

**INTERNET
FOR ALL**

State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program: Native Entities

September 2024



Disclaimer



This document is intended solely to assist applicants in better understanding the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program: Native Entities (2024) and the requirements set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and follow-on policies and guidance for this program. To avoid confusion with the State Digital Equity Grant Program with the eligible applicants of States (including D.C. and Puerto Rico) & U.S. Territories, this document refers to the program as the NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program¹. 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.



Table of Contents



1. Digital Equity Act Programs
2. NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program
3. Eligibility Information for the NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program
4. Funding Restrictions
5. Reporting
6. How to Apply
7. Reviewing and Approving Applications
8. Submission Requirements
9. Key Dates and Deadlines



Digital Equity Act Programs

The Digital Equity Act Established 3 Programs



The programs outlined in the Digital Equity Act focus on promoting large scale social and economic change by centering on **digital equity** and **digital inclusion** among the Covered Populations.

FY22 – FY24 Capacity & Planning Grant Program Funding Source



NTIA anticipates making \$45,300,000 available for the NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program.





The condition in which individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in in the society and economy of the United States.¹



The activities necessary to ensure that all individuals in the United States have access to, and the use of, affordable information and communication technologies.²

6 Internet For All
1. 47 U.S.C. §1721(10)
2. 47 U.S.C. §1721(11)

Defining Native Entities for the NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program



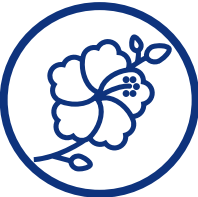
The term “Native Entity” refers to **Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, and Native Hawaiian organizations.**¹ Native Entities must meet the eligibility criteria in the NOFO.² Consortium applications from Native Entities are encouraged.³



Alaska Native Entity: A tribally controlled entity in Alaska whose purpose or mission is to represent or advance the interests of one or more native Alaskan communities. This will include, but will not be limited to, subsidiary organizations of an Indian Tribe; entities that receive federal funding due to their status as an Indian or Native organization; and the Alaska Native Regional Nonprofit Organizations created to administer social, educational, and health services for Alaska Native people in their region.



Indian Tribe: Any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community (i.e., Tribal Organizations), including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, 43 U.S.C. § 1601 et seq., which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.



Native Hawaiian Organization (NHO): An organization that is registered with the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of Native Hawaiian Relations and Hawaiian Homes Commission Act Beneficiary Associations and Homestead Associations, as defined under 43 C.F.R. §§ 47.10 and 48.6, or is the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands.

7 Internet For All
1. State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program NOFO Section I.C
2. State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program NOFO Section III.B.1
3. State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program NOFO Section III.B.1.b.







Covered Populations



Entities awarded a grant under this program should address the causes of socioeconomic disparities, resulting in improved outcomes in health, education, economic stability, and quality of life among the Covered Populations defined below.¹ Documentation of activities and performance data must measure impacts on Covered Populations.

Intersectionality of Covered Populations: The NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program is intended to support Native Entities as they serve Covered Populations within their communities, many of whom may have overlapping identities and needs.

COVERED POPULATIONS²

-  Individuals who live in **covered households** (defined as households with **income of not more than 150% of the poverty level**)
-  **Aging** individuals aged 60 and older
-  **Incarcerated individuals** (as defined by the State or Territory), other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility
-  **Veterans**

-  Individuals with **disabilities**
-  Individuals with a **language barrier**, including individuals who are English learners and have low levels of literacy
-  Individuals who are members of a **racial or ethnic minority group**; and
-  Individuals who primarily reside in a **rural area**

8 Internet For All
1. State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program NOFO Executive Summary Section H
2. State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program NOFO Section I.C(9)



NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program

Purpose of the NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program

The program's purpose is to **conduct digital equity planning** and **carry out digital equity and inclusion activities** consistent with the Digital Equity Act.

CAPACITY GRANT FUNDS¹

Purpose | *Implementation*

Funds are available to **carry out digital equity and inclusion activities**.

Open to Native Entities (as Single Applicants or as Consortium Applicants)

The process for allocation is **competitive**.

Native Entities may submit an application that seeks Capacity Grant Funds **only**.

PLANNING GRANT FUNDS (OPTIONAL)²

Purpose | *Strategic Planning*

Funds are available for **digital equity planning purposes**.

