



Digital Equity – Competitive Applicant Training Part 4

Funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)

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



Disclaimer



This document is intended solely to assist applicants in better understanding the Digital Equity Competitive 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, the terms and conditions of the award, or the specific application requirements set forth in the NOFO. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, the terms and conditions of the award, the requirements set forth in the NOFO, and follow-on policies and guidance, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in this document.



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INTRODUCTION

Introduction



This is the **fourth part of a five-part Applicant Training** for the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program (Competitive Grant Program). This training is intended to assist applicants in better understanding the Applicant Capability, Evaluation Strategy, Scenarios & Risk Mitigation Plan, Data Stewardship Plan, and Sustainability Strategy as is listed in the Competitive Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

TRAINING GOALS OF PART 4

- 1 Applicant Capability | *Understand the required elements detailing Applicant experience*
- 2 Evaluation Strategy | *Understand the required elements to measure successful implementation*
- 3 Scenarios & Risk Mitigation Plan | *Understand the required steps to ensure risk is effectively mitigated*
- 4 Data Stewardship Plan | *Understand the required elements to ensure data collection is conducted ethically*
- 5 Sustainability Strategy | *Understand the required elements to create sustainable long-term impact*



Application Sections



The Competitive Grant Program application has 10 parts in the NTIA Grants Portal, as shown below. This session will cover Part 4, Applicant Capability, and Part 5, Project Information.

1. General Applicant Information
2. Project Narrative
3. Budget
4. Applicant Capability
5. Project Information
6. Match
7. Other Funding Sources
8. Certifications and Assurances
9. SF-424
10. Standard Forms

1. General Applicant Information	SECTION STATUS Not Started	Get Started
2. Project Narrative	SECTION STATUS Not Started	Get Started
3. Budget	SECTION STATUS Not Started	Get Started
4. Applicant Capability	SECTION STATUS Not Started	Get Started
5. Project Information	SECTION STATUS Not Started	Get Started
6. Match	SECTION STATUS Not Started	Get Started
7. Other Funding Sources	SECTION STATUS Not Started	Get Started
8. Certifications and Assurances	SECTION STATUS Not Started	Get Started
9. SF-424	SECTION STATUS Not Started	Get Started
10. Standard Forms	SECTION STATUS Not Started	Get Started



KEY DATES

Key Dates Reminder



Please note the following key dates and deadlines coming up for the Competitive Grant Program.



Application Due Date: Eligible Entities, including Native Entities

Complete applications from Eligible Entities, including Native Entities, must be received by the NTIA Grants Portal no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) on **September 23, 2024**. (NOFO Section IV.F)



Application Due Date: U.S. Territories

Complete applications from U.S. Territories must be received by the NTIA Grants Portal no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) on **October 22, 2024**. (NOFO Executive Summary Section M)



Issuing Awards

NTIA expects to complete its review, select successful applicants, and begin award processing by Winter 2024. NTIA may, subject to NIST Grants Office Approval, announce awards made under the Competitive Grant Program on a rolling basis. (NOFO Section IV.F)



Period of Performance

Except for measurement and evaluation activities required under the Digital Equity Act and the NOFO, grant recipients must expend the grant amounts within four (4) years after the date on which the entity is awarded the grant. **No extensions to the four-year Period of Performance or the one-year evaluation period will be granted.** (NOFO Section II.B)



APPLICANT CAPABILITY

Evidence of Applicant Experience & Capability



The application must include demonstrative evidence that the applicant is capable of carrying out the project or function of the proposed grant and is capable of meeting the reporting requirements outlined in the Digital Equity Act. This evidence must include the following elements outlined in the NOFO Section IV.B(10).

