Maci Morin

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Hello, and welcome to our Internet for all webinar series, my name is Maci Morin I am a comms and outreach manager here with the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, also known as NTIA. Today, will be providing you a general overview of the three grant programs that were launched on Friday May 13. These are the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment program, also known as BEAD, the enabling middle mile broadband infrastructure program, also known as middle mile, and the Digital Equity and Access programs. Now, for those of you who have joined us in our Internet for All webinar series so far, whether it be the bipartisan infrastructure law overview we had last Monday, or maybe one of the deeper dive sessions we had on the program's, first of all welcome back, thanks for joining us again. And you'll notice that a lot of the information today may look familiar to you, but please know that will still have a live Q & A at the end of the program presentation to answer all your burning questions, as I know, I'm sure you all have, reviewing the notices a funding opportunities, also known as the NOFOs.

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But for those of you joining us for the first time, welcome glad to have you here, and we hope this will be a very interesting and informative session for you all. A couple of housekeeping items before we get started, please know that you could submit a question via the Q & A function on your Zoom module at any time. That will be the fastest way to get those to our panelists during the Q & A session. And please expect that will have a high volume of questions today so we'll try to get to as many as we can, but if we don't happen to get to your question today, please know that will be reviewing these and answering them in our upcoming Frequently Asked Questions documents on our website.

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And I know you all will be eager to review the slides and the recording after the presentation, so please know that this will be posted on our BroadbandUSA website. And they'll also be sent out to all registrants and attendees of following the events ending, So hopefully about 24 to 48 hours after the session ends.

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So let's get on to our agenda for today. So we have three guests for our formal presentation of whose leadership really without them this all couldn't have been possible. So for welcoming remarks will be joined by the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information, and also our NTIA administrator, Alan Davidson. He will then be followed by our deputy Secretary of Commerce Don Graves. And then, after that we will get the formal presentation overview of the programs by the Associate Administrator of the office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, Doug Kinkoph.

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After that, for the moment you all been waiting for, we will go to our moderator Q & A session. Doug and I will be represented by a member of each of the program teams so we'll have our BEAD director Evan Feinman. We will have our digital equity act programs director Angela Thi Bennett and tag teaming in for our middle mile director Sarah Bleau will be Susannah Spellman who is the Deputy Associate Administrator of the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth so with that for me let's go to our special guest for today Assistant Secretary Alan Davidson and Deputy Secretary of Commerce Don Graves. Thank you.

Alan Davidson

00:04:37.590 --> 00:04:51.660
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, a fully connected America.

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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 law's $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.

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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. 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.

Don Graves

00:06:05.250 --> 00:06:13.560
Hello. I'm Deputy Secretary of Commerce Don Graves. I'm glad that you're joining us today to hear more about the newly launched Internet for All programs. We all know that fast and reliable Internet access is vital for everyday life. That's become even more apparent over the last two years. Unfortunately, that access isn't always available or affordable. But thanks to President Biden's bipartisan infrastructure law, the commerce department is investing nearly $50 billion to bring affordable and reliable high speed internet to all Americans.

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Each State will get an initial $5 million to build a five-year action plan, following that every state will receive a minimum of $100 million with the rest to be divided by need. That includes nearly $3 billion in funding for the digital equity act, which will be used to promote digital inclusion and equity for communities that don't have what they need to take advantage of broadband connections finally.

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Our unserved and underrepresented communities of color are aging populations and our rural communities will have access to the technologies, the education Tele health and critical services they need. With dependable Internet access will increase the opportunity for everyone to succeed in the 21st century global economy. So thank you again for being here, thank you for your commitment to this historic moment, and thank you for your commitment to closing the digital divide.

Doug Kinkoph

00:07:31.140 --> 00:07:49.020
Thank you, both Assistant Secretary Alan David said Deputy Secretary Graves. My name is Doug Kinkoph. I am the Associate Administrator for the Office of Internet Connectivity & Growth, which is part of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, or NTIA.

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As part of the Internet for All program launch, we welcome you here today to learn more about the high speed internet programs. To echo the remarks for President Biden on the recently launched affordability connectivity Program, we will make sure every single American has access to high quality, affordable, high speed internet. A high speed internet programs that we will talk about today will help us achieve this goal.

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The programs, we will discuss are funded by the bipartisan infrastructure law, which was signed into law in November 2021. The bipartisan infrastructure law is a once-in-a-generation $1.2 trillion investment in our nations infrastructure. This includes the largest ever investments in our nation's high speed internet, rail, transit, clean energy, and water. And I'm excited for this opportunity to tell you more about high speed internet programs funded by the bipartisanship infrastructure law today.

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The bipartisan infrastructure long invest roughly $65 billion into high speed internet efforts to seven federal programs. Four of these programs are administered by NTIA. These programs are the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment program, also known as BEAD, to the digital equity planning capacity competitive grant programs and three, the Tribal Broadband Connectivity program and four, the middle mile private infrastructure Program.

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Additionally, there are three programs administered by other federal agencies. These programs are the Affordable Connectivity Program, which is run by the FCC to the rural broadband programs at the Department of Agriculture, and the private activity bonds. Collectively these programs help us make sure every single American has access to high quality, affordable, high speed internet.

