Susannah Spellman

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Hello. I'd like to welcome you to the first session in our Internet for all webinar series to discuss the new bipartisan infrastructure law high speed internet grant programs.

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My name is Susannah Spellman and I am the deputy associate administrator at the office of Internet connectivity and growth here at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration or NTIA. I'm excited to be serving us today's moderator today. We will be providing a general overview of our grant programs that officially launched on May 13. The Broadband Equity Access and Deployment or BEAD program, the Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program, and the Digital Equity Act programs.

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Before we begin, I would like to take a moment to review our agenda today. Joining us today are three esteemed guests, whose leadership help make all this possible.

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We will start first by hearing welcoming remarks from Assistant Secretary of commerce for communications and information and NTIA administrator, Alan Davidson and then deputy secretary of commerce, Don Graves. We will then move to the formal presentation and overview of the new Internet for all grant programs by NTIA's associate administrator of the office of Internet connectivity and growth, Doug Kinkoph.

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Finally, we'll move into a moderator Q & A session when where done and I will be joined by the directors of each of our new grant programs. Evan Feinman for BEAD, Angela Thi-Bennett for the digital equity programs, and Sarah Bleau for the middle mile. And with that, let's get started. I will now turn it over to Assistant Secretary, Alan Davidson and deputy secretary, Don Graves.

Alan Davidson

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Hi I'm Alan Davidson Assistant Secretary of Commerce and head of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. Thank you so much for joining us to hear more about our Internet For Al
l initiative.

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This is an exciting time for our country. The Internet for all initiative is a historic step towards achieving a critical goal to a fully connected America. We have been talking about the digital divide in this country for more than 20 years. Now, thanks to the bipartisan infrastructure law and President Biden's leadership, we finally have the resources to do something serious about it.

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The laws $48 billion investment in our nation's internet infrastructure will open opportunities for millions of Americans. The bipartisan infrastructure law will also give all Americans that access and skills they need to thrive in the modern digital economy. This is an all-hands-on deck moment. Your partnership is critical to ensure that everyone in this country gains access to reliable, affordable, high-speed internet.

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I hope you'll listen today, ask questions, give us feedback and then join us as we roll up our sleeves and get to work. Thank you again for being here.

Deputy Secretary Don Graves

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Hello I'm Deputy Secretary of Commerce, Don Graves. I'm glad that you're joining us today to hear more about the newly-launched Internet for all programs. We all know that fast and reliable Internet access is vital for everyday life. That's become even more apparent over the last two years. Unfortunately, that access isn't always available or affordable.

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But thanks to President Biden's bipartisan infrastructure law, the commerce department is investing nearly $50 billion to bring affordable and reliable high-speed internet to all Americans. Each State will get an initial $5 million to build a five-year action plan, following that every state will receive a minimum of $100 million with the rest to be divided by need. That includes nearly $3 billion in funding for the digital equity act, which will be used to promote digital inclusion and equity for communities that don't have what they need to take advantage of broadband connections.

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00:05:23.370 --> 00:05:34.650
Finally, our unserved and underrepresented communities of color, our aging populations and our rural communities will have access to the technologies, the education, Telehealth, and critical services they need. With dependable Internet access will increase the opportunity for everyone to succeed in the 21st century

global economy. So, thank you again for being here, thank you for your commitment to this historic moment, and thank you for your commitment to closing the digital divide.

Doug Kinkoph

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00:05:53.580 --> 00:06:11.460
Thank you, both Assistant Secretary Alan Davidson, Deputy Secretary Graves. My name is Doug Kinkoph. I am the associate administrator for the office of Internet connectivity growth, which is part of the National Telecommunications that information that is tradition or NTIA. As part of the Internet for all program launch, we welcome you here today to learn more about the high-speed internet programs.

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00:06:22.770 --> 00:06:28.590
To echo the remarks from President Biden recently launched affordability connectivity Program will make sure every single American has access to high quality, affordable, high-speed internet a high-speed internet programs, that we will talk about today will help us achieve this goal.

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The programs we will discuss are funded by the bipartisan infrastructure law, which was signed into law in November 2021. The bipartisan infrastructure law is a once in a generation what point $2 trillion investment in our nation's infrastructure. This includes the largest ever investments in our nation's high-speed internet, rail, transit, clean energy, and water and I'm excited for this opportunity to tell you more about high-speed internet programs funded by the bipartisanship such a long today. The bipartisan infrastructure long invests roughly 65 billion into high-speed internet efforts to seven federal programs. Four these programs are administered by NTIA these programs are the broadband equity access and deployment program, also known as BEAD.

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00:07:38.580 --> 00:07:49.830
To the digital equity planning capacity competitive grant programs, and three the tribal broadband connects the program, and four the middle mile private infrastructure Program. Additionally, there are three programs administered by other federal agencies these programs are the affordable connectivity program, which is run by the FCC to the rural broadband programs that the Department of Agriculture and the private activity bonds. Collectively these programs help us make sure every single American has access to high quality, affordable, high-speed internet.

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00:08:18.090 --> 00:08:27.120
High speed internet helps individuals and our country by maximizing savings for education, stimulating growth of the economy, low-cost health, strengthen the ties to our communities. For example, high speed like college or trades, high speed

internet allows businesses to connect with consumers increase sales, create jobs, and compete for talent.

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00:08:50.250 --> 00:09:00.510
High-speed internet enables patients to utilize Telehealth options, lower administrative costs for hospitals at improving patient improve patient health. High speed also fosters ties within the communities that helps first responders to respond to emergencies. All of these programs help close the digital divide which is the gap between those who have high speed internet and those have limited or no high-speed internet.

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00:09:19.650 --> 00:09:29.460
The digital divide is made up of several components, including lack of access to high-speed internet, meaning many Americans live in areas that are not covered by high-speed internet services or services that reliable. Lack of affordable high speed internet options meeting Americans cannot afford to pay for the cost of devices or monthly service has limited adoption of high-speed internet because individuals are not aware or available of service offerings or lack of digital skills to participate online.

