IFA Grant Programs Webinar Series: Digital Equity Act Programs
Moderator: Shannan William-Mitchem
May 18, 2022

Shannan Williams-Mitchem	00:01:01.020 --> 00:01:05.220 Hello everyone, and thank you for joining today's Internet for All webinar series. My name is Shannan Williams Mitchem and I serve in the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives under the Pffoce of Internet connectivity and Growth here at NTIA. 00:01:14.460 --> 00:01:23.670 During these webinars, our goal is to share as much information to the public as possible regarding this once in a generation investments in high-speed internet access in America. Today, will be providing an overview of the Digital Equity Act program, which is a key component of the new Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. 00:01:31.620 --> 00:01:41.190 I have the honor of serving as today's moderator for our esteemed guest speakers. Before we begin, I'd like to take a moment, though, to review our agenda and introduce our speakers today. We'll start today's session with the welcome from the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information and NTIA Administrator Alan Davidson. We'll, then be joined by the 40th US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo for a special guest's remarks. After that we'll move to the formal presentation and overview of the digital equity act programs by our DEA program director Angela Thi Bennett. 00:02:05.190 --> 00:02:14.970 And then finally we'll move into a moderated Q & A session where Angela and I will be joined by Rafi Goldberg, Senior Policy Advisor for Digital Equity at NTIA. And Heather King, interdisciplinary survey statistician of the social, economic and housing statistics division at the US Census Bureau. I'll now turn it over to Assistant Secretary Alan Davidson and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo.
Alan Davidson	00:02:32.190 --> 00:02:46.290 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 All initiative. This is an exciting time for our country. The Internet for All initiative is a historic step towards achieving a critical goal of a fully connected America. 00:02:58.530 --> 00:03:13.320 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. The laws $48 billion dollar investment in our nation's internet infrastructure will open opportunities for millions of Americans. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will also give all Americans the 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.

Gina Raimondo

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Hi, I'm Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. Thank you for joining us to learn more about the newly launched Internet for All programs. We all know that fast reliable Internet is vital for everyday life. We use it but that access isn't always equal or affordable. Gaps in access mean gaps in opportunity. The truth is America's diversity is our strength, but that's only if we give everyone an opportunity to fulfill their potential and fully participate. That's why we are thrilled that President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides nearly $50 billion in funding to the commerce department.

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To achieve the goal of universal high-speed internet that includes nearly 3 billion in funding for the Digital Equity Act to promote digital inclusion and equity, for communities that lack the skills, technologies, and support needed to take advantage of broadband connections. Thank you for stepping up to help ensure this funding is distributed efficiently and effectively. We need you; we need your insight and expertise so that our programs will stand the test of time. Working together, we're going to close the digital divide for good and pave a path toward a brighter future for all Americans, thank you.

Angela Thi-Bennett

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Thank you, Secretary Raimondo and Assistant Secretary Davidson for joining us today.

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The COVID-19 pandemic shed light on what many of us already knew. Access to the internet is a basic necessity. But, unfortunately, far too many Americans, particularly in our communities, are without access to affordable reliable high-speed internet.

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With the Internet for All initiative, President Biden is ensuring that every single American has access to high quality, affordable, high-speed internet. We have three goals. One, to build infrastructure that provides you with access today and tomorrow. Two, access that is affordable and reliable, so that everyone can participate in the digital economy. And, third, we know that all of the speed in the world doesn't matter if you do not have the skills to use the internet and the connected device to access it. We know that there are many benefits to having high speed internet for both individuals and to our country, we know the importance of it for education.

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Making sure that our students have access to online remote education and are not left out and left behind. We know the importance of it to our economy, helping to connect American citizens to jobs, so that they can live a thriving life.

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We know the importance of it for health, particularly in the pandemic, so that people could have access to telehealth appointments and not have to leave the safety of their home. And we know its importance to our community, the ability for families to stay connected. Today's webinar will focus on the Digital Equity Act, which seeks to promote digital equity and inclusion. As you know by now, Congress and President Biden have allocated $2.75 billion dollars towards the Digital Equity Act.

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The Digital Equity Act created three programs. One, the state planning which provides $60 million a formula funding to develop digital equity plans. The second is the state capacity program which provides $1.44 billion to implement the plans that the state's develop. And third, the competitive grant funding program which provides $1.25 billion dollars to promote digital equity and inclusion plans.

