Defining Equity

According to the White House Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, 'Equity" is defined as:

> **"** Sec. 2. Definitions. For purposes of this order: (a) The term "equity" means the **consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals**, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. [1]
>
> (b) The term "underserved communities" refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been **systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life**, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of "equity." [2] **"**

[1] https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/
[2] Ibid.

Defining Other Key DEI Terms

Diversity
·····································
REPRESENTATION

Inclusion
·····································
BEHAVIOR

Belonging
·····································
FEELING

Equity
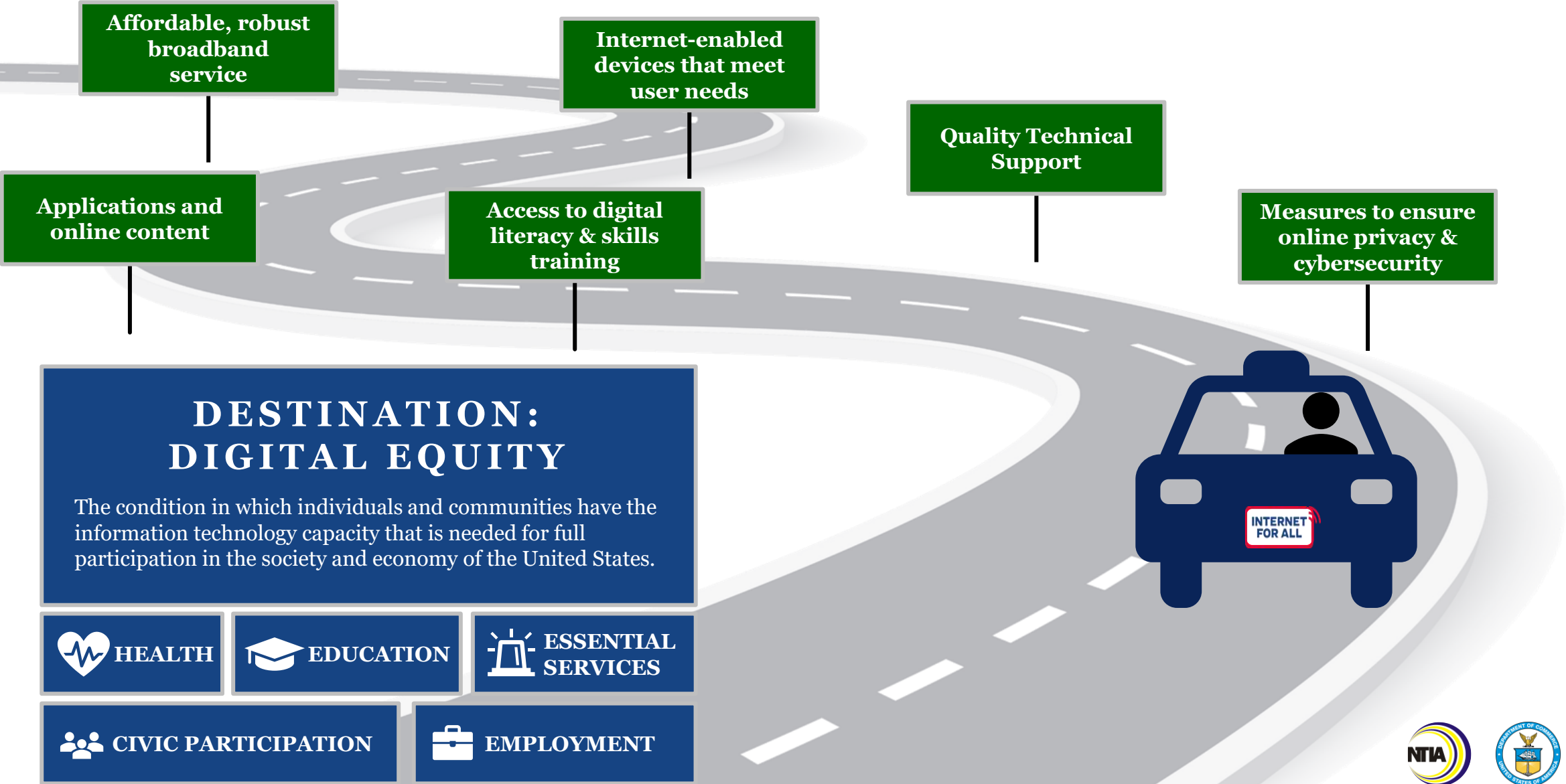·····································
SYSTEMS

Justice
·····································
RESULTS

Digital inclusion activities collectively build to advance and ensure digital equity & improve outcomes for unconnected communities

INTERNET FOR ALL

Affordable, robust broadband service

Internet-enabled devices that meet user needs

Quality Technical Support

Applications and online content

Access to digital literacy & skills training

Measures to ensure online privacy & cybersecurity

DESTINATION: DIGITAL EQUITY

The condition in which individuals and communities have the information technology capacity that is needed for full participation in the society and economy of the United States.