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00:09:54.990 --> 00:10:06.090
Addressing the digital divide requires more than just access to affordable, robust high-speed internet though. Maximizing the benefit for high-speed internet. It also requires tools and services, such as access the digital literacy trading and measures to ensure online privacy. These high-speed internet programs our investment and the tools and services to ensure Americans benefit from high speed after we've discussed how high-speed internet kickbacks my savings for education, stimulate growth of the economy, lower costs for health care and strengthen ties to our community.

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00:10:35.910 --> 00:10:45.510
We want to underscore that high-speed internet touches all aspects of American society from the entertainment industry to agricultural industry. As I mentioned at the beginning, NTIA will administer four high-speed internet programs, I want to take a few minutes to find an overview of each of the four main programs.

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We will provide more information about these programs in the days and weeks to come, including through several programs' specific webinars.

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00:11:08.010 --> 00:11:17.100
Broadband equity access deployment program or BEAD, is the largest of the four programs by investing $42 billion to all Americans by funding projects of infrastructure, where it is the increasing the adoption of high-speed internet.

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00:11:26.370 --> 00:11:44.190
States and territories in partnership with communities and stakeholders can use the funds, the plan to deploy and upgrade Internet including stalling Internet and multi-tenant buildings and to implement adoption of digital equity programs, including workforce, the job training programs. The digital equity plays any capacity kind of grant programs are technically three programs. One for planning, one for capacity implementation, at what competitive grant programs that promotes digital inclusion advance. equity for all Americans, the BEAD program includes 2.75 billion in funding, including $60 billion for states and territories to develop digital equity plans. $1.44 billion for states and territories to implement those planets and promote digital inclusion and a 1.25 billion for certain entities like clinical subdivisions, tribal entities, nonprofits, community anchors, Local Education and agencies workforce development organizations to implement digital equity inclusion activities together the DE program same to ensure all communities can access and use affordable reliable high-speed internet meet the needs and improve their lives.

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00:12:53.850 --> 00:13:04.320
The tribal broadband connectivity program is additional funding for the existing program to help tribal communities expand high speed internet access and adoption and tribal lands. The tribal of broadband connectivity program includes $2 billion in additional funding for initial new grants and to fully fund grant the first round of awards. The original program has been embedded it three ways to extend the timeframe for outfits to file, to allow grantees to spend up 2.5% of total project cost on planning feasibility and sustainability studies. And preserve unused them allocated funds for other tribal broadband projects.

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00:13:38.310 --> 00:13:45.180
The Middle mile grant program will expand middle well infrastructure to reduce the costs of connecting unserved and underserved areas. Middle mile infrastructure refers to the mid-section of the Internet infrastructure that carries large amounts of data at high speeds over long distances. Middle mile infrastructure connects the backbone of the Internet infrastructure to the last mile which connects to the users. The Middle mile program includes $1 billion dollars in funding construct improve or fire middle mile facilities and equipment.

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00:14:12.510 --> 00:14:19.440
Every type of stakeholder plays a role in these high-speed internet programs, including the select stakeholder shown here. From telecom providers plugged

directly from BEAD sub grants for middle mile grants to deploy high speed Internet infrastructure Community organizations serving as the voice of their community to state leaders who are developing broadband digital equity plants.

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00:14:36.660 --> 00:14:52.530
There are many ways stakeholders, they get all the programs, and it is incumbent on each of us as individuals, representatives of organizations, and community members lend our voices to the conversation, and ensure we make the most of this historic investment.

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00:14:54.630 --> 00:14:59.610
We look forward to continuing to work with all of you have these historic high speed internet programs. We encourage you all to go to the newly launched internet for all website at Internetforall.gov to learn more about these programs and familiarize yourself with the notice of funding opportunities. We encourage you to engage with your state or territory regarding to play it to approve high speed Internet access.

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00:15:19.950 --> 00:15:34.560
Additionally, we invite you to submit flashes to Internetforall.NTIA.gov and attend future NTIA webinars which will find more information about these excited programs, including additional guides for program applicants.

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00:15:35.820 --> 00:15:43.230
Thank you very much for your time and attention today, I will now turn it back over to Susannah to open it up for discussion, thank you.

Susannah Spellman

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00:15:48.210 --> 00:15:52.890
All right, let me give a minute for our panelists to come off their video and audio. Real quickly, and we got a lot of procedural questions from the audience. I just want to let you know the recording and the presentation slides will be available on our website in the next couple of days. We will also have a transcription of the recording as well. That takes a little bit longer for us to do, but that will also be up within the next week or so, but we do intend for all of our webinars to share the video recording as well as the slides so that everyone can go back to them on their own time and read through everything.

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00:16:25.950 --> 00:16:33.540
And there was another question about how, what you know what's the linkage between the webinars that we've been doing for the last few months, and these webinars. And they are similar, they're about the same program but now that we've officially released our notices a funding opportunity, we have additional information and details on how to apply, timelines, additional information on how we took the

statute and built that into our NOFO. So, we wanted to reinitiate another set of webinar series just to make sure everybody was on board with everything.

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00:16:58.410 --> 00:17:15.060
So, with that I am going to jump right into the questions right now. And here was a really good fundamental question about eligible entities and I want to throw this to Sarah because I think this has to do with all three programs that were discussing. And Sarah, there was a person who asked, is Alaska included in these programs. Are they eligible to apply for these programs?

Sarah Bleau

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00:17:22.950 --> 00:17:31.590
I think that's an excellent question, Susannah. And why the heck would Alaska not be eligible for this. Alaska is a state. Alaska can apply for the BEAD Program. We can also with the middle mile program with certainly it's open to states and political subdivisions, as well as co-ops, utilities, nonprofits, telecom companies, everybody. That I mean I, I hope that everybody who's on this webinar right now applies for middle mile because the opportunity is there. Angela, do you want to chime in a little bit on the digital equity program?