Native Entities have the **option** to apply for Planning Grant Funds by submitting and answering **additional** respective requirements in the NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program application and completing the **Capacity & Planning Consolidated Budget Form (CBF)**. Applicants may apply for Planning Grant Funds **in conjunction** with Capacity Grant Funds but **not** on a standalone basis.

NE Capacity Grant Program Goals

Proposed projects and activities must be consistent with the goals of equity and digital inclusion described in 47 U.S.C. §1723(d).

FOR CAPACITY GRANT FUNDS:

Capacity Grant projects and activities must:

 Address identified barriers to digital equity

 Use measurable objectives to assess progress towards overcoming these barriers

 Promote the following among the Covered Populations:

- 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, and;
- The availability and affordability of consumer devices and technical support for those devices.¹

NE Planning Grant Program Goals

Proposed planning activities must be consistent with 47 U.S.C. §1723(c).

All eligible Native Entities may apply for Capacity Grant Funds and have the *option* to also apply for Planning Grant Funds when submitting the NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program application. Applicants may **not** apply for Planning Grant Funds on a standalone basis.

FOR PLANNING GRANT FUNDS (IF APPLICABLE):

Planning activities may include:



A vision statement;



Outreach and engagement with the Covered Populations for the purpose of identifying barriers to digital equity and conducting a needs assessment;



Identification of the barriers to digital equity faced by members of the Covered Populations;



Measurable objectives that address the barriers to digital equity; and



Implementation strategies to achieve the measurable objectives identified above. ¹

Eligibility Information for the NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program

Eligible Applicants



Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, and Native Hawaiian organizations that appear on one of the following lists prior to the closing of the application window, satisfy the definition of a **Native Entity** for purposes of the NOFO.

List of Eligible Native Entity Organizations:



U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Entities Recognized by and Eligible to Receive Services From the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, 88 Fed. Reg. 2112 (Jan. 12, 2023), available at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/01/12/2023-00504/indian-entities-recognized-by-and-eligible-to-receive-services-from-the-united-states-bureau-of>



Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land and Water, Index of Regional Native Corporations, available at: <https://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/paad/17beasements/search>



U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Native Hawaiian Relations, Native Hawaiian Organization Notification List



U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Native Hawaiian Relations, Homestead & Beneficiary Associations List, available at: <https://doi.gov/hawaiian/homesteadbeneficiary-associations>



The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands



One Application Per Native Entity

NTIA will allow only one application from each Native Entity, whether applying as an individual Native Entity or as part of a consortium. Applicants that submit an application representing an individual Native Entity cannot also be part of a consortium application.

Requirements:



A Native Entity applying as an individual entity must coordinate internally (which includes all departments, subsidiaries, etc.) to prevent duplication of applications.



A Native Entity may only participate in one consortium, if applicable.



Each Native Entity, whether applying as an individual Native Entity or as part of a consortium, is required to submit documentation demonstrating it is authorized by the governing authority of the Native Entity to apply for Capacity & Planning Grant Funds (if applicable).



If NTIA determines that a Native Entity is participating in multiple applications, this may significantly delay NTIA's review of such applications and may result in NTIA removing that entity from consideration for funding for both their individual application and any consortium applications to which they are a party.¹

Requirements for All Applications

Applicants are required to submit various forms, certifications, and text responses. It is important that these responses are consistent and complete. More information about application requirements will be provided in the Applicant Training series.

AUTHORIZATION BY GOVERNING AUTHORITY:

- The applicant is responsible for ensuring that the Native Entity identified in the application exactly matches the Native Entity on the formal authorizing documentation.
- The lead applicant in a consortium is responsible for ensuring all consortium members are accurately identified and consistent between the Consortium Members Form and MOUs.¹



ALL APPLICATIONS MUST:

- Include the total amount of funding requested
- Account for all requested Capacity Grant Funds and Planning Grant Funds (if applicable)
- Provide **formal authorizing documentation** to apply on behalf of the Native Entity identified in the SF-424 and for all Native Entities in the consortium (if applicable)

Applying as a Consortium



NTIA encourages coordination and collaboration in achieving digital equity through the submission of an application on behalf of a **consortium** of multiple Native Entities (each of which must be eligible) in the most cost-effective manner.¹



Applying as a Consortium

- A Native Entity may only participate in one consortium
- Each member of the consortium application is required to submit formal authorizing documentation from the applicable governing authority, otherwise the application will be considered incomplete
- The lead applicant must be a Native Entity, with formal authorizing documentation and able to select an Authorized Organizational Representative with signatory authority on behalf of the lead applicant and the members of the consortium
- The lead applicant must submit a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with each Native Entity participating in the consortium demonstrating approval of proposed projects and articulating specific benefits and responsibilities of each member
- The lead applicant must submit a list of each Native Entity participating in the consortium. Applicants can use the Consortium Members Form using the template provided on the Digital Equity website

Reminder: An applicant cannot submit an application as an individual Native Entity if the applicant is applying on behalf of a consortium or is already a member of a consortium.



