

**Pre-NOFO Webinar #4**  
**Moderator: Karen Archer Perry**  
**April 27, 2022**

Karen Archer Perry

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I'm pleased to welcome you to NTIA's technical assistance webinar on Digital Equity and Inclusion: A Guide For States.

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My name is Karen Archer Perry and I'm a senior policy analyst with NTIA Office of Internet connectivity and growth and I'll be your moderator for today's program.

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We have two excellent speakers for today's program: Rafi Goldberg and Angela Thi Bennett. They will both speak later in the program but first I have the honor of introducing you to Alan Davidson, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information and Administrator. Alan is an Internet policy expert. He has over 20 years of experience as an executive a public interest advocate, a technologist, and an attorney.

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Among his many notable roles, he was most recently, a senior advisor at the Mozilla foundation, a global nonprofit that promotes openness, innovation and participation on the Internet. Alan also served in the Obama/Biden administration as the Director of Digital Economy at the Department of Commerce. Welcome back, Alan.

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He has been a long-time leader in the Internet nonprofit community. Alan served as the Director of the New America Open Technology Institute, where he worked to promote equitable broadband access and adoption and he was also the Associate Director of the Center for Democracy and Technology advocating for civil liberties and human rights online. I will now turn it over to Alan.

Alan Davidson

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Good afternoon or good morning, depending on where you are. I am just delighted to join you for the fourth of NTIA's series of Pre-NOFO technical assistance webinars which we are doing in advance of the release of our notice of funding opportunity or NOFO which will be coming out in mid-May.

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If you are joining us today, you know that the bipartisan infrastructure law has given us a once in a generation moment opportunity to build out our nation's infrastructure and competitiveness, including \$65 billion that's been set aside for broadband deployment to close the digital divide. We have been talking about the digital divide in this country for over 20 years.

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The infrastructure law and the hard work of the Congress and the Biden administration have given us the resources now to really do something structural about it.

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These technical assistance webinars, this series, is designed to help state and local governments Community organizations other stakeholders take advantage of these funds and prepare to best utilize them and make the most of this moment. Our focus on today's webinar is going to be digital equity and inclusion and I'll just say, these are simply essential components of the work that we are doing at NTIA and across the administration.

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It our programs around deployment have gotten a lot of attention they have a lot of money associated with them, but I will just say, we know that access alone is not enough to address the digital divide. People can have a connection available to them, but if they cannot afford that connection, it won't help them or their family. If they can afford the connection, but they don't have a device that allows them to get online, it doesn't help them. If they have the device, but there aren't applications that are engaging them. If they can't find content in a language that they speak, it will not help them thrive in the digital economy. Ultimately, our goal is about meaningful adoption and use for all people in America.

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Addressing these equity issues of equity and inclusion are essential to meet that goal. So today's webinar will help focus on building a strong foundation to promote adoption and use of broadband high speed internet across targeted populations that are laid out in the digital equity act. Those include low income households, aging populations, incarcerated individuals, veterans, people with disabilities, people with a language barrier, racial and ethnic minorities, and rural inhabitants.

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I would also like to take this chance to introduce one of the NTIA's newest draft picks, one of our newest staff members, Angela Thi Bennett, who's going to be the first ever Director of Digital Equity programs here within our Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth. We're just very excited that Angela has chosen to join NTIA at this pivotal moment and in her new role and she will be giving us guidance and leadership on the allocation of that almost \$3 billion that are being made available through the infrastructure law to further the mission of the Digital Equity Act.

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She's also going to be working on building state capacity and supporting state efforts for adoption of high-speed internet. She brings a very strong track record to us working with community leaders, improving the quality of life in her

Cleveland and greater Ohio communities. She comes to us from DigitalC where she was the Director of Advocacy and Impact. As a part of their senior leadership she's been a champion of digital inclusion and was instrumental in helping to connect hundreds of Cleveland metropolitan school district households when schools turn to remote learning during the pandemic. She has a long back and long history and background and other experiences in community leadership and has a bachelor's and master's and JD from Case Western University so we're thrilled to have Angela joining us at this moment that is so, as I say, a once in a generation moment for those of us working in the digital inclusion space.

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Finally, I'll just say thank you to you all for being here today. We know that achieving real digital equity and inclusion is going to be something that's going to require an all hands-on deck moment. There's an old saying in the civic tech community: build with not for. We want to build with the communities that are being most impacted by the digital divide. We need all of you as partners if we're going to meet this goal of 100% of access for all Americans, so that they have access to high-speed affordable broadband and that we promote meaningful adoption and use. So, thank you for being here, thank you for your partnership and I'm delighted to turn it back over to our moderators today.

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Karen Archer Perry

Thank you, Alan. We are happy to introduce the second piece of our program. We have two additional speakers Rafi Goldberg and Angela Thi Bennett.

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What we're going to do in the next piece of the program is that Rafi and Angela cover a number of topics. They're going to provide an overview of NTIA upcoming broadband funding opportunities. They're going to focus in on the digital inclusion and equity programs and really talking much more generally, about the program and the field of digital equity. Looking at definitions, focusing on outreach and engagement and talking about program models. We're going to be leaving a lot of time for Q&A, so think about your questions and remember to put them in the chat so that will be able to answer them when we get to the Q&A.

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Let me first introduce Rafi Goldberg. He has been with NTIA's Office of Policy Analysis and Development for 11 years. He's perhaps best known among this group for running the NTIA Internet use survey program in which NTIA regularly partners with the US census bureau to understand the state of computer and Internet use in America and the challenges in achieving digital equity.

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That program has been around for more than 25 years, so with Rafi's tenure in the program he has started, he has help to shape and influence it for almost half of its lifetime.

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Rafi has also had the opportunity to work on a wide range of Internet policy issues at NTIA, but his particular passion is working in the field of digital equity. He's made a number of contributions there and we very much appreciate his work. I am pleased to turn things over to my longtime colleague Rafi Goldberg.

Rafi Goldberg

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Thank you, Karen. So NTIA is going to be administering about \$48 billion through four different broadband programs. Those are the BEAD Program.

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The digital equity act programs. There is some additional money for the tribal broadband program that that was already at NTIA previously.

