

**INTERNET
FOR ALL**

Project Narrative Guidance

State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program



Disclaimer



This document is intended solely to assist applicants in better understanding the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program and the requirements set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and follow-on policies and guidance for this program. This document does not and is not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, or the specific application requirements set forth in the NOFO. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the NOFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in this document.

This document pertains to SDECGP requirements for States and Territories. While the NOFO contains information about the Capacity Grant Program for Native Entities, the requirements and details of that program and timelines will be covered at a later date.



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Overview: Project Narrative



The goal₁ of the project narrative is to provide an overall implementation strategy consistent with the Digital Equity Plan that is divided into two sections: **General Project Information** and **Specific Projects**. The Project Narrative must incorporate the following criteria and focal points₁:



Focus on Covered Populations: Focus on the priorities of the Covered Populations being served, including subgroups within each covered population



Long-lasting and Meaningful Change: Projects/activities must address the systemic barriers and gaps to digital access with a particular focus on sustainability of initiatives



Measurable Implementation Strategies: Programs/activities should be based on objectives that are measurable, achievable, sustainable, timebound, and designed to address identified disparities



Stakeholder Engagement: Stakeholders directly affected by proposed strategies/interventions should be involved in ongoing feedback loops and input on potential solutions/improvements

1. SDECGP NOFO Section II.C.3



NGP Application Section 3.1

Executive Summary | *Section 3.1.1*



The Executive Summary is intended to be a high-level summary of the overall project narrative₁. *Character Limit: 2,500 (approximately 500 words).*

The Executive Summary includes:



Main Purpose

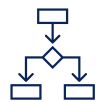
The Executive Summary must highlight the State's main purpose in proposing a Digital Equity Plan



Summary of Projects/Associated Activities

States must provide a summary of the projects/activities associated with the implementation of the DE plan

**There will be an opportunity to elaborate on each of the Specific Projects in the Special Projects step*



Intended Outcomes

States must elaborate on the intended outcomes of their implementation plans

Guidance

Applicants are advised not to incorporate information that concerns business trade secrets or other confidential commercial or financial information as part of the Executive Summary. NTIA may make all or a portion of the applicants executive summaries public.

See 15 C.F.R. §4.9(b) concerning the designation of business information by the Applicant.

1. SDECGP NOFO Section II.C.2.e.i



Implementation Plan | *Section 3.1.2*

This section requires the identification of elements of the Digital Equity Plan to be implemented for this fiscal year's allocation of Capacity funding, and whether specific elements of the Plan or specific Covered Populations are being prioritized, and the rationale for prioritizing those elements or Covered populations consistent with the needs assessment within the Digital Equity Plan¹. *Character Limit: 2,500 (approximately 500 words).*



Rationale of Implementation Plan



Are **specific elements of the Plan** being prioritized?



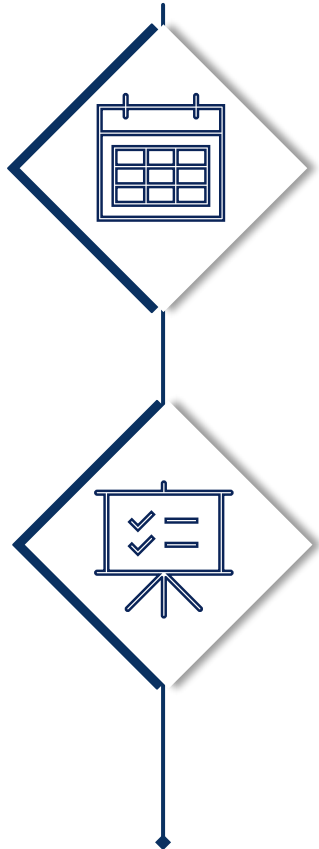
Are **specific Covered Populations** being prioritized?

1. SDECGP NOFO Section II.C.2.e.ii

Project Plan | Section 3.1.3



The Project Plan will elaborate on project activities, timelines, and measuring progress on objectives_{1,2}. *Character Limit: 2,500 (approximately 500 words).*



Major Project Activities and Timelines

A description of all major project activities and timelines, including key milestones and when each major project activity will start and end.

Measurable Objectives

A description of how progress on measurable objectives will be tracked and recorded alongside key milestones.