Angela Thi Bennett

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00:17:55.320 --> 00:18:14.790
With respect to the digital equity program, absolutely. Alaska, you know all the states, all they have to submit an application for the digital equity planning grants and our tribal community, as well as our territories. Just have to you know, submit a letter of intent so it's completely open.

Susannah Spellman

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00:18:16.500 --> 00:18:18.840
Okay, great. And Evan, what are the minimum speeds required for funding in rural areas?

Evan Feinman

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00:18:25.290 --> 00:18:32.220
So, great question. There are a few different ways to answer that. So, let's talk about how the NOFO characterizes different areas.

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00:18:33.360 --> 00:18:39.090
Every state is going to need to come up with a plan that gets everybody who's unserved infrastructure access and everybody who's underserved infrastructure access. Your unserved if you're at 25 megabits per second download and three megabits per second upload or below. Your underserved below 100 megabits per second download and 20 megabits per second upload. And so, the really short version is in nearly every circumstance, every single American should have 100 over 20 at a minimum at the conclusion of infrastructure construction. The few exceptions to that are people who are truly remote, at which point, a more

economically efficient way to get them online would be permissible and community anchor institutions for which we're looking at a minimum of a gig symmetrical.

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00:19:26.010 --> 00:19:27.240
Susannah Spellman
Okay, very good. We had a question about one of our other IIJA programs but it's also a program that's been part of the CIA programs that we've been currently administrating.

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I'm going to give this to Doug since he knows a lot about the travel program, in particular. Will the tribal broadband connectivity program include state recognized tribal nations?

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00:19:49.980 --> 00:19:54.690
Doug Kinkoph
I'm sorry, clarify that question. Clarify the question for me again, Susannah.

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Susannah Spellman
For the IIJA implementation of the tribal broadband connectivity program state recognized tribal organizations be eligible to apply.

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00:20:04.770 --> 00:20:11.760
Doug Kinkoph
So, tribes will not independently be able to apply, but states will have an obligation to include them in your…

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00:20:12.450 --> 00:20:14.790
Susannah Spellman
Wait a second, Doug. This is for TVCB not BEAD.

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00:20:19.530 --> 00:20:40.470
Doug Kinkoph
So, okay. So, for the current tribal funding right the $2 billion that comes from IIJA, there will be an additional notice of funding opened up later this year that tribal governments and tribal organizations same as in the first program will be eligible to apply.

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00:20:43.350 --> 00:20:43.800
Susannah Spellman
Not there yet. And I've got another good question about eligibility, in particular. And I think all of our program directors can probably weigh in on the eligibility for their programs of this entity. Specifically, how will counties be able to access these funds and when? So, let's start out with Sarah.

Sarah Bleau	48 00:21:06.540 --> 00:21:22.710 Yes. Number one, it's important to note that a county would be considered if a county is considered political subdivision of a state, then yes, of course. With the middle mile, with respect to the middle mile program, the county can apply for these funds. Middle mile is as far as when will that money be available. Middle mile is probably the most fun program, I think. Again, another reason why I think everybody should apply for it because we've got a billion dollars almost that's going to be available very quickly, we are actually going to be opening up the application to you right now. You can go out there and read the NOFO, all of the rules for the middle mile program.
	49 00:21:50.730 --> 00:22:01.950 Pretty shortly, you will be able to apply for the middle mile program. I think actually in a few days we'll be talking about what the application process looks like for middle mile. So, please go do that. We will be accepting applications for a few months, and we will actually be awarding dollars by this time next year. So, middle mile, that billion dollars that was made available to the to the grant program, we will be accepting applications very shortly. Counties are certainly able to apply for middle mile programs, and the money will be going out this time next year. Thank you.
Susannah Spellman	50 00:22:28.830 --> 00:22:32.700 All right. Angela, tell me about counties in the digital equity programs.
Angela Thi Bennett	51 00:22:33.510 --> 00:22:47.970 So, with respect to the digital equity planning grant application, that's out now, that is available for states. Counties can coordinate with their states, you know, to participate in the planning process. But the competitive grant funding which will not be available until next year is when, you know, counties would be able to, you know apply and compete for funding.
Susannah Spellman	52 00:23:02.610 --> 00:23:05.400 All right. Evan, on to you for BEAD, how can counties apply?
Evan Feinman	53 00:23:06.450 --> 00:23:18.300 A couple of different ways. The key thing to remember for BEAD is that outside of a very unusual circumstance, which would be a state declining to participate in BEAD. In which instance, political subdivisions would be able to apply directly. The way in which counties and cities should engage with BEAD is by engaging with their state broadband office as it deploys funds and as it generates its sub grantee process.

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The NOFO is the most supportive of local government engagement and stakeholder engagement of any federal program like this I've ever seen. And it really contemplates an ongoing dialogue between local, we've got local government leadership and the state broadband office. And we're going to have staff in the states, both making sure that's happening and facilitating that happening. And so, you know I think what you're going to see at the conclusion of the planning process ahead of BEAD funds being distributed is a process that's incredibly transparent. In which local governments and local leaders have a really clear understanding of what decisions were made, when they were made, and what the timelines and scoring systems are. And everybody's going to have an opportunity to weigh in before any final or even intermediate decisions are made.

Susannah Spellman

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00:24:21.360 --> 00:24:33.990
Thank you. I have another question that I think applies to all programs. Somebody asked about which programs require a local contribution, and I'm implying that to mean nonfederal match or cost share etc. I know this is a tricky question because posture is dependent on, you know, where you are in the program, which program, but let's start with Evan. You go first in terms of cost share for BEAD.