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As well as the middle mile broadband infrastructure program. So today we're going to be focusing on digital equity and inclusion, but we're going to discuss digital equity & inclusion, not just as they relate to the digital equity act itself but also across all of these different IJA programs.

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Another important thing to keep in mind is that this webinar is going to be about definitions, best practices, ideas, and other considerations. This is not official guidance; it is not going to be specifically about what is in the NOFO. The various program requirements and guidance are going to be included in the upcoming notices of funding opportunity once they are released.

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There will be, in general terms, there will be one NOFO released per program and we encourage you to review with each of those carefully once they're out. In addition to attending NTIA lead overview as sessions about each one in particular so once again, this is not. This is not a programmatic guidance related to what is actually going to be in the NOFO.

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So, what is digital inclusion and what is digital equity? So digital inclusion, you know, refers to the activities that help us to get closer to a state of digital equity. The goal we're trying to reach is digital equity. It's about parity in digital participation.

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Congress found in the Digital Equity Act that access to affordable reliable high speed broadband is really essential to full participation in modern life in the United States. And digital inclusion, the way that we get there includes everything from the basics of accessing affordable broadband service to just getting online in general. All the way up to having the digital skills and support

that it really takes in order to be able to take full advantage of online applications and content.

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The building blocks that you see on the slide here can be interactive and are by no means only activities that fall under additional inclusion, but these we think are some very good examples right so it's not just about being on the Internet but having Internet enabled devices that user needs. It's about applications and online content being accessible right, whether that means having applications available in your native language or applications that work with screen readers or other accessibility devices things of that nature, having access to digital skills and digital literacy training so that you can really maximize how you're making use of all the Internet has to offer. It's having access to quality and technical support so that when something goes wrong or you're not sure how to get something done that you need, you have somebody that you can call on in order to get that information. And it even includes understanding, you know, how to take better control over your online privacy and best practices when it comes to protecting your security online.

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Digital equity really benefits all aspects of a person's participation in society and the economy, and this slide shows just a few examples of those benefits and the importance of digital equity writ large.

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For example, broadband access and digital skills are really essential these days to people finding and successfully applying for a job. You need to know how to find job postings online, how to use email, how to create a resume, and how to fill out a job application and all those things almost completely take place online these days.

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And of course, the pandemic really highlighted the importance of digital equity even further. For example, the ability to access telehealth services reduce the need for some folks to sometimes go to the emergency room or you know or otherwise interact with health professionals for non-urgent situations which, you know, reduce their exposure to covid and save them time and money. And of course, the flip side of digital equity is digital divide, which refers something to the gap between

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those who have that easy access to devices and the Internet and those who don't. And for each of the benefits listed on that slide you know, there are people on the other side of the divide who are facing significant difficulties in participating fully in society today. Those who continue their education online or who don't have the skills necessary to navigate applications to access essential services. We know from lots of research that these inequities disproportionately impact some groups of Americans more than others.

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The Digital Equity Act try to address these disparate impacts by defining eight different categories of covered populations, which are to be the focus of Digital Equity Act programs and we've listed those eight populations. Here they include individuals and household screening at or below 150% of the poverty level, members of racial and ethnic minority groups, those who reside in rural areas, individuals with a language barrier, whether that's low levels of literacy or you know if you're not native English speakers and are not as adept at the English language. They're also aging individuals, those and as defined as those ages 60 and older in the digital equity act, individuals with disabilities, incarcerated individuals, and veterans. These populations in many cases are disproportionately impacted by digital exclusion, which exacerbates existing inequalities, wealth income, social inclusion, and other facets of daily life.

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So, we know that many factors drive the inequities that we see in digital adoption across populations, and we've listed a few here. For example, one study found that during the pandemic access to broadband was difficult for 34% of lower income households that had trouble keeping up with their monthly Internet access bills. And, of course, keep in mind that folks can be impacted by more than one driver of inequity, which can compound and make it even harder for them to fully participate in a digital society.

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If someone can't afford a home computer, for example, they may choose not to pay for a wired Internet connection at home and instead use the Internet only through a smartphone or a data plan. And for some of the time, the smartphone approach may work well, right. There are some things that smartphone is actually better out than a PC, but in many cases they're going to suffer from instruments and loss of service or find it difficult to complete essential tasks such as submitting your taxes online, filling out a resume, or completing online forms. There are many things for which a larger screen device such as a laptop or a tablet is going to be more appropriate. And the exact factors that that drive these inequities in adoption in your community may vary, so only localized research can really identify how to systemically tackle the digital divide.

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Karen Archer Perry

I'd also like to introduce you to Angela Thi Bennett. She's the first ever Director of Digital Equity programs here at NTIA. In her new role, Angela will provide leadership and guidance on the allocation of \$2.75 billion worth of digital equity funding. Yes, we're pretty excited about that. She will also work with many of you to build state capacity and to support State efforts towards driving broadband adoption use.

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Angela joined us from DigitalC in Cleveland where she was the Director of Advocacy and Impact. As a member of DigitalC's senior leadership team she

spearheaded her organizations digital inclusion efforts and she was instrumental in getting scores of households connected when Cleveland schools turned to remote learning during the pandemic. She also collaborated with community leaders to improve the quality of life in Cleveland and in the surrounding Ohio communities.

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We're thrilled to have Angela join us at this pivotal moment in connecting all Americans to high speed internet and ensuring that they have the skills needed for full participation in society. I will turn it over to Angela. Thank you.

Angela Thi Bennett

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Like Rafi mentioned, now that we've reviewed key definitions and the impact of the digital divide, we'll turn to what states can start doing about it.

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Equity should be central to your goals and programs, not just an afterthought. For the rest of the presentation, we'll be talking about three key pieces of driving digital equity and inclusion. One, collaboration and engagement. Two, developing knowledge and capabilities. Three, understanding best practices of some popular digital inclusion programs.

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These activities will be important for states as they develop and as your program plans start deploying, but they are not the only ways to prioritize digital equity and inclusion. Keep in mind that this presentation is mainly for state audience, however, we think there are helpful tips out there for everyone, regardless of your role in IJIA program implementation. We'll have time during the Q&A portion of our webinar to continue to talk about different strategies so please keep track of your questions.

