



Workforce Strategies for BIL Implementation

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WELCOME

WORKFORCE INTRODUCTION

Fostering Equity in the Telecommunications Workforce



The Department of Commerce (DOC) has committed to creating an economy that works for everyone in America and a workplace that is diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible to every employee.



NTIA at DOC supports the Administration’s commitment to equitable and highly skilled jobs in shaping the future of the telecommunications workforce.

The jobs created through investments in high-speed Internet must be good jobs that offer fair compensation, a safe workplace, equitable access, and opportunities for long-term advancement. These new opportunities will have lasting positive economic, social, and health benefits for years to come.



Workforce Values



NTIA prioritizes the Good Jobs Principles jointly published by the Departments of Commerce and Labor as core values in building a stronger, more diverse telecommunications workforce.

- **Recruitment and Hiring:** Qualified applicants are actively recruited, especially from historically underserved communities.
- **Benefits:** Full-time and part-time workers are provided family-sustaining benefits that promote economic security and mobility.
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA):** All workers have equal opportunity.
- **Empowerment and Representation:** Workers can form and join unions.
- **Job Security and Working Conditions:** Workers have a safe, healthy, and accessible workplace, built on input from workers and their representatives.
- **Organizational Culture:** All workers belong, are valued, contribute meaningfully to the organization, and are engaged and respected by leadership.
- **Pay:** All workers are paid a stable and predictable living wage before overtime, tips, and commissions.
- **Skills and Career Advancement:** Workers have equitable opportunities and tools to progress to future good jobs within their organizations or outside them.



Workforce Planning Guide for Eligible Entities



NTIA released a Workforce Planning Guide as a resource for Eligible Entities completing submissions for Internet For All programs. This guide intends to primarily support the BEAD program but may apply for workforce requirements and guidance across other IFA programs. This guide does not and is not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory, regulatory, or Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) requirements. In all cases, the previously noted requirements shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in this guide.

Access the Workforce Planning Guide [HERE!](#)



The Workforce Planning Guide includes:

- **Components of a Workforce Plan**, including the BEAD program requirements and guidance
- **Developing a BEAD Workforce Plan**, including proposed planning steps and pacing suggestions for BEAD submissions and integration with the Digital Equity Planning Grant Program
- **Strategies and Examples** that offer a range of approaches for meeting workforce requirements
- **Additional Resources** to support the workforce planning and implementation process

Today's webinar will focus on strategies and examples that various organizations can consider when implementing workforce requirements across NTIA's Internet for All programs.



WORKFORCE STRATEGIES & EXAMPLES

Workforce Strategies Overview



Eligible Entities and subgrantees will need secure, safe workplaces and robust, diverse workforces to execute their high-speed Internet projects. To build these, they can look to a diverse set of strategies and examples that can help to work towards their overall goals.



Federal Labor and Employment Laws

How to comply with legal requirements that apply to all employers in the United States



Skilled Workforce

How to hire, pay, and consider skills of employees, contractors, and subcontractors



Equitable Training & Workforce Development

How to support a highly skilled and diverse workforce through recruiting, retention, and professional development



Contracting

How to partner with minority-owned businesses and other socially and economically disadvantaged businesses



Federal Labor and Employment Laws



Eligible Entities must be aware of applicable federal labor and employment laws, such as federal labor practices, civil rights, and nondiscrimination, and prepare strategies to evaluate subgrantees on their adherence.

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Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following strategies.



Appropriately Classify Jobs: Job classification can depend on job responsibilities, scope, and complexity. Appropriately classifying different job types helps to ensure employees receive equitable protections and compensations for their work. Eligible Entities can encourage subgrantees to submit job classifications for review.



Engage Labor Experts: State labor departments and offices may be able to provide additional support, resources, and guidance to Eligible Entity project teams across many labor and employment laws, such as fair labor laws, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), civil rights law, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements, and others that affect the telecommunications workforce.



Set Requirements: Eligible Entities may set requirements for proof of legal adherence for themselves in addition to those required for BEAD submissions. For example, subgrantees may describe whether and how their project plan includes training for worksites on anti-harassment and other strategies (including third-party reporting procedures and robust anti-retaliation measures) to prevent and address hostility and harassment based on race, gender, ethnicity, or other factors protected under the law.

More information on these topics can be found through federal, state, and local labor agencies and organizations.

