

I came out of the private sector 6.5 years ago to help build this network. And it's been an interesting ride. So first of all, I'd like to thank you all for the work that you're doing. Because to me, this is a ray of hope, quite, especially in your infrastructure side.

1:04:28

To answer your first question, what do you see as the most significant barrier to ensure broadband access? I really appreciate the comments.

1:04:35

I'm going to focus on two things. One, the representative from the National League of Cities was spot on, as far as the underserved underinvestment. In certain sections of the City of Roanoke, we have where the actual life expectancy is 14 years less than the national average. That's a problem. So we want to be able to make sure we can provide investment, help this problem, and get better outcomes from that standpoint.

1:05:00

So our barriers are sometimes artificial restrictions, as far as procurement and funding, artificial barriers based on other competitive ways to keep folks from competing for the same dollars. That's been an interesting thing for us to learn.

1:05:14

I think the second thing is, and there's a gentleman from Georgia who mentioned about it, and that is the key thing, understanding that the importance of proper infrastructure, fiber optic infrastructure because it's great to deploy. But the problems when you have standards then only go up to 100 up and 20 down. I mean, you started 100 down in 20 up, that's a very short-term perspective. It meets immediate need, but 24 months, 36 months from now, I think we're going to be revisiting that. So, I look forward to working with NTIA understand this and how we can form the proper coalitions. And thank you. This has been great.

1:05:53

Scott Woods

Thank you very much. Next, we're going to Ryan Collins. And we're going to queue Heidi Ziemer.

1:06:01

Ryan, you're up.

1:06:04

Ryan Collins

Thanks for having me. I'm Ryan Collins, Broadband Coordinator from Buckeye Hills Regional Council, where a regional council of governments in Southeastern Ohio, primarily focused in 8 Appalachian counties in southeastern Ohio.

1:06:18

One answer to the first question, the most significant barrier to ensuring broadband access is definitely that, under representation of those that are connected and not. I would encourage the NTIA and the FCC to work with local

organizations that have been working on this problem for years, such as Buckeye Hills Regional Council.

1:06:37

We have a website called Connecting Appalachia, where we partnered with other regional councils in Appalachia, to truly show the wide range that was missed in the old FCC maps. So, working with organizations, such as us and other organizations across the country, to really see what the boots on the ground are seeing in their areas, when it comes to connectivity.

1:07:02

And what assistance can the NTIA provide? We already have a broadband program here in the state of Ohio. We heard from somebody from our development office earlier.

1:07:12

And something that the NTIA could do is help us with rolling out a new program quickly. So, when applying for those funds, making sure that we know how to update our current programs to the newer standards.

1:07:25

So, rather than having to start from the ground up, assisting with just making those slight modifications so that those funds can be applied to enrolled out sooner rather than later. And one other thing could be helping with coalition building within the state.

1:07:41

Something that I'm speaking with our state broadband office about is working with those regional councils and the boots on the ground, across the state as arms of those digital equity programs.

1:07:52

So the digital equity plan being delineated from the state down to those regional entities, and then those regional entities that are already well connected within their communities, and are able to get boots on the ground in those areas, then two, implement the plan.

Scott Woods

1:08:10

Thank you very much, we appreciate that.

1:08:12

Thank you. Alright, next we'll have Heidi Ziemer, and we're going to tee up Robert Bocher.

Heidi Ziemer

1:08:35

Thank you, Mr. Woods for allowing me to speak today.

1:08:40

My name is Heidi Ziemer. I am with the Western New York Library Resources Council based in Buffalo, New York. I'm also a member of the Western New York Digital Equity and Inclusion Coalition, encompassing six regions in the six

counties in the Western New York region. And I wanted to address the first question. But I think that actually, this actually relates to the second question, because perhaps NTIA can assist in helping us overcome some of these barriers. One is that we need government policies at the state and local level that are geared toward allowing local grassroots solutions through digital equity in every part of, well, in New York State, for example, in my state. And we need more information sharing. There's a lack of collective effort and community communication channels between state and local governments and non-profits and community based organizations.

1:09:35

We need guidance from the state and federal government, and I think maybe through the application process, that, I believe another speaker mentioned, the need to educate, some of our state and local leaders about broadband access and digital inclusion, would be a good step forward and helping them get to gain a better understanding.