HEALTH

EDUCATION

ESSENTIAL SERVICES

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

EMPLOYMENT

INTERNET FOR ALL

NTIA · DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

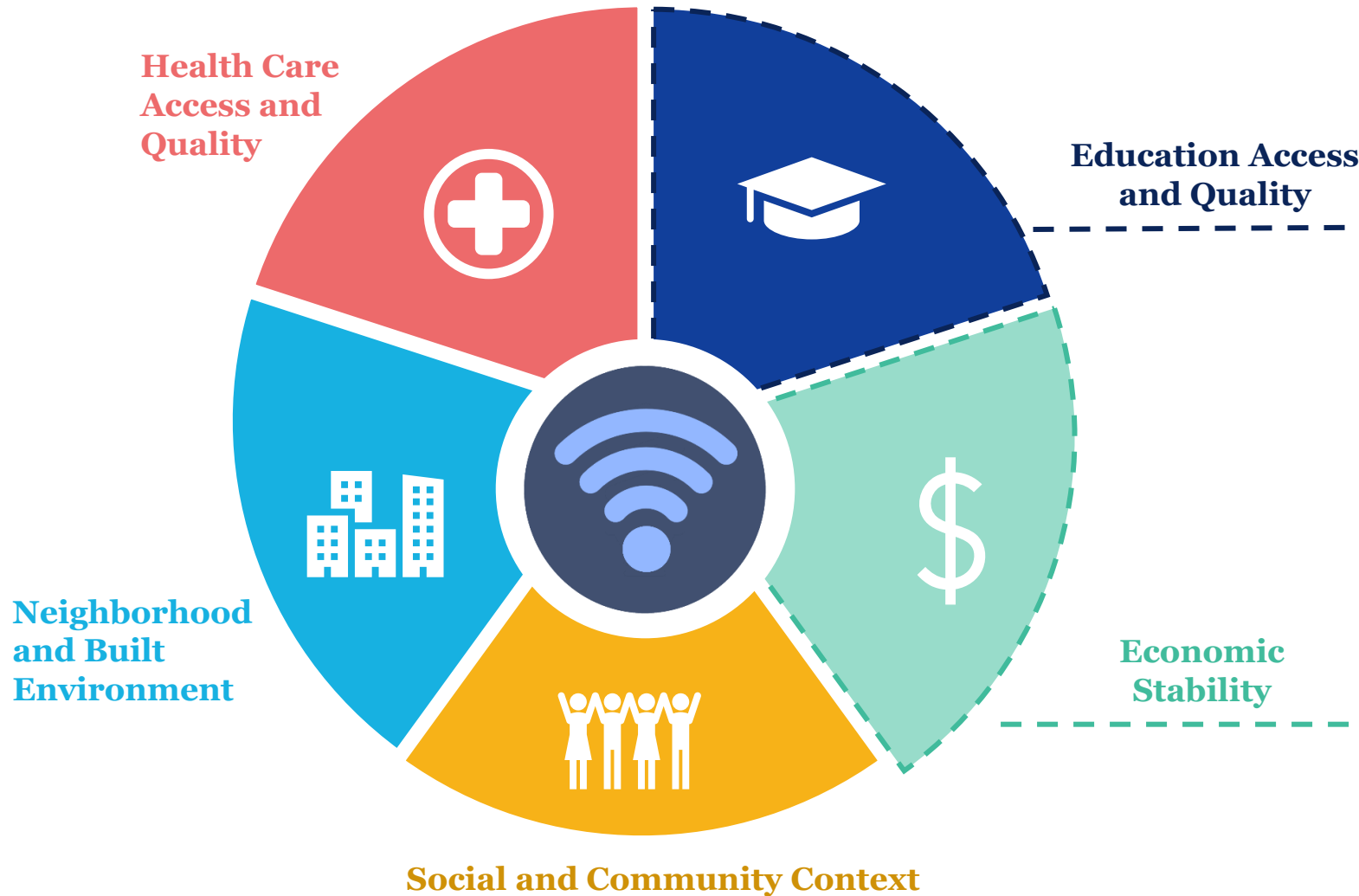# Digital inequity disproportionally impacts our stakeholders

DE & BEAD
Covered Populations and Underrepresented Communities
Identity groups and communities disproportionally impacted by digital inequity

- Low-income households
- Aging individuals
- Incarcerated individuals
- Veterans
- Persons of Color

- Indigenous and Native American persons
- Members of ethnic and religious minorities
- Women
- LGBTQI+ persons
- Persons with disabilities

- People with language barriers
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Rural inhabitants
- Persons adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality

DE NOFO **BEAD NOFO**

Digital Equity and the Social Determinants of Health

Health Care Access and Quality

Education Access and Quality

Economic Stability

Social and Community Context

Neighborhood and Built Environment

Example: Hamilton County Schools in Chattanooga is offering an initiative to bridge the digital divide by **providing home WiFi to every qualified family until 2030 for no charge**. After the program was enacted, **parity was seen between all students in academic achievement**, proving that an increase in digital access leads to an increase in educational quality.[1]

Example: Economic stability has a **positive relationship with other social determinants**, such as wellness and longevity. Bridging the digital divide among rural areas allows those in rural areas to **access online jobs** and helps small business owners and entrepreneurs **adopt new technologies,** like farmers in Texas' Rio Grande Valley who are advancing their businesses with **new 'smart' agricultural technologies.**[2]

[1] Lynch School of Education and Morrisey College of Arts and Science. (2022). *HCS EdConnect: Reducing the digital divide: Working towards high-speed internet access for all students.* EdConnect evaluation study. https://edconnect.bc.edu/#/
[2] Foundation for Rural Service. (2021). *Broadband today: Rural America's critical condition.* NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association. [Report]. https://www.ntca.org/sites/default/files/documents/2021-02/Rural%20America%27s%20Critical%20Connection%20--%20FRS%20White%20Paper.pdf

AN UPDATE ON THE DIGITAL EQUITY ACT PROGRAMS

This presentation focuses on the Digital Equity Act

BEAD

$42.45B

Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment Program

A program to get all Americans online by funding partnerships between states or territories, communities, and stakeholders to build infrastructure where we need it to and increase adoption of high-speed Internet.

Presentation focus

DIGITAL EQUITY

$2.75B

Digital Equity Act

Three programs that provide funding to promote digital inclusion and advance equity for all. They aim to ensure that all communities can access and use affordable, reliable high-speed Internet to meet their needs and improve their lives.

TRIBAL

$2.00B

Tribal Connectivity Technical Amendments

A program to help tribal communities expand high-speed Internet access and adoption on tribal lands.

MIDDLE MILE

$1.00B

Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure

A program to expand middle mile infrastructure, to reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas.

