**Internet for All: How Minority Serving Institutions Can Help Shape State
Broadband and Digital Equity Plans and Initiatives
Moderator: Kevin Hughes
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Kevin Hughes

00:00:05
Good afternoon. I'd like to welcome you to our NTIA Internet for All Webinar Series:
How Minority Serving Institutions Can Help Shape State Broadband and Digital
Equity Plans and Initiatives. My name is Kevin Hughes, and I am the acting director
of the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives, or OMBI at the National
Telecommunications and Information and Administration, or NTIA. And I have the
distinct pleasure of serving as today's host and moderator and one of your panelists
for our webinar today.

I'll be providing an overview of the NTIA Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives,
and my colleagues will provide an overview of the Broadband Equity, Access and
Deployment program or BEAD and the Digital Equity grant program.

Additionally, we're going to also provide guidance on how you and your
stakeholders can become involved in initiatives that will enable you to directly
participate in state, local, and regional planning efforts around broadband and
equity. Joining me today will be our panelists representing the BEAD program. BEAD
program Director Evan Feinman and Digital Equity Advisor, Michell Morton will be
our panelists for today's presentation.

Then, after our presentations, will then move into a moderated Q & A session, and
we welcome you to submit your questions at any time by entering them in to the Q
& A function on your Zoom module. Please note the PowerPoint presentation being
utilized today along with a full recording of the webinar will be on the
broadbandUSA website within 48 hours. And you can click on the website
homepage and click in the Events tab and select Past Events to access the webinar
materials.

We are so pleased that you are joining us today. And now that we've covered those
few housekeeping items, I think we're ready to get started. Today's webinar, as I
mentioned earlier, we're going provide you an overview of the Office of Minority
Broadband Initiatives as well as the BEAD and DE programs, and how those
programs work to get in terms of providing equity and opportunities for minority
communities. Now, each of NTIA's grants under the Consolidated Appropriations
Act, as well as the broadband bipartisan infrastructure law all have, and on ramp
towards providing fair and equitable connectivity for minority communities. And
OMBI is very important in this regard because connecting our minority communities
plays an important role in providing Internet for all and providing access for the
unserved and underserved. As representatives of the Department of Commerce, the
grants that our panelists represent provide real and tangible opportunities.

The BEAD grant represents the broadband infrastructure that you will be seeing within your States. And the DE grant directly addresses digital equity and digital literacy.

And then my office, the office of minority broadband initiatives, and the CMC grant, the Connecting Minority Community's Pilot program grant under our oversight represents broadband access to minority-based anchor community and direct funding to HBCUs, TCUs and MSIs designed to providing them with the funding necessary to uplift their campuses and empower their communities. The funding that NTIA has is designed to benefit broadband adoption and various facets of a broadband within the US.

We will explain how universities and colleges, nonprofits, and community-based anchor institutions can and should be a part of each state's broadband and digital equity plans and funding opportunities.

We'll provide information on how you can get involved with NTIA initiatives to further broadband access and digital equity within your communities of color and share guidance of how you and your stakeholders can become involved in these initiatives and directly participate in state local and regional planning efforts around broadband and digital equity. So, a little later on you're going hear me talk more about the Connecting Minority Communities pilot program grant which my office, the office of minority broadband initiatives, has oversight. And you will learn how CMC works with historically black colleges and universities, HBCUs, tribal colleges and universities, TCUs and other minorities serving institutions, or MSIs, to promote broadband connectivity, digital opportunities, and inclusive innovation in historically underrepresented and marginalized communities. In the 21st century it is absolutely imperative for all Americans to have access to reliable, affordable, high-speed. And President Biden and NTIA's goal to provide internet for all is working to ensure that every American, every American, across the country will not be held back by a lack of high-speed Internet access.

All Americans will have access to technologies that allow them to attend class, to start a small business, visit their doctor, have access to good paying jobs in the Internet field, and participate in the modern economy. Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act and the broadband bipartisan infrastructure law, we will build internet infrastructure, teach digital skills, and provide necessary technology to ensure that all Americans, including communities of color, rural communities, veterans, and older Americans all have access to the Internet and skills they need to fully participate in today's society. And today's webinar will address all of these issues.

OMBI works specifically to close the digital divide and achieve digital equity. OMBI is therefore a very important office as we are responsible for increasing greater broadband adoption and access within minority communities. OMBI was created to expand NTIA's outreach to minority communities and has responsibilities separate from the Connecting Minority Community's pilot program.

Under OMBI we will help to provide access workforce development, digital literacy training and empowerment to minority anchor communities. Under CMC separately, we provide Internet connectivity to campuses, students and faculty, and equipment, such as laptops and tablets, to both students and faculty and the ability to hire and train IT personnel. As it pertains to the CMC grant the request for funding coming from our minority based schools and universities was so great, reflecting over $800 million in request for funding on a grant of just $268 million. So right there that demonstrates the clear and demonstrated need on the part of minority institutions of higher learning. Currently, the CMC awards are in the post programmatic phase. And for those schools in universities who are participating today, we thank you for your patience.

And we're so pleased to announce that thus far CMC has awarded 19 awards, totaling $51.9 million in funding with additional awards which will be made on an ongoing basis, an ongoing rolling basis. And in fact, we have an announcement on that that will be coming up very soon. So we thank you for your patience, and things are moving forward with regards to our awards.

OMBI is relevant and important because a recent Pew Research Center survey conducted in 2,021 found that Black and Hispanic adults are less likely to own a computer within their homes or have home-based high-speed internet connection within those same homes. And the FCC's 8 broadband progress report stated that approximately 19 million Americans or 6% of the population still lacked access to fixed broadband service threshold speeds. In rural areas, nearly one over 4 of the population or 14.5 million people lack access to Internet connectivity. And in tribal areas nearly one third of the population lacks access.