Federal Labor and Employment Laws | Examples



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following program examples.

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) Provides Guidance on Regulations

JAN, a service provided by the Department of Labor in partnership with industry, **offers free services to organizations with questions about Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations.** They offer consultation and resources such as information on reasonable accommodations for applications, interviews, and for current employees, and other ADA technical assistance.

OSHA Training Institute Education Centers Support Nation-Wide Occupational Health and Safety Training

OSHA authorizes select national nonprofits to deliver **occupational safety and health training for all levels of workers,** including tailored trainings for those in construction-related industries that may support subgrantee training. Programs offer different features to workers, such as Spanish-language courses, evening and weekend courses, and online courses, depending on location.



Skilled Workforce



Eligible Entities will each define skilled workforce requirements and guidance for their subgrantees that will shape the experiences of workers on-site who will build and service high-speed infrastructure.



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Skilled Workforce | Strategies



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following strategies.



Connect with Federally Funded Career Services: Eligible Entities can work with federally funded job readiness programs, such as Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Programs, to offer relevant career and training services to job seekers.



Engage Coalitions and Nonprofits: Many organizations, such as the National Skills Coalition, offer resources for state-level workforce issues. These organizations provide information about effective models to help address skills gaps, provide examples of training approaches, develop program outcome measures, and offer other resources to help Eligible Entities understand the current state of training and certification in their areas and design and implement workforce development policies and programs.



Promote Use of an Appropriately Trained Certified and Credentialed Workforce: Eligible Entities can implement training, certification, and credentialing standards for subgrantees to encourage or support the development and use of a highly skilled telecommunications workforce.



Skilled Workforce | Examples



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following program examples.

Louisiana GUMBO Grant for Broadband Opportunities Prioritizes Technical Graduates

In Louisiana, the Granting Unserved Municipalities Broadband Opportunities (GUMBO) Grant Program **prioritized subgrantee hiring requirements for local graduates of telecommunications technical programs** in the area. In addition, the GUMBO Grant Program encouraged subgrantees to pay at or above prevailing wage rates, making GUMBO jobs an attractive option for workers.

Fiber Broadband Association (FBA) Creates Certification Program

Due to the increasing need of professional fiber optic technicians across the country, FBA and its affiliate, the Fiber Optic Sensing Association, **developed a certification course for technicians to help them provide complete training and take their certification exams.** This course provides future technicians with the required knowledge and skills to implement today’s high speed fiber optic networks while also giving them opportunities into professional careers.



Equitable Training & Workforce Development



Equitable training and workforce development activities help Eligible Entities and subgrantees find and employ the workforce needed to execute BEAD project plan objectives.



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Equitable Training & Workforce Development



Equitable training and workforce development activities help Eligible Entities and subgrantees find and employ the workforce needed to execute BEAD project plan objectives.

Equitable Training and Workforce Development Includes...

-  Workforce Readiness
-  Supporting a Diverse Workforce
-  Outreach and Engagement
-  Worker Protections

More information on these topics can be found through federal, state, and local labor agencies and organizations.



Workforce Readiness | Strategies (1 of 2)



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following strategies.



Incorporate Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships: Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs can actively support job skills development as well as diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion in the workplace. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) regulations set by the Department of Labor for Registered Apprenticeship Programs can help provide a pipeline for women, people of color, formerly incarcerated individuals, and people with disabilities to more easily enter the telecommunications workforce. Eligible Entities may consider developing minimum requirements or utilization goals for apprenticeships to support their use on BEAD projects.



Promote Flexible, Tailored Training Opportunities: Flexible job training opportunities offered virtually and onsite can help further develop workers' skills and prepare them for taking on additional responsibilities in the future. Additional benefits such as tuition assistance and sponsorship for relevant coursework can help remove barriers for workers looking to take advantage of training opportunities and can make these opportunities more accessible for all workers.



Workforce Readiness | Strategies (2 of 2)



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following strategies.



Provide Wrap-Around or Support Services: Eligible Entities can encourage subgrantee provision of wrap-around or support services for trainees. Wrap-around services such as on-site childcare or stipends for childcare, learning materials, and transportation to training programs create a stronger labor pipeline by helping workers get the certifications and relevant experience they need to be competitive in a telecommunications labor market and overcome challenges to and barriers to employment in a telecommunications occupation.