Note: Funding amounts inclusive of all administrative set-asides

Digital Equity Act created three programs

INTERNET FOR ALL

Funding pool
$2.75B

Three programs that provide funding to promote digital inclusion and advance equity for all. They aim to ensure that all communities can access and use affordable, reliable high-speed Internet to meet their needs and improve their lives.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The Digital Equity Act created three programs:

State Planning
- $60M formula funding program to develop digital equity plans

State Capacity
- $1.44B formula funding program to implement plans & promote digital inclusion

Competitive
- $1.25B to implement digital equity and inclusion activities

Example eligible uses of funds across three programs include:

- ☆ Developing digital equity plans; states must develop a plan to be eligible for state capacity grants
- ☆ Making awards to other entities to help make digital equity plans
- ☆ Improving accessibility and inclusivity of public resources

- ☆ Implementing digital equity plans and related activities
- ☆ Providing digital literacy and digital skills education
- ☆ Facilitating the adoption of high-speed Internet

NTIA is currently running the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program.

All 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, have been awarded their State Digital Equity Planning Grants.

The U.S. Territories have submitted their Digital Equity Planning Grant applications.

The programs are sequential and participation in planning is essential

Current Phase

State Planning Grant	State Capacity Grant	Competitive Grant
$60 million	**$1.44 billion**	**$1.25 billion**

Who Open to **U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico**

Open to U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, that **completed the State Planning Program**

Open to **certain entities**, such as political subdivisions, Tribal entities, nonprofits, community anchor institutions, local educational agencies, and workforce development orgs

What Grants will be used to **develop a State Digital Equity Plan**

Grants will be used to **implement State Digital Equity Plans**

Grants will be used to **develop and implement digital inclusion activities**

> Other U.S. territories, Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, and Native Hawaiian orgs have a statutory set-aside and separate program requirements under the State Planning and Capacity Programs

LEVERAGING NTIA RESOURCES TO DEVELOP STATE DIGITAL EQUITY PLANS

State Digital Equity Plan Components (I/II)

INTERNET FOR ALL

1. The **identification of the barriers to digital equity** faced by covered populations

2. **Measurable objectives for documenting & promoting** broadband technology; the online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services; digital literacy; secure online privacy / cybersecurity; consumer devices and tech support

3. An assessment of how the **objectives will impact and interact** with the State's economic and workforce goals; health, education, civic, and social engagement outcomes; and delivery of other essential services

4. A description of how the State **plans to collaborate with key stakeholders** (e.g., anchor institutions, municipal government, educational agencies, non-profits) to achieve objectives

5. A list of organizations with which the administering entity for the State **collaborated in developing and implementing the Plan**

6. A stated **vision for digital equity**

7. A **digital equity needs assessment**, including an assessment of the baseline and the State's identification of the barriers to digital equity

State Digital Equity Plan Components (II/II)

8 An **asset inventory**, including current resources and strategies that promote digital equity and existing digital equity plans and programs

9 A **coordination and outreach strategy**, including opportunities for public comment by, collaboration with, and ongoing engagement with the covered populations and the full range of stakeholders

10 Description of how **municipal, regional, and/or tribal digital plans will be incorporated**

11 An **implementation strategy** (1) establishing measurable goals, objectives, proposed core activities, (2) setting out measures ensuring the plan's sustainability, and (3) adopting mechanisms to ensure that the plan is regularly evaluated and updated

12 Explanation of how the strategy **addresses gaps in existing efforts** to address barriers to digital equity

13 Description of how the State intends to accomplish the implementation strategy by **partnering with workforce organizations, community-based organizations, and institutions of higher learning**

14 A **timeline** for implementation of the Plan

15 Material indicating how the State will coordinate its use of Digital Equity Capacity Grant funding and **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding**

# Using Technical Assistance Materials Effectively

There are multiple guides, templates, and resources available to applicants related to Digital Equity, and it is important to understand how to use them effectively.

Each Resource is Helpful

Although different resources are helpful to specific parts of the Digital Equity Plan requirements, remember that each resource can be utilized for all parts. Using each resource in conjunction with each other will only help.

Everyone Can Use These

No resource is designed for a specific audience, allowing all applicants and stakeholders to effectively use these resources. Try to use each resource to its full extent, as that will be the best way to ensure a comprehensive and robust application.
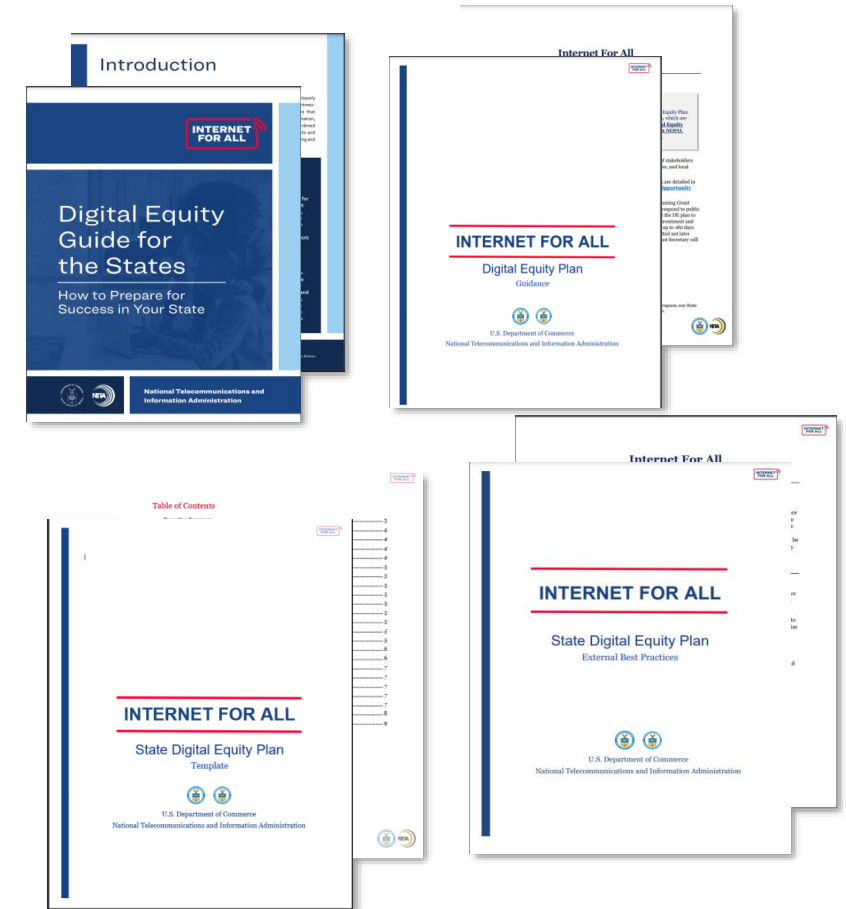
Overall Digital Equity Technical Assistance