1:09:58

And I think can feel more comfortable communicating with some organizations involved in Digital Coalition building locally, as far as adoption goes, I think that publicity outreach and education are the key. From formal education, in schools, to workforce training, to public programming in places like libraries, where people are being taught about, how to use telehealth services, and apply for government services online. I think that the more that we can do outreach and education and publicity of these new tools for communicating and sharing information, I think the better off we'll be, and thank you so much again for your time and for this opportunity.

1:10:40

Scott Woods

Thank you. Thank you for your comments.

1:10:43

Alright, next we have Robert Bocher and we're going to tee up Mark Luchini.

1:11:11

Robert Bocher

I just want to emphasize, I'm Robert Bocher from the American Library Association, and we've got a number of library representatives, including the previous woman speaking about library issues. And I just want to take about 20 or 30 seconds here, and that's the size of the comments that James River from the Maine State Library made a few minutes ago.

1:11:29

Our libraries really are key players in promoting digital equity, but in many smaller libraries, they're going to very likely lack the time or expertise to complete a digital equity application. And that's where the state library agencies can play a key role in submitting a conceptual application, for example. That includes many local libraries. So my point is, as you folks at NTIA develop your digital equity application, rules, and processes, I hope you recognize the key role that State library agencies have in helping to assist you in helping to assist those

local libraries in dealing with and addressing the digital equity issues. Thank you very much.

1:12:10

Scott Woods

Before I let you go, can you tell us who you are with? I don't know if you stayed at that at the top – with the American Library Association.

1:12:19

OK. There we go. Sorry about that. All right. Well, let's Mark Luchini, you're up And we're going to tee up Jason Zelley next.

1:12:45

Mark Luchini

What I'd like to address is probably Section two, or a discussion question two. And I'm with Snow Cloud Services. We're a small internet service provider here in south-east Alaska. And what I would like to see is potentially special consideration for existing providers in areas, as opposed to potentially funding new providers who have may previously chosen not to build out in an area without grant funding.

1:13:14

You know, we, over the years, have built out with our own investment, our own blood sweat tears in areas that no one else would build out to in. A lot of this grant funding that's coming out is certainly the way I see it and have noticed other applications is potentially overbuilding with people, other companies that basically had no skin in the game previously, and they wouldn't do it unless they had grant funding. I think this prevents overbuilding and unfair competition. I think it certainly supports businesses who have already invested in a community but may simply just need some extra help to provide complete coverage or more coverage and upgraded service. Um, and I think this would kind of unleash competition by smaller innovators.

1:14:04

I think those, those companies that, that really provided services on their own, over the last few years, we went from 10 by 2 to 25 by 3, and now, we'll go into 100 by 20, as sort of these metrics to provide broadband moving pretty quickly. The smaller innovators can provide these services quickly, and they may already be there.

1:14:27

We just need to have special consideration for them, and maybe a little bit more outreach. You know, we all know that maps are not necessarily accurate. And I think with a little bit of searching out for some of these smart providers in areas. I mean, simply Googling, you know, providers in certain areas brings up a lot of information, A lot of companies that may just may have been overlooked. And so, I would like special consideration for things such as that.

Scott Woods

1:14:57

Thank you, Mark. We appreciate that. Next, we have Jason Zelley and then we're going to tee up Kevin Taglang.

1:15:07

Jason Zelley

This is Jason. Can you hear me?

1:15:09

We can. Thank you, alright. I'm with Corning Optical Communications and a couple of comments on those questions.

1:15:17

My first point and it might be granular, but I think for having folks those that truly do need it, Broadband service, defining very clearly originally what access to broadband is going to be very important. Here, because access to and connected to are not synonymous. They're not the same.

1:15:36

So we need to make sure that in this process, that the states are defining very clearly how are they able to define success and allowing folks to get connected to broadband service.

1:15:47

And that could be something, for instance, as simple as they must be hooked up within 24 to 48 hours upon request or something specific so that it's not taking an extended period of time to connect these folks, whether that be satellite, fixed wireless or fiber or any other means of broadband.

1:16:07

I think the other second point here is we can allow undue burden on homeowners. There's plenty of cases where homeowners are denied service because they live too far away from the main road.