Guidance: Consider the Specific Projects Form as an opportunity to elaborate further in the application.

Ensure that all major projects activities and timelines identified in the Project Plan are reflected in the Specific Projects Form.

The “General Project Information: Project Plan” answer box may be used as a summary of the specific projects to indicate major, overarching milestones (but does not have to account for the more focused projects or activities).

1. SDECGP NOFO Section II.C.2.e.iii
2. SDECGP NOFO Section II.C.2.e.x



Updates to Digital Equity Plan | *Section 3.1.4*



The updates to the Digital Equity Plan should indicate whether the State or Territory intends to use a portion of its allocation to update its Digital Equity Plan¹. *Character Limit: 2,500 (approximately 500 words).*

Key Considerations



On the online application input, you must answer:
○ **‘Yes’** or **‘No’**



The State/Territory will use a portion of the Digital Equity Plan funding allocation that is **up to 20%**.



If ‘No’, no further action is needed.



If ‘Yes’, in the field provided, **indicate the activities** the State or territory intends to conduct to update the Plan, and a **timeline for updates**, including publication for public comment. For any aspects of the Digital Equity Plan that are forthcoming, such as quantitative baseline data, specify how and when those updates will be made.

1. SDECGP NOFO Section II.C.2.e.iv



NGP Application Section 3.2

Ongoing Collaboration Efforts | *Section 3.2.1*

In this section, the State/Territory will describe the ongoing collaboration efforts they conduct with key stakeholders as listed at 47 U.S.C. 1723(c)(1)(D) and in alignment with the Digital Equity Plan₁. *Character Limit: 2,500 (approximately 500 words).*

KEY STAKEHOLDERS MAY INCLUDE:

- 

Community Anchor Institutions
- 

County and Municipal Governments
- 

Local Education Agencies
- 

Where applicable, Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Entities, or Native Hawaiian organizations
- 

Nonprofit Organizations
- 

Organizations that represent individuals with disabilities
- 

Organizations that represent aging individuals
- 

Organizations that represent individuals with language barriers (English learners and low literacy)
- 

Organizations that represent veterans
- 

Organizations that represent individuals who are incarcerated in facilities other than federal correctional facilities
- 

Civil Rights Organizations
- 

Entities that Carry Out Workforce Development Programs
- 

Agencies of the State that are responsible for administering or supervising adult education and literacy activities
- 

Public Housing Authorities
- 

Partnership between any of these entities

Benefit to Covered Populations | Section 3.2.2

In this section, provide a description detailing how the State or Territory’s implementation of the Digital Equity Plan, through Digital Equity Capacity funding, will benefit each of the Covered Populations located within that State or Territory ¹. *Character Limit: 2,500 (approximately 500 words).*

Through the DE Capacity funding, **how will Covered Populations within the State/Territory benefit?**

The Covered Populations are:

Individuals who live in covered households

A household, the income of which for the most recently completed year is not more than 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level

Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group

Incarcerated individuals

As defined by the State or Territory other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal Correctional facility

Individuals with a language barrier
Including those who are English learners and have low levels of literacy

Individuals with disabilities

Veterans

Aging individuals

Persons age 60 and older

Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area









Measuring Success Across DE Outcomes | *Section 3.2.3*



In this section, describe how the State/Territory plans to collect data in alignment with the measurable objectives in the Digital Equity Plan ¹. *Character Limit: 2,500 (approximately 500 words).*






Digital Equity Outcomes

Measurable objectives to effectively measure the project's success across the digital equity outcomes identified at 47 U.S.C. 1723(c)(1)(C):

-  Economic and Workforce Development
-  Education
-  Health
-  Civic and Social Engagement
-  Delivery of Other Essential Services
-  Other Digital Equity Outcomes Not Specified in the Digital Equity Plan

Measurable Objectives

Note: DE Plans were required to include measurable objectives for documenting and promoting among each Covered Population located in that State –

-  The availability of, and affordability of access to, fixed and wireless broadband technology
-  The online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services
-  Digital literacy
-  Awareness of, and the use of, measures to secure the online privacy of, and cybersecurity with respect to, an individual
-  The availability and affordability of consumer devices and technical support for those devices