Evan Feinman

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00:24:46.890 --> 00:24:58.470
Sure, so the BEAD program contemplates a match. The question is there is not a requirement that it'd be a local match, however, I think what we want to be really clear that the 20% match that is contemplated under BEAD and that match, by the way, should escalate right so that that's sort of the minimum match we expected in places that are more economically efficient. That the primary provider of match will be the ISP or the network owner and operator.

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00:25:16.050 --> 00:25:27.150
There will be an opportunity for a wide variety of sources of funds. Some projects are going to be complicated and expensive and hard and you're going to have to have a capital stack that's going to include philanthropic or corporate funds that could include local funds that could include other federal programs that are eligible for use, especially here we're thinking about ARPA fund, some of which are controlled by local governments. And you know, I said there's no requirement that there be local funds. There's also, they're interests in which match will be waived entirely because the costs are already too high and they're simply, it makes it economically inefficient or impossible to undertake a project with that match requirement. And so, all that is to say the basic sort of standard BEAD project will contemplate a match coming from a wide variety of eligible sources at or around or above 20%.

Susannah Spellman

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But note that no match is required for the initial planning funds that the states are able and eligible to request right now states and territories.

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Angela, what about digital equity and match funds are in kind funds?

Angela Thi Bennett

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00:26:24.990 --> 00:26:38.130
So, fortunately, digital equity has no match requirement, but I will encourage states to, you know leverage the digital equity, you know dollars. Because we do want the programs to be sustainable, you know, once the program you know is completed. And, with this funding, you know, we know that that's much more as needed to, you know advance the digital equity work, you know so, encourage leveraging.

Doug Kinkoph

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00:26:55.890 --> 00:27:04.620
Susannah, I just want to make one point Evan made when he said that just by a mistake. It's 25% or greater for the BEAD program, not 20%, so I just wanted to verify that.

Evan Feinman

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00:27:06.390 --> 00:27:06.750
Sorry about that.

Doug Kinkoph

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00:27:06.990 --> 00:27:08.040
No, not a big deal.

Susannah Spellman

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00:27:08.190 --> 00:27:13.590
And the NOFO has been changing literally up until like the day it was released so this is this..

Doug Kinkoph

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00:27:13.920 --> 00:27:25.560
And, just to clarify, as I think I've been alluded to this many different types of sources, but it can be cash, it could be incurred. So, contributions can also be done through that channel.

Susannah Spellman

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00:27:26.430 --> 00:27:31.080
And, I think that underscores what Angela was trying to share. How in kind, some of these organizations that would be performing the digital equity grants may not have cash, they have a lot of in-kind resources. The time, the elements, the office space, etc. And, we'll have a lot of guidance coming out about what are eligible in-kind

resources so organizations can understand what they can leverage beyond just straight money.

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00:27:50.850 --> 00:27:55.560
And Sarah, to you in terms of in kind of match requirements for middle line?

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00:27:56.310 --> 00:28:13.710
Sarah Bleau

You have, thank you Susannah on the middle mile program. Yes, there is matching that is required of at least 30%. That's three zero, that is quite a bit though that matching amount. They're kind of like what Evan mentioned that if you are able to match a little bit more, we take that into account. It can be cash, it can be in kind services, it can be, it can come from a variety of places. Maybe it's services that are being offered, maybe it's materials that are being provided. We've also, there's also, when you read the NOFO, you will see that, in general, federal funds may not be used as nonfederal as the match amount unless it is expressly provided by a federal statute. So there, there are some programs that would allow you to use their monies for match. The middle mile program and so that's something to be aware of, thank you for asking.

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00:28:54.180 --> 00:28:59.730
Susannah Spellman

And then, I did see in the chat another question pop up in particular about the tribal program and match. Right now, the CAA programs do not require match, and I do not believe that that is a requirement in the statute for the tribal program as well. And Sarah, do you also want to elaborate on the tribal potential to waiver for natural middle mile?

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00:29:15.930 --> 00:29:24.450
Sarah Bleau

Yes, there's yeah, that's a great question. There is the ability to waive that on the tribal program if you are applying to the middle mile program.

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00:29:25.770 --> 00:29:26.130
Susannah Spellman

Awesome. All right, real quick question. I'm going to answer this, because this is the world I've been living in. Will application templates be available?

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Yes, we are working hard for all programs to get all application questions templates materials posted on the internet for all website, as well as on the Broadband USA site. For the digital for the programs that are accepting applications right now, those templates and application guidance are available on the website.

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00:29:55.680 --> 00:30:02.100
And then hopefully by the end of this week, we will have the templates and forms to fill out for middle mile, including the questions. You will see it's a little bit more elaborate than the state programs because it is a competitive program and we're funding very robust middle mile networks. But that will be available in the salesforce portal, which we have nicknamed the NTIA grants portal and will be opened and accepting applications for middle mile June 21. But states and territories who are ready to submit their letters of intent and/or applications and as well as for digital equity, those tribal entities and territories who want to submit letters and attempt for digital equity.

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00:30:32.910 --> 00:30:48.120
They can create logins in the NTIA grants portal and there's grant guidance on our website to help walk them through that. So, that was just a PSA on application. So, really quickly. Oh, this is that this is a question here, and then I'm going to throw this over to Evan. In particular, about the FCC maps and the implications on the timing for the BEAD Program.

Evan Feinman

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00:30:58.860 --> 00:31:01.830
Was that the whole question or?

Susannah Spellman

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00:31:01.890 --> 00:31:09.450
Well, there's a lot of questions about FCC maps. How does that impact the timing for BEAD, and what are we doing about that and whatnot? So, a lot of questions.