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High speed internet helps individuals and our country by maximizing savings for education, stimulating growth of the economy, lowering costs for health, and

strengthen the ties to our communities. For example, high speed internet helps students complete homework assignments, do research, and apply to college or trade schools. High speed internet allows businesses to connect with consumers, increase sales, create jobs, compete for talent. High speed internet enables patients to utilize Tele health options, lower administrative costs for hospitals, and improve patient health. High speed internet also fosters ties within the communities that helps first responders to respond to emergencies.

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All of these programs help close the digital divide, which is the gap between those who have high speed internet and those have limited or no high speed internet. The digital divide is made up of several components, including lack of access to high speed internet, meaning many Americans live in areas that are not covered by high speed internet services, or services not reliable. Lack of affordable high speed internet options, meaning Americans cannot afford to pay for the cost of devices or monthly the service. And limited adoption of high speed internet because individuals are not aware or available of service offerings or lack the digital skills to participate online.

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Addressing the digital divide requires more than just access to affordable, robust high speed internet though. Maximizing the benefit for high speed internet also requires tools and services, such as access to digital literacy trading and measures to ensure online privacy. These high speed internet programs are an investment in the tools and services to ensure Americans benefit for high speed internet. We've discussed how high speed internet cutbacks my savings for education, stimulate growth of the economy, lower costs for health care and strengthen ties in our Community. We want to underscore that high speed internet catches all aspects of American society from the entertainment industry to agriculture industry.

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As I mentioned at the beginning, NTIA will administer four high speed internet programs. I want to take a few minutes now to provide an overview of each of the four basic programs. We will provide more information about these programs and the days and weeks to come, including through several program-specific webinars.

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The Broadband Equity Access Deployment program, or BEAD, is the largest of the four programs. The program invest $42 billion to help to get all of our kids online by funding projects build infrastructure where it is needed, increasing the adoption of high speed internet.

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States and territories, in partnership with communities and stakeholders, can use the funds, the plan to deploy and upgrade Internet including stalling Internet and multi tenant buildings and to implement adoption a digital equity programs, including workforce and job training programs.

00:13:20.970 --> 00:13:27.540
The digital equity planning capacity and competitive grant programs are technically three programs. One for planning, one for capacity and limitation and one competitive grant programs that promotes digital inclusion and advanced equity for all Americans. The DEA program 62.75 million funding, including $60 billion dollars for states and territories to develop digital equity plans, $1.44 billion for states and territories that implement those plans and promote digital inclusion, and a $1.25 billion for certain entities, like clinical subdivisions, tribal entities, nonprofits, community anchors, local education agencies, workforce development organizations to implement digital equity inclusion activities together the 3 DEA programs aimed to ensure all communities can access and use affordable reliable high speed internet meet the needs and improve their lives.

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The Tribal Broadband Connectivity program is additional funding for the existing program to help tribal communities expand high speed Internet access and adoption on tribal lands. The Tribal Broadband Connectivity program includes $2 billion in additional funding for additional new grants and to fully fund grant the first round of awards.

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The original program has been embedded in three ways to extend the timeframe for applicants to file, to allow grantees to spend up 2.5% of total project cost on planning, feasibility, and sustainability studies, and preserve unused allocated funds for other travel broadband projects.

00:15:13.530 --> 00:15:20.400
The middle mile grant program will expand middle well infrastructure to reduce the costs of connecting unserved and underserved areas. Middle mile infrastructure refers to the mid section of the Internet infrastructure that carries large amounts of data at high speeds over long distances. Middle mile infrastructure connects the backbone of the Internet infrastructure to the last mile which connects to the users.

00:15:38.700 --> 00:15:45.870
The Middle mile program includes $1 billion in funding to construct, improve, or acquire middle mile facilities and equipment. Every type of stakeholders plays a role at these high speed internet programs, including the select stakeholders shown here. From telecom providers applying directly for BEAD sub grants or middle mile grants to deploy high speed internet infrastructure to community organization serving as the voice of their community, to state leaders who are developing broadband digital equity plans.

00:16:11.940 --> 00:16:27.810
There are many ways stakeholders to get involved in these programs. And it is incumbent on each of us as individuals, representatives of organizations, and Community members to lend our voices to the conversation, and ensure we make the most of this historic investment.

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

00:16:55.230 --> 00:17:09.840
Additionally, we invite you to submit flashes to Internetforall@ntia.gov and attend future NTIA webinars which will find more information about these excited programs, including additional guides for program applicants. Thank you very much for your time and attention today I will turn it back over to Susannah to open it up for discussion, thank you.

Maci Morin

00:17:25.980 --> 00:17:28.590
Have a few moments here to get everybody up on the screen. OK, I think that's everybody perfect. For those who may join a little bit late and maybe missed the instructions at the beginning, if you want to ask the question, please do so. There is a Q & A button or function on your Zoom module. Feel free to drop in your questions there and we will get to as many as we can. It's an exciting time a lot of people have questions and we will try our very best. So let's look and see what it has come in.

00:18:04.740 --> 00:18:16.710
I think this is something that Doug did cover in his program, but I think it's worth stating again. So maybe we'll go around the band and talk about timelines. So each of you may be starting with maybe Evan and then Angie and Susannah and then Doug, if you can cover TBCP, if we can talk about the timelines for the programs, maybe next steps and I think most of them have the NOFO out except the TBCP which you might be expecting a NOFO for later along the line. So alright Evan, go first.