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So, let's dive right in by talking through creating an inclusive stakeholder engagement plan. There are really two parts to this, creating the plan itself and deciding on your approach. On the plan side, start by ensuring that your engagement plan includes the right stakeholders. The right organizations, the people, those that are connected to the work or who has been disconnected and left out of the digital economy. You should also articulate as to what part of the plan, you'll create a feedback loop with stakeholders to include their insights into your state's IJIA plans.

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Once you've got your plan, use a mix of approaches to engage those stakeholders. A website is a great communication tool for example, but you might also need to partner with community based organizations to run a door knocking campaign to really get the word out. Remember that every conversation with the stakeholder is an opportunity to build trust which will help with implementation, in the long run. Be transparent with them on your

goals, what information you need, how their input would be used, and what to expect for follow up and how to reach out to you.

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Once you are engaging stakeholders, be really intentional in embedding digital equity and inclusion in your language and actions. Make sure the language that you use centralizes equity, rather than making it optional. For instance, an equity lens can be taken off, which is not what you want to signal. So using language, such as leading with equity. And, additionally, in addition to carefully deciding how to communicate around digital equity, make sure your language and communications are inclusive themselves. Which means ensuring that your communications are always accessible to the largest group of people, so not to exceed a fifth grade reading level. Translate everything into the dominant languages in your state. And make sure your formats are accessible for those with limited vision and hearing is just as important to make sure you're acting intentionally, which means ensuring leaders prioritize DE&I conversations and planning accessible outreach events.

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Historically disconnected communities have likely seen others try to make a difference in their communities. Sometimes without the best intentions or to limited effects. It is your responsibility as the State to ensure that you are centering digital equity and inclusion and being thoughtful in how you communicate and act. As part of your state's engagements, make a real effort to reach diverse communities. IJA statute does provide an initial list of the types of organizations to engage, like community anchor institutions. We suggest you refer to the Statute or our digital equity act primer for that list.

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In addition to those organizations, we've listed other types of organizations who may serve as connectors to disconnected or underserved communities. The best organizations to engage will vary widely between communities, so you really need to talk to the folks in your community and help them and have them help you identify the voices and organizations they trust, then prioritize working with them.

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The final piece of collaboration and engagement we wanted to highlight is the importance of meeting people where they are, sometimes literally. While you may use social media or websites to communicate with the public, you will also be holding or attending meetings and events to get the word out and collect data. Make sure those events are taking place all over your state and reaching as many of the disconnected and unserved as possible.

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The final piece of collaboration and engagement we wanted to highlight is the importance of meeting people where they are, sometimes literally. While you may use social media or websites to communicate with the public, you will also



likely be holding or attending meetings and events to get the word out and collect data. Make sure those events are taking place all over the state and reaching as many of the disconnected and unserved as possible. This takes effort. Here we've highlighted two examples of how states have worked to reach as many people as possible. In Louisiana, the state broadband office visited over 50 towns throughout 64 parishes.

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Reaching out to local officials and prioritizing simple, direct communication, opting for roundtables versus PowerPoint presentations and distributing simple one-page flyers. In Hawaii, sustained engagement has been key. Over 200 individuals and organizations meet virtually weekly as part of the broadband hui to work towards digital equity. The key is understanding where the disconnected and underserved are located in your state and making a real effort to go to them, whether that's in person, or virtually, or through your partnerships.

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In the next few slides, we will delve further into how to develop the knowledge and capabilities you need to advance digital equity and inclusion in your state. First, start by learning directly from lived experts. Lived experts are members of covered populations who have direct lived experiences of being disconnected. Engaging with lived expert can go a long way and making beats and concerns tangible and humanizing the numbers you're seeing in your state's quantitative data.

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Some states and localities have begun to find ways to compensate lived experts, especially when they serve as part of research committees informing state plan creation or become involved in an IJJA Task Force, as a member or co-chair. Feel free to reach out to us directly, if you like, to be connected with one of those communities and or learn more.

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In addition to lived experts, you'll need to rely on data collection to get a clear picture of the needs in your community. Part of creating that view will be: one, collecting information on the right factors and using a variety in terms of factors to look at. You'll definitely want to understand broadband availability, but you should also collect data showing adoption and the factors that drive adoption, you need information on both to close the digital divide.

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Qualitative data will be as important as quantitative data when understanding the needs and barriers. Use a variety of methodologies, including surveys interviews and focus groups with a broad and diverse group of people. In addition to collecting data, consider how you will display and share that data with the public and/or your partners.

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North Carolina's broadband indices are an example of how one state is demonstrating need at a granular level to determine where they should be deploying their resources. Keep in mind that making your information available to your partners in an easy to understand and updated format can accelerate or improve their own digital inclusion efforts. A priority in finding the right people should be ensuring your staff and collaborators reflect the diversity in your state and they are sufficiently trained and understand digital equity and inclusion to set them up for success, link them to the right people, including your broadband office, and equip them with the resources and the authority they need to drive forward digital equity work.

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Finally, consider how you can also build digital equity capacity across your collaborators and even subgrantees. Do you need to provide them with technical assistance, do they need support reaching the right potential hires? Work with them to identify their digital equity capacity needs and how to meet them. This will improve the effectiveness of your own digital equity and inclusion efforts in the future.

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Finally, we wanted to mention one particular way we've seen states and localities develop the knowledge and capacity they need. By building and partnering with digital equity and inclusion coalitions. Coalitions are made up of a communities digital inclusion practitioners, community organizations, and a variety of other stakeholders who coordinate to advance digital inclusion activities. They facilitate partnerships and collaborations between member organizations across many activities from identifying digital inclusion goals to running programs.

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As a state government, there may be room for you to build or partner with existing coalitions who tapped into a wealth of existing resources or knowledge. For more on coalition's we have included a link to NDIA's coalition handbook. On that note, I'll pass it to Rafi to review the program models.

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Rafi Goldberg

Thank you, Angela. In the final section, we will turn to thinking about specific digital inclusion activities that are popular or that we've seen work well in the past.

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The first type of program is digital skills training which empowers residents to fully engage in digital content and apps. When we say skills, when we say digital skills, we include foundational skills such as typing email, access and search functionality, as well as more industry specific skills such as using agricultural apps and construction technology. Whatever sorts of skills you may need either

for your career or for educational purposes or any other task that you may want to engage in. As a state, you're going to want to start by identifying and partnering with existing programs. Those private, those public private partnerships, like partnerships with employees, which, which may lead to better outcomes.