Evan Feinman

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00:31:11.640 --> 00:31:14.190
I'll talk about the FCC maps. Got it. So, FCC is going to be coming out with some apps toward the end of this year that are a wild and dramatic departure from the mapping strategy that was previously used. So, previously FCC used a census block approach. I think everybody who's on this webinar is familiar with, with the ways in which that was flawed, and so they are now moving toward a location-based approach which should, which will be an attempt to capture every single potential service location in the United States. That's obviously a really significant undertaking and one that's going to be very challenging. FCC will be the first to admit that the math that they put out toward the end of this year is going to be a draft, you know. They're going to have done their best and then we're going to need state and local partners, as well as our partners in the territories, to help improve that map. And, so there's a challenge process by which FCC will be undertaking and hearing people saying actually, you're incorrect, their service here, not their service, they're not here' there's not service in this location, there is service and that location.

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00:32:19.410 --> 00:32:32.250
Ultimately, what drives is the allocation process by which those funds that were not given out for planning or set aside for high-cost locations are distributed amongst the 50 states and territories. You're going to want to as a result, if you're a state or territory, pay some attention to the correctness of your FCC maps so that you're able to drive, you know, a fair allocation of those monies to your state or territory.

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00:32:48.480 --> 00:32:58.680
One thing to be conscious of, though, is that that is not the last word in terms of where things are built in where they're not built. Both because they're you know there's some play in what projects is funded, don't fund, as well as an opportunity to run a second challenge process that can determine service quality or lack thereof in a given area during the state sub grantee process. And, I know that's a lot of stuff to approach at once, but it all that suffice to say if the FCC maps come out and show service in an area where you as a local leader or a state don't believe their serviced, don't panic. Engage with the challenge process that FCC puts out, and then remember that those maps are the beginning of the conversation about where we're going to build, not the end of the conversation about where we're going to build.

Susannah Spellman

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00:33:36.120 --> 00:33:52.350
Thank you. So, we have a few questions from local communities that want to understand how does engage with their state broadband offices. How does a local entity or community engage with their state broadband office? Who wants to take that?

Doug Kinkoph

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00:33:53.910 --> 00:33:55.470
I'm happy to jump in. So, the notice of funding has an extensive local coordination obligation put on to the states and territories to work with community organizations, political subdivisions, etc. And they must make a showing in their initial plans of the outreach that they did. How they engage with communities. So, it's not a one and done, you know. How are they going to be transparent and how are they going to have an ongoing dialogue? So, we think we've really tried to tackle that in the notice of funding, putting the obligation on the eligible entity to engage with various political subdivisions. As I said, community organizations, other vulnerable populations to ensure their voices are heard in the development of this to ensure that at the end of the day that we have connected 100%. And, those are just rural communities, those are also unconnected urban areas and other areas in between. So, I think the notice of funding, it's actually I think on page 53, starts to talk about local coordination and how states are to go about doing that.

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00:35:07.110 --> 00:35:11.310
Having said all that, I would not wait for the state the outreach as kind of ever was saying about the challenge process. It would always be fruitful for community organizations, political subdivisions to start looking and reaching out to the state broadband offices to start getting that to get engaged and letting them know you want to be engaged, as this process moves forward.

Angela Thi Bennett

83
00:35:30.720 --> 00:35:47.760
And then, if I could just add, folks on the call want to identify the contact persons for the state broadband office, it is on the broadband USA website. So, you can go to the broadband USA website, click on the menu and some resources and then click on the state, and you'll be able to locate the contact information.

Doug Kinkoph

84
00:35:54.450 --> 00:35:55.020
Great point, Angela.

Susannah Spellman

85
00:35:58.320 --> 00:36:02.190
So, here's a good question. Angela. Will the formula used to calculate the state digital equity planning grant allocation, as specified in the NOFO, be the same as the one that is used to calculate the eventual capacity grants? I think it's a yes.

Angela Thi Bennett

86
00:36:25.470 --> 00:36:28.860
I think it's the same, right. It's the same formula that we use. Right, yeah so that determines, so great question. And so, it is the same formula. There is a challenge in, let me just share that folks on our team went through extensive lengths to try to ensure, you know, the accuracy, you know of that formula. So yes, it is and but I will note that, for you know the legislation does provide a challenge process, you know to that, I believe, states have what 14 days, you know to challenge that. But you know I can assure you, there were great lengths were taken to ensure the act, you know that it's as accurate as possible.

Susannah Spellman

87
00:37:17.760 --> 00:37:22.320
So, here's a question for Evan and also for Angela. I think some folks are trying to understand how local communities will get money. In particular, for the state BEAD program as well as the state digital equity programs. In particular, will the applications be directed to NTIA but will the eligible entities apply to each state, and so I think the question might be confusing. A couple things but I think you know Evan and Angela, if you could talk a little bit more about the state role of sub granting for these programs.

Evan Feinman

88
00:37:52.290 --> 00:37:53.010
Angela, why don't you take that.

Angela Thi Bennett

89
00:37:53.610 --> 00:38:04.650
Okay, so let me just clarify. So, under the digital equity act, we have three programs. So, we have you know one program that's the state planning grant that is out now. You know, and after you know seats, you know submit their application for the plan and grants, they'll submit for the capacity building, you know, in the fall.

90
00:38:15.990 --> 00:38:27.810
And then, you know after that separately, you know those are both for the states directly. And then, of course there's a third, which is the competitive grant process and that's direct and that's not out yet. And sub grantees, you know that's where you know the states are the ones who will receive the dollars. And they will determine, you know who to sub grant, you know that funding to which is extremely critical. As Doug you know really expressed, I mean there is a local coordination, you know requirement, you know in our funding for states to reach out and coordinate. And you know, sub grant as they deem appropriate, but having said that, reach out to your state office, like ASAP.

Evan Feinman

91
00:39:05.100 --> 00:39:16.890
Yeah, and I'll build on that a little bit. The BEAD program contemplates the states as the primary actors, but they, the state broadband offices are frankly, are you know aren't going to want to do this without local government input. But it is going to be absolutely critical that we take kind of a whole of society and a whole of government approach to accomplishing the really, really, really ambitious goals of these programs, right. We're going to get everybody online; we're going to make sure that everybody has affordable access. To do that, everybody's going to need to put their shoulder to the wheel, and you know I think every, I think the state offices are going to be excited and desirous of local government support and input, but I also want to be clear that, you know, we are the enforcers of the NOFO requirements. And so, if our team hears that a state is not doing the kind of robust ongoing deep engagement with local government actors that the notice of funding opportunities contemplate, that's going to be a real problem and something that will need to be corrected before we could ever approve any distribution of funds to the states.

