



Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives (OMBI) Webinar: Digital Skills and Workforce Development

Administered by the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)



NTIA will administer ~\$48B through four programs that drive high-speed Internet access, affordability, and adoption



NTIA will administer ~\$48B of funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

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.

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.

FCC to administer \$14.2B

For Affordable Connectivity Program, which replaced the EBB program

USDA to administer \$2.0B

Via the Rural Utilities Service

Private Activity Bonds \$0.6B

Authorizes State and local governments to use private activity bonds for rural broadband



BEAD will provide ~\$42.45B for infrastructure planning and implementation



Funding pool
\$42.45B

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.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Entities eligible to apply for this program include:

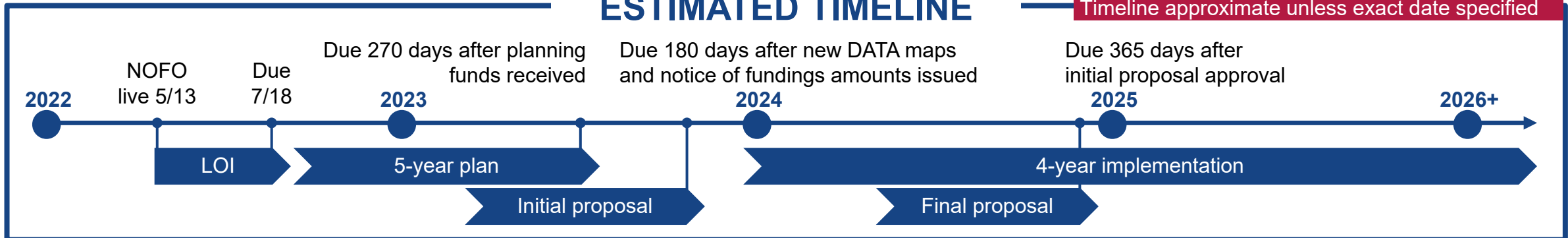
- All 50 States
- The District of Columbia and Puerto Rico
- Other Territories: U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Example eligible uses of funds include:

- ☆ Planning for deployment of Internet
- ☆ Deploying or upgrading Internet
- ☆ Installing Internet in multi-tenant buildings
- ☆ Implementing adoption and digital equity programs
- ☆ Workforce and job training

ESTIMATED TIMELINE

Timeline approximate unless exact date specified



Fostering Equity in the Telecommunications Workforce



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



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

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



Workforce Values



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

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



Workforce Planning Guide for Eligible Entities



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



Access the Workforce Planning Guide:
<https://www.internetforall.gov/workforce-planning-guide>

The Workforce Planning Guide includes:

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



Workforce Strategies Overview



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



Federal Labor and Employment Laws

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



Skilled Workforce

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



Equitable Training & Workforce Development

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



Contracting

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



Equitable Training & Workforce Development



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



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Equitable Training & Workforce Development



**Equitable Training and
Workforce Development
Includes...**



Workforce Readiness



Supporting a Diverse Workforce



Outreach and Engagement



Worker Protections





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



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





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



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



Supporting a Diverse Workforce | Strategies (1 of 2)



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

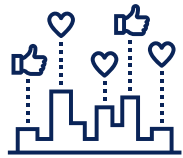


Provide Equipment: In addition to wrap-around services, providing laptops and electronics required onsite or for training programs and personal protective equipment such as hard hats, safety glasses, and gloves, as well as boots available in all sizes for both men and women, can reduce the financial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



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





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



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



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



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

Outreach and Engagement | Strategies



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



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



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



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



Worker Protections | Strategies



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



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



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



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



How You Can Engage



Engage with your State Broadband Office

Share local workplace planning initiatives as well as local workforce concerns with your State Broadband Office.



Educate & Convene Local Stakeholders

Expand awareness of BEAD and Digital Equity and mobilize others to act collectively.



Think about Opportunities

What opportunities do you see for BEAD and Digital Equity programs to support your workforce initiatives?



Share Examples with NTIA

Send NTIA examples of strong workforce programs related to high-speed Internet deployment and implementation.





THANK YOU