Organizational Structure

A description of the organizational structure of the applicant and evidence of the financial capacity/stability of the organization to implement the proposed project

Implementation Team

A description of the implementation team and its experience with the programmatic/technical aspects of project management, including past successes and relevant experience managing similar large programmatic initiatives and a demonstrated ability to manage large federal grant awards effectively

Covered Populations

A description of the applicant's experience with providing services to one or more of the Covered Populations and the extent to which the applicant has facilitated direct support, technical assistance, and capacity building across the Covered Populations

Collaboration

A description of the applicant's strategy and experience in managing and fostering collaboration among subrecipients and subcontractors (e.g., conflict management plans, team agreements) (if applicable)

Key Personnel

One-page resumes of no more than five key personnel from the applicant (not subrecipients). Any information beyond one page for each resume and any additional resumes submitted will not be considered.



Applicant Capability



Applicants should keep in mind relevant considerations for assessing the strength of the applicant’s organizational capability as outlined in the NOFO Section V.C.B.

The screenshot displays the 'Application Workspace' interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Application Workspace', 'Application Team', and 'Requirements'. On the right side, it shows 'OMB Control No. 0000-0000' and 'Expiration Date: 00/00/0000'. The main content area consists of four horizontal panels, each representing a section of the application. The first three panels are dark blue and indicate that their respective sections are 'Completed'. The fourth panel is light gray and indicates that the 'Applicant Capability' section is 'Not Started'. A red box highlights the 'Get Started' button in the fourth panel.

Section Name	Section Status	Action Button
1. General Applicant Information	Completed	Review/Update
2. Project Narrative	Completed	Review/Update
3. Budget	Completed	Review/Update
4. Applicant Capability	Not Started	Get Started

From the Application Workspace, locate the **Applicant Capability** section and click the **Get Started** button.



Description of Applicant Experience & Capability



Applications must include demonstrative evidence of the applicant’s experience and capability as outlined in NOFO Section IV.B(10)a.

4.1 Description of Applicant Experience & Capability

4.1.1 Description of Applicant Experience & Capability

Describe the organizational structure of the applicant and evidence of the financial capacity/stability of the organization to implement the proposed project. (2500 character limit)

• Response

4.1.1 Description of Applicant Experience & Capability | Describe the organizational structure of the applicant and evidence of the financial capacity/stability of the organization to implement the proposed project.

When applicable, each section has a character count limit of 2500 (approximately 500 words).



Implementation Team Experience



Applications must include a description of the implementation team and its experience with the programmatic/technical aspects of project management as outlined in the NOFO Section IV.B(10)b.

4.1.2

Describe the implementation team and its experience with the programmatic/technical aspects of project management, including past successes and relevant experience managing similar large programmatic initiatives and a demonstrated ability to manage large federal grant awards effectively. (2500 character limit)

* Response

4.1.2 Describe the implementation team and its experience with the programmatic/technical aspects of project management, including past successes and relevant experience managing similar large programmatic initiatives and a demonstrated ability to manage large federal grant awards effectively.

When applicable, each section has a character count limit of 2500 (approximately 500 words).



Experience Providing Services to Covered Populations



Applications must include a description of the applicant’s experience with providing services to one or more of the Covered Populations and the extent to which the applicant has facilitated direct support, technical assistance, and capacity building across the Covered Populations as outlined in the NOFO Section IV.B(10)c.

4.1.3

Describe the applicant’s experience with providing services to one or more of the Covered Populations and the extent to which the applicant has facilitated direct support, technical assistance, and capacity building across the Covered Populations. (2500 character limit)

• Response

4.1.3 Describe the applicant’s experience with providing services to one or more of the Covered Populations and the extent to which the applicant has facilitated direct support, technical assistance, and capacity building across the Covered Populations. When applicable, each section has a character count limit of 2500 (approximately 500 words).



Collaboration Strategy and Experience



Applications must include a description of the applicant’s strategy and experience in managing and fostering collaboration among subrecipients and subcontractors as outlined in NOFO Section IV.B(10)d.

4.1.4
Describe the applicant's strategy and experience in managing and fostering collaboration among subrecipients and subcontractors (e.g., conflict management plans, team agreements) (if applicable).
(2500 character limit)

* Response

4.1.4 Describe the applicant's strategy and experience in managing and fostering collaboration among subrecipients and subcontractors (e.g., conflict management plans, team agreements) (if applicable).