1. SDECGP NOFO Section II.C.2.e.viii









Measuring Benefits to Covered Populations | *Section 3.2.4*



In this section, explain how the benefits delivered to the Covered Populations will be measured to the extent not addressed by the categories for “Measuring Success”¹. *Character Limit: 2,500 (approximately 500 words).*

Measuring Success

Measurable objectives to effectively measure the project’s success across the digital equity outcomes identified at 47 U.S.C. 1723(c)(1)(C):

-  Economic and Workforce Development
-  Education
-  Health
-  Civic and Social Engagement
-  Delivery of Other Essential Services
-  Other Digital Equity Outcomes Not Specified in the Digital Equity Plan



Other Proposed Research Activities, as applicable



1. SDECGP NOFO Section II.C.2.e.ix

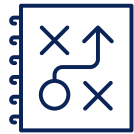


NGP Application Section 3.3

Evaluation Plan | Section 3.3.1



In this section, describe the overall plan to evaluate how the proposed projects and activities will achieve the goals of the Digital Equity Plan. *Character Limit: 2,500 (approximately 500 words).*



Detail how a Program/Project will be_{1,2}:

- Monitored
- Evaluated
- Improved based on evaluation data



To ensure Applicants can describe & assess their progress against their plans, Applicants should consider :

- NTIA reporting requirements
- The measurable objectives & goals communicated in their Digital Equity Plans



Ensure Subgrantees are:

- Prepared for and capable of evaluating the efficacy of the programs/projects they are implementing



More Information can found:

- On the Evaluation of Project Efficacy for Subgrantees and the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program one-pager

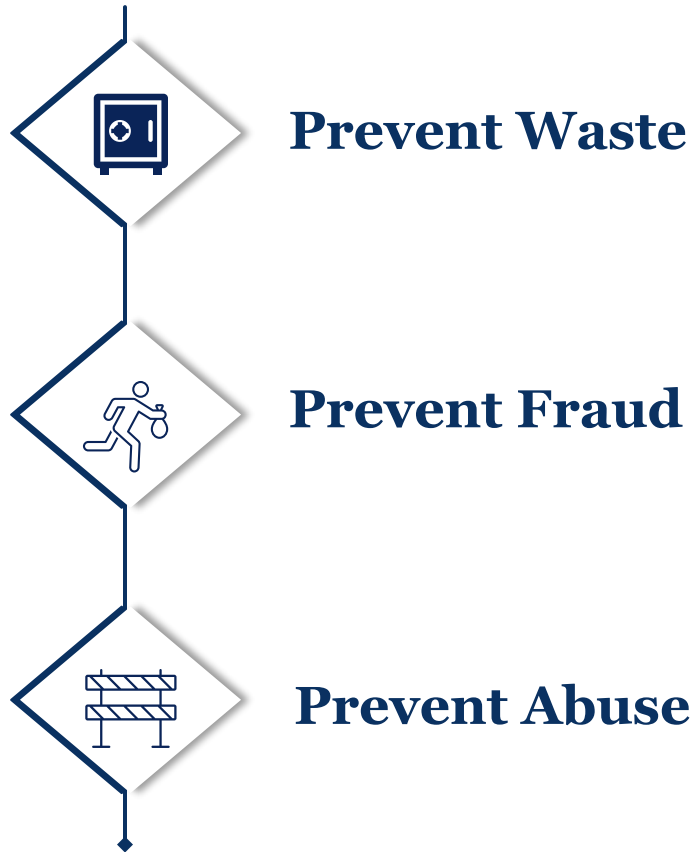
1. SDECGP NOFO Section II.C.2.e.iii.8
2. SDECGP NOFO Section II.C.2.e.vii



Safeguards | *Section 3.3.2*



In this section, describe the safeguards the applicant will put in place to **prevent waste, fraud, and abuse** in the implementation of the program to ensure transparency, accountability and oversight¹. *Character Limit: 2,500 (approximately 500 words).*



For example, elaborating on how the grant funds will be used to further the overall purpose of the Program in compliance with:

- The Requirements of 47 U.S.C. §1723 of the Digital Equity Act*
- The State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program NOFO*
- 2 C.F.R. Part 200*
- The Terms and Conditions of an Award*
- Other Applicable Federal and State Laws*



Subgrantee Selection Process | Section 3.3.3



Applicants have the option to select **subgrantees to implement** grant projects and activities^{1,2}.