Below are general technical assistance resources that all stakeholders and participants will find helpful. The following slides will provide additional resources that will help with specific parts of Digital Equity plans.
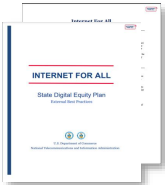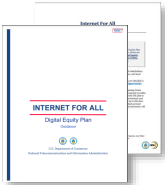
Digital Equity Best Practices
This document gathers best practices and examples for digital inclusion activities from across the country and aligns to each of the Digital Equity Plan requirements
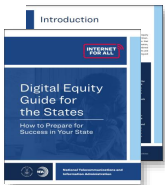
Digital Equity Guide for States
This guide includes the basics of digital equity, an overview of the DEA — recommendations for preparing for the planning requirements, and recommendations for weaving digital equity throughout all State-led broadband activities
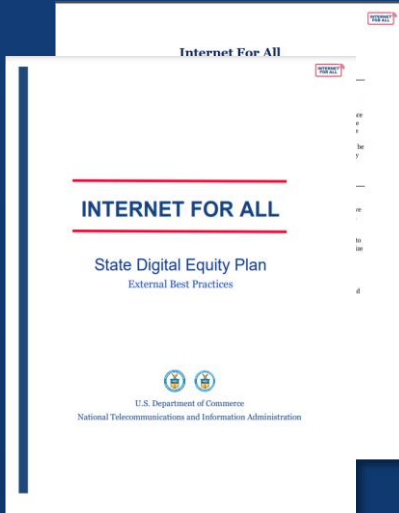
Digital Equity Plan Guidance
This document takes the reader step-by-step through each Plan requirement, providing expanded detail on how State Broadband Offices can comprehensively meet each requirement
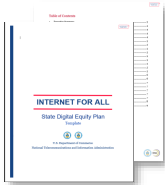
Digital Equity Plan Template
The template is an optional resource that enables State Broadband Offices to use a pre-set format to build out the State Digital Equity Plan
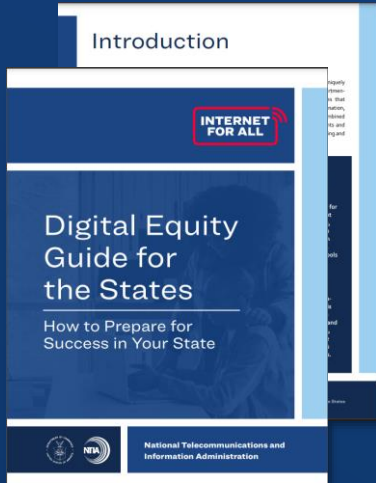
DIGITAL EQUITY BEST PRACTICES

This document gathers best practices and examples for digital inclusion activities from across the country and aligns to each of the digital equity plan requirements

Examples:

Vision Statement	Reference
"Forsyth County is a thriving, inclusive community where all residents—especially residents of underserved communities— have equal access to learn, participate, and contribute to society through robust and digital information technology."	Forsyth County, NC - Digital Equity Plan
"Ensure all residents, businesses, and organizations can participate in and benefit from the prosperity and culture of innovation in Silicon Valley." "Broaden access to basic digital infrastructure to all residents, especially our youth, through enabling free or low cost, high-speed, 1 gigabit or faster broadband service in several low-income communities, and increasing access to hardware, including tablets and laptops, for low-income students."	San Jose, CA - Digital Equity Plan
"All residents of Portland/Multnomah County will have barrier -free access to high-speed broadband Internet at home and school, and affordable computing device and the training to use them effectively."	Portland, OR Digital Equity Plan
"We want every Detroiter to have affordable, reliable, and abundant digital access that elevates local communities and accelerates opportunities."	City of Detroit, MI Digital Access Infrastructure Overview

INTERNET FOR ALL

State Digital Equity Plan
External Best Practices

U.S. Department of Commerce
National Telecommunications and Information Administration

DIGITAL EQUITY GUIDE FOR STATES

This guide includes the basics of digital equity, an overview of the DEA — recommendations for preparing for the planning requirements, and recommendations for weaving digital equity throughout all state-led broadband activities

Be Intentional with Language and the Details

The language you use to communicate with stakeholders throughout the DEA planning process matters. If the office is "leading with equity" but uses phrases like, "now, let us put on our equity lens," those you interact with may believe that equity is optional and only thought of intermittently.

Similarly, being thoughtful and intentional about the details of the planning process matters in terms of signaling the value that DEO places on equity. For instance, if hosting a listening session for both the DEA plan and the BEAD plan but your agency leadership only attend the BEAD session, it signals to stakeholders that BEAD is a priority for leadership whereas DEA is not.