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These programs are sequential and participation and planning is essential to receiving the capacity funds. So, the first, which the NOFO has just been released on May 13, this past Friday, is the state planning grant, and this is open to states. The District of Columbia and Puerto Rico States are required to prepare a planning grant in order to be eligible to receive the state capacity grant.

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Other US territories and tribal native entities are also eligible for funding, but they are following a different process. $3 million has been set aside for US territories, other than Puerto Rico. And $50 million dollars has been set aside for Indian tribes, Alaska native entities, and native Hawaiian organizations. So, their process for submission is a little different. They will first submit a letter of intent, rather than an application and then, once their letter of intent has been submitted, the entity will then receive a separate communication from NTIA about the requirements and the timelines.

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The Digital Equity Act focuses on addressing the needs of covered populations, as defined by statute. And those are low-income households, aging populations, incarcerated individuals, but not in federal correctional facilities, our veteran's, people with disabilities, people with language barriers which includes English as a second language individuals, as well as low literacy, racial and ethnic minorities and rural inhabitants.

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The programs funds can be used for different purposes. The first program funding is the state planning grants, which are available now, are for our state digital equity plans. States can make subgrants to other entities such as community anchor institutions and municipalities, Indian tribes, nonprofits, and other organizations to help them develop their digital equity plan. And local participation and local coordination in these efforts are expected and required under this grant.

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The second use are the state uses of the state capacity and competitive grants under the state's capacity wants to states submit their planning application. Then they will then be eligible for the capacity to implement their state digital equity plans and then of course we have the third competitive, which are, you know available to you know nonprofits, community anchor institutions, you know local municipalities to apply and compete for that funding.

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So, when states are developing their state digital equity plans, they must contain several components. One a stated vision for digital equity. Two, the objectives. What are their measurable objectives and how will this impact the state's plans and outcomes? What are some of those barriers to digital equity, as it relates to, you know, our covered populations? With respect to their local coordination and outreach, you know, what is their plan to collaborate with stakeholders to achieve their digital equity plans, as well as a list of the organizations, you know that they've coordinated and helped, you know, inform the plan. And another component is the integration. You know, an asset inventory of there, you know, strategies, how are they incorporating local plans and how are they coordinating the use of these capacity funds in the development of their BEAD planning funds as well as the implementation of BEAD. And then, what is their implementation strategy and the timeline?

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So, here's a list of eligible entities that are required, that they're required to engage with, you know the stakeholders. So, key stakeholders include: your community anchor institutions, you know your libraries, your higher ed's, your county municipal governments, your local educational, you know agencies, your Indian tribes, Alaska native entities, our native Hawaiian organizations, where there applicable, our nonprofits definitely, you know, organizations that represent and serve you know our covered populations, your civil rights, other entities that are carrying out workforce development programs. I'll tie agency coordination's you know within the states, you know that supervised adult education or literacy, you know activities and I'll also, you know point out, you know with the state agencies, you know that even cover you know and serve our covered populations, such as you know, the correctional institutions, as well as you know, our public housing authorities.

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So, here's a visual of what the digital inclusion activities that you plan and implement and how you can move towards achieving digital equity, you know. One,

as the foundation, making sure that we have an affordable, robust broadband service which we are accomplishing you know, through the BEAD program. And then, with the digital equity program you know the internet enabled devices, making sure that we have connected devices that Americans can use as well as ensuring that we have the applications and the content and the digital literacy, training, and support to ensure that every person, no matter where they are at on their journey to becoming a digital citizen, have the tools that they need to get there. And, you know, just as important as we're bringing people online, how are you planning to ensure for online privacy and safety.

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So, the programs under the Digital Equity Act support the bipartisan infrastructure law's broader goals of improving access, affordability, you know and adoption. And every stakeholder plays a role in the digital equity programs. This is, you know, a holistic effort that requires the collaboration and coordination of all stakeholders, you know within the state, which includes the telecom providers. We need everyone, you know at the table you know, with the commitment to ensure that high speed, reliable, and affordable access is you know delivered to, you know each American, you know, our anchor institutions our tribal governments, making sure that those who've been left out and left behind, are included, you know in this planning process.