Formal Authorizing Documentation



Each applicant and all members of consortia are required to submit formal authorizing documentation demonstrating their governing authority which authorizes the Native Entity to apply for Capacity & Planning Grant Funds.¹

Formal Authorizing Documentation:



For Indian Tribes and Alaska Native entities: Tribal Resolution of Consent



For other Native Entity organizations (such as Native Hawaiian Organizations): Equivalent formal authorization from the governing authority of the Native Entity



For Consortium applications: Appropriate authorizing documentation from each consortium member demonstrating governing authority of the Native Entity. Additionally, the lead applicant must submit an MOU with each Native Entity participating in the consortium demonstrating approval of the proposed projects.

Note: NTIA will consider application(s) submitted *without* the appropriate authorizations and agreements as incomplete and may remove them from consideration for funding.



Tribal Resolution of Consent & Equivalent Formal Authorization



Native Entities must submit a Tribal Resolution of Consent or equivalent formal authorizing documentation from the governing authority of the Native Entity.¹

Tribal Resolution of Consent & Equivalent Formal Authorizing Documentation Requirements:



Name of the Native Entity (which shall appear on the *List of Eligible Native Entity Organizations*)



Express authority to file an application for (1) Capacity Grant Funds or (2) Capacity & Planning Grant Funds. NTIA recommends that express authority includes the following to support the authorization:



Signature of a leader within the governing authority and/or other governing body (e.g., the Tribal Council, Native Hawaiian organization President, etc.)



Dated after March 25, 2024 (NOFO release date)



Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)



If applying as a consortium, the lead applicant must gather and submit MOUs that identify each Native Entity participating in the consortium and demonstrates consortium participants' approval of the proposed project(s).¹

MOU Requirements:

The lead applicant is responsible for submitting an MOU or MOUs:



With each Native Entity participating in the consortium



That demonstrates approval of the proposed projects from each member of the consortium



That clearly articulates the specific benefits and responsibilities of each consortium member



That includes a commitment from the lead applicant to stay in regular communication with each member of the consortium regarding the status of awards and the progress of the proposed projects

NOTE: Consortium applications *submitted without authorizations from **each** Native Entity named in the application* will be considered incomplete.



Authorized Organizational Representative



All applicants must have a designated Authorized Organizational Representative to receive an NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program award.

Authorized Organizational Representative

The Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) is an organization member who is authorized to submit the application on behalf of their organization. **This is an individual who has signatory authority for the NE and has signatory authority for the consortium, as applicable.**

If submitting the application through the NTIA Grants Portal (NGP), the AOR will be the only organization member with access to submit the application.

Note: A Native Entity on one of the lists identified above may appoint a non-profit corporation authorized by the governing body of the Native Entity to administer NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program funds on behalf of the eligible Native Entity. If a Native Entity intends to utilize an authorized non-profit organization for this purpose, the Native Entity should identify the organization in its application, provide an authorization in its application for the non-profit, and discuss the role and activities of such organization.



Funding Restrictions

Use of Planning Grant Funds

If a Native Entity has requested **Planning Grant Funds**, the following eligible uses will apply. Funds are to not exceed seven and one-quarter percent (7.25%) of the total funds requested.

ELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS FOR PLANNING: 1



To the extent that a Native Entity has requested Planning Grant Funds

The development of the elements of a Digital Equity Plan for the Native Entity that identifies the barriers to digital equity faced by the Covered Populations of the Native Entity and measurable objectives, for addressing:

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



Evaluation cap

Funds may be used to evaluate the efficacy of the efforts of funds made to subgrantees, provided that the Native Entity may not use more than five (5) percent of the grant funds for this purpose.

Use of Capacity Grant Funds

Native Entities must use their Capacity Grant Funds for specific purposes that are outlined in this NOFO, including the achievement of digital equity, support of digital inclusion activities, and the adoption of broadband by the Covered Populations of the Native Entity.

