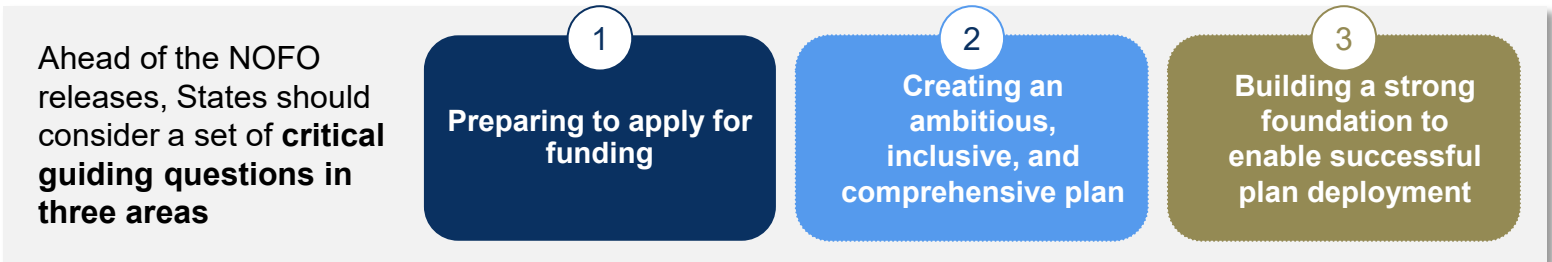# PREPARING FOR UPCOMING IIJA NOTICES OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
A GUIDE FOR BEAD AND DEA

This resource is designed to help States prepare for upcoming Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) broadband programs, with a focus on: the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program; the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program; and the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program.

Potential Pre-NOFO State Activities

While NTIA will release complete program rules later in 2022 with the BEAD and State Digital Equity Planning Grant Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs), States will benefit from acting now in anticipation of program requirements.

Ahead of the NOFO releases, States should consider a set of **critical guiding questions in three areas**

1 Preparing to apply for funding

2 Creating an ambitious, inclusive, and comprehensive plan

3 Building a strong foundation to enable successful plan deployment

1 *Preparing to apply for funding*

PLANNING FOR THE APPLICATION PROCESS

☐ **Roles:** Determine which agency, office, or other entity should apply for, administer, and oversee each program. Consider where broadband programs currently exist and where shared services may be used.

☐ **Coordination:** If responsibility for programs is shared among offices, how will they coordinate?

☐ **Planning funds:** *(BEAD only)* In the Letter of Intent, States can request access to up to $5 million in funds that can be used for planning and pre-deployment activities.[1] How will planning funds be used? (Note that the Assistant Secretary will determine the specific allowable uses for planning funds at a later date.)

STATE-LEVEL CAPACITY BUILDING

☐ **Current state:** What capabilities does the State currently have in broadband?

☐ **Capability needs:** Given the chosen application processes and plans, what capabilities must be acquired or developed?

☐ **Capacity needs:** Adequate staffing and support ensures fiscal responsibility and accountability. How will capacity needs be addressed?

Capability needs may include, but are not limited to:

- Program Application, Planning, Administration, and/or Implementation
- Digital Equity and Inclusion
- Community Outreach
- Interagency/interdepartmental coordination
- GIS and Broadband Mapping
- Broadband deployment and networks
- IT Solutions

To address capacity needs, states may:

- Hire staff
- Share services among offices or departments
- Train current employees
- Contract with individuals or organizations

1. Planning and pre-deployment activities may include research, data collection, preliminary budget development, communications support, training (and related staffing), and the establishment, operation, or capacity expansion of an office that oversees broadband programs and deployment in an eligible entity. The U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands may request up to $1.25 million each.

2 — *Creating an ambitious, inclusive, and comprehensive plan*

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholders may include:
- Political subdivisions
- Community organizations
- Broadband providers
- State stakeholders (*e.g.*, state agencies, elected officials)
- Individuals

☐ **Plan:** Develop an engagement plan that best serves your statewide goals.

☐ **Relationship-building:** Identify key stakeholders and begin to build or refresh relationships.

☐ **Tactics:** How will stakeholders be engaged? What will be the frequency?

☐ **Inclusivity:** States will benefit from, and should collaborate with, partners with diverse perspectives, resources, and skills. Are existing partnerships varied and diverse? Who is missing? How will the State engage unconnected, unserved, underserved, and underrepresented communities?

☐ **Support:** Are there any stakeholders or partners who might need targeted capacity building? Begin to develop a plan to support identified groups.

DATA COLLECTION

☐ **Current state:** What is known about state connectivity today? If the State has not already done so, seek out estimates of unserved, underserved, and eligible CAI[2] locations, as well as information on covered populations, considering both adoption and use.

☐ **Coordination:** Collect detailed information on existing and/or planned broadband efforts--both will be important for application and plan development. How will funding sources and efforts be coordinated?

Consider:
- What information exists and is publicly available? Start with the NTIA Internet Use Survey and/or the American Community Survey; supplement national data with local sources as needed.
- How will any information gaps be addressed?
- Are there any existing or planned locally-, State- or federally-funded efforts? Sources may include the FCC, NTIA, USDA, or Treasury.

3 — *Building a strong foundation to enable successful plan deployment*

LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING

☐ **Relationship-building:** Work to identify the local points of contact for every political subdivision coordinating with the State. What contacts and engagement mechanisms should be initiated today to aid in planning and implementation?

☐ **Support:** What locality capacity building should be launched to facilitate broadband planning and deployment?

Potential State support may include:
- Funding
- Technical assistance
- Engaging associations (county or municipal)
- Promoting knowledge sharing among localities

ENABLING POLICIES

☐ **Policy exploration:** Explore policies that may support cost-effective broadband deployment. Consider which policies:

1. Would be most <u>effective</u> within the State context; and

2. Can be <u>feasibly implemented</u> in preparation for IIJA funding.

Examples could include dig-once, one-touch, streamlined permitting, standardized pole attachment rates.

2. Community Anchor Institution