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Our local governments, our community organizations, particularly the ones that are grassroots and, on the ground doing the meaningful and difficult work of you know, really serving, you know each and every one of our covered populations, as well as you know, individuals in, you know within, you know the local community. Folks who have the lived experiences can help, you know, inform the work in the digital equity programs. For additional resources about our digital equity programs, please visit the InternetforAll.gov website where you'll find additional information on other funding programs. Especially as you are looking to develop the plans and leverage the different resources and the funding opportunities in addition to what's available in the Digital Equity Act program. Engage with your state or territory about your plans and if you are, you know, not a state representative state on this call and you're looking for the state contact you can go to the BroadbandUSA.gov website and be able to locate your point of contact for your state. And if you have questions, please email us at digitalequity@ntia.gov. We have a team of folks that are on standby poised and ready to address your concerns. And I encourage you to attend future NTIA webinars including program specific application guidance webinars for applicants. Thank you all for joining us today, and I will now turn it over to Arica.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:18:43.920 --> 00:18:52.770
The speakers for today, Rafi Goldberg and Heather King, are joined by Angela and I to take the audience's questions about the presentation today. So, I'll jump right in and get started. One question that we have right now is about further planning guidance for states, particularly around partnerships with community anchor institutions. And Angela, I know you spoke about our holistic approach to addressing digital equity with this plan. Would you be able to speak more about what planning

guidance there is for states in encouraging partnerships with community anchor institutions?

Angela Thi Bennett

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So, we'll share that, you know we are in the process of building, excuse me, toolkits for, you know states, as they are developing their digital equity plans as well as toolkits for local coordination, for you know organizations that are on the ground on how they can advocate and communicate, you know up to, you know their states as well.

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So, those are you know in process. But in the meantime, you know as I shared, you know local organizations don't have to wait. For toolkits, you know they can go to the broadband USA, I believe it's BroadbandUSA.NTIA.doc.gov website and they can locate their broadband office contacts, you know at that website and begin kind of sharing the work that they're doing on the ground. But states are expected and required to, you know reach out, go into local communities and, you know collaborate. And, you know this is not a check the box community, you know public engagement, community engagement, you know expectation. But what we're really looking for is a meaningful engagement, you know with local communities and a coordination of the efforts that are happening on the ground.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:20:55.230 --> 00:21:07.500
Thanks Angela. Another question I have. When do you expect the competitive grant to be released? And I know you spoke a little to the timeline there, maybe Rafi or Angela can address that question.

Rafi Goldberg

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Sure, I can start with that. The three Digital Equity Act programs are kind of a sequence where the NOFO that just went out last Friday is for the digital equity state planning grants. At some point next year, the next NOFO to go out will be for the first round of state digital equity capacity grants, right. That's for the states to implement their digital equity plans and then the statute, I believe, requires us to issue the first NOFO for the competitive grant program soon after the first round of capacity grants goes out. So, it's kind of a sequence thing, and so, sometime either late next year or you know or early the following year, I think, is when we'll likely see the first round of competitive grants.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:22:10.170 --> 00:22:11.250
Great, thank you. So, I've gotten a lot of questions about eligible entities, right. Can NTIA speak more to the eligible embassy, eligibility sorry. Eligibility of tribes specifically. We also have gotten some questions about public health institutions and of sub grantees. Angela or Rafi, can you speak to that?

Angela Thi Bennett

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So, with respect to the state grants, the eligible entity, are the states. And, you know they will identify and it's in administering entity, you know whether it's going

to be within their state agency or, you know outside, they will then identify who will be responsible for administering, you know the state planning grants. As far as the tribals, they are eligible for the state planning grants and their process, you know, is simply a letter of intent that they need to submit to NTIA. And they can either submit it through our grants portal via email or you know by regular mail that's at least postmarked, you know, by the July 12th deadline. And then, once we receive that, we will then reach out and provide some additional, you know directions on what to do next.

Rafi Goldberg

00:23:42.720 --> 00:23:55.830
Yeah, and just to add a little bit on to that. So, we have we been required to set aside funds for both the planning grants and down the road, the capacity grants. One set aside is specifically for tribal entities and the other set aside is for US territories, other than Puerto Rico, which is considered a state under the digital equity act. So, in both of those cases, there is dedicated funding for tribal entities and for US territories, other than Puerto Rico. So, there is an opportunity there.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:24:25.770 --> 00:24:34.860
Great, thank you. So, a question I have here is about digital equity data and how it's used for formula allocations. Will they be updated throughout the program's life, or will they be incorporating other data sources in later years? Can either of you or Heather speak to that?