But thanks to the efforts of the Biden Administration and NTIA, OMBI is here to help address those disparities and affect positive change.

00:10:38
So let's begin. The Office of Minority Broadband Initiative within the NTIA Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, or OICG, was created in August 2021. And the office, as I mentioned previously, was mandated by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 to promote equitable broadband access and adoption at HBCUs, TCUs and MSIs and in their surrounding anchor communities. And to identify barriers to high-speed Internet access for students, faculty, and staff at those institutions within their anchor communities.

Our vision is to achieve digital equity for minority communities across the United States by supporting and building capacity in HBCUs, TCUs and MSIs as catalysts of broadband access. We believe that the schools at the HBCUs, TCUs and MSIs are, in fact, engines of opportunity within their surrounding communities, where they can affect positive change with regards to adoption and with regards to bringing broadband access to their surrounding communities and their state. Our office has 3 pillars and they represent the core of the work that helped to align our efforts.

One, we administer the CMC Pilot program grant. We collaborate with federal, state, tribal, and anchor institution stakeholders. And we build capacity of anchor institutions and their communities.

OMBI was authorized by Section 902 of the consolidated appropriation act and we are here, our goal is to use the partnerships that we will develop within our office to expand broadband access, digital inclusion, and equity, and to leverage the rules, as I mentioned, of the colleges and universities for innovation and economic opportunities within the anchor communities that they serve.

So what are our duties under the office? Well, I won't name all of them, but just a few. We will collaborate with federal agencies that carry out broadband internet access service support programs to determine how to expand access to internet service and other opportunities within anchor communities. We'll collaborate with state, local, and tribal governments, and other stakeholders within communications, education, business, and technology fields to achieve a variety of initiatives.

We will promote initiatives relating to broadband internet access service connectivity for anchor communities and digital opportunities. We'll develop recommendations to promote the expansion and deployment of Internet access service to underserved HBCUs, TCUs and MSIs. And we'll promote activity that would accelerate the greater adoption of internet access service.

Upon request will provide technical aid and assistance to HBCUs, TCUs and MSIs and leaders from anchor communities with respect to navigating other federal programs dealing with Internet connectivity.

We'll promote digital literacy skills, including promoting opportunities for virtual or in-person, digital literacy training and educate, which, of course, as you know, is so important, especially these continuing times of covid. We'll promote professional development opportunity and partnerships between industry leaders and our institutions of higher learning. We'll explore how to leverage investment in infrastructure with respect to Internet access and to expand connectivity with regards to the service in anchor communities

So here I included this slide to kind of illustrate who we serve under the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives.

And this is a great slide, because here it demonstrates that we see HBCUs, TCUs and MSIs which are located in 440 counties and county equivalents across 54 States and US territories touching literally every region of our country. So here you see all of our minority-based colleges and universities and where they are located.

Next slide, please. Under our OMBI objectives, we have several. Of course, we will implement and manage the $268 million for the Connecting Minority Communities pilot program. We'll conduct and continue to do local and community outreach working with our colleagues from the IIJA or BIL Grants and programs, and we will promote broadband access digital inclusion and empowerment and provide

technical assistance to our institutions of higher learning. And here you see at the end of per our congressional mandate, we are required to provide a report and an update on the good work that we're doing within the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives. Next slide please.

So here we will now talk about the Connecting Minority Communities pilot program specifically itself. Here you see $268 million allocated to focus on building the broadband digital capacities within our historically black colleges and universities, our tribal colleges and universities, and our MSIs as well as their surrounding anchor communities.

And this is so important when we talk about the surrounding anchor communities, because what we are looking at is facilitating greater broadband adoption and use at the universities and then expanding outwards into the surrounding neighborhoods and thereby affecting positive change statewide and eventually nationwide. Our purpose is to build the broadband and digital technology capacities of eligible institutions and support broadband access, adoption, and digital skills within those institutions. Next slide, please. Of course, spur economic growth and development, can't forget that.

Here under the connecting minority community's pilot program, we will continue through our efforts, as I mentioned, to work with eligible recipients to provide them with 3 temples of the CMC grant which is, one to provide Internet connectivity to the campuses or even the students in faculties within their homes. Two, purchase or lease equipment for the students and the faculty, and that could be in the form of laptops or tablets. And then three, our grant provides funding to hire and train IT Technology, personnel, very, very important facets of the Connecting Minority Communities pilot program.

Next slide, please. Under this slide was included to show all of the diverse groups that we serve which we are so proud of here. And here you see that the CMC grant provides all of our benefits to eligible institutions, such as Historically Black Colleges or Universities, HBCU's, Tribal Colleges and Universities, TCUs, and minority serving institutions, and then under that heading we have Hispanic Serving Institutions, Native Americans Serving non tribal Institutions, Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions, Asian American, and Native American Pacific Islander serving Institutions and predominantly black institutions, as well as serving consortiums, led by HBCUs, TCUs and MSIs that also included a minority business enterprise, or a tax exempt 501c3 organization.

So here you see all of the minority-based designations and the various colleges and universities that benefit from this truly great brand, the Connecting Minority Communities pilot program. And I have to say as I mentioned earlier, our grant is, our window is of course, closed at this point, and we are in our post-award phase, we are actually making awards right now. So many of you are already familiar with this information but it's important to just punctuate how vitally important the benefits that we are providing are, you know, under the CMC grant. Next slide, please.