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Many digital skills training models already exist in the United States. Tech Goes Home, for example, is one model that just started in Boston and was replicated to great success in Chattanooga to help provide 15 hours of digital skills training, as well as to distribute low-cost devices and affordable light Internet service. Now tech goes home is just one example of a holistic program that includes digital skills training, among other services and these programs are popular since to truly get online and to take advantage of the Internet, residents will need service on the device, and of course they're going to need the right skills.

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Now, in terms of affordability, in particular, one easy way to increase adoption today is to spread the word eligible households about existing discount programs as such as the Affordable Connectivity Program, or ACP. Successful sign up campaigns will need to integrate have a variety of outreach channels. Use simple and accessible terms and rely on collaboration with other offices and agencies who already interact with the underserved. And, of course, this last piece is especially important. In New York, for example, in early 2022 campaign to educate consumers on the ACP was actually able to sign up 100,000 households, in part because several agencies collaborated to get the word out to the particular disconnected communities that they already interacted with. So whether that's the DMV or the Department of Labor, or a number of other agencies as well.

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So, how do you identify all the organizations working on digital equity issues and inclusion issues in your state? Well, one strategy is to consider creating an asset map. Asset maps or way to catalog the resources networks and strengths near community by identifying organizations programs an individual and as well as the individuals who are delivering digital inclusion services providing funding sources and to any other resources that may be available as part of the digital equity landscape in your community. For example, the Hawaii digital equity ecosystem map, which is pictured here, is a visual representation of the state of Hawaii. The state of Hawaii is digital equity ecosystem and it's based on 30 interviews with a variety of different community stakeholders. An asset map like this can be instrumental in bringing to life the variety of resources that are already at work on digital inclusion.

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Facilitating future collaboration, reducing redundancy, and strengthening existing programs, in addition to helping you figure out where best to invest to create a new or expanded programs. As we mentioned earlier, holistic support

that includes digital skills training, device distribution, and low-cost Internet subscriptions can make a real difference in advancing the cause of digital equity. Digital navigators are one model for providing that to holistic support in a tailored one on one fashion which helps to support to every individual being served in meeting their individual digital goals. Navigators are trained to assist community members with everything from securing a device all the way to learning how to use the Internet to improve their day-to-day life or to access essential services. If you are considering a digital navigator program, keep in mind that navigator programs are most successful when they prioritize community trust in your program. In for a one-to-one system and tailored attention clients and can work with partners to conduct outreach and refer residents to the navigator program.

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And finally, it's important to use existing touch points when it comes to help your residents access all the digital applications and content they need. For example, consider whether to add a question to a school enrollment questionnaire about home computing device use and then work with the community partner to distribute low-cost devices to those students who need them prior to the beginning of the school year.

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Once you begin to identify sort of touch points that you already have with historically disconnected communities, you'll find many opportunities like that to close the digital divide, one conversation at a time. And collaboration really is key here to take advantage of these existing touch points. Your partners willing to have a working understanding of broadband efforts and the digital inclusion resources that are available in your state. And you can start that work today.

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So, as you as you continue to plan for IJJA broadband programs, please remember to make sure that you're embedding equity and inclusion across all of your efforts and to not silo those conversations. Cross program prioritization will help you to successfully close the digital divide, faster and more effectively.

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For additional guidance on digital equity and inclusion and other IJJA related topics, you can visit our state and local government page from the NTIA website. And with that, I'm going to pass it back to Karen who will moderate our Q&A session.

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Karen Archer Perry

Welcome back panelists as well as audience members. We have gotten so many questions and we're looking forward to answering them. I'm going to try to filter through them and I got to tell you I do have two screens here, so I'm going to be doing a little bit of back and forth here.

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And in order to try to get through as many of them as possible, I do want to remind you that you can continue to ask us questions by putting your questions in the chat. Let me start by asking, and I'm going to remind you that our statutory deadline for issuing our NOFO is. . . Rafi, would you remind us what our deadline is and start with that because we did get a number of questions about when we will be publishing the NOFO. So, would you highlight that information first?

Rafi Goldberg 00:44:03.960 --> 00:44:13.770  
Sure, absolutely. So, we have three NOFO's that we need to publish pretty soon. One for the BEAD program, one for the Middle Mile Program, and one for the Digital Equity Act. State to State to planning grants. For the first two of those, the BEAD and the Middle Mile program, there's a statutory deadline of May 16 for us to get the NOFO's out.

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The Digital Equity Act, the legislative text was slightly different, you know. I'm not a legislation expert but my understanding is we technically have until June 8 to release that one. None of that is a comment on, you know, what the day or days will be, but those are the deadlines and in the statute for anyone to read.

Karen Archer Perry 00:44:55.980 --> 00:44:57.780  
And so, one of the questions was. Do States need to include a detailed plan for digital equity in their BEAD proposal? What will be required in the first time, the proposal, when it as it relates to digital equity?

Rafi Goldberg 00:45:15.270 --> 00:45:27.660  
Yeah, so there will be lots more details in the NOFO's which we you know, have been spending, most of the last six months, working to prepare, you know as a general matter, though. We think it's very important for BEAD plans and digital equity plans to be in conversation with each other, right that you know as we go about deploying broadband infrastructure to all these unserved and underserved areas, we should also be thinking about the digital equity issues that you know will still be there. Even in a future where hopefully every corner of the country is you know well served with the infrastructure. Right, we know you know even in cities that are fortunate enough to you know, have very good infrastructure, there are far too many households that are not online at all. You know, many more that are mobile only or don't have the skills or the training or the tech support that they need to really thrive on the Internet.

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So, you know, we think, you know these are all pieces of a much larger puzzle, and that together the different broadband programs form a comprehensive approach to really tackling the problem, and you know and helping our country to you know be prepared to compete in the in the digital economy going forward.

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Karen Archer Perry Well, that tips off a question that I've got for the two of you. Somebody commented that they were glad that you mentioned that some people don't have access to broadband. And they asked will digital equity prioritize these communities over say people who are having other issues with online participation. And Angela would you start with that one, and then I'll ask Rafi to comment.