Rafi Goldberg

00:24:48.060 --> 00:25:02.160
Sure, I'll start. So, um as we expressed in the NOFO, it is our intent in future years to update the inputs into the funding formula with the most recently released versions of the data sources that we use. So, the digital equity act requires us to use a few different data sources, including the American community survey, the NTIA internet use survey, and the FCC 's section 706 broadband progress report.

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And so, we will continue using those data sources. It's possible that right, so there is the option for the Assistant Secretary to incorporate others, after notice and comment period. We have not chosen to do that at this time, but we will certainly be updating the formula to use the most recently released versions of the data sources down the road.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:25:57.840 --> 00:25:59.790
Angela, did you have anything to add on? Sorry. No, okay great. Okay, so another question, what are the projected roles of academic institutions in this program?

Angela Thi Bennett

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I think academic institutions have a critical role from our K-12 to our higher ED and for multiple, you know, reasons. One, they're serving our families, you know our K-12's are serving our families and making sure that you know they are involved and engaged so that we're hearing what their needs are and they're developing plans you know, to address our needs particularly our, you know covered populations that you know are in poverty areas and in addressing literacy, you know when it comes

to our higher ED. There's a portion in the BEAD program that has a focus on digital equity and workforce and that's an opportunity for our higher ED to help collaborate and develop training programs and certifications to engage with our families, you know in our local communities to ensure that they are not only receiving the skills in the training for these jobs that are coming down, but have it so that they are participating economically in all of the infrastructure development that's happening around our country.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:27:34.860 --> 00:27:35.790
Thank you, Angela. Let's see another question. Okay, so cybersecurity is a question that has come up. Is this something that is going to be involved in any technical assistance with regard to the digital equity program? I just want to make sure I covered that question from an audience member. Can either of you speak to that?

Angela Thi Bennett

00:28:08.610 --> 00:28:18.390
I guess the question in cyber security with respect to infrastructure deployment or cyber security, you know, maybe it goes kind of you know, cyber security and safety goes, you know both ways, right. So, from an infrastructure under BEAD, you know, ensuring, which is a separate program, but it's ensuring that you know the systems, you know, are designed, you know with those you know safety and security, you know mechanisms, you know in place. From a digital equity and cyber security, I think of training and you know, opportunities and workforce, you know opportunities, you know as well. And empowering a lot of our young people who have, you know great, you know digital skills to be able to apply those skills, you know in, in the work. You know that's happening as well you know, I was, I was at a library, I won't say which one, and there were some technical issues because some students had hacked the system. You know, I look at that as, wow, we have some talented kids. And, you know how do we then connect them with some training programs, and you know and get them into some opportunities where they can apply, you know the skills that, you know they have.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:29:34.830 --> 00:29:49.200
Thanks, Angela. So, I wanted to give Heather an opportunity to talk a little bit about her role in the deployment of the digital equity planning program. Did you have a couple things to share with our audience, Heather?

Heather King

00:29:54.720 --> 00:29:56.010
Sure, sorry I was on, was on mute. And, yes, thank you. My name is Heather King and I'm an interdisciplinary statistician at the at the census bureau and I worked with these folks to put together the estimates of the total covered populations for each state. So, for that piece of the funding formula, we use 2019 data from the census bureau's American community survey or the ACS tabulated the respondents for each state that had one or more of those eight characteristics that Angela went over earlier in the presentation that's are focus of the Digital Equity Act.

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So, the ACS is a nationally representative survey with data on the characteristics of the US population. The sample is selected from all counties and county equivalents

and has a sample size at about three and a half million housing units each year. So, it's the premier source of detailed population and housing information about our nation and the communities within it. So, I'm on hand if anybody has any specific questions about how we derive these estimates, we can share my contact information if we don't get to your question for follow ups.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:31:29.490 --> 00:31:40.710
Thank you, Heather. Okay, so another question we had is about identifying who at the state level is working on their digital equity plans. So can anyone, so the government equivalent official of each state is required to designate administering entity, you know that I'm so the website is where they can locate those pretty those plans, yes.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:31:59.400 --> 00:32:10.770
Yes, they can go to the broadband USA website and they will be able to identify their broadband office contact person, yes.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:32:11.880 --> 00:32:12.540
Thanks, Angela. So, we have plenty of time left and not that many questions, actually. So, looking to see what we have not covered yet. So, a national organization with chapters in every state, is there any mechanism to serve as a sub grantee on a national basis or should they work with every state separately?