Evan Feinman

00:18:40.890 --> 00:18:46.080
Sure, I mean the timeline that folks really need to be focused on with the BEAD program right now is getting their letters of intent. So we have a template letter of intent on the Internet for All website, you can also see it in our Salesforce login. Every state that plans to participate in every state and territory that plans to participate in this program, which should be every state and territory, needs to get us letter of intent by July 19, you absolutely have to do that. It has to have a couple of things in it, this is not a heavy lift. Please focus on that, you can also shortly thereafter, you should be able to access an application for $5 million in planning funds. Those funds are going to be, they can be used for a variety of different items, but you know that also is not a heavy lift as federal applications go. You need to get that into us by August, I cannot recall the specific date in August you need to get to us that application. But it again, it takes less than an hour to fill out, it shouldn't be a problem. And then after that, you'll have a series of opportunities to create your five year action plan, your initial plan, your final plan.

00:19:53.160 --> 00:20:01.890
But the deadline that people should really focus on right now is get us that letter of intent, signed by the governor and get it into NTIA so you can participate in this program.

Maci Morin
00:204.260 --> 00:20:05.430
Angie, over your routine.

Doug Kinkoph
00:20:06.000 --> 00:20:07.620
Will be just clarify one thing Maci, that the August 15 is a date Evan was looking for and July 18 as he stated, is the date to get in the initial letters of intent. So just underscoring those dates, thanks.

Maci Morin
00:20:22.290 --> 00:20:23.250
Okay, thank you.

Angela Thi Bennett
00:20:25.170 --> 00:20:41.220
Alright, thanks Maci. So for digital equity for states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, the application deadline is July 12 and they will have to apply through the NTIA grants portal. For territories other than Puerto Rico, and our tribal Community, their deadline is also July 12 but they just have to submit a letter of intent, which they can submit either through the portal, they can send it by email, or they can even mail it was the postmark. Once we receive their letters of intent then we will provide them with, you know, some more guidance, with regard to the application. So July 12 is the date that they should keep in mind for that, but we are encouraging everyone to submit it sooner than that.

Susannah Spellman
00:21:24.120 --> 00:21:31.830
So I guess I'm doing for middle mile. So for middle mile, the application window opened when the NOFOs were released on May 13. However, our application portal, the NTIA grant portal, will not be available for eligible applicants to actually go in and physically apply for the program until June 21. And those applications will be due September 30th. However we just posted on Friday on InternetforAll and I BroadbandUSA and also on the NTIA grants portal under the middle mile page, a middle mile application packet. And it's a zip file that includes a long list of the application questions that will be asked in the NTIA grants portal, as well as some of the templates and documents that need to be filled out by applicants. Note that as it gets closer to when the portal launches in July, we will also release a very comprehensive list of application grant guidance that will include screenshots of how to navigate through the entire the NTIA grants portal, additional guidance on what NTIA is expecting, level of detail in terms of answering those questions, additional guidance on filling out some of the templates etc. I will have to say, this application is not quite as easy as the planning application for Digital Equity and BEAD right now, given that this is for funding and middle mile broadband infrastructure network. So, a little more involved, but not too dissimilar from you know, our prior grant programs where we asked a lot of detailed information to understand, you know, various pieces of the application. But we just posted on Friday, so that's new and live.

Maci Morin	00:23:12.150 --> 00:23:17.310 And Doug can you touch on what is to be expected, for the TBCP?
Doug Kinkoph	00:23:17.940 --> 00:23:25.410 Yeah tribal, right we currently have an open program. We are currently considering moving some of IIJA money or bipartisanship infrastructure funding into that program to fund some of the other, we do not have enough current funding to cover all of the applications that came in that are worthy of being funded. So we are currently considering moving some of the bipartisan infrastructure law funding into the current program. The money that would be remaining from the bipartisan infrastructure law would then be part of a new notice of funding that we would expect to come out later this year.
Maci Morin	00:23:59.790 --> 00:24:06.540 Okay, all right now, another very common question people love to ask is, what is the matching requirements? I heard Doug rattle all of these off right before the call, so I know he knows this, but I'm happy to pass it along in a circle if everybody wants to state the matching requirements for their perspective programs.
Evan Feinman	00:24:21.330 --> 00:24:28.230 You got a 25% match in BEAD unless you've got a waiver, there are going to be some situations in which it is not, it doesn't make economic sense for there to be a match requirement for given locations, but we also need to emphasize that there are a lot of places where it's not going to make economic sense to only require a 25% match. In fact, we want to be driving the best bargain that taxpayers can possibly get, we want to avoid windfalls for sub grantee recipients. And so we're going to be working with the states and territories to ensure that the match on a project by project and area by area basis is right sized for the needs of getting connectivity to that area.
Angela Thi Bennett	00:25:02.100 --> 00:25:07.170 So for digital equity, there is no match requirement, however, we do encourage, you know, collaborating and leveraging other resources because you know, once the digital equity program end, we want to ensure the sustainability of the programs.
Susannah Spellman	00:25:25.230 --> 00:25:37.620 For middle mile, the minimum match requirement is 30% and there is some additional I guess bonus points for more than 30% of match in the merit review criteria and programmatic review criteria. So folks are encouraged to apply more match, where possible. There is no opportunity for a waiver of that match provision, except for if you are tribal entity, that is when you can submit a waiver for the match provisions with middle mile.
Maci Morin	00:25:58.620 --> 00:25:59.100 Thank you. Next question here and there, they're asking from a local government perspective. Honestly I think it'd be could be asked for any type of stakeholder. How that should local governments engage with their state broadband offices? This is going to be critical when it comes to, you know, planning and deploying these huge

program. So how do, I would just say stakeholders, get in touch with their state broadband offices? And maybe I'll throw it to Doug first, but if anybody else has anything to add, please feel free to hop in.