1:16:18

I think some other callers have brought up some similar instances, but we can't allow sub grantees to put burden on homeowners that are undue There's, there's a, a great example. This broadband initiative has been, compared to the Rural Electrification Act, and there's a story about a farmer.

1:16:35

Who couldn't get connected by a co-op because he live too far away, so he literally hooked this house up to attractor, and he moved it half mile down the road so that he could be close enough to get connected. We can't do that these days. So we need to make sure that homeowners are protected in that way.

1:16:48

Then finally, I think a previous homeowner or a previous excuse me, Caller mentioned a little bit about future proofing in the next, you know, 36 months or so?

1:16:58

I think we should take into consideration how states are planning for, over the horizon technologies that will put stress on broadband infrastructure, things like autonomous driving or other network needs that need to be incorporated into their plan. Because what you don't want is another digital divide where urban communities are left behind because they simply aren't connected to new

technologies, right? If a car can't drive to them, you know, automated, then they're just not going to get visited right.

1:17:31

So we want to make sure that this money last for decades to come, and that states are considering those types of requirements on their network. Thank you.

1:17:42

Scott Woods

Thank you, Jason, and we appreciate those comments.

1:17:45

I know, folks, we only have about 13 minutes left in the session, so we're going to try to call on everyone that we can. I'm just alerting you to the time.

1:17:53

So, next, we have Kevin Taglang. Then, we're going to tee up Mari Savickis.

1:18:00

Kevin, you're up.

1:18:02

Kevin Taglang

Thank you, Mr. Woods.

1:18:04

I just wanted to address the barrier to achieving Universal Broadband adoption. I think research finds that over and over that the number one barrier to adoption is cost, especially monthly costs for broadband service.

1:18:22

So, I'd like to ask that the NTIA in working with states and providers come up with affordable plans that are affordable for everyone, including the unbanked, which might mean that they have to be free. We would ask that you work in coordination with the FCC to make sure that there are plans available to low-income people that can be covered by the Affordable Connectivity Program.

1:18:50

I'm sorry, I didn't introduce myself, Kevin Taglang from the Benton Institute for Broadband and Society.

1:18:58

Thank you, Kevin.

1:19:00

Scott Woods

Next, go to Mari Savickis, I'm sorry, I mispronounce your name the first time ever going to tee up next Stanley. Mari.

1:19:09

Mari Savickis

Hi, Mr. Woods, thank you so much.

1:19:12

Mari Savickis as I am with Chime, that stands for the College of Health Care Information Management Executives, and our members are CIOs, and others, and this C Suite, your purchase and deploy technology, are hospitals and health

systems across the country. And, I guess we're not terribly familiar with NTIA aiming. We're trying to follow the broadband conversations to respond to the two questions. I think the things that we would say first would be accountability. Just making sure that the money is spent in ways that it was intended by the administration, and it gets to the people who need it the most. And then the other thing is, number two, is just anything you can provide with respect to health care providers. And we're happy to work, you know, happy to work with you, on, or other healthcare providers to get that information out. But, hospitals, especially, those, are underserved and rural, community centers and federally qualified centers. Rural health centers, they don't always have this information.

1:20:07

So, if there's anything you can do to target some of your outreach to the health care sector, we would most, appreciate that for my telehealth perspective. Thank you so much.

1:20:20

Scott Woods

Thank you, Meri. We appreciate that.

1:20:22

Next, Carl Stanley let us know he does not have any comments so we can go on to the next person.

1:20:32

OK, so we're going to call on J Mel Poole, then we'll tee up the Roberta Silverstein.

1:20:41

There you go.

1:20:43

J Mel Poole

Hi, Thanks for putting this presentation on I'm J Mel Poole Director in Ocala Fiber Network here in Florida. And we're a government entity. This party that's been operating in this space for over 20 years, providing high speed Internet, to community institutions is to include schools and libraries, are challenges one of the map, so that we can get out and with color mixed between rural and urban areas.