Angela Thi Bennett

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They will need to reach out to their states. So, the funding is being allocated to the states and then the states will develop and identify, you know the different partners, so I would strongly encourage them to reach out to the states.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:33:10.230 --> 00:33:12.420
All right. Let's see. Oh, I needed to scroll down on the document, so I'm fine. I found more, let's see. Are tribes being notified or do we just reach out and make sure they apply?

Angela Thi Bennett

00:33:28.350 --> 00:33:29.940
I would say all of the above. Though we are reaching out to try to share with them the funding opportunity that's available. But I would also ask whoever asked that question to also reach out to the tribes and let them know that this funding opportunity is available and to reach out to us as well. So, you know that you know multiple you know engagements and connections, I think, would be beneficial.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:34:02.310 --> 00:34:05.550
Okay, great. Thank you. Let's see, can planning funds be expanded for consulting services to support stakeholder outreach and plan development?

Angela Thi Bennett

00:34:15.000 --> 00:34:16.380
Yes, yes.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:34:18.540 --> 00:34:29.280
All right, does Heather have the location of covered populations in a GIS format, perhaps, is what one attendee is asking.

Heather King

00:34:30.210 --> 00:34:43.35
So, we have a website for where the data lives on a census hosted website where you can access that data as a csv format and it has the Phipps codes. It doesn't have the any GEO data on it yet because currently it's just at the state level. But we do have plans to produce more detailed estimates as we move along this process to help support NTIA with the remaining programs for the Digital Equity Act. So, at this moment, we don't have plans to provide GIS data, but we can certainly look into that. But right now, where we are with the data and what's available, the geo codes, the Phipps codes that identify each state is the geographic information that's available right now. So, we can share the location of the website that houses the data and the file layout and the quick guide and access to a mapper that displays the distribution of the covered populations per state, the estimate, the numbers for each state, and the percentage would within each state, along with the other elements that went into the funding formula. It's got some indicator for the individual characteristics that make up the total covered population. For example, you'll be able to view the share of each state that's living with one or more disabilities that are living in households with low income, which is considered no more than 150% of the federal poverty line. So, we can, thank you, I think someone followed up in the chat with the location, so you can access the data and see what's available.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:36:31.230 --> 00:36:32.280
Thank you, Heather. So, I've gotten multiple questions about this topic, and we did touch on it a little, but I'll ask for folks to expand upon it. So, NTIA's monitoring of states, whether or not they're indeed engaging with the key stakeholders as required. They are worried that some states may not be engaging with certain stakeholders appropriately, can you speak to that topic a little bit more. Angela or Rafi or Heather.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:37:05.640 --> 00:37:16.830
So, I mean within the NOFO and by statute states are required to provide us a list of organizations that they have engaged with and, and what we're encouraging and hoping that states will do is not wait until, you know they have one year to develop their digital equity plan. But we are engaging with states throughout that year as they are developing their digital equity plans to encourage and also provide support and engagement for them to connect with their local communities, as well. So, we're you know from our side, from NTIA side, you know we're working and engaging with you know and collaborating with different you know organizations and you know, helping to develop those resources that states will also be able to access to be able to, you know reach out into the local communities as well.

Rafi Goldberg

00:38:11.610 --> 00:38:21.720
Yeah, and I would only add that the requirement is both to engage with the range of stakeholders during the development of the state digital equity plans, as well as to

in the digital equity plan document and to also have a plan for continued outreach and collaboration. As they move forward into the implementation phase. Right, so it's both early on during the initial plan development but also moving forward, we're going to want to see it continue to outreach and collaboration.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:38:51.450 --> 00:39:09.930
And in addition to digital equity, and you'll see it's common you hear that that's a common, very important priority theme amongst all of our IIJA programs, local coordination, local coordination local coordination. I don't think we could emphasize; you know that enough.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:39:13.200 --> 00:39:16.350
Thanks, you, guys. So, another question I have is the distinction between or overlap of the digital equity program and BEAD. Can we explain the distinctions between the two programs a little bit more for audience?