Additionally, intentionally planning stakeholder outreach to provide opportunities for as many disconnected households as possible by selecting dates and times where a diversity of households can engage, and ensuring invitations to the stakeholder outreach events reach the disconnected, will lead to more equitable engagement and a more holistic plan. Things to consider for in-person meetings would be providing childcare, ensuring meeting locations are easily accessible from public transit or have ample parking, and providing travel vouchers or mass transit tickets for participants.

Center the Voices of Covered Populations and Historically Disconnected Communities

Throughout the planning, development, and implementation of the plan, intentionally identifying, amplifying, and centering the voices of those most affected by the digital divide, the covered populations, and the disconnected communities will provide for a more prosperous and more equitable planning process and plan.

One strategy several digital inclusion coalitions and organizations have begun incorporating into their community-based coalition work, and digital inclusion work is to financially compensate the residents for their participation. Lived experts are members of covered populations, particularly individuals from historically disconnected communities with direct, lived experience of being disconnected. For example, the **Franklin County Digital Equity Coalition** has compensated lived experts for their participation as research team members to better understand the ramifications of different aspects of the digital divide in their communities.

Another digital inclusion coalition plans to provide lived experts with $5,000 for a 10-month commitment to participate in the coalition work as a subcommittee co-chair. The co-chair would commit to attending 80 percent of the subcommittee meetings, lead subcommittee meetings, and actively engage with the subcommittee's work during that time. The entity could invite lived experts to join the core planning team and other stakeholder touch points throughout the planning process.

Including lived experts in the planning process provides a viewpoint and expertise to the team that cannot otherwise be obtained. In addition, the practice is radically humanizing and would enable the State to demonstrate respect for the residents.

Content Simplicity and Translation

Another simple but important way to operationalize equity is to ensure all content the DEO publishes is comprehensible and translated into the State's predominant languages. Translating all materials developed throughout the planning process, including but not limited to public notices, surveys, flyers, and informational pamphlets, into simple, easy-to-understand wording and the State's predominant languages will engage a wider pool of residents throughout the State. Additionally, we recommend translating and publishing materials into formats easily accessible for people with limited vision and those who are deaf or hard of hearing.
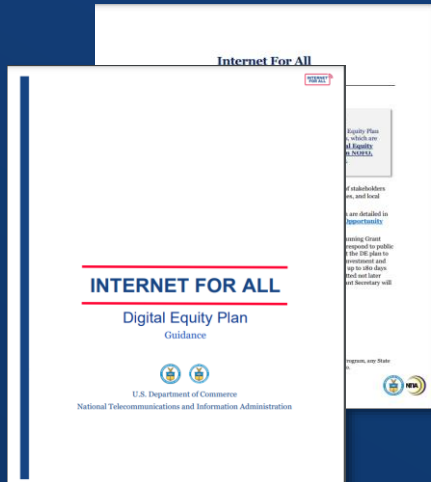
DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN GUIDANCE

This document takes the reader step-by-step through each plan requirement, providing expanded detail on how state broadband offices can comprehensively meet each requirement

2 Introduction & Vision for Digital Equity

2.1 Vision

Relevant Requirements from the NOFO, page 21:
- A stated vision for digital equity ^{Additional Req.1}

The purpose of this section is to provide a clear, specific picture of the State's vision for digital equity. As part of this vision, States should define digital equity in the context of their State.

Each State may use this section to describe what success looks like for their State, inform strategies, serve as a guide for setting goals and objectives, and determine the activities the State will prioritize in the Digital Equity Plan.

States that are also utilizing funding from the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program should ensure that the programs and plans are coordinated and that the visions for BEAD and digital equity are aligned.

What should applicants describe for their vision?

Applicants should focus on describing what success looks like for their State, and it should inform strategies and serve as a guide for setting goals and objectives:

- What will digital equity look like in in the context of your state?
- What are the broad goals that should be accomplished in executing this plan? (e.g., improve rural health outcomes, increase underrepresented youth employment in technology-related fields)
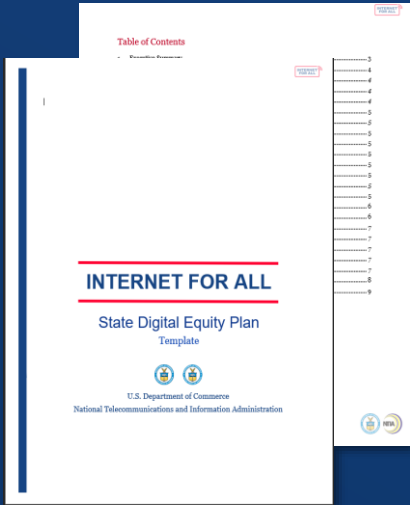
DIGITAL EQUITY PLAN TEMPLATE

The template is an optional resource that enables state broadband offices to use a pre-set format to build out the state digital equity plan

3 Current State of Digital Equity: Barriers and Assets

3.1 Asset Inventory

Refer to Section 3.1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

3.1.1 Digital Inclusion Assets by Covered Population
Refer to Section 3.1.1 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

3.1.2 Existing Digital Equity Plans
Refer to Section 3.1.2 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

3.1.3 Existing Digital Equity Programs
Refer to Section 3.1.3 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

3.1.4 Broadband Adoption
Refer to Section 3.1.4 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

[Identify and detail the assets in the state/territory]

3.1.5 Broadband Affordability
Refer to Section 3.1.5 of the State Digital Equity Plan Guidance.

Stakeholder Engagement & Local Coordination Resources

PLAN REQUIREMENT

4 A description of how the State **plans to collaborate with key stakeholders** (e.g., anchor institutions, municipal government, educational agencies, non-profits) to achieve objectives

5 A list of organizations with which the administering entity for the State **collaborated in developing and implementing the Plan**

ASSOCIATED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

4 **Local Coordination One-Pager**
Resources on conducting local coordination including guidance on creating accessible meetings, how to conduct effective community engagement, and a Digital Inclusion Coalition guidebook discussing keys to successful coalition operations.

