Overview

INTERNET FOR ALL

The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to ensuring that all Americans have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet service.

As part of this goal NTIA has published a Request for Comment on Regulations.gov to help inform how the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Digital Equity Act programs can work to achieve this national and community driven opportunity for change.

This Request for Comment is part of NTIA's wider strategy to engage with partners, stakeholders, and most importantly, individuals with lived experiences who are impacted by the digital divide.

These tips are meant to help you submit comments that have an impact and help us improve our programs.

Background

The Digital Equity Act - Three Programs to Promote Digital Equity and Inclusion

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 service to meet their needs and improve their lives.

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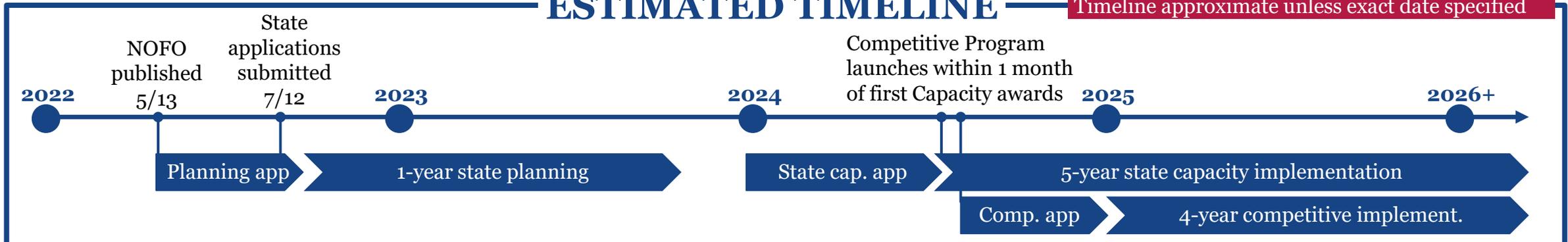
Competitive
- $1.25B to implement digital equity and inclusion activities

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

ESTIMATED TIMELINE

Timeline approximate unless exact date specified

NOFO published 5/13

State applications submitted 7/12

Competitive Program launches within 1 month of first Capacity awards

2022 — **2023** — **2024** — **2025** — **2026+**

Planning app → 1-year state planning

State cap. app → 5-year state capacity implementation

Comp. app → 4-year competitive implement.

The Digital Equity Act focuses on addressing the needs of "covered populations" as defined by the statute

Covered Populations

Identity groups and communities disproportionally impacted by digital inequity

- Low-income households
- Aging populations
- Incarcerated individuals
- Veterans

- People with disabilities
- People with language barriers
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Rural inhabitants

Every stakeholder plays a role in the Digital Equity programs

Illustrative, non-exhaustive

Telecom provider
- Provide States, other territories, and Tribal / Native entities with background data on their baseline and digital equity needs
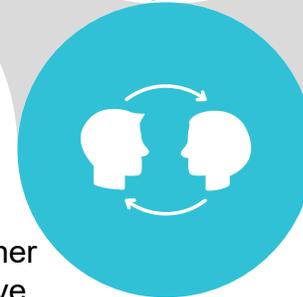
Community anchor institution
- Partner with States, other territories, and Tribal / Native entities to develop State Digital Equity Plans
- Advocate for community interests and needs

Community orgs
- Serve as a thought partner as States, other territories, and Tribal / Native entities design their outreach strategies
- Advocate for community interests and needs

Tribal government
- Coordinate with relevant State(s) to develop state-wide Plans

Local government
- Collaborate with States, other territories, and Tribal / Native to develop State Digital Equity Plans

Individual
- Participate in the planning process of your local jurisdiction

Eligible entities are required to engage with key stakeholders as a part of developing digital equity plans

Key stakeholder groups may include:

- Community anchor institutions

- County and municipal governments

- Local educational agencies

- Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, or Native Hawaiian organizations, where applicable

- Nonprofit organizations

- Organizations that represent covered populations

- Civil rights organizations

- Entities that carry out workforce development programs

- State agencies that administer or supervise adult education or literacy activities

- Public housing authorities

Request For Comment

NTIA's Request for Comment on the Digital Equity Act programs is **currently open.**