Angela Thi Bennett

00:39:29.820 --> 00:39:37.170
If you think of BEAD as the infrastructure and with BEAD and developing infrastructures to serve unserved and underserved with priority being unserved those having less than you know 25 downloads, three upload. Underserved those less than 120 and then, you know when you're prioritizing, you know after, you know those two have been achieved, you know, making sure that our community anchor institutions you know, are connected, you know as well. So, under BEAD, they're required to develop a five-year plan, and you know equity is central, you know to the development of that plan and states can actually utilize their digital equity funding to meet that equity requirement in their BEAD.

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And so, while you have a digital equity plan, and you have a five-year BEAD plan, they are not to be developed in silos but actually developed together, because we are, you know, encouraging states to really take a holistic approach to closing the digital divide.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:40:45.210 --> 00:40:55.860
Thank you, Angela. And so, perhaps that's a good lead in to talk more about the competitive portion of the program, that competitive grant. The distinctions between the planning and the capacity grant. You talked a little bit about that in the presentation, perhaps a little bit more clarity for our audience members about those two phases of the program.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:41:12.510 --> 00:41:16.470
So, the competitive grant is not going to the states. So, I think that's where, again, I think, local communities and other organizations that are non-state players aren't, you know where's our opportunity, you know towards digital equity. So, the planning and capacity are in other states other recipients, but the competitive grant which is, Rafi shared, you know will be released after the capacity, which will be you know late, you know early a competitive grant will be you know available for, you know local organizations, you know local political subdivisions, to apply for.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:41:59.880 --> 00:42:07.680
Thanks, Angela. The questions keep going too and I'm trying to spread the wealth, but your primary POC on this so more questions relevant to our tribal stakeholders. So, tribes often lack the resources to assess or define their telecom requirements is what this audience member is saying in the letter of intent, which is sent to NTIA, not the state. How detailed must tribes be about their plan? Is the plan and grant to the tribe provided by NTIA or the state? So, I'm reading verbatim, sorry, so if you need more clarity, let me know.

Rafi Goldberg

00:42:39.720 --> 00:42:40.170
So that's.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:42:40.710 --> 00:42:41.970
Rafi, oh.

Rafi Goldberg

00:42:42.000 --> 00:42:56.190
Yeah so, the grants provided by NTIA, not the state. The letters of intent go to NTIA and not the state. It would be a grant, that is, between the tribe and NTIA. In terms of how detailed the letter of intent needs to be, I believe the answer is not very, right. We're mostly just asking, you know, for a letter signed by the governing body that you know, sort of designates, you know who is going to administer the program. And, you know some very basic things like that are mentioned in the NOFO. You know, we specifically chose to do a letter of intent to at first for the tribal entity as opposed to a full application in part, to make the barrier to entry has loved as much as it can possibly be so the letter of intent stage should be a pretty simple thing to fill out.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:43:49.350 --> 00:43:54.330
Thanks, Rafi. Okay. So, let's see um. Digital literacy skills, someone has asked about. Will there be guidance for states around the measurement of those we know that digital literacy is a critical component to achieving equity? But I wonder, you know, what you know I guess this audience members asking about additional guidance around the measurement of digital literacy skills and will that be a part of the program.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:44:24.390 --> 00:44:39.930
We will have guidance and toolkits and resources to invest really bests practices that we will share with states as they, you know help identify, you know the metrics to measure the impact of their programs.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:44:45.600 --> 00:44:58.380
Okay, another question. Could you clarify, must a national organization representing covered populations apply to each state as a sub grantee to assist with the community plans or is there mechanism for the digital equity office to work with such organizations to assist states. So, still needing further clarity on the role of national organizations within the planning phase of the program is what it looks like

this attendance, audience members asking. I know we touched on this multiple times. Does anyone want to speak to that?