ALLOWABLE USES OF FUNDS FOR CAPACITY:¹



Support digital inclusion activities of the Native Entity



Make Subgrants | To **make subgrants** to any of the eligible entities identified at 47 U.S.C. §1724(b) that are located in Native Entity’s jurisdiction to:

- a) **Assist in the implementation of the Digital Equity Plan** and/ or digital equity programs and activities defined
- b) **Pursue digital inclusion activities** consistent with the Digital Equity Plan and/or digital equity programs and activities identified above; and
- c) **Report** to the Native Entity **regarding the digital inclusion activities** of the entity.



Evaluate | To **evaluate the efficacy** of the efforts made to subgrantees, provided that the Native Entity may **not use more than five (5) percent** of the grant funds for this purpose.



Support Administrative Costs | For **administrative costs** incurred in carrying out the activities defined, provided that the Native Entity may **not use more than three (3) percent** of the Capacity Grant Funds for this purpose.



The other permissible uses | Including the Focus of Programs and Permitted Activities as identified in Section II.C.3.b of the NOFO

1. State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program NOFO Section III.C.3.a

NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program: Focus of Programs

NTIA anticipates making awards ranging between \$500,000 and \$2,000,000 per entity.

PROJECTS MUST CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA AND FOCAL POINTS:¹



FOCUS ON COVERED POPULATIONS

- Prioritize Covered Populations including their subgroups
- Prioritize impact



PROMOTE LONG LASTING MEANINGFUL CHANGE

- Address systemic barriers and gaps to digital access
- Consider sustainability



USE MEASURABLE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Base activities on objectives that are measurable, achievable, sustainable, timebound



INVOLVE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- Involve and encourage stakeholders who are directly affected by the proposed strategies to provide feedback

NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program: Permitted Activities

The following are examples of potential programs, activities, and interventions Native Entity applicants may consider proposing. This list is not considered exhaustive, and applicants are encouraged to develop new and innovative strategies.¹



Digital Literacy and Skills Training | *Encourage digital literacy and skills programs that provide training and education to members of the Covered Populations*



E-Government and Civic Engagement | *Develop digital tools that enable online community engagement and that empower individuals to participate in the democratic process*



Device Deployment Programs | *Coordinate deployment of accessible devices such as laptops, smartphones, tablets, or other internet-enabled devices for those that need it most*



Economic Development | *Support digital entrepreneurship, online job training, and remote work opportunities to foster economic empowerment and reduce disparities*



Online Access to Health and Mental Wellness Services | *Build or strengthen tools that directly help patients and end users within the Covered Populations to access healthcare services online*



Online Accessibility | *Coach programs to ensure that websites and applications are designed with accessibility in mind*



Access to Affordable Broadband Service | *Promote programs to provide low-cost services*

Caps on Uses of Funds: Administrative Costs



Statute 47 U.S.C. §1723(d)(3)(D) limits the allowable uses of Capacity Grant Funds.



3% Cap on Administrative Costs (Applies to Capacity Grant Funds only)

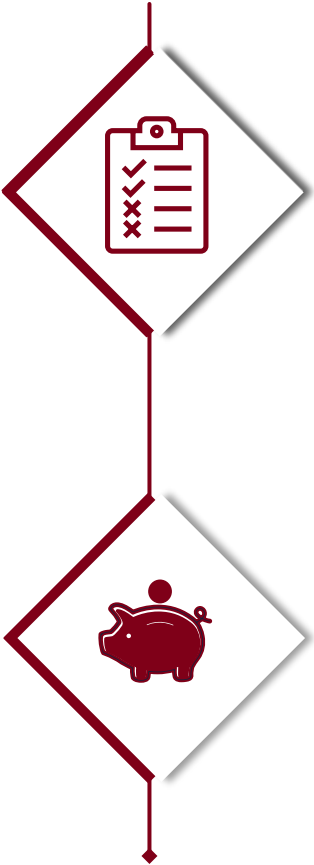
No more than three (3) percent of the amount of the grant may be used for administrative costs (exclusive of costs for program evaluation and updating the Digital Equity plan) in carrying out allowable activities under this Program and described in an SDECGP award. The limitation on administrative expenses includes the combined total of indirect and direct administrative costs.¹



Caps on Uses of Funds: Evaluation & Affordable Access Programs



Statute 47 U.S.C. §1723(d)(3)(D) and 47 U.S.C. §1723(c)(3)(E) limit the allowable uses of Capacity & Planning Grant Funds across different categories of the program.