Here, per Congress's mandate, the CMC grant will provide at least 40% of grant funds to be made available to HBCUs, and at least 20% of all grant funds will be awarded to eligible recipients to provide broadband access and/or devices and equipment. Next slide please.

Here I'm showing where we are, as I mentioned earlier, in terms of our continuous rollout of awards under the CMC grant. And as I mentioned, 19 awards thus far totaling $51.9 million on the $268 million. So, much more to come, much more to go, but we are well on our way.

And we thank you guys so much. We know that you are very, very anxious to hear and to learn, as we continue to roll out the award next slide please.

So here, because we have the representatives, my colleagues from BEAD and DE, who will be talking more specifically about this I won't go to in depth here but suffice to say that the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives is working closely, very closely with our colleagues on the BIL programs and the BIL grants, such as BEAD and DE. And were working to help to guide and to provide a direction to minority stakeholders so that you can, not only benefit from your participation within your state with regards to BEAD and DE, but how there are also other opportunities that are specifically available for you as well, which my colleagues will talk much more about. Next slide please.

And here this is just another slide which is talking about the involvement of community-based organizations, and I know that many of you are here. We want the participation of our, of course, of all of our institutions of higher learning, all of our HBCUs, TCUs and MSIs. We want our nonprofits. We want our community-based organizations. All of you to be able to have access and to participate in the great benefits that are available under BEAD and DE. Next slide please.

And this is another slide punctuating what's available underneath all of the BIL grants that we are working with. Here you see information as it pertains to BEAD as well as information on Digital Equity, and also information on the Middle Mile grant. And again, deeper information will be provided to you shortly when you hear from my colleagues on those teams. Next slide, please.

OMBI has established regional representatives that will be working alongside with the BEAD and DE FPOs, where our aim will be specifically to work to bring minority stakeholders across the US and its territories to their state broadband offices, to have a seat at the table where they can discuss and make suggestions on how broadband funding can be used within your states and territories. Really quickly, I'd like to just mention the members, the great members, hardworking members of the OMBI, CMC team. They are serving as regional representatives and CMC FPOs. They are Dr. Francine Alkisswani, Janice Wilkins, Michelle Lemel, Amy Tseng, Karen Perry, Cameron Lewis, Kayla Green, Patrick Wickland, Juan Sanchez, and Shirley Reyes. Those are the members of my team. These are the good folks who work hard every day to make sure that our minority communities are taken care of in the sense of

being provided the great opportunities coming from our grants and then also, as I mentioned, the grants under IIJA.

So with that said and done, I'm going to now at this time ask for my colleague from BEAD to take the floor and to give a presentation on opportunities that are available to minority communities under the BEAD program. And so I will ask for my colleague, Evan Feinman, to please take the floor and to address. Evan, over to you.

Evan Feinman

00:27:02
Thanks a lot. Kevin, and thanks for asking me to, you know, join everybody today. And I sincerely appreciate everyone who has joined the webinar. I know there are more exciting ways y'all could be spending your morning than listening to a webinar about federal programs, but I promise that we're going keep this useful and that that you should be able to get a fair amount out of it.

So BEAD, Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment. This is the program that is the primary broadband infrastructure deployment program created by the bipartisan infrastructure law. If we can move to the next slide.

You can see that this program has a direct budget of right around $42.5 billion dollars. The idea here is we are going to finally close the digital divide and get Internet for all Americans, as you heard from Kevin. The way this program works really from a high level is we at the federal level will make grants to our partners in state and territory governance.

So eligible entities for this program directly are only 50 State governments and the governments of the District Columbia and Puerto Rico, as well as the 4 additional territories. You can see kind of the timeline here. We anticipate getting the programs stood up in each of those states over the course of the next 6 months to a year, after which those states will begin taking in sub granting applications.

And so you can imagine, this is kind of a multi-step process whereby we are working with states to make sure they're ready to implement this program, and that they are able to do it within our guidelines. Then we will divide up our pot of money, and the states will seek on a State-by-state basis applications for sub-grants to both accomplish the infrastructure challenge as well as implement very strong, accountable digital equity programming.

And so if we move to the next slide, one thing that I really want to emphasize here is that the Digital Equity Act program, which you're going to hear about in just a moment, and the BEAD program are incredibly closely interlinked. The digital equity plans that each of the states and territories are writing are also incorporated into the plans that they're writing for BEAD.

There is going to be no daylight between the way the digital equity program is implemented on a state-by-state basis and the way BEAD's digital equity funding is implemented on a state by state basis.

Moreover, I want to be really clear that, while it is remarkable and exciting that the BEAD program is writing the next chapter in the great American infrastructure story, whether it's, you know, you're talking about rural electrification or the interstate highway system, we're also aware that there's some dark pages in those other chapters. The infrastructure has not always been equitably distributed and often was used as a tool against minority or marginalized communities. We are deeply committed to avoiding that in the BEAD program.

And so both with our direct digital equity programming and funding, we're going to be supporting minority and marginalized communities. But we are also going to make sure that the manner in which the infrastructure is created is not some kind of top-down serving majority or wealthy communities first. Rather that we, the equitably distributed in terms of the quality, availability, pricing, and speed of deployment, so that we can make sure that all Americans benefit as we connect all Americans.

So, moving to the next slide. What you can see is that we are really focused on, sort of in this order within the BEAD program, first, increasing access for unserved and underserved households. This is about infrastructure. So what we're saying here is, if you don't have a wireless signal, or a fiber or a coax cable to your house, we're going get it to you.