Key Considerations



NTIA strongly encourages States and Territories to take **deliberate steps** to **ensure that subgrant opportunities are accessible to a diverse range** of organizations, particularly those owned, led and/or managed by members of the Covered Populations.



On the online application input, you must answer “Do you plan to use subgrantees to implement grant projects and activities? : ‘Yes’ or ‘No’



If ‘No’, no further action is needed.



If ‘Yes’, in the field provided, elaborate to the extent the applicant intends to use **subgrantees to implement grant projects and activities**, describe the process by which subgrantees will be selected and the safeguards in place, like selecting and conducting risk assessments of subgrantees (see, 2 C.F.R. §200.332(b)), to ensure the selection process fosters a sense of fairness and accountability by being open, transparent, and equitable. Ensure the process is in compliance with 2 C.F.R. part 200.

Character Limit: 2,500 (approximately 500 words)

The Applicant should consider including details on:



How Subgrantees will be Selected Fairly



Selection Criteria



Plans for Rubrics



Relevant Timelines



Anticipated Challenges



NGP Application Section 3.4

Specific Projects Plan | Section 3.4.1



If at the time of application, a State or Territory *has not yet identified all of the projects to be used for Digital Equity Plan implementation, or is unable to provide all of the project details for the Specific Projects Form*, this information **must be submitted to NTIA** via the NTIA Grants Portal **as soon as practicable, but no later than nine (9) months from the award start date**, unless extended in writing by the Grants Officer, and will be subject to review and written approval by the Grants Officer before a State may draw down funds to implement the project(s) at issue¹.



No limit to number of projects that State/Territory can have



Applicants should refer to Project Plan in General Project Information portion of the Project Narrative to ensure synchronicity

Things to Note:

- *Review ‘Special Projects’ form. The form includes ‘Instructions’ tab that will be used to capture information related to specific activities and timelines.*
- *‘Specific Projects’ form must be downloaded and completed separately as an Excel file, then uploaded to the File Upload field provided in the Project Narrative portion of the application on NGP*

1. SDECGP NOFO Section II.C.2.e.



Sections of the Special Projects Form | *Section 3.4.1*

Applicants will be required to submit the following information for *each* project they propose funding for with their Capacity grant award.

-  Project Name

 Project ID, *which will be auto populated*

 Primary DE Outcome
(select from dropdown)
-  Secondary DE Outcome *(if applicable, choosing from same categories)*

 Executive Summary, *using 2-3 sentences*

 List of specific activities the project intends to complete or implement
-  Environmental and Historical Preservation Requirements

 Build America Buy America (BABA) Act Requirements

 List of barriers to be addressed; *note - barriers should align to DE Plan*
-  Estimated number of individuals to be served for each covered population

 List of geographies to be served (if not State/Territory wide)

 List of Measurable Objectives
-  Estimations of anticipated outputs of the activity/project

 Anticipated Start & End Dates

 How proposed project/activity will be evaluated to determine successful implementation of DE Plan
-  Project Duration, *which will be auto populated*

 Funding amount to implement the project

 Whether the project will be implemented directly by State/Territory or if funds will be sub-granted to implement

Sections of the Special Projects Form | Continued



If the project will be sub-granted, the following information is required in Columns AD to AH:



Subgrantee(s) legal name



Subgrantee(s) UEI



Subgrantee(s) EIN



Description of subgrantee's capacity to manage the project for which it received a subgrant



Whether the subgrantee is a women's business enterprise, minority business enterprise, or small business

Note: MBEs and WBEs are major catalysts for economic growth and job creation. Data shows that MBEs and WBEs historically face significant contracting disparities compared to other businesses. Per 2 C.F.R. § 200.321, Federal law requires states and territories receiving grant funds to take “all necessary affirmative steps to assure that MBEs, WBEs, and labor surplus area firms are used when possible.”



State/Territory and Project Information

Provide the following information for your State/Territory and each project in the Specific Projects Form.

State/Territory

Column B

Write the postal abbreviation for the State/ Territory.

Project Name

Column C

Applicants should list an applicable project name, noting if the project will go by an acronym.