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Angela Thi Bennett OK, and then, if I could just go back to and just add on to Rafi's prior response and I think this will also help weave into it, we are encouraging States to not only apply for BEAD but also apply for digital equity funding, because we do want to encourage a holistic approach to closing, you know, the digital divide and leveraging the funding from BEAD to help advance digital equity in their BEAD plans will ensure that you know we you know, are being very intentional in meeting the needs, you know of all the communities.

00:47:56.310 --> 00:48:11.040  
Under BEAD, there's a prioritization for those that are you know unconnected you know unserved you know less than 25/3 and then you know, an underserved you know being less than 100. In digital equity we're focused on, you know the tools, the digital inclusion tools and activities to achieve, you know digital equity, so with the covered populations, those are the folks that you know we are you know prioritizing you know with those funds. So that includes you know people that are unserved you know underserved and you know, do not have the tools and the resources, you know the devices, the skills, the training so that they can fully participate, you know in our society.

00:48:53.520 --> 00:49:03.900  
Karen Archer Perry And Rafi, did you want to comment on the question about prioritizing people who don't have access over other questions about online participation.

00:49:04.890 --> 00:49:19.800  
Rafi Goldberg Yeah no, I think I think what Angela said is spot on that, you know, we're trying to do all the above right and through the BEAD program you know we have \$42 billion to try to build out the nation's broadband infrastructure and unserved and underserved areas and then, when it comes to the digital equity act right. Members of covered populations live everywhere right they live in places that you know, have no broadband and all and they live in places where there's plenty of infrastructure, but you know they're not able to afford it, or they don't have the equipment over there, training to be able to use it effectively. You know, and so, for you know really trying to target everyone, you know, you know, wherever their problems may lie. You know by both having programs to address the infrastructural problem, as well as you know, specific programs focused on digital equity.

00:50:12.630 --> 00:50:25.620

Karen Archer Perry

I have another question for you probably both, how would NTIA recommend that housing authorities connect with states as states develop their broadband and equity plans.

00:50:27.960 --> 00:50:29.910

Angela Thi Bennett

Reach out to them, you know, you know reach out to you know if you have a State broadband office, you know reach out to your state broadband office, you know build your coalitions. You know you're stronger, you know in numbers and you know, make sure that they're aware of your work and your desire to be you know involved in a very meaningful way in the digital equity planning.

00:50:57.180 --> 00:51:07.860

Karen Archer Perry

Well, you mentioned the state broadband office, this is probably a good time for our friend Maci to put a link in our chat with our list of all the state broadband offices. You might know that NTIA has a program where we work with all the state broadband leaders, and if you'd like you can go to our website and it lists the State broadband leaders across the state, so if anybody hasn't listened and already doesn't know that we have that list. It's a great resource for you to go and find the state broadband leaders and get a little snapshot view of the State broadband programs in your area so that you can start that outreach, I think they're very popular people right now, they should be. Any other comment on that one, Rafi?

00:51:51.150 --> 00:51:53.610

Rafi Goldberg

No, I think, Angela answered it well.

00:51:58.650 --> 00:52:12.210

Karen Archer Perry

Let me just look down a little bit more. I'm going to ask you some questions that you're not going to answer all of them, so I'm going to, I'm going to warn you, because these are questions that lean towards questions about the NOFO, but you will answer some of them. So, some of them are questions about tips, and so let me warn some of our questioners that we can't answer questions about the NOFO because the NOFO is not out. So, when you ask us questions about it, we will defer, but I do want to recognize that you have asked these questions and I will do, we will do the best. So the NTIA programs funded under NTIA have an and have a 30-day response period.

00:52:53.250 --> 00:52:55.920

Rafi Goldberg

Well, I'm not sure. So, by response period, I said that refers to the application period.

00:53:04.080 --> 00:53:07.560

Karen Archer Perry

Question I know they use the word NPRM in there and we don't have any NPRM. So, lets assume the application period.

00:53:11.100 --> 00:53:29.550

Rafi Goldberg

Okay, so different programs have different deadlines, I can say that, for the digital equity planning for him to program the statute says that once the NOFO is published, states will have 60 days to apply.

00:53:31.530 --> 00:53:34.110

Karen Archer Perry

That's promising. Goodness, this next one goes on forever, so I'm having a little bit of problem with it.

00:53:53.790 --> 00:53:59.970

Angela Thi Bennett

Well, you know what Karen, while you're looking for that, let me just also add with regards to the application. You know we strongly encourage states to also work with their tribal organizations as well because there's funding, you know available for the tribal organizations and you know that's part of this holistic coordinated, you know DE planning, you know that we're encouraging you know states, you know to be involved in.

00:54:26.670 --> 00:54:39.930

Karen Archer Perry

There's another question that I think you can answer which is a question about resources, and that is where people can go to get more resources to support them in their planning and their application process. And I know the answer is various places on our website, did you want to comment about that.

00:54:48.900 --> 00:55:00.180

Rafi Goldberg

Sure, well that's I mean but that's a perfect start to the answer various places on our website, and I know that you know there's a whole lot of technical assistance to come once the NOFO's are released.

00:55:01.410 --> 00:55:16.830

You know and they're also you know great to organizations that have been working in this space for a very long time NDIA the National Digital Inclusion alliance is huge one not to be confused with the NTIA, the acronym system does similar. I believe the Pew Charitable Trusts are doing a lot of work in the space as well and Angela I don't know if you had done more examples you wanted to share.

00:55:28.590 --> 00:55:45.510

Angela Thi Bennett

Yeah. well just you know kind of want to you know piggyback on the NDIA because they just published their digital inclusion guide for states, and so you know definitely check out that resource and they'll be publishing you know additional tools. You know and NTIA you know post the release of the NOFO will also have additional you know, technical assistance and you know webinars and guidance so just you know stay connected with us. And if there are things that you are seeing that you know we're publishing and you know there's still some additional questions you know, please let us know so that you know we can be responsive.



Karen Archer Perry

00:56:12.720 --> 00:56:19.650

And I'll also add to the list your libraries, in addition to being in in addition to there being a number of state broadband leaders, there are a number of state library leaders. So every library has a State librarian that list of state Librarians is available at the chief officers of state libraries. And the State Librarians have always been champions of digital literacy, for a long time. They work with small and large libraries across the state and virtually every one of them has public computers and broadband and does digital literacy training as well. And so, they've been advocates as well, and our digital literacy experts and champion senior community and are already and will continue to be part of the solution, so please include them engage them in your solutions as well so that's another resource for you.