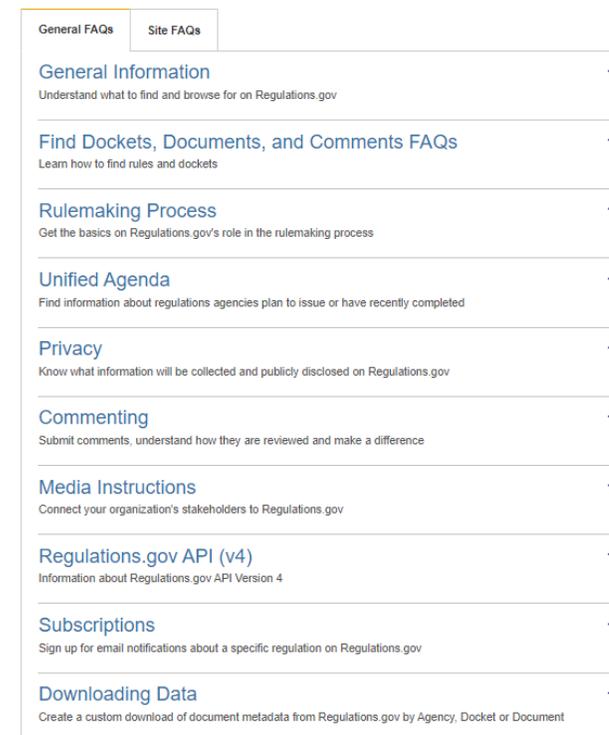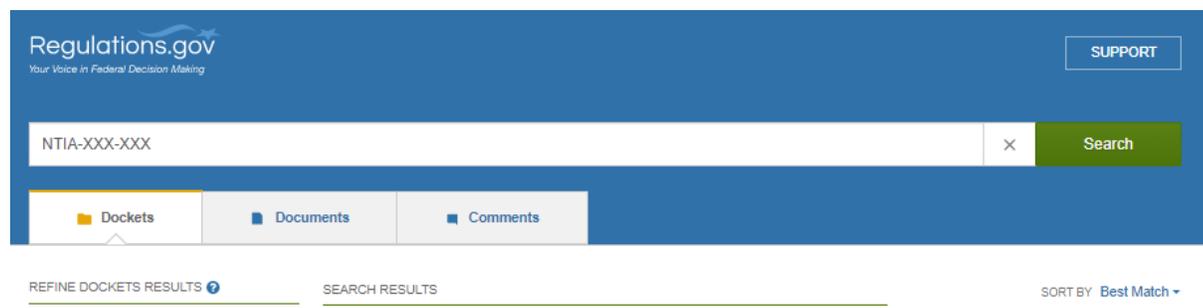The Notice and RFC is available [here](). Comments can be submitted at regulations.gov under Docket #NTIA-2023-0002.

The deadline for all comments is: **May 1st, 2023 at 5:00 PM EST**

Regulations.gov

To submit a comment via regulations.gov enter the Docket "NTIA-2023-0002" in the search bar, then click on the 'Dockets' tab (as shown below).

For further questions, please refer to the regulations.gov FAQs.

How to Submit Comments

1. Keep a copy of your comment in a separate file - this practice helps ensure that you will not lose your comment if you have a problem submitting it using the Regulations.gov web form.

2. Additionally, NTIA will accept comments via email. Please include the docket number NTIA-2023-0002 in the subject line of the message, and direct your comments to digitalequity@ntia.gov

3. You may also mail a printed submission to

   National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 4878, Washington, DC 20230, Attn: Digital Equity RFC.

4. The Digital Equity Act comment period will close **60 days after date of publication on the Federal Register (March 2 to May 1st)** - begin work well before the deadline

How to Write a Comment

Tips on Crafting Comments

1. While NTIA encourages you to support your comment with substantive data, facts, and opinions, **you do not need to be an expert or professional to provide a comment.** You are encouraged to provide your lived experience in your comment

2. Clearly identify the question(s) that you are commenting on and include the question number. There is no minimum or maximum length for a comment, and you are encouraged to reply to any or all questions posed.

3. If you disagree with an aspect of our programs, suggest an alternative and include an explanation and/or analysis of how the alternative might meet the same objective or be more effective.

4. Include pros and cons and trade-offs in your comment. Consider other points of view and respond to them with your views. Include examples of how our programs would impact your life and work positively or negatively.

5. Please reach out to NTIA via digitalequity@ntia.gov if you have any questions about the Request for Comment, and stay up to date on NTIA information by visiting broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov and www.internetforall.gov

Additional resources about the Digital Equity Programs

1. Visit the InternetForAll.gov for additional information on federal funding programs

2. Engage with your State or territory regarding their plans to improve high-speed Internet access and achieve digital equity

3. Submit questions to digitalequity@ntia.gov

4. Attend future NTIA webinars, including program-specific application guidance webinars for applicants