The first priority is unserved locations. People who can't get online at any price at speeds that are above 25 megabits per second download and 3 megabits per second upload. Our second priority is the underserved households and businesses. Those are places that have above that 25/ 3 baseline level but do not have what we would consider to be broadband speeds, which are at least 100 megabits per second over 20 megabits per second. After that, what we're going to focus on is ensuring that community anchor institutions and very strong digital equity programs are funded.

Throughout the entirety of this deployment we're going to make sure that the services that are offered are affordable and that the network construction is sustainable. So when you think about that, you know, there's kind of 3 different big problems that we've got a bridge before we can solve the digital divide. It's is there infrastructure adequate to get online? Can people afford to take service over that infrastructure? And then do they have the skills and devices necessary to make meaningful use of that service?

So if we move on to the next slide, this goes a little bit more into the way the funding is distributed. So FCC right now is making and improving a map that is locations-based. They are consistently publishing new and improved maps based on challenges that they receive as well as their own work to improve the map. Folks may be familiar with the prior FCC map that was based on census tract data that was not a great map. And most of us don't live in houses the size of a census track and it didn't tell us a lot about who actually had service and didn't have service.

The new map is imperfect, everyone agrees that it is imperfect, but what we believe is that by June 30th, which is our planned date right now, the maps will be adequate

for the distribution of our funds. So what will happen is each state and territory, with some exceptions for the for American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, each state and territory will get $100 million, there's less 4 that I mentioned, will get a minimum of $25 million dollars. And then the funding will be broken out according to the number of unserved locations in each state and territory relative to the total number of uncertainties, as well as the number of very high cost locations relative to the total number of very high cost locations.

So all $42.5 billion dollars will be granted out to each state and territory proportionate to their needs. We are also going to make sure that we have, you know, as good an opportunity as possible to ground truth those maps. And so, I while it's not covered here, I want to be clear that folks should work to improve the FCC maps as much as they can. But after allocation, each state and territory will have the opportunity to run their own challenge process which we believe will allow us to get an even more close and granular look at what the needs are within each of the states and territories so that we can make sure no home is left behind, no business is left behind, no community anchor is left behind.

So if we turn to the next slide, this goes a little more deeply into the prioritization that I laid out earlier. So what we have here is our unserved locations. That's, of course, people who are below 25 megabits per second download in 3 megabits per second upload. I'll also emphasize here that this includes multi-family dwellings. Very frequently what will happen on the FCC map is a building will be shown as served, but in fact, units within that building do not have access to the internet. We will solve that even if that location is shown is served on the FCC map, later on that challenge process. What we'll do is we'll identify the lack of access in those other units with the help of community leaders like y'all on the on the webinar right now. And then we'll be able to make sure that we get either wired service within that building, or if the you know, the landlord or the property owner doesn't let us do that, then what we'll do is we'll position wireless transmitters outside of the building to ensure that every unit has access to the Internet.

We also want to make sure that everybody who has mediocre or bad service right now gets up to adequate service speeds, and that will include, you know, folks who have a wireless provider but who, you know, from whom they can't get high speeds or they don't have a reliable signal. It'll also include people on DSL and others who, you know, is simply just don't have an adequate connection but not a very good one.

Last, we want to make sure that community anchor institutions are served. One of the big deficiencies that we're finding for our purposes on the FCC map is that many community anchor institutions are not being reflected as broadband serviceable locations right now on that map, even though they, in fact, need to take service from an ISP. The way in which we're implementing this model is pretty different from prior federal efforts related to broadband.

We are not picking projects in DC. No one can apply who is not a state or territory government to us to get a grant. Rather, we are ensuring that every single state government works very, creates their own broadband office, and then works incredibly closely with every single local government and every single community group, every single tribal government and other keys stakeholders to ensure that all of those groups needs are met.

So, we're going to give the money to the states. The states are going to develop a program that they're going to submit to us. And they're going to say, this is what we believe we need to do to make sure this works. we're going say, have you talked to everybody? Have you talked to every minority serving institution? Have you talked to every local government? Have you talked to every community group that's interested in doing this? Have you talked to every tribal government?

If the answer is No, we will tell them to go do that, and then come back with their improved plan. If the answer is yes, then we'll make sure that we are confident that that has happened and we will approve their plan to then seek out applications to that state office for grants to build infrastructure and do digital equity programming.

Because this is a different model, it requires a different staffing approach. So while we have hired a lot of staff, if you turn to the next slide, what we have also done is we have deployed best program officers to every state in the union. So every single state in the Union and every single territory has a Federal Program Officer to whom they can speak and who is the primary point of contact for program implementation in the states. These folks are going to be building relationships with key stakeholder groups throughout each state and territory.

We're also going to be pulling together what we're calling state broadband tables. I'm not, I'm not going keep saying states and territories, y'all, but it just because it takes a little while, I mean states and territories every time I say state.

But we're going be pulling together state broadband tables. Those are, if you've been in the advocacy world, those are effectively coalitions spaces. These are places where all interested parties can come together, they can share their concerns and needs with our team and our team is going to be able to push out dates, opportunities for collaboration, and key technical information about the way in which the program is working.

If you've got any concerns at present, what you should do is go to the Internet for All website. There is a map there, you can click on your state or territory and you'll be able to see the direct contact info for both the State Broadband office and the Federal Program Officer who is serving that state or territory.

If we move to the next slide, this goes a little more deeply into you know what I was just discussing which is that again, the only eligible entities for funding from us are the states and territories. Then they will, according to a program of grant

distribution that we approve the States and territories will then make grants to sub-grantees.