1:21:11

We follow the electric backbone of our era electric utility services. So for us, being able to play in this space is nothing unusual for us who've been playing in it for some time now. I think one of those barriers for us is updating the maps is one big challenge for us and probably, too, that recognizes that government municipalities can play in this space and offer high speed broadband Internet to those uncertain, underserved locations. That's question one, question two, as far as assistance, I think, from a government perspective, tamping down the verbiage in those applications was, I think someone mentioned that those grants can be very, cumbersome when you try to write one as I'm not a professional grant writer. But I can tell you that really, those grants and trying to

apply for those grants. If they could just kind of be simplified a little bit where the average person can go in and apply for them.

1:22:17

Thank you and look forward to hearing back.

Scott Woods

1:22:21

All right. Thank you, Appreciate that.

1:22:23

Next, we have Roberta Silverstein and we'll tee up Corey Block.

1:22:29

Hello, yes, hello!

Roberta Silverstein

1:22:34

Alright, alright, yeah, thank you so much. Mr. Woods and Ms. Garner with regard to, you know, providing this session for all of us to communicate to each other. I'd like to answer number two first and then go back to number one. I messaged this as well. There are so many players in this marketplace.

1:22:59

And so many interested audiences, it would be great to have a directory of some sort where we can all input our contact information so that we can actually collaborate with each other. Because we are a very small trade association I haven't introduced myself. Roberta Silverstein, I'm with the Multimedia Coaxal Alliance.

1:23:24

And what we do is we create technology standards that utilize existing coaxial infrastructure for connectivity of multi gigabit, broadband, Internet services. I know you've never heard of us. We don't lobby to, to Washington, DC, because we just can't afford to do that. But I'm actually typing everyone's information that I can gather just because I would like to collaborate with all of these resources and all of these brilliant individuals that have been on the call today. So that is one of the things that I would say, is assistance that you can provide applicants, and partners, is a directory where we can connect with each other. And then in answer to the first question.

1:24:10

You know, one of the things that we've been doing and we actually been talking about digital inclusion and equity for the last three years is really looking at not throwing out the bathwater, that in many of the underserved, urban areas, connectivity resources are available in multi dwelling units through existing coaxial cabling infrastructure. And that can be utilized in a number of different ways, including fixed wireless including with fiber broadband fiber pawn.

1:24:50

So I would, I would recommend that we not throw out and just, you know, blow fiber into all the empty use that are available if it's, if it's worthwhile to do that. If there's a location that has television service already, it can get broadband

connectivity, and we'd love to be able to determine how can we use that. So thank you.

Scott Woods

1:25:15

No, thank you for those comments. We appreciate it. We have about five minutes left to see if we can get to everyone here that I have queued up.

1:25:23

Next we have Corey Block. And we're going to tee up Patrick Harrison.

1:25:29

You're on the mark.

Corey Block

1:25:32

I'm Corey Block. I'm a planner with Westmoreland County, we're in Southwestern Pennsylvania and I would say that the most significant barrier is the co-ordination and capacity needed to pull off something like this. I mean, we're a huge county. We go from rural to urban.

1:25:55

We have 65 municipalities, but a lot of those municipalities are so small, and barely have a staff of their own. They can't handle this. So the county is taking the lead, and while we do have some municipalities that are taking the charge themselves, for the most part, the county is facilitating that effort and the rest throughout the rest of the county, just coordinating across such a large area. Learning about all the new technologies, trying to get grant funding, learning about implementation.

1:26:28

I mean, having the resources to do all that, I think, is one of the most significant barriers that we have currently. And that is about it for me. Then, thank you very much.

Scott Woods

1:26:42

Thank you very much.

1:26:44

Next, Patrick Harrison. we're going to tee up Daniel Holbrook, Patrick.

Patrick Harrison

1:26:54

Good afternoon, Mr. Woods, can you hear me OK?

1:26:57

I can hear you. Yes.

1:26:59

Thank you very much. My introduction is my name is Patrick Harrison. I represent a utility company here in upstate New York. I wanted to first thank you Mr. Woods and Ms. Garner for facilitating the discussion today.

1:27:10

I would like to comment on the first question regarding barriers for entry. For some additional context over the past five years, New York State has engaged in

a similar initiative to expand broadband service to unserved or underserved communities through the Empire State Development and the new near broadband program office. Those offices have partnered with utilities and ISPs telecom's in an effort to expand broadband access across New York.