Doug Kinkoph

00:26:32.970 --> 00:26:33.240
It is critical for counties in other community organizations to engage directly with the state and the state broadband office on this for whether it's the BEAD program Digital Equity, right. And there's different reasons to do that. One, to ensure on the BEAD that they're unserved, unconnected people are represented with the State and that the state has a full picture of their area. Digital Equity right? Ensuring that they understand the needs adoption issues, the economic issues that an area is facing to kind of feed that into the state digital equity plan. There'll be opportunities for counties and other organizations that participate in both the BEAD program and the digital equity program. So I think that it's critical, and I've been saying this well before the release of the notice that of funding, that counties, political subdivisions in general, community organizations need to actively participate with the state and the development of both the BEAD programs and the digital equity programs, as they are, and both of those are significantly linked for success. Both get the infrastructure and the adoption done but back to you, Angela or Evan, if you have something that.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:27:57.600 --> 00:28:06.150
Yeah thanks I just wanted to add just as a resource for the folks listening. You know, for stakeholders looking to find out, you know who is their, you know, broadband office, you know, their contact information, they can go to broadbandUSA.ntia.doc.gov and on there, they can click on their states and find out their broadband office contact person for that information.

Evan Feinman

00:28:28.740 --> 00:28:29.610
And I'll just add, you know the NOFO for BEAD is really clear that the engagement that the State broadband office is expected to make with local governments is not merely a notice and comment. Y'all are going to have the opportunities to submit your own plans and we're going to need to see evidence of robust, ongoing collaboration not comments. So this is really about partnerships between the Federal Government and the state and territory governments, yes, but much more about partnerships between the state and territory, governments and local and tribal leadership, so that we can make sure that the folks closest to the ground, are a part of the process of visibility, the process, and are confident that, when the process completes, all of their residents and businesses are going to be able to get online.

Susannah Spellman

00:29:20.100 --> 00:29:24.450
I just want to flag from a middle our perspective, though it's not a state set aside program like that the equity program, we are encouraging middle mile applicants to let their state broadband offices know about their intention to submit applications in order to help, I think, coordinate, make the most of all these funds. All this money is coming out at different times and so, part of it is going to be putting together a puzzle and timing things correctly and making sure everyone's aware of what's

coming forward what's being proposed. So we definitely encourage minimize applicants to work with their state broadband offices, make them aware of their intention to apply, etc, And they may have resources to support you as well.

Maci Morin

00:30:00.600 --> 00:30:12.900
To lean in, and just so you know, in the chat I did post, the link that Angie was referring to so feel free to go to that website to look up information about your state broadband offices there's a nifty little nap, map, I need a nap, nifty little map on there where you can click and it'll take you to information about your state broadband office. So I feel like I refer to that, at least on a weekly basis.

Maci Morin

00:30:24.330 --> 00:30:29.730
Alright well, Evan since you were speaking about plans, I'm going to ask this next one. Can you can you clarify whether the NTIA intends that the five year action plan and the initial proposal be sequential? And will they time the release of state allocations to ensure that there is time to receive and integrate NTIA feedback on action plans before initial proposals are due.

Evan Feinman

00:30:52.050 --> 00:31:01.200
So, yes, we had envisioned that they would be sequential. It is also the case that there is a you know, a potential for the timing, to get a little funny right. So you've got 270 days after you receive your planning funds to get us your five your action plan, you've got 180 days after the allocations are made after the release of the data maps. At the end of the day it may be, you know,if there is a pile up in terms of that timing, then what we'll do is we'll work that out on a state by state basis, and if it looks like there's going to be a broad pile up, we'll address that. Rght now, our intent is that those be sequential and then we have the opportunity to work with you in review your action plan prior to any requirement that you submit your initial proposal. And that timeline, even if the maps drop early, is still available right. You know, the amount of time that you would need, your 270 days, should expire prior to your hundred and 80 days after your data maps, but you know if it doesn't, then what we'll do is we'll work with you. Guys, at the end of the day, what we want to do is be reasonable and make sure that this is that these planning exercises are useful for you to make a plan to get all of your residents online and for us to understand what you're doing and advise you as to what we think the wisest course of action is as well as what's going to be compliant with the program and share best practices across the country. So, you know, don't worry that we're going to play gotcha or that some change in the calendar is going to throw a wrench in the gears, that's not what we're here to do.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:32:30.450 --> 00:32:36.990
And it may see if I could add to you know Evan's response and then concurrent with the BEAD planning, we encourage, you know, states to also apply for the digital equity planning, because there is an equity component in Bead which saves can apply for the DE funding to help you know develop that plan that will satisfy the equity requirement in BEAD and so we're really looking at this from a holistic approach. And so while States they have different teams of people, developing the BEAD plan, as well as the DE plan, we are encouraging the teams to collaborate and

you know develop those plans together so that, you know, there can be a comprehensive, you know plan you know for those States.