Angela Thi Bennett

00:45:28.200 --> 00:45:31.320
I'm not sure I'm understanding that question.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:45:31.380 --> 00:45:38.250
Must a national organization representing covered populations apply to each state as a sub grantee to assist with community? I think there might be conflating the different phases of the program, the planning versus the competitive.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:45:51.360 --> 00:46:00.570
I think they're talking from a planning purpose, and again I mean, even though you know, unfortunately, even though they're a national organization, you know NTIA, you know the funding is going directly to the states for their planning grants. And so, while they may be a national organization, they will still need to reach out to individual states in order to you know, be a part, you know of their planning process.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:46:23.310 --> 00:46:24.540
Got it, thank you. Okay, so, additional questions. Will the state toolkits include encouragement to reach out to county and city jails that house incarcerated individuals, is a question that one audience member had?

Angela Thi Bennett

00:46:43.260 --> 00:46:55.380
Incarcerated individuals are one of our covered populations, you know we're already doing outreach to the different, you know state correctional facilities to ensure that they are aware, you know of the program and encouraging them to reach out to their states as well. And so, for the local and city correctional facilities, I would encourage you to reach out to your state, you know to make sure that, you know they're aware of you, and you know, encouraging them to collaborate as well. I wouldn't just, while states are that, here's the reality of it, while states are expected to reach out and engage locally and engage. They may not know where every single, you know organization that serving our different covered populations.

00:47:44.160 --> 00:47:50.610
So, I would just recommend reaching out to the State and reaching out going, you know finding that the contact person. We won't know who the administering entity is for the state until they, you know submit, you know the application to us. So, at this point, it was just released. We won't know. But I would just encourage you to reach out to your broadband office you know and ask for a meeting you know send information and let them know that you're on the ground serving the covered populations and ready, willing, and able to collaborate.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem	00:48:25.890 --> 00:48:29.970 Thanks, Angela. So, one other question we have is about designating an organization other than a state broadband office to prepare the plan. So, can the governor do that? Can they designate an organization, other than the state broadband office to prepare the plan or the government says innovation is? Just identifying who the state broadband office? So, I guess more clarity around making with the governor. Guys, in making a selection, we recommend they do.
Rafi Goldberg	00:49:02.970 --> 00:49:15.210 So, the statute actually has a list of different types of entities that are eligible to be selected by the governor. And it's not just a state agency, like a state broadband office, it's also community anchor institutions, local educational agencies. I have the statue pulled up right now, so kind of just reading from it. So, housing authorities, workforce development entities and a few others as well as, so there are other options besides just a state agency.
Shannan Williams-Mitchem	00:49:41.760 --> 00:49:50.310 Great, thank you. Regarding the capacity grant, how will states select sub grantees? Is NTIA making any requirements around that?
Angela Thi Bennett	00:49:58.200 --> 00:50:10.440 We don't have the authority to require states to make sub grants to any particular, you know organization. And that's what, that's outside of our authority. Rafi, do you have anything to add to that?
Rafi Goldberg	00:50:16.590 --> 00:50:17.610 I think that's right.
Shannan Williams-Mitchem	00:50:21.630 --> 00:50:23.220 Okay, great. Thank you. Let's see, I have covered a good portion of the questions. Let's see, we have about nine minutes left. Let's see, is there any information you'd like to add to our presentation Heather, Rafi or Angela? So, I think we've gotten a good, most of these questions. Maybe we can start to round out the conclusion of the webinar with some additional points. we want to make sure our audience. Okay, coming in, as I speak, but go right ahead, Heather.
Heather King	00:51:23.640 --> 00:51:33.660 Someone did ask about the definition of low-income households. And, first state with that is again to, I can handle that its low-income households are those that have an income that's no more than 150% of the federal poverty line. So, poverty, the poverty line is the minimum income that a household needs to purchase basic needs and it's specific to household sizes so let's say that for a given household side the poverty line is $10,000, just making this number up for example purposes, then under the digital equity act, household would be labeled low income if they had household income that did not see $15,000 because $10,000 is the federal poverty line for a household of that size. Yeah, hope that clarifies it back over here.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem	00:52:24.030 --> 00:52:26.850 Thanks, Heather. Alright so. Angela, were you about to speak?
Angela Thi Bennett	00:52:29.130 --> 00:52:29.700 So yeah, can I just respond to one question someone had about a letter from the tribe signed by the Governor? The letter of intent is not signed by the Governor of the State, it would be by whoever the governing official is for that tribe.
Shannan Williams-Mitchem	00:52:54.990 --> 00:52:56.340 Okay, great. Thank you. Let's see. Where can telecom providers and potential sub grantees locate additional information regarding applying and getting involved. So, that would be the Broadband USA website where we have all of our information on getting involved for asked relevant stakeholders. 00:53:18.870 --> 00:53:35.400 Let's see, another question. When do the use of funds awarded need to be completed by granting in the three D programs? Will the competitive grants have a shorter period to expand because the funds will be distributed later, is one question I have?
Rafi Goldberg	00:53:38.400 --> 00:53:51.570 So, I believe for the planning grants, the general requirements, right. Because the plan needs to be completed within a year, and so the general expectation is that the money will be spent within a year. There is an option to expand, to extend the deadline for expending the funds to 18 months, I think. I guess in case there are any, you know outstanding bills, or something like that that come in. But it is generally one year for the planning grants. I think for the capacity grants it's a longer time frame. Angela, and I'm not sure if you recall the exact, you know amount of time it's, for.
Angela Thi Bennett	I think we all need to get back on that, I think I believe the person may be asking about the competitive because that's further down the road. But the details with regard to the competitive grant has not been developed, yet. And so, I would just encourage them to, you know, stay posted, you know check the website for additional information. 00:54:50.550 --> 00:55:03.390 Internet for All is also the program website of you know, they would like further updates with regard to, you know the competitive grant, you know as that you know NOFO is, you know the balance to be released in the future.
Shannan Williams-Mitchem	00:55:06.420 --> 00:55:14.100 Okay, great. Thank you. So, audience members, are there any other questions before we reach our conclusion? I think I've addressed most of them. Let's see. Sorry, just making sure I get all the questions I can that are relevant, let's see.