So how's that going to work? If we look at the next slide, what you see is that there are effectively 5 major steps. We have gotten one of those done in all 50 States and 6 Territories. Letters of intent came into us over the summer along with planning fund applications for as much as $5 million dollars to each of these broadband offices so they can staff up, so they can get to a place where they're competent to administer this program. As a result of that, they should already have begun construction on their 5-year action plans.

Those are 270 days after they received their planning funds. Most that happen in different dates, but in November, so every one of these states and territories is under a ticking clock. That 5-year Action Plan you could think of as the 100,000' look at how each state is going to achieve Internet for All Americans. That plan will go into our review and we're going to give them some significant steer.

Secondarily, sort of in a parallel process, we're going to get a lot more tactical. So 5 Year Action Plan, strategy. Initial proposal and final proposal, much closer to the ground, tactical, how are we actually going to do this?

And so that initial proposal would going to be due 180 days after June 13th. It is, you can think of as the blueprints of the machine that are going to get that's going to get this done. That is, how are they going to run this, the state-run challenge process to ensure every single location is accounted for? How are they going to open their portal to people who would like subgrants in each state and territory? What is their plan to ensure that they are getting good ongoing, collaborative feedback, not just notice and comment from key stakeholders within their state?

And then what is the scoring mechanism that they're going to use to score infrastructure proposals and non deployment activities or digital equity activities? After NTIA approves that plan, you know, approves the blueprints of the machine, that's when they build the machine and then they take in applications.

And so they will say, we've got this amount of money for infrastructure and this amount of money for digital equity. That's going to vary on a state-by-state basis. Some states, unfortunately, will need to spend all of their allocation on infrastructure under BEAD. The majority of States will have will be able to build robust infrastructure with their BEAD allocation and spend significant additional resources from their BEAD allocation on digital equity. The outputs of that are application and scoring process are the heart of the final proposal that they will send to NTIA. And after we approve it, then they'll set about, you know, finalizing the grant agreements and contracts and getting the money out to sub grantees so that folks can actually start building, teaching, doing device provision, etc.

So how does each state figure out how much money it gets? If we move to the next slide, you can see that the way in which we're dividing up these funds. Each State will have the minimum amount allocation, a $100 million dollars for all 50 States as

well as DC and Puerto Rico. $25 million is the minimum allocation for the remaining 4 Territories.

We also set aside 10% of our total pot of money to fund the very high-cost locations, recognizing that tribal villages in Alaska are going to be somewhat more expensive to serve than suburbs in Rhode Island. And then finally, the remainder of the funds right around 90% of the funds, less admin costs, will be divided according to simply the percentage of unserved locations in a given state or territory relative to the number of uncertain locations in a given state.

Each state will, then they will know, right, we get this many hundreds of millions or billions of dollars to solve this problem in our state, to, and they will set about running their challenge process to determine which uncertain locations they need serve as well as how they're going to divide up the digital program.

So if you turn to the next slide, which is kind of the last high level overview here, right? First, they've got to figure out where they need to build infrastructure. Second, they're going to construct that challenge process to make sure that they're right. Third, they're going to make sure that everybody knows what's going on. And then fourth, we will review all of those choices. So that's really important and I strongly encourage everyone here to be in communication with your state broadband office and our Federal Program Officer in your state or territory over the summer.

It'll, allocation is going to be June 13th. So you can imagine some states will move very swiftly after that allocation is made to begin this challenge process. You need to hear from y'all. The key thing I want to let everybody know here is, this is a very well-resourced program. We've got a both, in terms of the amazing people who've joined our team, the incredible partners we have in the stakeholder community, and in the state broadband offices. As well as just you know, look, it's a lot of money. It's $42.5 billion dollars.

It isn't enough. We absolutely require a whole of society effort if we're going to solve this big societal problem. And so everyone, everybody who is joining this webinar is a community leader, we know that. We need to hear from you to make sure that we serve your community well, that both from an infrastructure standpoint and a digital equity standpoint.

So please do reach out to both the state broadband office and our staff person in your state or territory, and again you can go to the Internet for All website. And I don't, I can't share that, I don't have the link right in front of me, but it's not, it won't be hard to navigate to a map that you can hover over, click on each state or territory and you'll see our staff person reach out to them. Reach out to them today, set up a meeting, make sure that they know who you are, and you know who they are.

They will be the key people that you're going to be able to use to guide you through this process as we build infrastructure to every single American home and business

and community anchor as well as the creation of really robust digital equity programming. And so with that I think it's a good segway to turn the mic over to my friend and colleague, Michell, to tell you a little bit about the Digital Equity Act.

Michell Morton

00:45:19.000
Thanks Evan. Okay next slide, please. Okay, so before providing an update, I think it's important that we pause and define equity. I would like to highlight that to achieve equity that it must be consistent and fair to individuals and communities, specifically to those that are under served and under underrepresented. And that in order for equity to exist, it means the opportunity to fully participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.

So what does this mean for the Digital Equity Act? It means that we are driving toward parity and outcomes as it relates to economic growth and opportunity, health, education, civic engagement, and access to essential services. This also means that each of you on this call today have the tools, resources, programs and services to help each state broadband office achieve digital equity.

Next slide, please. As many of you know by now, the Digital Equity Act is $2.75 billion program that has 3 grant programs. Planning, capacity, and competitive. Through the Digital Equity act's 3 programs the goal is to ensure communities and individuals can access and use that ways that are relevant to their daily lives. Next slide, please.

You may also know that all 50 States, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have received their digital equity act planning Grant and every US territory has submitted their Digital Equity Act planning grant application. Next slide, please.