Maci Morin

00:33:24.390 --> 00:33:25.560
Thanks for hopping in there. I'm trying to combine some of the questions as I can, and a lot of the ones that I see popping up, particularly for middle miles, is you know, "I'm a nonprofit, are they eligible", "I am local government and am I eligible", so I think it might be useful here to go around again. Maybe we'll go backwards, a start time and start with Susannah but talk about who the eligible entities are for each of the grant programs and who can apply.

Susannah Spellman

00:33:53.730 --> 00:34:07.590
So what's great about the middle mile program is that there's a lot of eligible entities and, in fact, the list is so long I'm going to find that list and read that off you guys. Hold on I just got to find it my fingertips. Course it's not here. Okay, a state, a political subdivision of the State, so that's like a county or city or town, etc., tribal government, technology company, electric utility, utility cooperative, public utility district, telecommunications company, telecommunications cooperative, nonprofit foundation, nonprofit corporation, nonprofit institution, nonprofit association, regional planning council, native entity, or economic development authority or a partnership of two or more of those entities described above can apply for the middle mile program. Sorry I had to read that but it's long and it's very inclusive.

Maci Morin

00:34:49.530 --> 00:34:51.120
Alright Angie, maybe you go next.

Angela Thi Bennett

Okay, so with regard to digital equity, the funding is going directly to the States and then the states can make subgrants to you know, other entities such as Community anchor institutions, municipalities, you know, and other organizations to help develop this state digital equity plans.

Maci Morin

00:35:17.370 --> 00:35:17.550
And Evan eligible entities, I know you I thank you very much.

Evan Feinman

00:35:21.000 --> 00:35:23.700
Yeah I mean this is like less exciting for us right, so it's territory governments that you can apply. I do think there are a lot of other people who should, who will be sub grantees, who should be engaged with the program be watching what's happening, make sure you're connecting with your state or territory broadband office, so you know, so they know, what you think they ought to be doing was they develop their plans but yeah I mean for us it's your state or a territory government.

Maci Morin

00:35:49.500 --> 00:35:58.830
Next question I know this will really come into play, especially for BEAD and digital equity programs, so I'll toss it over to Angie and Evan here. But they want a definition of the evidence of collaboration in relation to stakeholder engagement. So what does that mean? How are we going to ensure that states are meeting this

requirements of, you know, collaboration on the ground and making sure that all stakeholders have a say in these planning purposes proposals?

Evan Feinman

00:36:23.520 --> 00:36:26.340
Sure, so you know, the first thing I'll say is that this is not a box ticking exercise for y'all or for us. And so, we're not, we didn't say you need to you know have X number of meetings or Y amount of events. What we instead, want to see, is a very clear message from your municipal and county associations and association of city, you know, whatever the different varieties of those, in each state and territory. But we want to hear from them that the outreach has been robust and ongoing. We want to hear, our staff will be on the ground will be out reaching directly will be reaching out directly to those groups, to tribal leadership to marginalized communities, we want to hear that everybody's had an opportunity to sit at the table, to share their view, to input their plans and has had a robust back and forth. And so you know what I can tell you is, if you embrace that as a as a way of doing business, as a way of running this program, you will succeed at that measurement. We're not going to give a firm set of metrics around it. We'll certainly be happy to take you know, to take folks temperature and tell you where you are. And so, you know, as you're running the program, if you're a state or territory government you say gosh you know, you should really know, but if you're anything other than really confident that you've run a more robust program, if you're competent you run a robust program and you just want us to verify that, shoot us a note and say "hey you know we think we've really had a really good dialogue with our city county and tribal governments, and you know what are you guys hearing, are there any gaps". And our staff who've been in contact with folks will try to help you fill those gaps.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:38:17.490 --> 00:38:20.490
And does your equity similar and, you know, really looking at you know from the stakeholders with respect to, you know, our covered populations. You know, the organizations that serve, you know, our public populations, you know, what are the state's you know outreach and coordination efforts look like. NTIA is modeling that engagement by going out into local communities, and so, instead of having and waiting for communities to come to us, you know, going out in hearing from and engaging with local communities to to really learn about, you know, what are those barriers, you know, to digital access? You know, what are some of the best practices? What are strategies, you know, that could be, you know, employed, you know, listening to and learning from, you know those individuals in the communities and their lives? You know, experiences and being able to make sure that those strategies and that input is incorporated into their digital equity plans.

00:39:18.480 --> 00:39:31.590
So you know, looking at the list of you know stakeholders that they plan to engage with how they will engage with them. So really encouraging States to, you know, go outside their traditional, you know, engagement and, you know, become more adept with it.