5% Cap on the Evaluation of Program Efficacy (Applies to Total Funding Request)

No more than five (5) percent of the amount of the grant may be used to evaluate the efficacy of the efforts funded by grants made to subgrantees to: (a) assist in the implementation; (b) pursue digital inclusion activities; and (c) report to the Native Entity regarding the digital inclusion activities of the entity.¹

10% Cap on Affordable Access Programs (Applies to Total Funding Request)

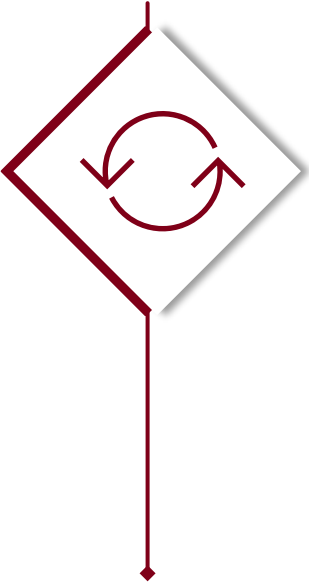
No more than ten (10) percent of the amount of the grant may be used to fund subsidies for the provision of broadband services through affordable broadband programs. ¹



Caps on Uses of Funds: Digital Equity Plan Updates



Statute 47 U.S.C. §1723(d)(3)(D) limits the uses of Capacity Grant Funds for updating plans.¹



20% Cap on Digital Equity Plan Updates (Applies to Total Funding Request)

No more than twenty (20) percent of the amount of the grant may be used to update or maintain the Digital Equity Plan. ¹

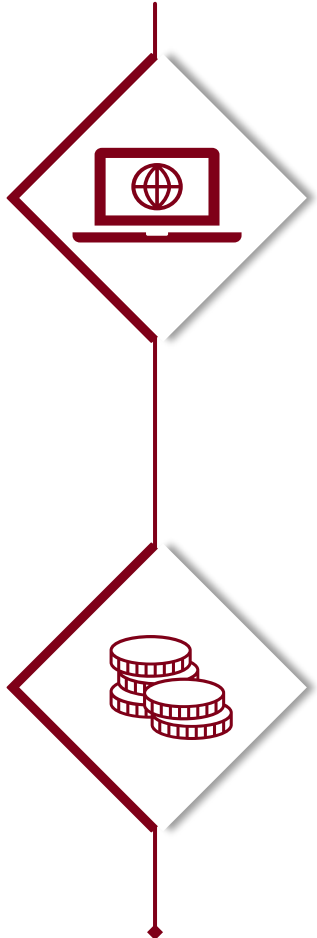
Note: Applicants are subject to the 20% cap if the proposed activities for Capacity Grant Funds include updating and maintaining a Digital Equity Plan that was (1) previously created without NTIA funds, or (2) a Digital Equity Plan created using Planning Grant Funds.



Prohibited Uses of Funds



NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program has multiple prohibited uses of funds.¹



Prohibition on Supplanting and on Certain Website Upgrades

A grant or subgrant shall supplement, not supplant, other federal or State funds that have been made available to carry out activities described in the NOFO. Funds from the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program must not supplant other funds that have been made available to carry out digital equity and planning grant activities.

In addition, grantees are prohibited from using Capacity Grant funds to conduct website upgrades or other accessibility projects that are otherwise required by law.

Prohibition on Profit or Fees

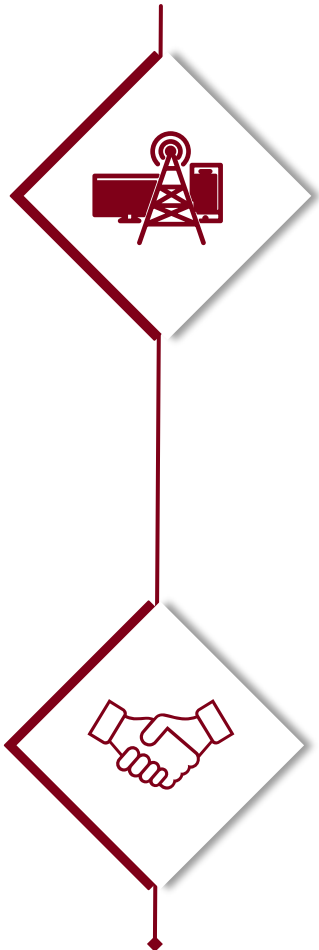
A profit, fee, or other incremental charge above actual cost is not an allowable cost under this program.