92
00:40:16.140 --> 00:40:25.080
And so, I think y'all are the carrot and we can be the stick. But I promise you, there is going to be very robust engagement between state offices and local governments.

Susannah Spellman	**93** 00:40:28.440 --> 00:40:30.150 Another question about match and I think this only really applies to middle mile and BEAD. So, I'm going to start with Sarah. Does greater match mean the application is more competitive, will they get more points?
Sarah Bleau	**94** 00:40:43.290 --> 00:40:51.840 That's a great question. Thank you and thank you for considering that because 30% matches a large amount. The goal in requesting this kind of a match is the only way to bring affordable, high-speed internet to all Americans is, we have to make the dollars go as far as we can. So yes, matches required certainly for middle mile program and when you read the NOFO, there are some explicit directions in there in the kind of waiting that will be allocated if you provide more than 30% match.
Susannah Spellman	**95** 00:41:14.220 --> 00:41:18.270 And then Evan, what about BEAD, is there anything in particular about giving more than the minimum?
Evan Feinman	**96** 00:41:19.080 --> 00:41:23.400 Yes, so similarly they're going to need to be competitive processes within each state to determine who the sub grantees are. Both for infrastructure, construction, and for digital equity funding that comes out under the BEAD Program. In each of those instances, we're going to look very hard at are we being really efficient in our use of taxpayer funds. Different states are going to be able to pursue different models for what a competitive bidding process looks like in those states. We recognize that states are very differently fostered, both internally and amongst each other. But you know in each instance it's going to be a, are we sure that we are, that enough money is coming to the table that this is going to be a viable project ongoing you know, in an ongoing basis and that we're not creating significant windfalls. Rather, that we're you know we're kind of right sizing awards on a project-by-project basis to ensure that the dollars go as far as they possibly can.
Susannah Spellman	**97** 00:42:15.360 --> 00:42:26.160 So, here's a question that I'm going to just take. It's really quickly just states have to submit the rest of the application after the letter of intent to receive the $5 million and planning funds, even if they asked for in the letter.
	98 00:42:26.610 --> 00:42:33.600 Yes, you do is technically a grant and there are Department of Commerce and federal regulations that require minimal submission of budgets and narrative to explain how you're going to spend that money so that our grants office partner, which is NIST, can review, along with us and award those funds. So, there are some of those federal checks and balances that we have to do. Unfortunately, the LOI

doesn't automatically mean instant 1.5, 1.25 million for territories or 5 million for states, but the application is very slim. It doesn't require a lot, just good budget, information, and some narratives. And we're working to review them as they come in and process them and award them as quickly as possible.

99
00:43:13.290 --> 00:43:27.720
Here's a really good question and I'm going to throw this to Doug. And in terms of affordability as a determination of served or unserved, is that part of the component for determining unserved or underserved?

Doug Kinkoph

100
00:43:28.440 --> 00:43:30.000
For what will determine. I'm sure unserved and under service based on the speeds, but utilizing the FCC map. So, unserved locations will be anything below that does not have access to speed to 25 megabits down to three megabits up. And the FCC will utilize the new location-based maps to identify those locations that are service full but below those speeds and that will drive the allocation of funding. Unserved will be those areas that are identified that have 25 three speeds, but less than 100 megabits out at 20 megabits up. So, again the funding allocation will be based on the number of unserved locations. Affordability is not tied to the funding mechanism.

Susannah Spellman

101
00:44:17.130 --> 00:44:23.970
However, is it a consideration, for example, that the states could use and apply as they think through their sub grantee process?

Doug Kinkoph

102
00:44:25.110 --> 00:44:27.810
Yes, I mean, as they look to sub grantees, right. We have prioritized fiber builds primary right those that meet the conditions of prioritization fiber and will be priority projects. The issue of affordability becomes secondary and tertiary kind of criteria and is part of other if there is not a priority project and they look to secondary projects, fixed wireless, or LOI, or something like that affordability also comes into play their selection.

Susannah Spellman

103
00:45:05.940 --> 00:45:18.780
I see a question about an entity or a webinar President said, hey we've got the Li we see the template; they want to know how to apply for the state digital equity planning funds. Angela?

Angela Thi Bennett

104
00:45:23.220 --> 00:45:26.310
I'm sorry, they would go into to that portal and submit. I mean there were going to the support on in Canada. I'm trying to think of the steps to it, but if they have a

login to the salesforce portal for the NTIA, they should be able to select digital equity as a program and pull that down and submit their application that way.

Susannah Spellman

105
00:45:48.000 --> 00:45:58.410
Yeah, I think on the internet for all site digital equity page, there is that apply now button that leads you to that portal, so that you can set up your actual login. And then, it will also include the materials by which to fill out, but that is definitely open and eligible for people to apply.

106
00:46:10.230 --> 00:46:13.350
All right, we're getting a lot of questions coming in and some of them are questions. I just want to know some of these questions, they're still new. The NOFO's are new. If we don't get to them on this webinar, we do plan to take these questions and create them as FAQs and post them on our website. We will have FAQs posted later this week and our hope is to periodically and as quickly as possible, as we get more questions from these webinars or inquiries that we received via email to publish those FAQs because I know if you have the question, you're not the only one, others are going to have that question too. So, if we don't get to your question, just know we will get to it and it'll just be published publicly. And I'll go ahead.