00:39:35.280 --> 00:39:42.600

Doug Kinkoph	Yeah If I could just add to that, if you look at pages 51 through 55 of notice of funding for the BEAD program, it lays out extensive recommendations and guidance that Evan was touching on. And I think that'll give you a really good idea of what NTIA is looking for from as part of your plan, on both the digital equity and even though it's the BEAD, it's the same type of outreach we would look for in digital equity.
Susannah Spellman	00:40:04.620 --> 00:40:10.530 I also want to flag, I think this is going to be a topic for technical assistance too. So we will come out and share best practices we'll ask States to share amongst themselves, some of the best practices they learned, for all these different folks as well, so we will want to support you in those efforts too.
Maci Morin	00:40:23.220 --> 00:40:37.680 Yeah it's definitely going to be an exciting time and looking forward to all those success stories and best practices coming out in the years to come, hopefully it's going to be, yeah, a great learning opportunity. Okay, so next question I'll hand over to Angie. Do states need to use procurement processes in order to select the DEA digital equity act administering entity?
Angela Thi Bennett	00:40:49.530 --> 00:40:51.840 To identified their administering entity?
Maci Morin	00:40:52.860 --> 00:40:54.180 In order to select an entity.
Angela Thi Bennett	00:40:57.570 --> 00:41:02.010 Susannah I'm going to actually hand that off as a technical question to Susannah.
Susannah Spellman	00:41:04.920 --> 00:41:22.590 Um no, they do not, you know States are encouraged to use their procurement policies and requirements as needed, but we are not requiring states to formally procure or do a competitive bid for selecting their administrative entity.
Angela Thi Bennett	00:41:25.680 --> 00:41:27.900 Okay, I thought so just wanted to confirm.
Susannah Spellman	00:41:27.960 --> 00:41:28.620 No, no, Evan I'm curious you know, coming from a state perspective, where you were before I mean, how will states kind of view that potentially?
Evan Feinman	00:41:41.010 --> 00:41:42.510 In what way? give me a little…
Susannah Spellman	00:41:42.690 --> 00:41:52.590 Well, do you think that States will do are there going to be a lot of states that are going to be required to have a competitive process to select their administrative entity? I mean you might know in your state, but maybe I know.

Evan Feinman

00:41:57.720 --> 00:41:58.500
I mean, I think the States know States and local governments understand how their procurement laws work and they're going to follow their procurement laws and almost all procurement rules are competitive, by nature. If there is a, and the question is really "are you giving funds out to a non governmental entity? If so, has there been a competitive process for determining which non governmental entity?" it can't be, right, it can't just be your cousin's stationary shop, it's got to be, like, an actual legitimate organization that proved that they were the best organization to do that in competition with other organizations. And that's going to be something we're going to look for when there's first one of funds, and I think that's going to be a legal requirement in almost every scenario in every state and territory, I could imagine this happening, regardless of where that had that non governmental entities plugging in.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:42:55.980 --> 00:43:09.570
But Evan I guess two senses and I'm with a follow up to that, with regard to that administering entity, if so, their procurement issue would really be raised, if the State were to identify an administering entity that is not a state agency.

Doug Kinkoph

00:43:10.950 --> 00:43:11.550
I think, right. So Evan said it right up front, each State has its own pyramid laws, and they just need to follow their own laws. If that requires them to do a procurement for those that are non government agencies, then they need to follow the state rules. Don't envision that for any "State entity" like Department of Commerce or something else in the state, they would just delegate that authority to run the program to them. So I think the simple way to put this because there's so many variations as a States need to follow whatever the requirements are of their procurement laws.

Maci Morin

00:43:55.680 --> 00:44:06.000
It you know we only have about 15 minutes left so we'll try to get to a few more. I know there's been some folks that have been posting in the chat here about, you know, them living in very remote homes, and so, you know, it's difficult to reach. For example, somebody said their home is in a steep and deep fjord in Alaska. So that brings to mind the question about technologies and this particular person asked about, you know, whether satellite access will be an option. But I think just more broadly, you know, are what are our views on technologies and which ones to use? Maybe I'll throw that to whoever wants to take, I see Doug unmuted so I'll throw it to him first.

Doug Kinkoph

00:44:43.620 --> 00:44:55.860
Yeah the notice of funding for BEAD establishes fiber is the priority program. So, if there are competing technologies for an area, all things being equal, cost wise, etc., then the state should select the fiber alternative. That doesn't mean that fiber will always be an option brought to the table for an area, and if it is not, then other technologies, the state consider other technologies and serve those areas. The intent of the program is connect all Americans at all unserved locations. So, the

preferences, fiber scalability and reliability and future proofing it, but that does not exclude other technologies from applying and being selected based on various criteria.

Maci Morin

00:45:37.830 --> 00:45:47.310
Right okay sounds good, um so, I know there's been a lot of questions as well about the FCC broadband maps and the challenge process. So maybe I'll just start with this then and I'm sure others will have we will weigh in on this. But this particular question is that there's two upcoming challenge processes, a challenge process for the FCC broadband data collection and the challenge process for the state broadband offices that they must implement as part of the BEAD process. So Evan if you can just take a stab about how these challenge processes will relate and you know whether it's happened at the same time, or one kind of about the other, you know that's a complicated question but.