Encourage Establishment of Strong Career Pathways: Eligible Entities can work with employers to encourage job training and workforce development programs that offer workers an opportunity to not only obtain one job but also to enter a pathway to advancement and increased wages. These programs can promote career progression either with the same employer or prepare workers for other jobs. Additionally, Eligible Entities can look to data on “feeder occupations” with adjacent or relevant skills sets to better understand potential paths for workers.



Workforce Readiness | Examples



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following program examples.

The White House Talent Pipeline Challenge

The Biden-Harris Administration launched the Talent Pipeline Challenge to support employer investments in equitable workforce development for infrastructure jobs. The challenge asks employers, education and training providers, local and regional governments, and philanthropic organizations to **make tangible commitments that support equitable workforce development** in high-speed Internet and other areas. Employers partner with training providers and hire workers that have completed sponsored programs.

Northwood Technical College and Wisconsin State Telecommunication Association Partner on Broadband Academy

Northwood Technical College provides a **two-level training program for entry and senior-level personnel**. The program is offered online to eliminate travel time and reduce expenses and is available “a la carte” to increase flexibility. Northwood Technical College partners with the Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association and other local telecommunications companies to offer scholarships and grants.



Supporting a Diverse Workforce | Strategies (1 of 2)



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following strategies.



Partner with Pre-Apprenticeship Programs for Underrepresented Groups: Pre-apprenticeship programs for women and other underrepresented groups offer workers industry-recognized credentials that will bolster candidate experience and can create a more accessible pipeline into the telecommunications industry. Eligible Entities can require or encourage these partnerships and activities to support a diverse and representative workforce.



Provide Equipment: In addition to wrap-around services, providing laptops and electronics required onsite or for training programs and personal protective equipment such as hard hats, safety glasses, and gloves, as well as boots available in all sizes for both men and women, can reduce the financial barriers for individuals seeking to join trades and/or workforce development programs.



Support Workforce Diversity in Hiring Practices: Eligible Entities may require or strongly encourage subgrantees to make documented and measured efforts to hire and retain workers from historically underserved groups, which could include women, people of color, veterans, and people with disabilities. Ensure such outreach, labor standards, and investment requirements flow to contractors and subcontractors.



Supporting a Diverse Workforce | Strategies (2 of 2)



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following strategies.



Cultivate a Supportive Working Environment: Cultivating an inclusive environment that does not tolerate harassment and discrimination promotes retention of employees from underrepresented and historically disadvantaged groups. Clearly stating and promoting inclusive workplace policies such as anti-harassment policies, offering equitable training opportunities, and providing employee benefits such as childcare and pregnancy and parental support can help create a more supportive working environment.



Offer Targeted Mentorship: Mentorship programs have shown to be an important factor in recruitment, advancement, and retention of women in the trades. Eligible Entities may develop mentorship programs and encourage their use by subgrantees in order to support diverse and inclusive workplaces.



Sponsor Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Programs: Make training on DEIA available to all workers, and align that training to the organization's approach, values, and understanding of what constitutes acceptable behavior.



Promote Accountability and Transparency: Publish aggregate workforce data, including information on demonstrating good faith efforts for bringing in women, people of color, and other underserved groups. Data should be collected and reported frequently enough to permit course correction and deploying new strategies as needed to ensure that employment opportunities are available to historically underserved workers in the communities in which projects are contemplated.



Supporting a Diverse Workforce | Examples



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following program examples.

Moore Community House Offers Funding for Childcare as part of its Women in Construction (WiC) Program

Based in Biloxi, Mississippi, Moore Community House helps create economic security for women by **offering affordable childcare and job training for work that pays a living wage.** Moore Community House’s WiC Program is a pre-apprenticeship job training program designed to prepare women for careers in apprenticeship and nontraditional career pathways. As part of the program, Moore Community House offers childcare assistance for eligible participants.

KentuckianaWorks Tracks and Reports Job Placements and Wage Rates by Worker Demographics to Improve Equity

KentuckianaWorks, the Workforce Development Board for the Louisville region, has incorporated commitments to racial equity in workforce development as a key component of their mission. To support their goals, they **measure and publicly report on workforce demographics in the region,** using that information to strategically drive their programs to make positive change.



Outreach and Engagement | Strategies



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following strategies.