Telehealth, if a community uses telehealth and a prominent role to drive broadband adoption and another community has a similar project that lacked telehealth for their proposal with the community. Would a community with telehealth have a better chance of funding? So, telehealth is an element in digital equity that can be strengthened. I guess generally, if there's information relevant to telehealth that we want to share with our audience member and how that would work in the broader program.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:56:20.100 --> 00:56:27.120
Yeah so, let me just clarify. So, the planning grant and the capacity grant are formula based and they're not competitive. And so, with respect to the plan and grant that is available now for states to apply to this really wouldn't be a matter that you know we would you know be considering way you know one funding application that's versus another. This is really, we're in the planning process for states to, you know, develop their digital equity plan so that if there is a community that needs, you know access and broadband access, you know for telehealth you know period, you know, telehealth, remote work. Again, encouraging that community to reach out to their seat, you know, broadband office, not only for digital equity, but for BEAD to make sure that the infrastructure, you know reaches that community so that they can then engage in telehealth training, you know of the residents, so that they can, you know participate in controlling and managing their health care online.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:57:30.780 --> 00:57:42.150
Yes, thank you so much Angela. And thank you Rafi and Heather for joining us today. Are there any other concluding remarks? We have a couple minutes left on our broadcast.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:57:45.120 --> 00:57:52.080
And my concluding remark would be you know, thank you to everyone, you know, for taking the time you know to join us today. Encouraging again to reach out, you know go to the website, find out the point of contact, reach out to the state office. Stay, you know, tuned into our website for additional, you know webinars. We're not only doing webinars as part of engagement because we're encouraging states to go outside of their doors and go into communities. NTIA, we are also going out into communities and engaging directly with stakeholders to hear from them which will, you know help inform, you know what types of tools and what types of resources that we should be developing in order to you know, support the efforts not only at the state, but at the local level.

00:58:34.950 --> 00:58:52.650
So, if you have ideas, if you see something or you don't see something, please, you know reach out to us. Digitalequity@NTIA.gov and share with us your insights. We are here to serve you so please feel free to reach out to us.

Shannan Williams-Mitchem

00:58:54.900 --> 00:58:59.850
Okay, thank you so much Angela. Anyone else in the next minute? I think you wrapped that up beautifully. Thank you all for joining our webinar and there's much more to come. We are committed to continuing to share information about all of

these programs and receive your questions. Any questions that I didn't, I mean I think I got them most of them, but there, we will also be distributing a Frequently Asked Questions document to the public to sort of summarize, a lot of what we discussed today and address any further questions that we receive in our inquiries to the digitalequity@ntia.gov website, email address. But again, thank you so much for joining and have a good rest of your day.

END TRANSCRIPT.