5 **Local Coordination Interview Guides for SBOs**
Example agendas, targeted outcomes, and best practices for meeting with stakeholders during the planning phase. Guides are organized by the stakeholder groups.

5 **Local Coordination Tracker**
Use the tabs of this spreadsheet to track stakeholders, activities, and local plans.

Digital Equity Plan Development Strategies

INTERNET FOR ALL

PLAN REQUIREMENT

7 A **digital equity needs assessment**, including an assessment of the baseline and the State's identification of the barriers to digital equity

8 An **asset inventory**, including current resources and strategies that promote digital equity and existing digital equity plans and programs

ASSOCIATED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

7 **Needs Assessment Guide**
Resource that details how to structure a Needs Assessment, as well as examples from existing needs assessments from across the country

8 **Asset Mapping Guide**
Practical guidelines designed to support asset mapping efforts by digital equity practitioners within State Broadband Offices

Defining Equity Outcomes

PLAN REQUIREMENT

6 A stated **vision for digital equity**

11 An **implementation strategy** (1) establishing measurable goals, objectives, proposed core activities, (2) setting out measures ensuring the plan's sustainability, and (3) adopting mechanisms to ensure that the plan is regularly evaluated and updated

ASSOCIATED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

6 **11** **Equity Outcomes for State Broadband Offices**
A resource that connects digital inclusion activities with their impacts on health, civic participation, employment, education, and essential services

Coming Soon

BEAD-DE Alignment Guide

The BEAD-DE Alignment Guide is a robust resource that provides guidance on how to align the requirements and coordinate the activities across the two grant programs.

The guide provides the following purposes and resources:

- *Supports Eligible Entities in receiving initial planning funds for BEAD and DE*

- *Provides a review of the requirements for each program and how to create plans that meet both requirements*

- *Assists Eligible Entities in aligning efforts across programs*

- *Provides an overview of the programs*

- *Provides general guidance, requirements, and funding uses*

- *Explains the importance of digital equity*

INTERNET FOR ALL

BEAD Five-Year Action
Plan-Digital Equity Plan
Alignment Guide

U.S. Department of Commerce
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
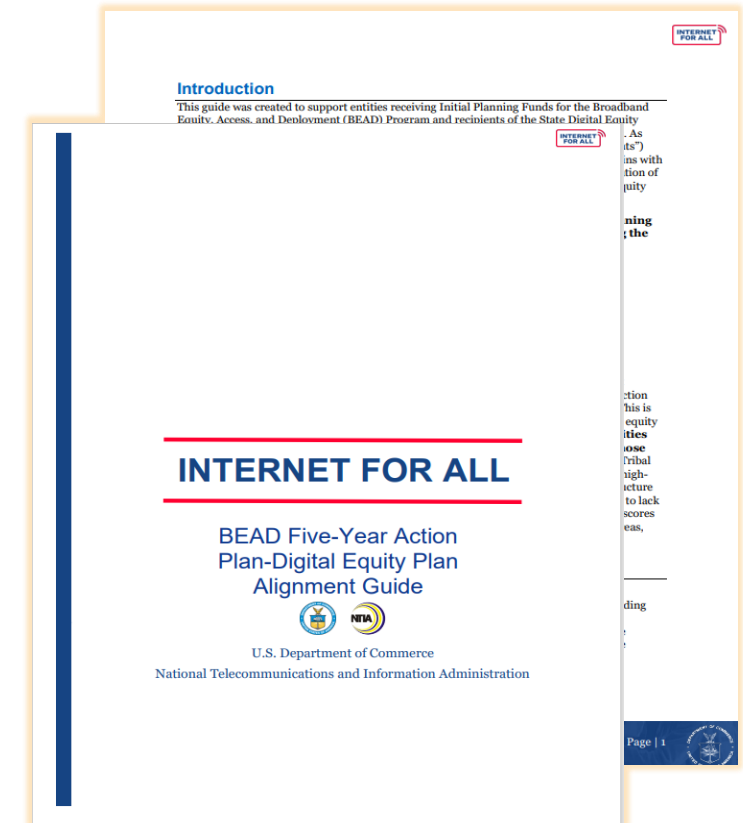
Access the guide here:
https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/BEAD-Digital_Equity_Alignment_Guide.pdf