Commit to Transparency: Eligible Entities should communicate early and often with various partners on their workforce goals and values, including offering clear expectations for partners involved in workforce planning. Consider sharing plans while they are still under development to build strong working relationships and establish trust between Eligible Entities and local partners.



Create a Feedback Loop: Eligible Entities will need to proactively solicit input to develop workforce plans, incorporate feedback, communicate changes, and continue providing options for engagement throughout implementation of high-speed Internet projects. Eligible entities should offer updates to partners on how they have acted on feedback, as creating a feedback loop with partners helps them become partners in the process and helps to engender trust.



Give Partners a Seat at the Table: Active partnership approaches include shared decision-making practices among partners, and potentially involving them directly as program team members. Beyond offering opportunities to share perspectives, consider adopting mechanisms to encourage partner action and participation in next steps. Offer flexibility to partner organizations when seeking input given possible burdens on organizational capacity.



Use Local Coordination to Further Workforce Goals: When approaching partners for BEAD and Digital Equity projects, incorporate workforce into conversations and encourage participation in workforce goals.



Outreach and Engagement | Examples



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following program examples.

Minnesota Governor’s Task Force on Broadband Access Drives Change Collaboratively

Launched in March 2019, the Minnesota Governor’s Task Force on Broadband Access meets monthly to review the current state of high-speed Internet access in the state. **The task force serves as a forum for collaboration** for 15 diverse partner representatives, including employers and educational institutions. Through the forum, the state publishes an annual report on its activities as well as the needs, barriers, issues, and goals for high-speed Internet access, including workforce challenges such as labor shortages.

Oakland Undivided Partners for Digital Skills and Education

A coalition of community-based organizations – including Oakland Promise, Oakland Public Education Fund, Oakland Unified School District, Tech Exchange, and the City of Oakland’s Office of Education – coordinates to **offer trainings, digital skills development, and technology troubleshooting for all students from Pre-K through college in Oakland**. The coalition also collects information about Internet and device access in the area. The coalition plans to provide 25,000 laptops and Internet to Oakland households.



Worker Protections | Strategies



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following strategies.



Require or Encourage Prevailing Wages: Eligible Entities may encourage or require prevailing wage standards for subgrantees, which can help improve desirability of jobs and ensure fair wages on BEAD projects. When coupled with local hire provisions, paying prevailing wages can create a diverse and competitive local labor market.



Promote Project Labor Agreements: Eligible Entities may consider using Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) to set terms and employment conditions on BEAD projects, whether with union or non-union organizations. PLAs can offer stability, higher wages, and additional training to workers, while minimizing the likelihood of worker disputes and strikes.



Promote Labor Peace Agreements: Eligible Entities may consider proactive engagement with local unions through Labor Peace Agreements to protect local financial interests while advancing worker rights.



Encourage Robust Benefits: Eligible Entities may require or strongly encourage subgrantees to offer robust benefits that allow workers to balance their job and family commitments, such as ample sick leave, family leave, vacation days, retirement matching, and pensions. They may also seek out partnerships with industry leaders, trade associations or other organizations offering these services to their workers or members.



Worker Protections | Examples



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following program examples.

NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association Offers Pensions to Members

As part of a suite of benefits, NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association gives members the opportunity to join a **group health program, a retirement and security (pension) plan, savings, and other employee benefit plans**. In addition, NTCA – the Rural Broadband Association offers members regulatory and compliance support, education, and consulting resources for their benefit plans.

Boston Housing Authority Establishes Successful Project Labor Agreement with Amaresco

In 2014, the city of Boston completed a \$66.7M energy efficiency rehabilitation of 13 public housing properties owned by the Boston Housing Authority. The city entered into a **project labor agreement** with the contractor, Amaresco, which **helped create approximately 600 jobs** for local union workers, public housing and low-income city residents, and small and minority owned businesses.



Contracting



When developing strategies to assure a highly skilled, diverse, and equitable workforce, Eligible Entities must consider not only directly employed workers but also contractors and subcontractors in their workforce development standards and activities.

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Contracting | Strategies



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following strategies.



Engage Contracting Experts: Federal offices such as the Small Business Administration and state offices on acquisitions may be able to offer advice and guidance on how to shape contracting requirements for MBEs, WBEs, and other small or economically disadvantaged businesses.