Doug Kinkoph

107
00:46:52.050 --> 00:47:01.740
Susannah, I just wanted to clarify in case I misspoke there, but when you look at the primary criteria of prioritization of projects. Affordability is one of the four primary criteria that they look at. So, it would be you know minimal BEAD outlay, affordability of fair labor practices for priority projects, so I just wanted to clarify that if I implied that it was a secondary criterion, for now.

Susannah Spellman

108
00:47:18.330 --> 00:47:27.420
Thank you. And then, we're having some questions about the five-year broadband action plan that the states are required to submit if they accept planning funds. They're curious about how NTIA is going to use those and if we're going to score them or send them back or just how they're going to be using this as a broader BEAD process.

Evan Feinman

109
00:47:39.660 --> 00:47:46.740
In essence, that's the first and broadest cut at the problem. It gives us a really good sense of where a state is and what the state's thinking is. A lot of different states and territories are going to take different approaches. Some of that, I think we'll agree with and think is really smart. Some of that we're going to ask to learn more about depending on, you know why a state may have made the decisions to pursue, decision to pursue X or Y or Z strategy. And so, that five-year action plan is going to give us that first cut. We're going to be putting staff on the ground in almost every state. And in each instance, if there's not a staff person in your state, there's one in

an in an adjacent state who's handling both states. Those folks are going to live and breathe those action plans as they work with the state office to develop the initial plan, which is the first more formal and holistic document that should wrap up all of the broadband plans, both on BEAD, but also digital equity, middle mile, and tribal so there's a single holistic document.

110
00:48:36.960 --> 00:48:51.750
So, you know the really short version is, we want to keep getting more and more and more granular slices of how is this problem going to get solved for everybody, as each iteration of the plan comes out in a given state.

111
00:48:52.770 --> 00:48:57.240
Susannah Spellman
Alright, perfect. Angela, here's a really good question, but I know you know this. Because it's something that you have brought and infused and helped us, helped me understand. How do you define digital literacy and what resources can you suggest for people, knowledge, and skills are needed for digital literacy?

112
00:49:12.960 --> 00:49:26.040
Angela Thi Bennett
Oh, you know digital inclusion, you know, are the tools is when we say equity, digital equity, if you think of it, digital equity is the endpoint, right. That's where we will get everyone to fully participate you know, in our society, the full digital citizen. Digital inclusion, other tools and the resources to get you there, and you know as far as resources, you know I would you know direct people to the NTIA national digital inclusion website, for you know excellent, you know resources. You know, to help you know direct them in you know different states, because they have you know a great network there. A lot of folks are on the ground doing this work. I would reach out to the libraries; you know the libraries are doing tremendous work in the digital inclusion space. Are health institutions, you know as well, and you know, of course, you know with having to go on to remote learning, you know our school systems are also doing a lot of work, and you know not only doing remote, but now transitioning to you know this hybrid, you know environment as well.

113
00:50:26.370 --> 00:50:30.270
Susannah Spellman
Right, very good. And just to follow up, I think some folks are curious on the timeline for which the state digital capacity and then the state, actually digital equity state, digital equity capacity grants and then the digital equity competitive grants when those NOFO's might be released.

114
00:50:48.570 --> 00:51:01.530
Angela Thi Bennett
So, the state digital equity planning grant is due July 12th. And in the fall, we will begin releasing awards and that's when the capacity, you know grants will become available, and then they have you know one year to develop. I'm sorry, they have

one year then to develop a plan for the capacity grants. And then afterwards, we'll begin issuing the NOFO for the competitive.

Susannah Spellman

115
00:51:17.400 --> 00:51:34.710
So, it sounds like one year after every state submits their plan, then we'll release the competitive state capacity grant. And then, once that state capacity grant program starts, then we'll release the competitive grant based on how their sequenced in the statute.

Angela Thi Bennett

116
00:51:35.400 --> 00:51:36.450
Correct.

Susannah Spellman

117
00:51:39.270 --> 00:51:41.220
All right. And, there is a question here about how we're going to be publicly sharing information about our awards and any of the documentation that the state's submit to us. In particular, if their applications will be available for public review so that communities can better understand how states are itemizing and requesting, you know planning funds or the five-year plan. And I do know NTIA generally when we do make awards make that information publicly available on our website. But Evan, do you want to talk a little bit more about how states are supposed to be transparent, with their communities with some of their submissions.

Evan Feinman

118
00:52:24.420 --> 00:52:35.100
Sure. So, states are going to need to accept comment on their plans from local governments and from a variety of other stakeholders, and so this is not going to be. What we want to be really clear about is that there are no black boxes here, there is not going to be decisions made enclosed rooms, that will then come up to NTIA and we just announced what's going to happen.

119
00:52:46.140 --> 00:52:56.880
This is a very different approach from grant making processes that have come before and ultimately everybody's going to have a really clear view into what the individual states and territories are doing at each step along the road and will have the opportunity to weigh in as those decisions are made.

Susannah Spellman

120
00:53:05.970 --> 00:53:22.230
All right, sounds good. I'm going to ask this question of Sarah because I know she lived and breathed that during the VIP program which she helped to manage last year, and so, anyone who has less than 25/3, just to confirm is considered unserved for the purposes of these grant programs correct. Yes, no?

Sarah Bleau

121
00:53:22.620 --> 00:53:31.080
When it comes to last mile anybody who is not at least getting 25 megabits per second down in three up is considered unserved, that is correct.

Susannah Spellman

122
00:53:32.370 --> 00:53:33.090
Right. I'm sorry, I'm just reviewing all the questions that are coming in they're coming in fast and furious. Oh, one question also was whether or not awards would be awarded on a rolling basis, generally, and I think I think we could go through each of the programs. Let's start with Evan first, and then I'll take through each of the programs.

Evan Feinman

123
00:54:02.400 --> 00:54:15.300
So, sort of. The states and territories will be on slightly different schedules depending on when they get things into us and then, when their deadlines are. And, of course, you know we're very happy to take submission of documents and other supporting materials ahead of the very last day contemplated as a deadline. I know that's not real estate but let's just we can all live in that place now, before we've gotten two things coming in at 11:59.