When applicable, each section has a character count limit of 2500 (approximately 500 words).



Resumes of Key Personnel



Applications must include resumes of Key Personnel. One-page resumes of no more than five key personal from the applicant (not subrecipients) may be included. Any information beyond one page for each resume and any additional resumes submitted will not be considered per the NOFO Section IV.B(10)e.

4.1.5

Provide one-page resumes of no more than five key personnel from the applicant (not subrecipients). Note that any information beyond one page for each resume and any additional resumes submitted will not be considered.

* Upload

 Upload Files | Or drop files

FileName



Upload Date ↓



Save and End

4.1.5 Upload Files | Provide one-page resumes of no more than five key personnel from the applicant (not subrecipients). Note that any information beyond one page for each resume and any additional resumes submitted will not be considered.

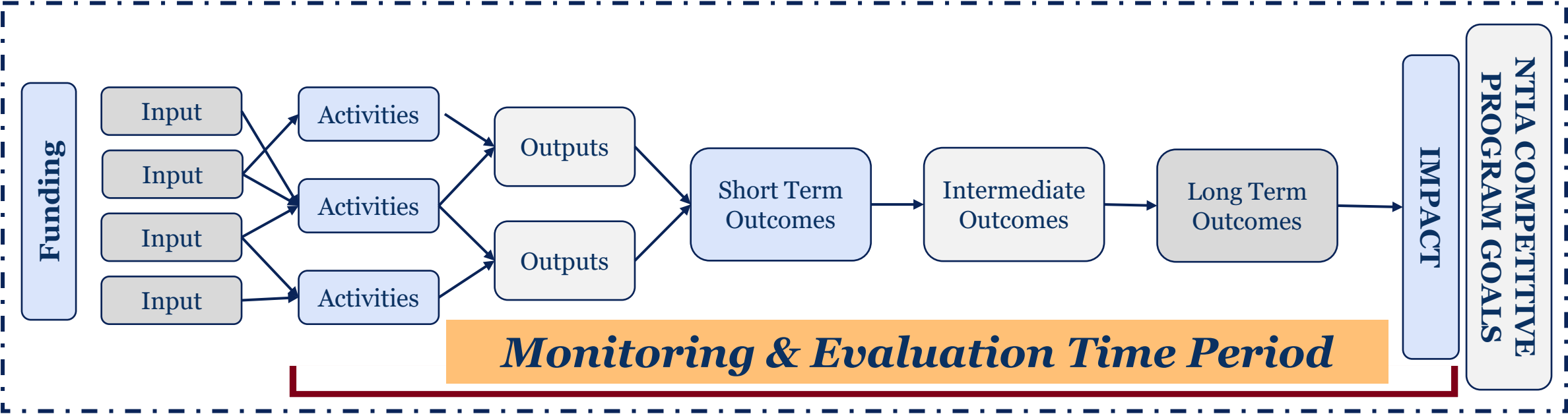
Then click **Save and End**.



EVALUATION STRATEGY

Evaluation Strategy Requirements

Applicants must build an evaluation strategy that will help them demonstrate how their proposed project(s) create measurable impact and progress toward NTIA’s Competitive Program Goals.



Evaluation Strategies should show that grants administration and programmatic monitoring and evaluation will be completed throughout the Period of Performance. Applicants may have 1 year to wrap up Evaluation activities.

Evaluation Strategy Impacts



The Evaluation Strategy must include details about frequency and scope of evaluation, near-and-long term impacts of the evaluation framework set-up by the applicants, as per Section V.C. of the Competitive NOFO.

NEAR-AND-LONG-TERM IMPACTS



Alignment with Project Plan | Applicants should ensure that the proposed Digital Equity Project plan and milestones are sound and the proposed activities and timelines are reasonable and can be conducted within the period of performance, as outlined in the NOFO Section V.C.C.