1:27:34

During that expansion, we have encountered two primary barriers, one challenges relating to existing infrastructure, terrain areas, served. And as mentioned, challenges with identification of those lesser serve communities, with respect to the infrastructure challenges, that does include difficult terrain and remote areas, which has resulted in higher make routine construction costs for telecommunications and ISPs. Those costs to provide access in those areas, for example, areas within the Adirondack Park via traditional fiber optic, we've found may not be feasible, and ISPs have been hesitant to expand into those areas due to the cost for entry. Unlimited opportunities to generate revenue. For those alternate solutions for service, including satellite internet, or wireless says, suggested here may allow those entities to provide service to areas otherwise inaccessible to traditional fiber.

1:28:26

Second, didn't want to state, I agree with multiple comments regarding challenges to the location and data accuracy. As we have experienced that in New York State, inaccurate surveys and records of served communities have resulted in gaps or areas that remain underserved. Even after those initial expansion's previous surveys considered a community served if only a certain percentage had access to service, although a significant did remain unserved.

1:28:51

The accurate surveys and records of home served is critical in ensuring that those communities do, who do need access, receive them. Wanted to thank you for the time and the opportunity to comment. We're eager to continue this initiative here in New York. Thank you.

1:29:07

Scott Woods

Thank you, Mr. Harrison. Next, we're going to have Daniel Holbrook and we're going to tee up Bob O'Shea.

1:29:13

Thank you.

1:29:15

Daniel Holbrook

Daniel Holbrook with the Oregon Broadband Office, Thank You, Mr. Woods.

1:29:19

And so, for number one, we have Frontier remote communities and cost is very important and is a barrier. What that specifically means is middle mile has to be a factor in all projects. Additionally, the operation maintenance and replacement program and cost and ongoing costs. Typically don't make the business case for a lot of our ISPs and so how continued support or financing is going to be important for that, as well.

1:29:49

Additionally, data transfer cost is a factor for that, and then, one more item under this, really, under the digital equity space, part is, you know, I didn't haven't seen anything, really scales up. Training and support, that could really be implemented statewide so that we're not replicating a whole bunch of other programs.

1:30:12

And then, for the second question. Having some type of universal templates, applications, things that could be easily modified, for states, and for communities would be helpful. And then lastly, if the NOFO could be structured, so that components of that could possibly be copy and paste, I consider that a plug and play. Thank you, sir.

Scott Woods

1:30:36

Thank you very much, and we are at our last caller of the day.

1:30:40

We have Nancy Werner, Nancy, if you're here. The microphone is yours. And you are our last input for today.

Nancy Werner

1:30:50

OK, thank you very much. I was assuming you wouldn't get to me, so I appreciate it. I, just to be very brief, will just echo I'm sorry. I'm Nancy Werner one of the general counsel of NATOA, which is the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors.

1:31:05

I would like to echo the comments that Angelina Panettieri, from the National League of Cities made. I think she made excellent points.

1:31:11

And I'll just kind of emphasize with respect to the second question, What I have heard from members is just concern about the co-ordination issue that Angelina raised questions about what local government can be doing now to prepare for coordinating with states in terms of the grant applications that states will submit. And then, also make sure that local governments and municipal providers are included.

1:31:37

I know the law requires that they not be excluded but, I think finding ways to make sure they are effectively included, whether the best often is important.

1:31:46

And, then, finally, just to echo what the gentleman from DC said, I think there are some unclear aspects of the of the beat provisions of the law, and, so, the sooner we can get some clarity on those things, The better, specifically, in the subsection on uses of funds.

1:32:02

There's, there's about 5 or 6 different uses of funds, and only two of them really are the deployment and the planning, um, purposes that are discussed at length

in the dark, in the, in the bill. So, I'd be interested to see what NTIA is going to do in terms of those other uses of funds, which will really help states and local governments start planning how they could apply for these grants. Thank you.

Scott Woods

1:32:33

Please excuse our technical difficulties. We appreciate everyone's patience. These were good sessions. Very collaborative process. Please submit written comments. You can see we have more sessions coming up in January and February of 2022. There will be different questions at each of those sessions. Please register for the registration links. Scripts will be posted on our website. Check the website for frequent updates, information today, on behalf of all of us, we hope to see you again soon, and Happy Holidays.