Prohibited Uses of Funds, Continued



NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program has multiple prohibited uses of funds.¹



Prohibition on Broadband Deployment Funding

In general, deployment of broadband infrastructure to connect broadband serviceable locations should be accomplished through other programs, including the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program and the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program. However, to the extent that installation of broadband infrastructure is necessary to accomplish an eligible program, activity, or intervention, additional information will be required to determine the potential for environmental impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act and potential impacts to historic properties under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Additionally, any portion of a State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program award that will be used for an “infrastructure project” is subject to the Build America, Buy America Act.

Prohibition on Use of Grant Funds to Support or Oppose Collective Bargaining

Grant funds awarded pursuant to this program may not be used, whether directly or indirectly as an offset for other funds, to support or oppose collective bargaining.







Reporting

Performance Measurement and Evaluation



Native Entities must document and measure their implementation progress, and upon program completion, assess the effectiveness of the funded projects in meeting the identified performance objectives.¹

 Documentation of Program Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide the number and types of activities and interventions implemented• Describe how the activities and interventions will impact the adoption and meaningful use of broadband, the longer-term impacts on income, education, employment, housing, and health of the Covered Populations
 Performance Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide quantitative data that shows the progress toward achieving program goals• Examples include: the number of members of Covered Populations served, locations of the Covered Populations (e.g., county, city), milestones achieved, and resulting outputs
 Participant Assessment & Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect feedback from participants on their experiences to measure changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviors• Assessments and feedback should be used for continuous improvement to the implementation of the projects
 Program Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An assessment of the effectiveness of the programs including the results, protocols, and instruments used to collect the data must be provided• All program evaluation materials must be submitted as soon as practicable and no later than the final award closeout and may be posted publicly on NTIA's website

All personally identifiable information must be protected as required by 2 C.F.R. §200.303(e) and 15 C.F.R. §27.



Infrastructure Act and Additional Reporting Requirements



Grant recipients will be required to comply with the following reporting requirements:



Annual Reports

Grant recipients are required to publicly report for each year during the period of performance.¹

Due date: Annually



Financial Report

Grant recipients are required to submit an SF-425, Federal Financial Report on a semiannual basis.²

Due date: March 31 and September 30



Performance (Technical) Report

Grant recipients are required to submit a technical progress report semiannually.²

Due date: March 31 and September 30

Evaluation Assessment

At the end of the period of performance, an assessment of the effectiveness of the programs along with the results, protocols, and instruments used to collect the data must be submitted to NTIA. All program evaluation materials must be submitted as soon as practicable and no later than the final award closeout and may be posted publicly on NTIA’s website.³

Human Subjects Research

If research is conducted or supported by the grant award, recipients must review guidance for human subjects research protections and act in accordance with the protection of human subjects requirements and reporting.²

1. State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program NOFO Section IV.E.1
2. State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program NOFO Section IV.E.2
3. State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program NOFO Section III.A.3



How to Apply

How to Apply for the NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program

Native Entities are permitted to submit their NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program applications, including Planning Grant Program information, either electronically online, via email, or by mail or courier no later than the submission deadline.¹

Submission Deadline

Applications submitted through the NGP must be received no later than **11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) on February 7, 2025.**



Online: NTIA Grants Portal (NGP)

The NGP will open for electronic application submission on October 30, 2024. The forms and requirements can be accessed on the NGP at <https://grants.ntia.gov>. Log in with your account or create an account if you don't have one. Additional instructions can be found in the Application Guidance.



Email to digitalequity@ntia.gov

Reminders:

- All application requirements should ideally be submitted in one email before the submission deadline.
- The last application version NTIA receives will be the application that is reviewed.