Evan Feinman

00:46:24.390 --> 00:46:32.190
Yeah I'll try to go quickly, you know, it's a shame we didn't come up with better names for one or both of them, because then both being called the challenge process does I create some confusion where there might not be otherwise, because they're really pretty different exercises. The first is going to be a response to the FCC maps. So the FCC is going to put out maps they've undertaken the incredibly challenging task of locating every single home and business location that could accept service in the whole of the United States. They are the first to admit that, in the context of that massive undertaking they're not going to get it entirely right and that there's going to need to be a challenge process related to their maps that states you're going to run to determine "hey guys, you know it turns out, these areas over here are served" or "hey guys it turns out over here, these areas, these specific locations are not serve". That's the FCC challenge. Secondary to that, once you've got your state program running and you're doing your sub grantee selection and you're proposing projects, within the context of those proposed projects there's going to be a challenge that is going to be allowed to determine the service or non service levels within those specific projects that the State plan is funding. That's going to be really important to both recognize to update and ground truth the FCC maps which were a snapshot in time at a moment with what's happening when construction is happening on the ground in your state in the process of that sub grantee process. Sorry there's a lot of process in there. And that'll happen on a project by project basis, and so you should anticipate you know, different folks saying this project serves these areas and it or not, this project fails to serve these areas and it ought to etc. And that I think is the is the secondary and more detailed process that we're going to use in part to ensure that we're getting to the program goal, which is universal connectivity for all locations within each state and territory.

Maci Morin

00:48:30.600 --> 00:48:45.840
I know that's not an easy process to understand so I appreciate you taking the time. I will toss this one, probably to Susannah. Can you better define the open network requirements for middle mile and last mile projects?

00:48:48.300 --> 00:48:57.180

Susannah Spellman	So for middle mile, the open access requirements, there is not an open access requirement for middle mile however, it is a one of the like bonus areas or priority areas for which reviewers will give additional evaluation criteria, metrics scoring, etc towards. It's not a requirement however it's something that's encouraged. There is for middle mile a non discrimination requirement that is applied to all recipients of federal funding for middle mile. Now for last mile, I believe the same applies in BEAD, right Evan? I think open access is something that's encouraged, but not mandated in the sub granting process.
Evan Feinman	00:49:38.130 --> 00:49:44.400 Correct, I mean we like open access whereby if you're building middle mile, it's good to make it open to everybody it's not a requirement. And in fact states could weight it more if they wanted to as they select their additional scoring criteria. It's also worth noting that under BEAD, you can't just do a build it and they'll come approach with middle mile there has to be at least one lined-up user of that middle mile network, who will do the last mile connections necessary to serve all the areas that the middle mile network service broadly.
Maci Morin	00:50:17.580 --> 00:50:29.430 Um next question here, um there's a question about, you know, how can I tell if Internet speed is not low or bad enough to be eligible? So it might be worth talking about of what we consider the speeds to be under unserved, underserved, so if somebody can tackle that, I'm not sure who to pass it to you right away, maybe Doug or Susannah, Evan.
Evan Feinman	00:50:45.480 --> 00:50:46.290 You all could honestly say yes so you're unserved at 25 megabits per second download and three megabit, if you're under 25 megabits per second download and three megabits per second upload. You are *underserved* if you are below 100 megabits per second download and 20 upload. That is, you know, I want people to be really clear, we're going to build to both unserved and underserved folks so everything we're building is at a minimum 100 over 20. And as you heard Doug say earlier, the priority, the thing that you're going to need to test you're going to need to give us an explanation why you're not building, is fiber to the premises, which will, which is scalable way beyond 100 over 2 . So nobody is shooting for old low speed targets instead we're going to build fiber networks everywhere we can and we're going to build to everybody who isn't, at least at 100 over 20 where resources allow. 00:51:36.510 --> 00:51:48.270 And there will be some exceptions right if you're in a steep fjord in Alaska and you're very remote from everybody, we might not be able to get you a fiber but we're going to get you the fastest, most scalable most future proof connection that we can.
Maci Morin	00:51:49.980 --> 00:52:02.400 Love that call back, we love our friends in Alaska. So Angela Angie I want to get you in it's been a while since we've asked a DE-specific question so um can you cover

what can you tell us what is considered covered populations and what is considered a covered household under the digital equity programs?

Angela Thi Bennett

00:52:11.910 --> 00:52:24.540
So our cover populations I'll just run down the list are low income households are aging populations, you know, age 60 and over, incarcerated individuals, not in a federal correctional institution, veterans, people with disabilities, people with language barriers are English as a second language population as well as low literacy racial and ethnic, minorities and our rural populations.

Maci Morin

00:52:49.980 --> 00:52:53.850
Um okay next question here. Maybe this goes to Doug but I think others can weigh in on, are there any restrictions for use in ARDOF areas and for those who don't know our office will digital opportunity fund under the FCC.

Doug Kinkoph

00:53:11.490 --> 00:53:18.300
So it will not have an impact on allocation, however, States once they receive their allocation will not be able to overbuild those areas, right? Those would be identified as a legally binding commitment with other federal dollars. So it will not impact allocation formula but it will come into play as a state identify those areas that already have a binding build-out commitment through other federal programs.