00:57:14.130 --> 00:57:27.690

What does it look like to assist a state and then apply for grant money that they would disseminate? Is there something you need to consider when you're assisting a state and then applying for grant money?

Rafi Goldberg

00:57:32.100 --> 00:57:48.840

My only response would be to you know consult you know your Council/ethics folks you know about sort of what the rules happen to be around that which may vary from State to State as well I'm not sure there's one national answer to that question.

Karen Archer Perry

00:57:51.900 --> 00:57:56.790

I also do think that there is a class that says that there is a limit in terms of assisting and applying as part of our rules in the legislation, so do check the legislation as well between planning and applying.

00:58:15.300 --> 00:58:19.980

Is this webinar mainly to assist states or to assist sub grantees?

00:58:21.750 --> 00:58:31.770

While this is primarily for states, it's important to sub grantees to learn how the program works to approach the States.

00:58:38.190 --> 00:58:53.490

So, if you're if you're we're talking to states, but what if I'm not a state what if I'm a municipality or what if I'm a sub brand But what if I'm somebody who might end up working with a state how should I interpret this material.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:58:54.450 --> 00:58:56.580

And I would say, knowledge is power. You know the more information that sub grantees can have, the more empowered they will be when they are having conversations with the state know understanding the program it helps them identify the questions to ask it helps them, you know strategize you know and position themselves so.

00:59:23.040 --> 00:59:32.760

I would encourage you know them; you know participants, you know potential sub grantees you know becoming as informed as possible on this subject.

Karen Archer Perry

00:59:34.080 --> 00:59:40.650

Not none of no States will implement this program alone, you know states are a composition of communities and organizations and partners and so those are sub grantees those are communities, and so, while we say this is a guide for states, this is a guide for all the organizations that make up states and support states and so please do take it as guidance for all of you. And the NOFO hopefully will spell out more detail in terms of how you can start to think about that.

01:00:15.900 --> 01:00:25.560

Let me find more questions for you. Rafi and Angela, would you each make a comment, a general comment from your experience, while I look for additional questions.

Angela Thi Bennett

01:00:27.540 --> 01:00:29.040

I'll make a comment particularly to the to the person who asked about you know infrastructure not possibly being you know in certain areas and I'm from Cleveland, and you know I can honestly say there you know areas that are completely you know unserved. But DE doesn't have to wait for the infrastructure to get to those areas in order, for you know your digital equity work to start you know, DE can start now.

01:01:01.740 --> 01:01:14.310

You know, and just being creative and co creating with local communities to come up with solutions you know workforce centers you know central you know, let leveraging our libraries, as you know, central hubs to you know provide and deliver digital literacy training. So you know just encouraging you know states and potential sub grantees and partners don't wait for the infrastructure to be built, partner and you know start DE now.

Rafi Goldberg

01:01:33.000 --> 01:01:44.820

Yeah, and I would just add to that you know the importance of you know, thinking about how there is a full range of different challenges that people face to using the Internet to its fullest potential right, whether it is a lack of physical infrastructure, the ability to afford to actually use the infrastructure. You know, not having the right type of computing device you need. Any of the sort of steps that we listed in one of the opening slides to you know, to you know getting up the ladder towards achieving digital equity. You know, there are a lot of different kinds of challenges out there and we don't always use the most precise language in saying which ones were talking about at any given time, so I think it's you know just important to consider that you know, there are that there are folks who face a pretty wide range of different challenges in this space.

Karen Archer Perry 01:02:430 --> 01:02:56.400  
This question a very simple question called, What about tribes? And so, we have a current \$1 billion travel fund expanded, with an additional \$2 billion so \$3 billion of tribal money. This is a \$2.7 billion digital equity fund we're talking about, what's the cross elasticity between those programs?

Rafi Goldberg 01:03:09.180 --> 01:03:26.070  
So there is in the digital equity active planning and capacity grant program a requirement that the assistant Secretary set aside a certain proportion of funds for use by a tribal entities, so there will be money available for tribes through the digital equity act programs, and then, of course, in addition to that direct funding, it is going to be very important that you know States engage proactively with the tribes that are located within their states when they're coming up with our own digital equity plans for the state.

01:03:59.100 --> 01:04:02.640  
So, lots of different opportunities, I'm not the expert on the tribal broadband program but you know, certainly, there are a lot of opportunities there as well.

Karen Archer Perry 01:04:13.770 --> 01:04:16.800  
How can they make sure that they're part of the planning process?

Rafi Goldberg 01:04:18.120 --> 01:04:18.540  
Well, wait for the NOFO to come out and there will be instructions for tribes that are interested in applying for grant funds, you know, so that certainly is one way another way when it comes to looking at what the States are doing is you know the states are very much required to engage with a full range of stakeholders, including the tribes, and so to you know, reach out to the state entity that is administering the program and you know, make sure that they're aware of the opportunities to participate and hopefully the state will also come to them.

Karen Archer Perry 01:05:03.450 --> 01:05:06.000  
And do you have anything else to comment on that, Angela?

Angela Thi Bennett 01:05:06.570 --> 01:05:08.400  
And yeah, I was just going to add, I know that you know I saw in the comment that they're waiting on you know the awards to come out for you know the tribal you know broadband programs, you know. For those who may have had adoption in their plans and may not, and I'm not privy to that information, but it may not, you know receive you know funding, this is a space to apply and receive the funding, you know for that work so. You know there's multiple pots, you know don't be discouraged just know that you know when the NOFO is released, and you know there's another opportunity, you know, to support your programs.

01:05:55.260 --> 01:06:13.080

Karen Archer Perry

And let me just note, we do have a map on our website and it's kind of exciting, because we do continue to roll out of awards in our travel broadband connectivity web program and it's nice to watch more dots appear on that website on our map as we continue to roll those awards out kind of week by week, or month by month the words have kind of taken some time to go through, but the map is lighting up bit by bit.

01:06:24.090 --> 01:06:37.560

Let me ask another question and I'm going to comment on it as well. Will institutions of higher education be eligible as sub recipients or be required to participate in the planning process? And that might be a have to wait for the NOFO question, I'm not sure.