So, as I mentioned previously, the Digital Equity Act is a three-phase program. We are currently in the planning grant. This is $60 million allocated to states and territories to develop a plan for implication.

States are currently in a process of developing their plans. They have started conducting asset, mapping, planning, and hosting, outreach and engagement events and listening tours, meeting with various stakeholder groups and facilitating state broadband tables to help them develop strategies that will be implemented during the capacity grants. Next slide please.

So what does this mean for you As a community anchor institution, a local government, or community organization? It means now is the time to engage with the State Broadband offices. Many of you have been leaders in this field for years, if not decades. You possess the programs, services, research reports, and data that the state broadband offices need to develop these plans.

We have tasked the state broadband offices with the co-creation of these plans with subject matter experts and lived experts. Many of you are providing programs or services that can be shared and leveraged, whether that's a digital skills program, leading efforts to help residents sign up for ACP, helping residents getting access to

devices, or have implemented programs or conducted research that can help the states achieve more equitable outcomes and education, health, workforce, civic participation, and access to essential services.

I would suggest that you invite the state broadband offices to your table. Have them meet with the lived experts most impacted by the digital divide, because we know they also have some of the best solutions to the issues and challenges we were hoping to address through this funding. And with that we can go into our questions and answers please.

Kevin Hughes

00:49:24.000
Thank you so much, Michell, for that presentation. And we are going to now, as Michell mentioned, segway into our Q & A, which provides an opportunity to for you to ask questions of any of us as panelists. I know that there was a lot of good, solid information provided to you from Evan, from Michell, from myself with regards to the various grants and programs we represent.

And now it's your opportunity to ask any questions by just simply dropping the questions into the chat. One of the questions that I see right away, which is a good one, which is basically, how do you get in touch with us? And so you know, for CMC and of course if you need to contact Evan and the BEAD program, or Michell in the DE program, we can route those questions to you as well. But you can contact us at CMC@ntia.gov.

And that's a way that you can reach us direct with any questions that you may have. Okay. I also wanted to make sure and re-reference that you visit our website at internetforall.gov. And that gives you very, very important information, which was covered by Evan, Michell, and myself.

As well as if you want an update on the CMC grants and where we are in terms of our rollout and the number of awards that were made, you can go to our https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/ address. And there you click on Grant Programs and click on CMC. There you will be able to see the status of the rolling process of our awards. Okay, so just teeing that up.

Let's move on to some other questions that we see in the chat. And Evan and Michell, you guys can feel free to jump in at any time.

Michell Morton

I can take one question. It just came up. Hi, Joe, about the competitive awards. Yes, they will be nationwide and open to community anchor institutions, community-based organizations, local governments as well. As far as a timeline, we don't have that yet. More than likely that will happen I would say the early part of next year.

Kevin Hughes

Okay. I see a question here again asking about the CMC grants and information on that. We will continue yes, we're going to continue to provide our grants, you know, on a rolling basis. You can reach out to us direct for more information on those if you have a specific question about a grant that has been made in your state. Alright! Let's see.

Evan Feinman	Well, say, I see couple here. One is there an existing partnership with organizations that focus on serving the deaf and hard of hearing community?

We have been talking with both NASRA and TEDPA, who are national organizations with state affiliates that focus on the technology that leverages the internet to support the deaf and hard of hearing community. The, we don't, our only partnerships will be with states and territories, to be clear, like we're not picking winners and losers ahead of time, but we are certainly doing as much outreach as we can to organizations of that sort as well as other organizations that serve specific identified communities to make sure folks know about it.

And if you are someone who is concerned about whether or not your state or territory is going to be taking seriously the concerns of the deaf and hard of hearing community, what I would say is, make sure to get in touch with our staff person in state as well as your state broadband office and make your voices heard. As I said before, you know, our expectation is not just notice and comment, but really robust ongoing collaboration.

And so if you're raising a concern, whether it's for the deaf or hard of hearing community, or for a specific minority or affinity group, somebody in a disability space, you know, it really doesn't matter, if you're not being listened to by the state broadband office you need to tell our team and we will make sure that you are. We are very committed to making sure that we are not doing this program at people. We're doing this program with people. |
| Kevin Hughes | And I wanted to just mention or remention it at this time, that the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives is basically, was created to help expand outreach into minority communities and to really help to make sure that our communities are not left behind as it becomes to broadband, as it pertains to broadband. And so, the one of the important messages that I want you guys to come away from today's webinar with is that the opportunities under the CMC grant, my grant, CMC is closed at this time. We're no longer receiving applications because we are actually in the post award process and making.

However, we want to make sure that those of you who are on this call are also privy to the additional opportunities. I say again the additional opportunities that are available to for you under the BEAD and DE programs. When we look at the DE program, for example, we are asking you to participate in really getting excited in both BEAD and DE from the perspective of going to your state broadband office and really talk to them about, you know, any ideas or suggestions that you may have with regard to how broadband funding can be used within your state.

And so we have OMBI representatives who are partnering with the BEAD and DE FPOs to work with our stakeholders, you guys within your states, so that you can then be able to meet with the state broadband office to discuss any ideas or suggestions that you have. |

I know that many of you, for example are HBUs, TCUs, and MSIs, you guys have, you know, ideas or concepts that maybe you've thought about with regards to connectivity and perhaps how you can make suggestions in terms of how broadband connectivity can be done within your state, perhaps ideas which were regards to digital literacy. All of these things we want you to be able to discuss with your state broadband office, be a part of the process, have a seat, have a seat at the table.