Maci Morin

00:53:43.140 --> 00:53:52.080
And before we get to the very end here, I do see some questions about whether the PowerPoint will be available. The recording will be available after the fact, so I can take that one. So the PowerPoint is actually up right now on the BroadbandUSA website. I'll post it whenever I get a chance after asking the next question. And that's where the recording will be posted as well. I think, within the next 24 hours that should be up. We'll also have full transcripts for all of our webinars but does, obviously, take a little bit longer to get through and clean up. But we are trying to commit to seven days after the fact, but, at the very least you'll have access to the PowerPoint and recording very quickly after this ends. And also, it will be sent out via email to everyone who has registered and or attended this session through Zoom. Zoom will send out an automatic email about 24 to 48 hours after the fact. To provide you all the information. So you can go and watch it as many times as you like.

00:54:44.250 --> 00:54:51.360
All right, I know we're running low on time here. Okay, so I am going to end on these couple of questions I think they're interrelated and I think it'll be a nice opportunity to kind of wrap this up nicely here and give everybody an opportunity to weigh in. The questions are, now that the NOFOs have been released, have stakeholders essentially missed the boat to provide input and engage in the programs? And, will NTIA be doing anything to help stakeholders get involved? So next steps, looking at those, especially if its BEAD or digital equity where you know you're not an eligible entity, what are the next steps for folks like in academic institutions, nonprofits individuals? How can they actually get involved and be a part of, you know, every

step of these programs. So I will pass it along. Let's start from the opposite and we'll start with Susannah we'll work our way around.

Susannah Spellman

00:55:53.460 --> 00:56:05.100
So, as I mentioned earlier, middle mile is a very broad eligibility, listed eligibility organization. So even if your name isn't on that list of eligible organizations, doesn't mean you can't necessarily partner or talk to an entity that is eligible to come and build, you know, to your community around your communities, etc. So I think, you know, folks are encouraged to take their broadband destinies and needs and to find those partners as necessary. And but in terms of shaping the NOFO, obviously that's, that is, you know, publicly posted and is a competitive program so we're a little bit limited about the technical assistance that we can provide to eligible entities. It's going to be very much like one too many and pushed out versus the hands on work that we're going to be able to do in the BEAD to drop the program but I think, you know, working with your state, working with those eligible entities to help, you know, define a project and the need and applying it is the best way to kind of really make your voice heard in that program. I don't know if there's any other creative ideas, it's just what first came to mind.

Maci Morin

00:56:59.640 --> 00:57:03.930
Creativity to me it's always welcome and encouraged. Alright Angie you next.

Angela Thi Bennett

00:57:04.980 --> 00:57:22.290
Yeah and again, you know, reach out to your state broadband office. And I would also encourage local communities to, you know, collaborating and form, you know, coalition's because then that also helps you, you know, amplify your voices up to the state as well.

Maci Morin

00:57:26.130 --> 00:57:27.660
And then Evan.

Evan Feinman

00:57:28.470 --> 00:57:38.340
Yeah on BEAD, I don't want to take away an inch from the incredible work that happened, that was done across government in developing this NOFO, it's an incredibly strong document that lays out what I think is an excellent program. But the model of this program is a state-led program. You know, we are here to support the states in between some very, very, very broad guardrails which themselves have, you know, gates in for exceptions when there's an exceptional situation. The state plan and their sub-grantee selection criteria is going to be where the rubber hits the road on how the funds are distributed and the solution that ultimately gets every member of that state or territory, every citizen in that state or territory online. And so what I would say is, engage early and often with your state broadband office. That's going to be where a ton of really critical decisions are going to be made about where, you know, how far out we push our priority projects versus where locations are high enough cost that it's going to make sense to switch to other technologies. It's going to be, you know, that's going to be the determinant for how we're going to score digital equity programming. It's going to be the determinant for what the form and nature of competition is going to be for each

different project. You know, there are a ton of decisions that we've left to the states on purpose and those decisions will be made with our guidance, but you know, in the way that makes the most sense for each state and territory. And so what I would say is you very much have not missed the boat it's just the opposite. You know, you've gotten your thoughts to us about the NOFO but you now need to engage with both our staff in states and with the state office itself to make sure that those state plans are reflective of your views.

Maci Morin

00:59:18.870 --> 00:59:20.100
Early and often, I love that. Doug, anything to round this out?

Doug Kinkoph

00:59:22.980 --> 00:59:26.610
I know I think those Angie, Susannah and Evan will come.

Maci Morin

00:59:28.380 --> 00:59:37.290
Awesome well, I think that brings us right to time but for those who are still with us, I did post in the chat the link to where you can find the presentation up on the BroadbandUSA website. That will also be the same link where the recording will be posted once it is processed through Zoom. And if you have any questions, we are actively taking inquiries, our team is standing by ready to have your questions. I know we didn't get to a lot of them today but please know that our team are taking all the questions that are asked, through the webinars we are rolling them into our frequently asked questions that will be rolled out on our website frequently. And so just be on the lookout for that. I encourage you all to visit Internetforall.gov and also, if you have any questions email Internetforall@NTIA.gov.

01:00:22.770 --> 01:00:30.060
And we look forward to connecting with you on a future webinar. We have on Thursday our enabling middle mile broadband infrastructure application process webinar. So real deep dive into the program and what the application process looks like so encourage you all to join. For now, that is all for us, I thank all of our panelists for joining us today and look forward to seeing you next time. Thank you so much.