How to Find Technical Assistance Materials on BroadbandUSA

Existing and future Digital Equity TA Materials can be found at **broadbandusa.ntia.gov/digital-equity-programs** and by scrolling down the page.
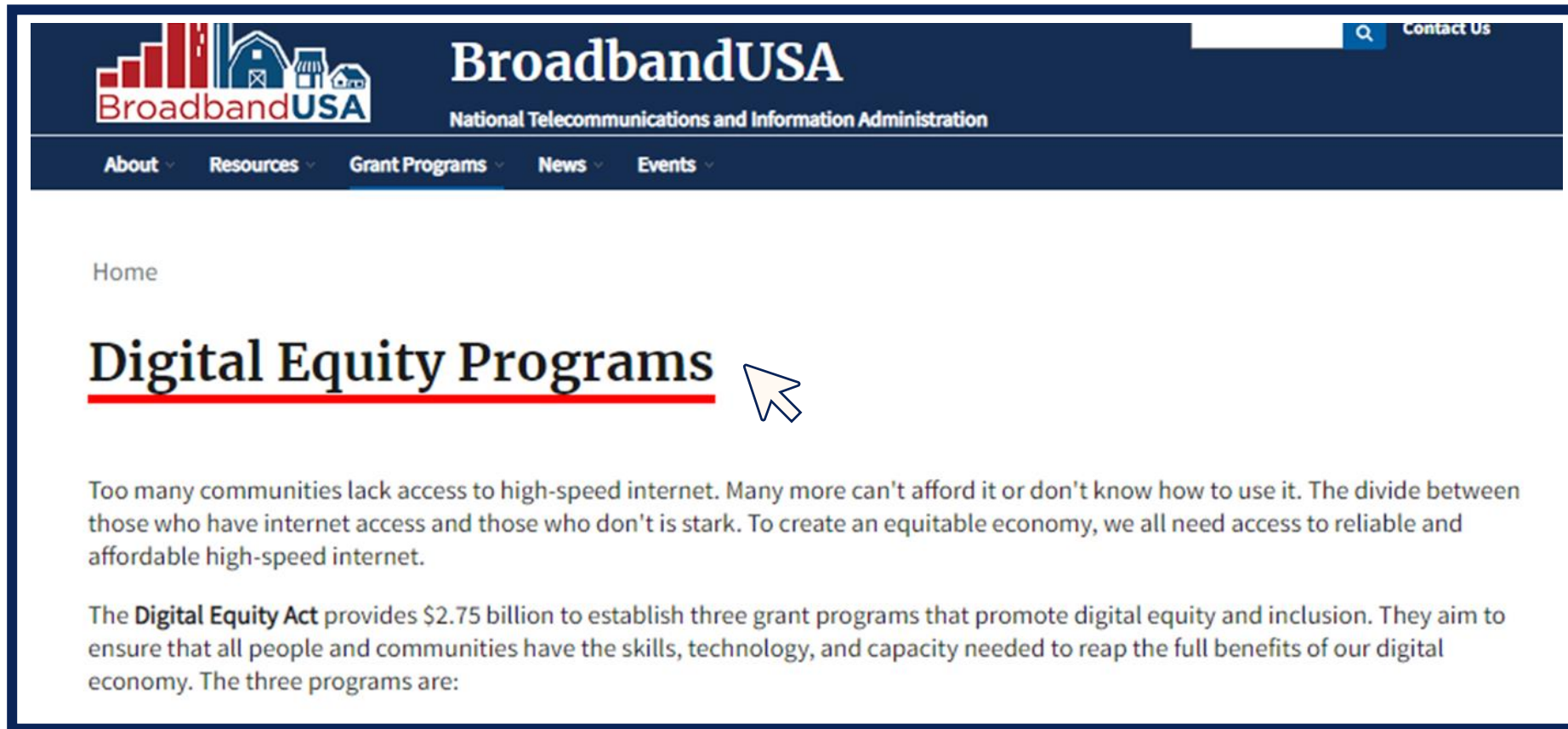
How to Find Technical Assistance Materials on BroadbandUSA

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*Access Digital Equity Technical Assistance Materials using the above link. Items such as **Frequently Asked Questions**, **Guides**, **Templates**, **Toolkits**, **Local Coordination** Resources, and more **general TA resources** can be accessed through this page. Additionally, this page provides links to the DE Planning Grant NOFO, program application guidance, and key dates for applicants.*
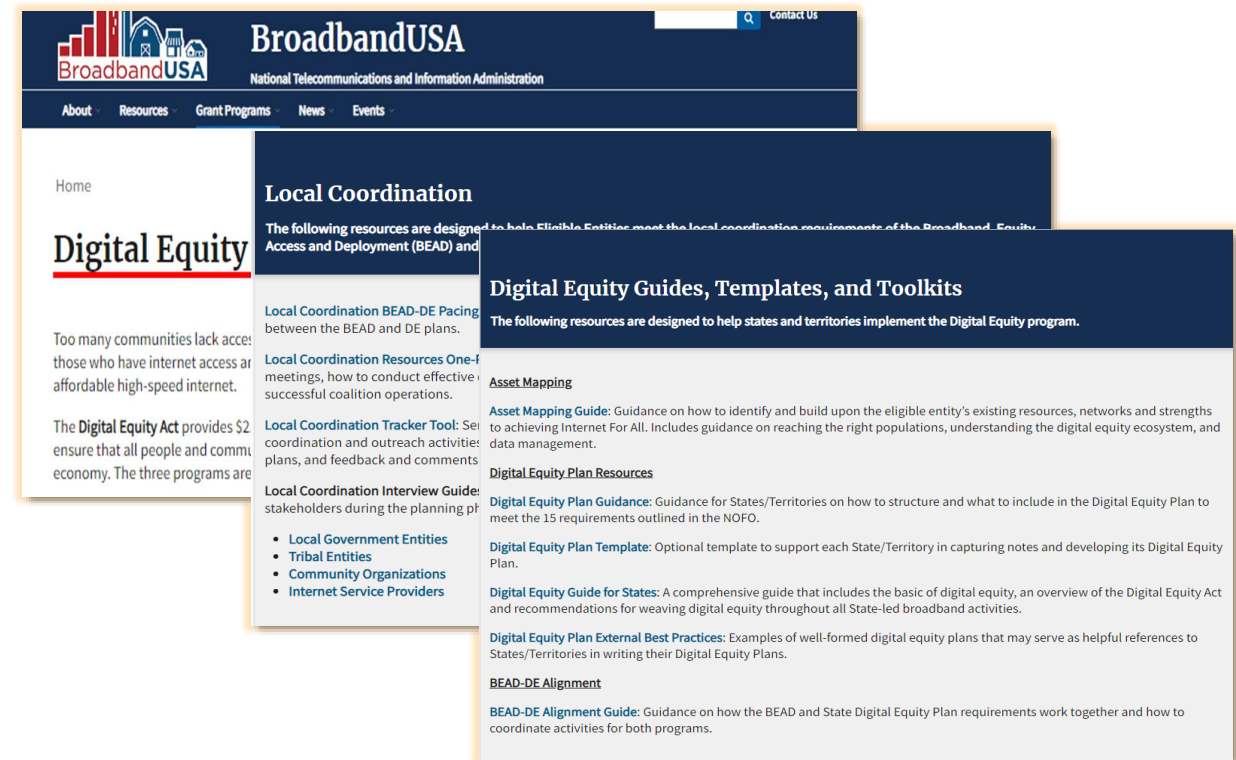
How to Find Webinars on BroadbandUSA

Existing and future webinars can be found on the Past Events section of the BroadbandUSA website, at **https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/events/past-events**. Users can filter by topic and engagement.