Alignment with Digital Equity Act | Applicants should ensure that evaluation strategies include measurement of social and economic goals relevant to the Digital Equity Act.

During the application review process, for example, reviewers will assess whether the project aligns with or addresses a root cause or systemic barrier to Digital Equity, as outlined in NOFO Section V.C.A.



Evaluation Frequency and Scope | Applicants should consider the applicability and/or efficacy of the proposed data collection and analysis procedures, including evaluation frequency and scope, to ensure comprehensive measurement of project outcomes, as outlined in NOFO Section V.C.D.

Applicants must also address measures to facilitate direct support, technical assistance, and capacity building amongst Covered Populations, as outlined in NOFO Section V.C.B.



Evaluation Strategy Considerations

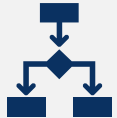


Applicants should include an evaluation strategy for measuring successful implementation. This includes near-term and long-term outcomes. This information should be captured as part of the Project Plan.

THIS SHOULD INCLUDE:



Proposed **data collection and analysis procedure**, including frequency and scope



Key outcomes to be measured



Plan for continuous improvement to use evaluation findings to inform project activities, including obtaining input from beneficiaries and stakeholders to inform project adjustments and **maximize effectiveness and sustainability**



Examples of Evaluation Strategy Effects



The Evaluation Strategy must measure direct and indirect effects of the project on Digital Inclusion. Achievability and capability will determine where these effects are categorized, as per Section IV. C. 3. of the Competitive NOFO.

Examples of Direct Effects

-  Access to Technology/Devices
-  Digital Literacy & Skills Development
-  Economic Opportunities
-  Education Advancement

Examples of Indirect Effects

-  Innovation and Creativity
-  Access to Healthcare Services
-  Strengthened Community Networks
-  Policy and Advocacy



Evaluation Strategy Continuous Improvement



The Evaluation Strategy must include a plan for continuous improvement, per Section IV.B(7)b.v.c of the Competitive NOFO. This should include obtaining input from beneficiaries and stakeholders (see examples below) to inform project adjustments and maximize effectiveness and sustainability.



Public Service Examples

- Federal Government
- Elected Officials
- State Agencies
- Tribal Governments
- Local Agencies
- Public Utilities Commissions
- Economic Development Organizations



Private Sector Examples

- Broadband Service Providers
- Chambers of Commerce
- Energy and Telecommunications Companies
- Electric Utility Companies
- Consultants
- Construction Companies
- Equipment Vendors



Community Service Examples

- Nonprofit Organizations
- Community Anchor Institutions
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Community-Based Organizations
- Community activists, residents, and other leaders
- Coalitions or associations of stakeholders

Evaluation Frequency and Scope | Frequency of evaluation must be determined (i.e., regular meetings with Covered Populations via designated forums, quarterly meetings with State Agencies and Tribal Governments, etc.).

Applicability and efficacy of proposed data collection and analysis procedures to ensure comprehensive measurement of project outcomes must also be evaluated by Applicants.




SCENARIO AND RISK MITIGATION PLAN


Scenario & Risk Mitigation Plan Requirements




For the Scenario & Risk Mitigation Plan applicants will need to think critically about the steps necessary to ensure *technology deployment* will not have adverse consequences on Covered Populations.

If applicable, mitigate risk by:

-  **Privacy Protections** — Including the rights and privacy of individuals, cybersecurity

-  **Algorithmic Biases** — Examining algorithmic biases that may impact Covered Populations

-  **Multilayered Process** — Creating, evaluating, and re-evaluating detail-oriented steps to mitigate risk on a regular basis

Note: This requirement is not applicable to all Digital Equity Projects. If this requirement does not apply to one or more proposed project(s), applicants must provide an explanation regarding why this requirement does not apply.




Scenario & Risk Mitigation Plan



Applicants must upload the Scenario & Risk Mitigation Plan to ensure steps are clearly outlined to ensure technology deployment will have the impact the applicants intend, as outlined in the NOFO Section IV.B(11).