Project ID

Column D

Provide a unique ID for the project using the following structure where [XX] is two digits, starting with 01:
 [State or Territory Postal Code]-
 Capacity Grant Project-[XX]

Primary/Secondary Outcome

Column E & F

Using the dropdown, select the primary, and if applicable, secondary digital equity outcomes for the project

Example: State Z

State/Territory	Project	Project ID	Primary DE Outcome	Secondary DE Outcome
SZ	Mental Health Online Resource Portal	SZ –Capacity Grant Project -01	Health	Economic and Workforce Development

Executive Summary, Project Activities & Geographies



The following information must be provided for each project in the Specific Projects Form.



Executive Summary Column G

In 2-3 sentences, provide a brief executive summary of the specific activity or set of activities the project intends to complete or implement, where the project will be carried out, and the expected beneficiaries of the project



Project Activities Column H

List the specific activity or set of activities the project intends to complete or implement



Geographies Columns V

List the specific geographies to be served (if not State- or Territory-wide)



Barriers, Measurable Objective & Covered Populations



The following information can (and should) be referenced from your Digital Equity Plan to complete the Specific Projects Form.



Barriers to Be Addressed Column L

List the barrier(s) to digital equity the project will address



Measurable Objectives Column M

List the measurable objectives to be pursued and the data to be collected to demonstrate success in meeting these objectives, **including quantitative baseline data**



Covered Populations Columns (N-U)

Provide the estimated number of individuals to be served for each covered population



Alignment to Plan and Anticipated Outputs

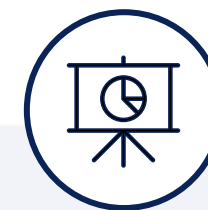
The following information must be provided for each project in the Specific Projects Form.



Alignment to Plan Column W

Include a description of how the proposed project or activity will be evaluated to determine successful implementation of the Digital Equity Plan of the State or Territory

- **Guidance:** Include specific references to the Digital Equity Plan and quantitative baseline data



Anticipated Outputs Column X

Provide estimates of the anticipated outputs of the activity or project

- **Example:** the number of hours of training to be provided, the number of curricula to be developed, or the number of devices to be provided

Project Details



Applicants can look to the Implementation Strategies section of their Digital Equity Plans to approximate start and end dates for their projects.

The funding amount listed should reflect the information provided in the Consolidated Budget Form, as they should match.

Applicants have **up to 9 months** in post award to accurately and comprehensively complete the Specific Projects Form.



START DATE Column Y

Use this column to insert the *anticipated start date* for your project



END DATE Column Z

Use this column to provide the *anticipated end date* for the project



PROJECT DURATION Column AA

DO NOT ENTER OR EDIT THE TEXT IN THIS COLUMN

This column is a formula based on inputs from columns Y and Z.



FUNDING AMOUNT Column AB

Enter the amount of funding that will be used for this project. *This should align to your Budget Form.*



EHP & BABA Requirements

While most projects will likely not be applicable for the following, some projects may fall under Environmental and Historical Preservation and Build America Buy America requirements.

Environmental and Historical Preservation (EHP) Columns I & J

EHP comes into effect when a project requires installation of fixed equipment on or in a building

If so:

- Provide:
 - Building location
 - Year of original construction
- Upload the documentation required in the NTIA Grants Portal for EHP

Build America Buy America (BABA) Column K

Review the project description and parameters and decide whether it is an “infrastructure project”

- If the proposed project fits the description of “infrastructure project” as defined in 2 CFR 184.3, BABA is in effect
- Applicants and subgrantees must abide by BABA*

If your award is subject to BABA, see additional BABA information at the following link, or reach out to your agency contact for additional information.

Tips and Tricks for the Project Narrative

The Project Narrative, including the Specific Projects Form, is the largest portion of the Capacity Application and illustrates the work that the applicant will fund to reach the goals set forth in the State/Territory's Digital Equity Plan.



Reference your Digital Equity Plan

The Capacity Program is funding your accepted Digital Equity Plan, therefore anything proposed in the Capacity Application should reference to the accepted Plan where possible



Be Specific and Detailed

While leaving space for any projects that are addressed through a subgranting process that follows the State/Territory's procurement laws, applicants should be as detailed as possible when describing how projects meet the objectives set forth in the approved Digital Equity Plan



Plan for Project Impact

Have a detailed plan for monitoring and evaluating each project's impact. This includes demonstrating how covered populations benefit, how they align to digital equity outcomes, and a specific plan for measuring that impact