This is why we are really punctuating the fact that this is a great opportunity for you, and we hope, sincerely hope, and that you take advantage of it. And that you understand that this is why we're bringing this directly to your attention is because there's a tremendous opportunity here. In addition to that, under DE there's a the competitive grant portion of the program that will come out a little bit later, which will actually afford you opportunity to actually apply for funding directly for yourself. And I think that that amount is $1.25 million Michell, believe that that amount is correct. And so there's a great opportunity. So we're not just talking about you going to the state broadband office and talking with them is one facet.

But then, later on, there's going to be actual, an actual opportunity for you to participate yourself in an opportunity for that particular grant under DE and the competitive grant.

I want to go back to the chat see if we have, we have some other questions that have come in, Evan.

Evan Feinman

Yeah, Kevin, I got a couple here. First, a question from Rick, who represents a tribal government, about the speed that broadband infrastructure that's built is going to be. The answer, there is. We do have a preference for fiber, and but we're not going to build anything that is below 2,100 over 20. So we're not going to build anything that would then be under served. Right? You know, if we're going to build something, we want it to be future proof is a terrible term, because it proves us all wrong eventually.

But, we at least want something that's going to be able to serve the community's needs for years and years. And, where it is financially possible, that's going to mean fiber or an upfitted coax network that's also very fast. Where it is not economically viable to, even with all of the funds that exist in the state, to do fiber to the home, then what we will say is, you know, these are very high cost locations. We will accept some wireless technology, but that still needs to be built at a very high speed and a very low latency.

The only other thing I would say is that, that I didn't cover in my remarks, to the extent that folks here are from educational institutions, there is a huge work force shortfall that, you know, we are partially responsible for, right?

We're putting a lot more business out into the world for the telecom industry. There are not currently enough folks to fill those jobs, and we are going to be releasing very soon, we've got some really remarkable data of a variety of different labor

category shortfalls that we've got in each state and territory. And we need y'all's help. We got to get folks trained up so that they can get these jobs.

These are good jobs, these jobs are going to last a long time, and we anticipate that these jobs being occupations that will give people upward mobility and very strong wages above the prevailing average in almost every instance. So it's a, it's a good opportunity for your current and future students. And again we need y'all's help to get folks trained on in.

Michell Morton

I see a question here in the chat that I'd like to sort of answer. So the question is from Jennifer Jamie, and it is, is there an efficient way for a national organization that serves multiple states with a mission focus on digital equity to coordinate involvement in state DE plans? And so I would like to answer that by saying proactively reaching out to the state broadband offices in each state is encouraged. The DE team can definitely assist in making a connection to the Federal Program Officers in those States, if you're interested and I can drop the email address for that in the chat.

Kevin Hughes

Okay, great. I also want to take the opportunity to re-emphasize the point that OMBI stakeholder institutions of higher education, that you are community anchor institutions or CAIs. And so it's very important that you understand that you play a huge part in, you know, the opportunities that are available under BEAD and DE.

CAIs serve and represent, you know, a very broad anchor community but we want you to, we want to make sure that you have a seat at the table when it comes to these opportunities that are available. And so I just wanted to point that out, okay.

Evan Feinman

But I want to underline that if a state does not the state broadband office does not proactively invite you to a seat at the table and give you a real opportunity to voice your views, that state is imperiling hundreds of millions or billions of dollars of funding. If they do a bad enough job on stakeholder engagement, they aren't getting their money. They must, must work with y'all.

Kevin Hughes

And we know that so many of you on this call, many of you the CMC applicants, you guys have already have shovel already projects that can serve your communities. And so these are the ideas that we want you to bring to the state broadband office for consideration. This is very important, because you already have a, you know, a turnkey ideas and concepts that can be vital to your state.

So we would ask you to come forward and join with the OMBI representative and the BEAD and DE FPOs, and in terms of reaching out to your state broadband office and taking your seat, your rightful seat at the table in terms of opportunities.

Michell Morton

I see a question for me. What happened during the state capacity grants phase after planning? So the capacity phase is the, basically, implementation. So, the plans roll into the implementation phase. So states will be awarded money to implement their plans. And that's over 5 years so that's why it's important to start meeting the states as they do these plans.

Kevin Hughes

Exactly. So this I again I can't stress it enough, what you're hearing from Michell and from Evan and myself are real and tangible opportunities. They are opportunities for you. And so this that was the purpose of this webinar is to bring this to your attention so that you can see what's available and to provide the guidance for you to, basically, access these opportunities

Let's see what else, we have some other questions coming into the chat.

Evan Feinman

Well, so right at the bottom the Chris just asked. Well, State, and I'm confused about the funding can be used for CAIs, and the funding is based on the state maps based on the FCC map and the FCC map excludes many CAIs. How do we ensure CAIs are mapped accurately?

The first thing is, FCC has a challenge process within its map that will allow it to make that update right? So if you represent a CAI that is not shown as a broadband serviceable location on the FCC map, put a challenge into the FCC map to make sure that you're properly represented there.

The second thing that I would say is though, remember that, and if we could go back we wouldn't have them both be called challenge processes but we're not going to open up NOFO rewrite just to change that term. But there's both the FCC map challenge process and the state run challenge process.

And so what we, the FCC map is the beginning of that state challenge process, but we really see the State challenge process, which is run according to a rule set that you guys will all have the opportunity to see and that we will approve after the state develops it according to our guidance that will allow us to kind of clean up that FCC map and make sure that it's accurate about both where services needed and what the current service availability is at each of those locations.

I also see a question about low-Earth orbit satellites. You know we really want to focus on proven technologies and business models that only LEO constellation that's currently offering service right now is Starlink.