01:06:47.670 --> 01:06:52.170

Rafi Goldberg

It might be, you have to wait for the, so I assume we're talking about the digital equity NOFO.

01:06:52.230 --> 01:06:54.030

Karen Archer Perry

Yes, we are back to the digital equity yet.

01:06:54.360 --> 01:07:01.590

Rafi Goldberg

Okay um, that that may be have to wait for the NOFO I need to check exactly what the Statute says but I don't want to mislead anybody.

01:07:05.370 --> 01:07:12.240

Karen Archer Perry

I do want to comment that my primary work right now is that I've been working on the Connecting Minority Communities grant Program. And that program is specifically targeted to institutions of higher education, historically black colleges and university, tribal colleges and minority serving institutions. My work has been reviewing those grant applications, and it has been so much fun because we got such wonderful grant applications, and I am so excited that we're very, very close to beginning to consider rolling out those announcements. So hopefully you'll be hearing from us soon on that and it's just going to be wonderful. So we just got great awards to coming soon on that one so that's been a marvelous program to be involved in and more information coming soon on that it's going to be wonderful. I'm excited, I can't wait to for you guys to see those things.

01:08:12.840 --> 01:08:27.540

Angela Thi Bennett

So, Rafi, you know, without you know infringing on the NOFO I mean, I will just say that you know higher ED is another one of those stakeholders, you know, for you know, robust and you know meaningful collaboration. Because like someone put in a comment, they are in the communities and in the neighborhoods that you know are serving you know are marginalized you know populations, so you know, similar to the response with the public housing authorities, you know to higher ED and to any stakeholder. You know, in the Community, you know go and reach out to your state broadband office or

whichever you know office within your state that you know, has been designated you know to work on these plans so that you, you know you are engaged and, of course, you know she said, you know if you go from you know that there's a line between engagement you know, and being you know substantively involved in the planning and then being a sub recipient so you'll need to confer with your own legal counsel for that, but strongly encourage you know higher ed you know to collaborate.

01:09:23.490 --> 01:09:34.200

Karen Archer Perry

Another comment regarding higher rate is higher ed is still struggling with accepting the concept of digital inclusion ecosystems, Internet access, affordable devices and digital literacy question. How can the funding rules make getting the message to higher ed that education that the time delay planning funds for digital inclusion programming is over?

01:09:47.100 --> 01:09:58.830

I can just tell you they got it in the CMC program. So many, many applicants did get it, and hopefully it's a pilot program hopefully we'll be able to continue to do more of that work.

01:10:01.560 --> 01:10:03.210

Let me ask you another question. As a homeowner and chief advocate for West Virginia grassroots organization representing homeowners, especially those with poor DSL and no way to get adequate speeds, is there any suggestion for how those communities could be served? So how do people who are in areas where you have DSL or slow DSL you know, the people who are in the slow speeds in the you know poorly connected areas, how did people who have porteous poor connections some connection, but not good enough connections, how can those folks get the kinds of upgrades that they need to kind of take that next step into connectivity.

01:11:04.290 --> 01:11:12.390

Angela Thi Bennett

That recommendation is conducting some speed test and share that data up with your state broadband office.

01:11:13.860 --> 01:11:21.240

Karen Archer Perry

And those are the kind of organizations, those are the kind of capabilities that would be eligible, possibly in the BEAD, Is that correct?

01:11:21.300 --> 01:11:24.720

Angela Thi Bennett

Correct, that would be definitely a BEAD eligibility. And that's how he can't you know fully advanced you know digital equity without you know, making sure that infrastructure, you know, that reliable has to be you know service, you know is available, you know, for all Americans but definitely you know. Pull those speed tests and share that information and advocate you know, for your area to that State broadband office for inclusion in the BEAD funding.

Karen Archer Perry

01:11:57.000 --> 01:12:02.100

When it comes to digital equity, what are the requirements, the solution at the solutions must have in terms of line of sight or future prudence to make sure that everyone in different geographies have access to equitable access do we have technology requirements or specific requirements in terms of the types of implementations for technology.

Rafi Goldberg

01:12:24.420 --> 01:12:26.280

Not in the digital equity act. BEAD has certain standards about you know what it means to be fully serve but the digital equity access it's you know not primarily you know really about the deployment of physical infrastructure doesn't have those sorts of standards. What it does have was right, so every state is going to have to create a digital equity plan. And then they submit that plan to NTIA when they choose to apply for capacity grant funding down the road which is. When you actually implement the plan, and you know so anything they want to do, will need to be in the plan, and you know we will look at the plan and make sure that you know meets all the requirements of the statute to the NOFO, you know, and that what they're proposing to spend the money on is actually you know implementing what they said they would do with the digital equity plans. So, you know, if they say in the plan for example that you know they're going to you know deploy some sort of technology, you know that you know helps with you know with certain equity issues and that'll be an important thing to see when it comes to the capacity grants.

Karen Archer Perry

01:13:44.550 --> 01:13:49.230

So, since the digital equity act is more about actually that it is about technology and it's in intended to make sure that everybody has the opportunity for full participation in society. That is a hard thing to kind of like get your hands around. Kind of what language, do you think is in the act or what kind of terms, do you think about personally to talk about full participation in society, I know that there's terms of economic development and healthcare and skills. What kinds of terms are do we think about when we think about equity and full participation in society for do you think about. I know you've worked about it worked on it in your survey and Angela I know you've worked on it in your work, so what is full participation society look like, or what kinds of measurements, have you done historically in it.

Rafi Goldberg

01:14:48.900 --> 01:14:59.400

Well, as I think you alluded to right, you know, ultimately, you know we're not doing all this for the sake of you know people just being connected, we're doing this because the long term outcomes we want to see, right. You know um you know achieving digital equity is part of what it means to you know achieve better health outcomes to achieve better economic development educational outcomes and things like that so in the long run, that's what we'd like to see, and in fact the statute makes it clear that that the goals of a digital equity plan should be linked to a states of broader socio economic goals, so that you know, is going to be a very important thing to keep in mind. You know, and you know and another important aspect to I think the digital equity plans is the

requirement to express measurable objectives for making progress towards digital equity right so you're right, this is a very you know large space, it can you know sound like a lot to wrap your head around and that I think is exactly why States seem to come up with you know specific, measurable objectives that you know will be say down the road you know okay, you're making progress towards this, or you need to make more progress towards this.