124
00:54:35.160 --> 00:54:45.240
But in essence, it's going to it's going to go in bunches. And so, you should anticipate that states will get there, most states will get their planning funding around the same time most states will get their initial allocation of funds, you know, they're 20% of their potential funds around the same time, and most states will get their remaining 80% around the same time. So, it's not going to be on a rolling basis, in that sense, there will be a little bit of delay between when states come in and when they when they have to hit their deadlines, but not a lot.

Susannah Spellman

125
00:55:16.800 --> 00:55:17.250
Angela?

Angela Thi Bennett

126
00:55:18.000 --> 00:55:23.460
So, similar to BEAD. So, with digital equity. So, for the states, you know we're planning on doing bunches as well. It looks different for territories and tribes because they're submitting their letters of intent first. So, we can you know determine you know how many applicants there are to determine the allocation. And then, you know, once we get that number in then they will submit you know their applications and their budgets as well.

Susannah Spellman

127
00:55:52.140 --> 00:55:53.640
Sarah, how about for middle mile?

	128
Sarah Bleau	00:55:55.650 --> 00:55:58.350

Middle mile will also be rolling awards. But I'll also point out that when you when you read through the NOFO, you'll see the applicants will first be rated with there'll be the initial criteria search. Then there will be merit review that will be completed and those applications, which score above an average of 80 and meet a few of the criteria, will then be prioritized for programmatic review.

129
00:56:28.320 --> 00:56:35.190
We will do, we list out the steps we will be taking in programmatic review and then finally we're going to make sure that we're geographically and size diverse in terms of the awards. So, it is technically rolling, but I think honestly, by the time we account for all the applications that are going to get through it will be rolling in very short intervals. Maybe one after the other pretty much in a at the same time, very close to one another.

Susannah Spellman

130
00:56:58.830 --> 00:57:11.370
And one, I'm going to do one last question because we're hitting almost four o'clock. But just a reminder, we will have additional webinars that actually deep dive into each program this week, as well as next week. So please look at internet for all. Also, Broadband USA is another. It's one of our original websites that we've had within NTIA to support technical assistance of communities and their broadband efforts, but then there's also our newly launched Internet for all website which details. All of these programs, as well as other federal broadband investment programs that have been funded through the bipartisan infrastructure law. So, one last question. Oh, my goodness.

131
00:57:45.210 --> 00:57:52.530
Here's a really good question about I think TA and I think we haven't talked about what entire plans to do in terms of TA and someone wrote; we have found that awareness and advocacy our challenge require constant presentations. Does NTIA provide playbook, suggestions, materials to move local county and state organizations that really to realize the need and embrace the initiatives?

132
00:58:08.430 --> 00:58:19.170
So, it just at a parting note, just one you know quick 30 second blurb about some of the TA initiatives that you guys are planning. Let's start with Sarah first because competitive grants are a little bit different when it comes to TA.

133
00:58:21.330 --> 00:58:30.600

Sarah Bleau

Your right, Susannah. It is, it is competitive, so we won't be able to help as much as we want to, but we will. It's very important to us to make sure that the application

for the middle mile program that honestly everybody should be applying. This should be a very simple, straightforward thing to do, it's going to be very time consuming, but we will spend a lot of time in TA answering your questions and helping you respond to the middle mile applications.

Doug Kinkoph

134
00:58:47.610 --> 00:58:55.290
I just wanted to add, Sarah. So, the TA provided on a competitive grant program is more group TA than one on one.

Sarah Bleau

135
00:58:55.830 --> 00:58:56.610
Correct, thank you.

Susannah Spellman

136
00:58:58.980 --> 00:58:59.610
Angela, talk to us about your TA plans.

Angela Thi Bennett

137
00:59:02.070 --> 00:59:14.010
So, you know, we'll be having you know, of course, you know webinars different, you know FAQs. We're working on toolkits you know for states for local coordination. And then you know we're going out into the community, because we do recognize that, especially in the digital equity space that it's you know, to step, you know goes beyond just the webinars. But we are going and visiting local communities and sharing the information and being available as well. And then Evan can talk about the FPO's. We will have folks on staff as well to, you know folks on the digital equity team, and then folks collaborating you know, closely with you know the BEAD team to provide technical assistance to states as well.

Evan Feinman

138
00:59:51.720 --> 00:59:55.350
Yeah, I think that the key thing here is there's going to be a suite of documents that are, some of which are out now, some of which are going to come out over the course of the summer, they're going to be really clear. But also, we're taking a much more hands on approach, you know as you heard earlier there's going to be staff and nearly every state and territory in the country, those folks are going to be very available. If you are a local government, you should look over the course of the summer and the fall to invite your staff person in your state or territory to both regional gatherings of your government groups, as well as your state or territory association group.

139
01:00:27.750 --> 01:00:39.660
They're also going to be available to speak to other stakeholder groups, as well as a wide variety of other folks. So you know, all of which is to say there's going to be a tremendous amount of folks working on it and they'll be very available to people.

Susannah Spellman	140 01:00:40.830 --> 01:00:46.320 Now, thank you for that. I mean we are just as committed as you are to helping your communities get broadband so technical assistance will be wide and abundant. And we're also open to ideas of where and what types of technical assistance you need. We don't know all the answers, and we want to work with the states and communities to help understand what they need and provide that.
	141 01:01:00.690 --> 01:01:14.250 So, with that, thank you so much, all of you for joining our inaugural post NOFO Internet for all webinar. And, as I mentioned before, there are plenty of webinars teed up for the rest of the week and next week and we'll also be scheduled for the rest of the year, giving technical assistance, other program updates, etc. So, thank you again for joining us and have a great rest of your day. Thank you.
Sarah Bleau	142 01:01:25.860 --> 01:01:26.370 Thank you.
	END TRANSCRIPT.