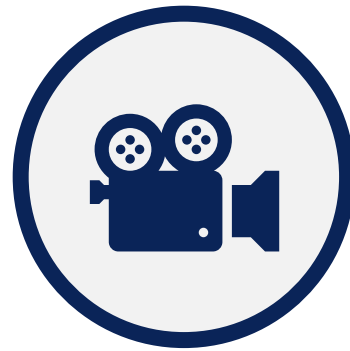# Upcoming Technical Assistance for the Semi-Annual Report

States are required to submit Digital Equity Program Semi-Annual Reports on **April 30.** NTIA will provide Technical Assistance to support States in this process.

Coming Soon
For Grantees Only

Digital Equity Semi-Annual Report Sample

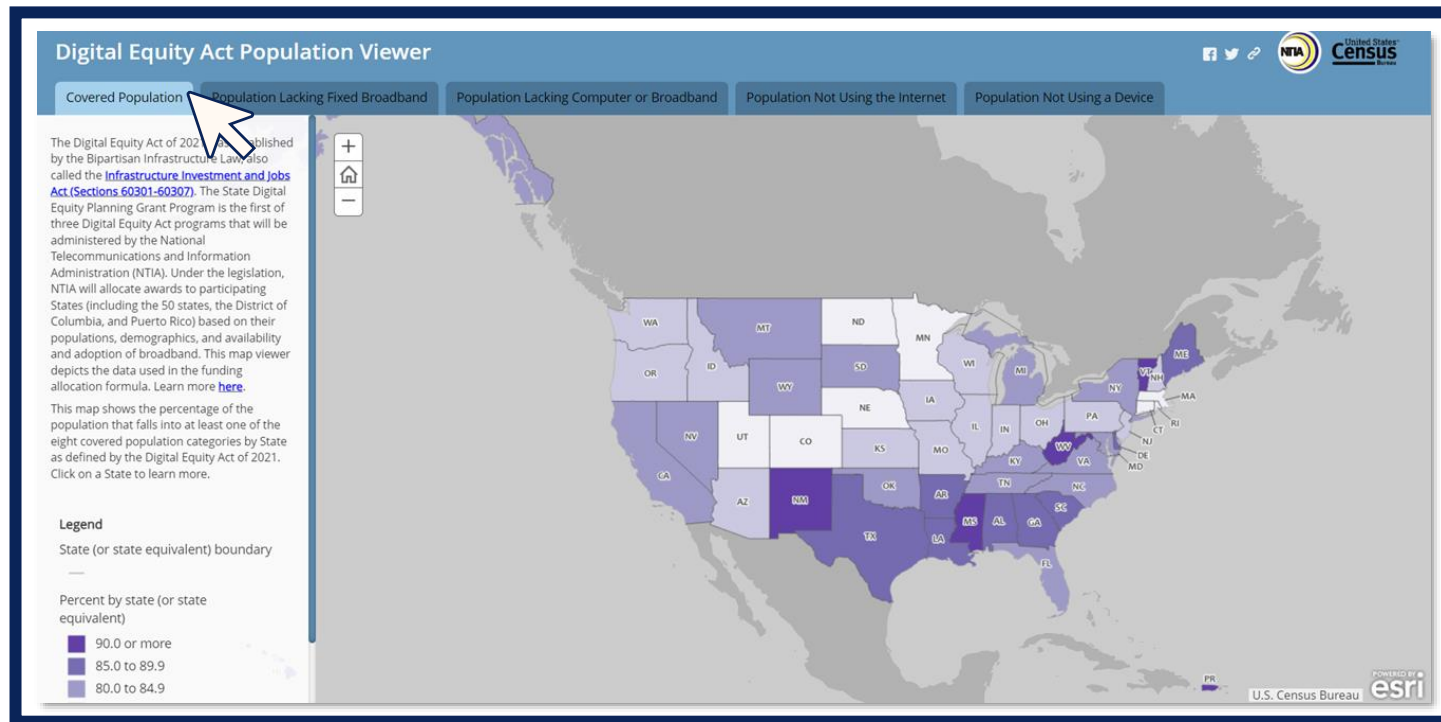Digital Equity Semi-Annual Report Instructional Video

Digital Equity Semi-Annual Report Office Hours

The Digital Equity Act Population Viewer

This map viewer depicts the data used in the funding allocation formula and shows the percentage of the population that falls into at least one of the eight covered population categories by State as defined by the Digital Equity Act of 2021. The next iteration of The DEA Population Viewer will have data at the local level.

Access the map at

https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a0013a9dcbb9419e855f563d78e892ef

Internet for All Map

INTERNET FOR ALL

This clickable map provides information for all the States and Territories participating in the Digital Equity and the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment Grant Programs.

Program Progress by State & Territory

Broadband Equity, Access, and Development (BEAD)

Nebraska

PROGRAM STATUS

Broadband Equity, Access and Development (BEAD)

STATUS	STATE/ TERRITORY
Planning Application Submitted	56
Planning Grant Awarded	55

Mariana
Guam
American Samoa
Virgin Islands
Puerto Rico

Nebraska

Population Metrics

Percentage of State Population Living Where High-Speed Internet is Available	99%
Percentage of State Population Living Where High-Speed Internet is Unavailable	1%
Percentage of State Households without Access to a Device	9%
Percentage of State Population not using the Internet	11%
Percentage of State Households with no Internet Access or a Device	9%
Percentage of State Households using a Device	92%

CONTACT

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	patrick.redmond@nebraska.gov
BEAD Inquiries	bead@ntia.gov
DE Inquiries	digitalequity@ntia.gov

Access the map at

https://www.internetforall.gov/interactive-map