5.1.1 Scenario & Risk Mitigation Plan
Provide scenario and risk mitigation plan describing the steps taken to ensure that any proposed deployment of technology will not have adverse consequences for the Covered Populations (e.g., privacy protections, algorithmic biases, etc.), if applicable. If this requirement is not applicable to the proposed Digital Equity Project, provide an explanation as to why this requirement does not apply to the proposed project(s).

* Upload

 Or drop files

5.1.1 Upload Files | Provide scenario and risk mitigation plan describing the steps taken to ensure that any proposed deployment of technology will not have adverse consequences for the Covered Populations (e.g., privacy protections, algorithmic biases, etc.), if applicable. If this requirement is not applicable to the proposed Digital Equity Project, provide an explanation as to why this requirement does not apply to the proposed project(s).



DATA STEWARDSHIP PLAN


Data Stewardship Plan



Applicants must upload the Data Stewardship Plan, including a technology impact assessment with an emphasis on privacy of individuals, as outlined in the NOFO Section IV.B(12).

5.1.2 Data Stewardship Plan
Provide a data stewardship plan including a technology impact assessment demonstrating a plan to ensure that data collection, management, and utilization are conducted ethically, transparently, and with a strong emphasis on safeguarding the rights and privacy of individuals.

* Upload

 Upload Files Or drop files

The screenshot shows a web form section for "5.1.2 Data Stewardship Plan". It includes a descriptive paragraph and a red-bordered box containing a "Upload" label and a button with an upload icon and the text "Upload Files". To the right of the button is the text "Or drop files".

5.1.2 Upload Files | Provide a data stewardship plan including a technology impact assessment demonstrating a plan to ensure that data collection, management, and utilization are conducted ethically, transparently, and with a strong emphasis on safeguarding the rights and privacy of individuals.



SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Sustainability Strategy Requirements



Long-term impact and the sustainability of the infrastructure set up by these plans is critical to the elimination of barriers to Digital Equity, as per Section IV.B(13) of the Competitive NOFO.

What is required for long-term success?

Applicants must provide a **description of strategies** to be undertaken to ensure each project or activity will create, as outlined in NOFO Section IV.B(13):



Sustainable long-term impact on Digital Equity and Inclusion

OR



Will lead to the permanent elimination of a barrier to Digital Equity




Sustainability Strategy



Applicants must upload their Sustainability Strategy including descriptions of near-and-long-term strategies for impact and infrastructure, as outlined in the NOFO Section IV.B(13).

5.2.1 Sustainability
Provide a description of strategies to be undertaken to ensure the project or activity will create a sustainable long-term impact on digital equity and inclusion or will lead to the permanent elimination of a barrier to digital equity.

• Upload

 Or drop files

5.2.1 Upload Files | Provide a description of strategies to be undertaken to ensure the project or activity will create a sustainable long-term impact on digital equity and inclusion or will lead to the permanent elimination of a barrier to digital equity.



WHAT'S NEXT?

What's Next? | *Scheduled Information Sessions*



Application Webinar Part 1

What Topics will be Covered?

- SF-424
- Lobbying Standard Forms
- Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreements

What was covered?

- Completing the SF-424
- Completing the Lobbying Standard Forms
- Information on NICRA



Application Webinar Part 2

What Topics will be Covered?

- General Applicant Information
- Partnerships
- Eligible Entities

What was Covered?

- Breakdown of the General Applicant Information
- Details to include for partnerships



Application Webinar Part 3

What Topics will be Covered?

- Project Narrative
- Executive Summary
- Project(s) Description Form
- Project Plan

What was covered?

- Details to include in the project narrative
- Breakdown of the executive summary
- Review of the Project(s) Description Form



Application Webinar Part 5

What Topics will be Covered?

- Related Costs
- Consolidated Budget Form

What will we be Covering?

- Review of Consolidated Budget Form
- Review of NICRA
- Review of Budget Caps



Recording Available Now

Upcoming Information Session



QUESTIONS