Consider Impact of Timelines on Different Subgrantees: To best support engagement with diverse subgrantee organizations, Eligible Entities should ensure sufficient lead time and notice for collaboration with these organizations. Unlike larger organizations, smaller businesses may not have staff members dedicated solely to the procurement and partnership process.



Set Participation Goals: Set participation goals for subgrantees or encourage contractors and subcontractors to set goals for working with MBEs, WBEs, and other small or economically disadvantaged businesses. Work with subgrantees to help them understand the barriers that small and disadvantaged businesses typically experience in contracting, offering feedback on areas where subgrantees can improve participation by disadvantaged businesses.



Conduct Outreach to Worker Associations: Eligible Entities and subgrantees can identify and proactively communicate with local and regional labor associations that work with underrepresented groups to socialize contracting opportunities and increase representation of MBEs and WBEs.



Contracting | Examples



Eligible Entities and subgrantees may consider the following program examples.

Dallas Partners with the Regional Black Contractors Association

In 2020, the Dallas City Council awarded the Regional Black Contractors Association (RBCA) a grant to expand support its Second Chance Hiring Program. Through the program, RBCA **offers workforce development training and programs to individuals released from prison within the past three years.** Through this program, RBCA helps create a pipeline to advance and support black contractors and black-owned business in the Dallas metro area.

Illinois Capital Development Board Sets Utilization Goals for Underrepresented Businesses

The state of Illinois **sets thresholds for projects to contract with minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses, and businesses owned by persons with disabilities** on Capital Development Board projects. The Fair Employment Practices unit ensures contracts awarded reflect and adhere to the business enterprise program participation goals.



RESOURCES

Resources for Workforce Planning



Resource	Source	Description
Federal Labor and Employment Laws		
Handy Reference Guide to the Fair Labor Standards Act	DOL	Reference guide to sections of the Fair Labor Standards Act.
Prohibited Employment Policies/Practices	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)	Explanations and additional information on prohibited employment policies and practices per the laws enforced by EEOC.
Job Accommodation Network	DOL	Resources about the ADA and strategies to accommodate employees with disabilities. The Job Accommodation Network also offers consulting services for organizations with questions.
Skilled Workforce		
Train and Retain	DOL	Customized employment solutions to develop and upskill your current workforce and promote employee retention.
American Job Center	DOL	Federal program with offices nationwide to offer support to job seekers for a variety of career and employment-related needs, including training.
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Workforce Programs	DOL	List of WIOA programs administered by DOL that provide career and training services such as job search assistance, workforce preparation, and career development services.



Example Resources



Resource	Source	Description
<i>Equitable Training and Workforce Development</i>		
Diversity and Inclusion	DOL	Guidance and resources for fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace.
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility	DOL	Information on how including diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in apprenticeships is beneficial, along with case studies.
Build Together: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Construction	National Center for Construction Education & Research	Key takeaways and examples of how construction companies can implement DEI initiatives and improve workplace inclusion for their employees.
SkillSPAN	National Skills Coalition	A national network of non-partisan coalitions focused on advancing state skills policies to expand economic opportunities for workers while boosting local workforce capacity.
Designing Inclusive Apprenticeships	Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship	A guide to recruiting and training apprentices with disabilities.
USDA Resource Guide for Rural Workforce Development	U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)	Outlines programs and services available at USDA and other federal departments/agencies to support rural workforce development.
Explore Pre-Apprenticeships	DOL	Resource to support the development of high-quality apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, including case studies and examples.
Prevailing Wage Information and Resources	DOL	A guide with information, tools, and additional resources specifically related to prevailing wage.
Labor-Management Relations	DOC	An explanation of labor-management relations and best practices.
Construction Program Guide: Project Labor Agreement	DOT	A guide that provides a description of Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) and relevant Executive Orders and legislation.
Labor Peace Agreements	U.S. Chamber of Commerce	A guide that describes a Labor Peace Agreement and provides multiple case studies of successful Labor Peace Ordinances.
<i>Contracting</i>		
An Overview of Small Business Contracting	Congressional Research Service	Descriptions of federal small business designations, example federal funding programs for small businesses, and related requirements.
MBDA Programs/Business Centers	DOC	A list of Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) programs and business centers across the country by state.
Contracting Guide	SBA	A list of state and local SBA offices, which can offer support for connecting with small businesses.



Q+A



THANK YOU