01:16:27.240 --> 01:16:35.940

Yes, I think those are important, I think I think the centering of the cover of populations is very important right because in many cases. Those are populations that you know, historically, have not only been on the wrong side of the digital divide, but you know have found themselves with many other socio-economic challenges as well, so I think that centering those communities it's going to be extremely important here.

01:16:58.530 --> 01:17:03.180

Karen Archer Perry

What advice would you give states to center on those covered populations?

01:17:03.630 --> 01:17:15.240

Angela Thi Bennett

Yeah, and before I answer that I just wanted to kind of piggyback you know on what Rafi said as to what you know equity and digital equity means you know. For me, it's about access and opportunity. And we're you know, focusing and centering on marginalized populations and it's about a shifting of power and empowering people with tools and resources where they can make the determination that they feel are best for their lives, so that they can thrive. We don't want people to just survive because that's literally you know what I mean, I'm from one of those communities, you know I mean you know, we want to move people from just surviving to actually thriving and whatever that looks like for them, you know from healthcare to education, to economics, being able to live a very meaningful life. I mean that's ultimately the goal, I mean we connect 100% of Americans to high speed reliable Internet and we haven't you know, changed any of the outcomes in their life. We haven't improved the health outcomes, you know, so that they can live a quality life, you know with longevity. We haven't helped increase their median household income so that they can stabilize their housing so that their children are not you know transient, so that they can focus and be able to you know achieve academic success in school, then really, what are we trying to accomplish here. So, at the end of the day, it's about making sure every single American are empowered to make those choices to live the life that they want to live.

01:18:58.410 --> 01:19:11.790

Karen Archer Perry

If you were a state leader, what two things would you do to make sure that you could reach out and really reach those covered populations really target them?

Angela Thi Bennett

01:19:12.390 --> 01:19:17.400

Go outside of your norm stretch outside of your normal network and reach out into communities that you normally don't reach out into there are people you know those organizations that you know they're the name well known organizations that you know always the one you know the go to's, but there are other folks who are really doing that work, the heavy lifting that you know people generally don't go to just you know.

01:19:41.940 --> 01:19:55.170

You know, I was saying to my son and that's you know, one of my concerns and biggest priorities is making sure that local communities, you know, have a voice. And he says mom, you just need to go talk to them. And that's what I encourage students to do go out reach out, you know spread those, I you know it's like in our webinar go no knock door to door, you know go reach out into those communities so that we can make sure that you know everyone's voices, you know feel heard and we're not going to be able to solve every single problem, I mean that's but wow if at the end of the day, people can say you know what, I felt heard and I'm seeing impact in my community.

Karen Archer Perry

01:20:25.950 --> 01:20:35.040

Okay, I'll take one big one. Did you have one advice for states to make sure we reach uncovered and targeted populations, Rafi?

Rafi Goldberg

01:20:36.330 --> 01:20:44.580

Well, I think I think Angela's answer it was really a perfect and the only thing I would add to that is you know when you know I am to be respectful of the folks that you know you're asking for their lived experiences. Right, you know, when you are any Community where you know as, as you know, as some of the chat I mentioned just you know, trying to survive, right now, it can be very difficult to take a lot of time out of your day, and you know, really, you know what. You know, advise a bunch of government people about you know what needs to happen, and you know you may even want to consider you know some form of compensation if you're going to take a lot of people's time. So yeah, that would be the only thing I would add there.

Karen Archer Perry

01:21:22.800 --> 01:21:43.440

Someone asked a specific question about the role of community anchors on schools, libraries health clinics. Do you see as, in addition to higher education, do you have a particular comment on the role of Community anchors in this kind of a program.

Angela Thi Bennett:

01:21:45.270 --> 01:21:54.840

Yeah, it takes a village me the work that we were able to do you know in my previous organization was because we reached out to all of those anchor institutions. You need to healthcare institutions, not just the big healthcare institutions, you need the Community, you know neighborhood you know health institutions, you need the schools, you know the charters, the public's, you know the parochial I mean you have you know the Community



organizations it truly it takes a village and that's how we're going to will be able to see change.

01:22:24.870 --> 01:22:37.320

Rafi Goldberg

Yeah, and then, you know, in many cases, these CAI's are you know are all the there are already in places that have been serving these communities, for a very long time. Right, you know for folks who you know don't have a computer or don't have a very good computer your local library is really the best place that you can go when you need to use one you know, bar none, it's not even close. You know so um you know it's going to be very important to keep you know, libraries and other institutions heavily involved, because you know they have the experience and they have the infrastructure.

01:23:05.340 --> 01:23:12.720

Angela Thi Bennett

And can I add another advice to states to when you go into the communities, and you ask for their input, come back and report back as to what did you do with it because so often, you know we get all these folks coming into the communities asking us, you know our input, surveys and then we never hear anything back and we don't see any results. As a result of that, and so it, you know, continues to you know, create that you know distrust like, why are you coming here, why are you just checking the box engagement, or are we going to actually see change as a result of this engagement.

01:23:44.910 --> 01:23:52.770

Karen Archer Perry

Let me just add, and I think it's implicit in what we've talked about. We've mentioned Community anchors we've mentioned tribes. It's also hopefully implicit that states are also made up of cities and towns and regional cogs and that collaboration is critical, and I hope I'm taken for granted as being what makes a State work, so we didn't call it out explicitly but we assume that that's kind of built into the fabric of what's going on here.

01:24:27.660 --> 01:24:43.560

And it is why we are so excited about the work that we have coming up, and with that I'm going to ask Carole, I'm going to thank our panelists and Alan who kicked us off and I'm going to ask Carole to show us our final slide which is an announcement of our next webinar. The next webinar is May 11 and it's our last technical assistance webinar. We hope before you'll see a NOFO coming out from us. You'll find the slides and the transcript and the video recording from this webinar available on our website a week from today, which I think is May 5 at Broadband USA NTIA events-past events, and you can download all that information there. We have really appreciated you joining us today. We've appreciated your comments and your questions, I know we didn't get to all of them, we got to as many as we can, and we thank you for everything. Thanks very much.

END TRANSCRIPT.