They seem to be offering a good product, but it has a lot of limitations. They themselves still characterize what they're doing as a beta test. And so if there's truly no other realistic option, you know we're not going to spend $75 million dollars to run a fiber to a single location and if that's not a good wireless candidate either, and it happens to be a low-income resident, what we would do is support satellite connectivity for, you know, equipment and, you know, navigation to the affordable connectivity program for the residents of that location. But what we really want to focus on is terrestrial service at the highest quality possible before we would ever entertain a, you know, another service provision methodology.

Kevin Hughes

One of the things I'd like to revisit is the fact that under the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives, in addition to all of the work that we do to benefit minority communities, we also represent veterans and seniors. These are 2 groups that also,

with regards to broadband, you know, have not been at the forefront of the table. And so it's very important for us as a part of our outreach, we're reaching out to national groups and organizations to help address the connectivity, providing connectivity for those 2 groups as well.

Think what what's very important for you, which I hope you're getting a good sense of, is that NTIA through its efforts is really providing a holistic approach to addressing the digital divide here in America. And also to address, you know, bringing America up to the level where our country needs to be with regards to infrastructure as Evan was talking about. And then in in terms of training and skills like Michell was referencing under DE.

We have a real great opportunity here in terms of increasing of workforce development, our digital literacy training of all Americans, as well as providing the infrastructure in unserved and underserved community under the BEAD program, which is what we are doing.

So I really hope that that you guys, you get a sense that, and these are just, these are just some of our awards, we haven't even touched on tribal or middle mile, and all of the other grants that we have, which are also doing good work, which are also all working together hand in hand, to help create better America. The questions are coming in.

Evan Feinman

Yeah, I see a good one, Kevin. David Randall- where will the workforce report you mentioned be available? At a minimum, it be on the Internet for all website. And you know I think I can lean on Kevin and his team to email that out to all of y'all as well as his broader list.

Look, I'd be if it weren't for the littering problem, I'd be printing it out and dropping it from planes city, I mean, people need to know right? Because it we're going to fall behind if we can't get enough folks trained up to solve this problem. And so you know, we're going to be sharing that as loudly and broadly as we possibly can.

Kevin Hughes

Yes, definitely so. Okay, other questions I see coming in on CMC, I see a question asking about, again, about the rollout. You can check the website that I mentioned previously so that you can see, which is updated very regularly in terms of the awards that are made.

And we're going to keep those going. You know, these awards are very important, obviously, to our institutions of higher learning and to our communities. And we're going to make sure that these awards continue to flow and those funds to provide Internet access, to provide equipment, tablets and laptops to the students, as well as to hire and train it technicians. We're going to make sure that that funding continues because it is so very, very important to our communities.

Michell, was there anything under DE that you wanted to address as we kind of round out to begin our closing?

Michell Morton	I think I saw a question related to the tribes, and I'll answer the tribal entities will and communities will be treated separately as sovereign nations, as someone stated. But we also want to emphasize the importance of states really including tribal entities and groups in this planning process it is expected of them to reach out to these communities as they are creating these plans so they are integrated into the plant as well. So it's not either/or, it's both/ and so I just want to emphasize that.
Kevin Hughes	Okay, great Evan, anything you wanted to round out on in terms of what we're seeing in the chat?
Evan Feinman	No, just go back to my earlier call to action guys. We need you, we can't do it without you. Please come as soon as they're organized, and we should be setting them up this month, so the things will be on the schedule in most states. These state broadband tables, this is going to be the best regularly meeting gathering for folks who care about these issues to engage with our teams as well as the State broadband office and so that y'all can hear what we're worried about, and so we can hear what you're worried about. We're also going to be doing one-to-few and one-on-one stakeholder engagement. But like there's a lot of folks, there's not a lot of us so it'll sure help, if you please. Come to those table meetings, so be on the lookout, and we'll make sure folks who are notified of this meeting are notified of those table meetings opportunities.
Kevin Hughes	01:13:50.000 Okay, great. And I think at each, at the conclusion of each of the slide presentations that Evan did and Michell did, there was email information where you can contact either those either BEAD or DE or, like I said, if you have any questions for them that you want to route through our office, we will do that because we work hand in hand together, and we're happy to do that. 01:14:23.000 As it pertains to OMBI, you know, for questions pertaining to the CMC grant again, please reach out to CMC@ntia.gov and we'll be able to respond to any questions that you have as it pertains to the CMC grant or the Office of Minority Broadband initiatives. Alrighty, I think we've had a very, very successful webinar here, lots of great information provided, and I hope that you really take to heart the opportunities that are available to you under NTIA's very diverse suite of grants and opportunities. Decades ago, when America's infrastructure was first being built, they built our electrical grids and capacity, our water systems and waterways, and our roads and our highways. And today, thanks to the Biden Administration and NTIA, we are now completing the buildout of our internet-related infrastructure and related services. This monumental effort is designed to touch every American. Want to repeat every American, and so I want everyone on this call to get excited about these opportunities as they were created to help make a better America for all of us.

And so on behalf of OMBI and CMC, my colleagues representing the BEAD and DE programs, and all of us at the Department of Commerce and NTIA, we would like to thank you sincerely. Thank you for participating in today's webinar. And please be sure, participate in future OMBI and CMC webinars, as, in addition to BEAD and all NTIA webinars and meetings and postings that you receive information from.

We are here to serve you. And we're so very happy to be doing the job to make a better America and to provide Internet for all. And so with that said, I think we've come to the conclusion of our webinar, and I want to thank you again for your participation. Thank you.

[END WEBINAR]