Mail or courier

Angela Thi Bennett
Director of Digital Equity

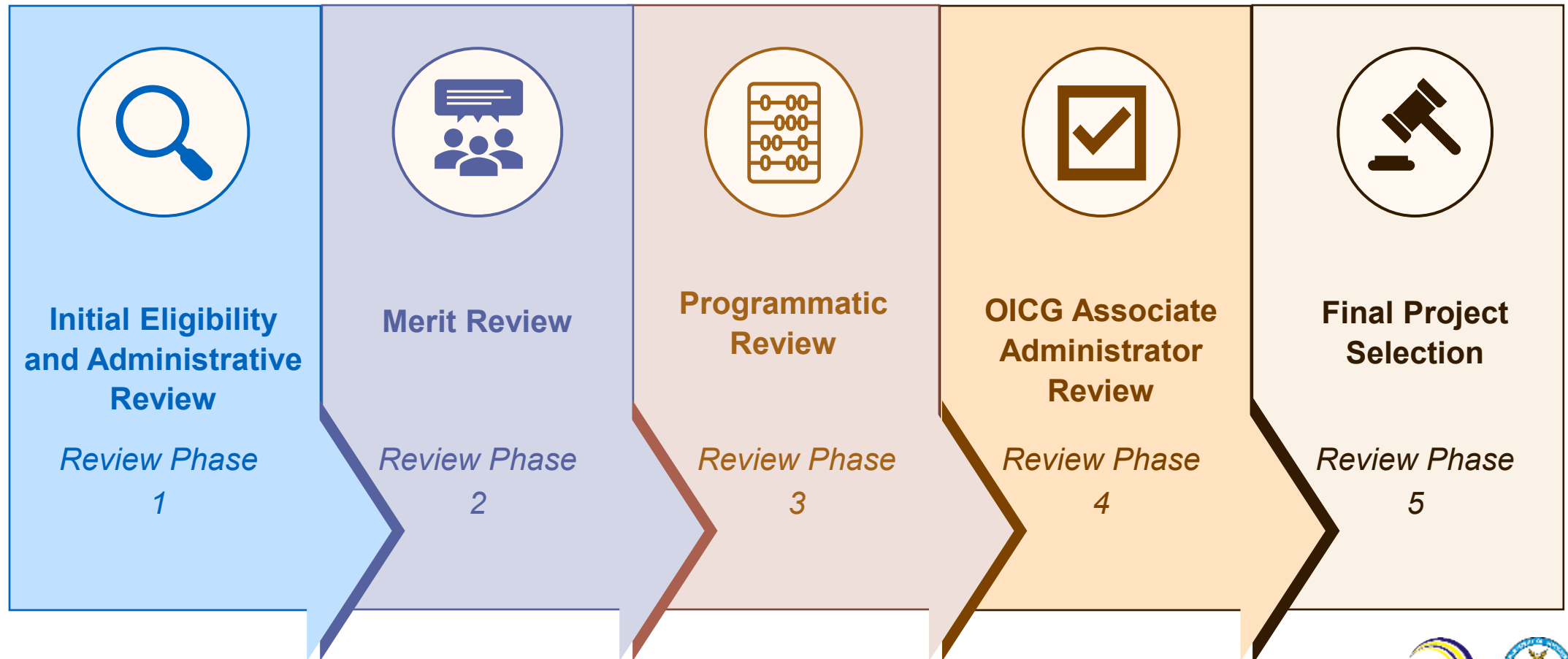
Office of Internet Connectivity & Growth
National Telecommunications & Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Reviewing and Approving Applications

Application Review Process



Capacity & Planning Grant Funds will be awarded to Native Entities on a competitive basis using the following stages of review and will be prioritized for funding as described in Section III.D.3.a₁



Reviewing Applications: Phases 1 & 2

Capacity & Planning Grant Funds will be awarded to Native Entities on a competitive basis using the following stages of review and will be prioritized for funding as described in NOFO Section III.D.3.a.₁ *Curing*, the process of refining pieces of an application, may be requested by NTIA for specific applications at certain review points.



Initial Eligibility and Administrative Review *Review Phase 1*

What: Initial eligibility and administrative screening

Why: Ensure the application contains all the required information and documentation and that it was submitted in a timely manner



Merit Review *Review Phase 2*

What: Merit review of eligible applications

Reviewers will evaluate applications and independently score each application on a scale of 0-100 points

Why: Assess overall strength of application, including conformity with program objectives and cost reasonableness

Considerations for Curing: NTIA may continue to the review process for an application that is timely submitted by an eligible Native Entity, but that is missing certain information or documentation required by this NOFO. In such cases, NTIA may ask the Applicant to provide any missing or incomplete materials during this initial review. NTIA reserves the right at any time during the application processes to negotiate with the Applicant relative to specific modifications to the application.

Reviewing Applications: Phase 3

Capacity & Planning Grant Funds will be awarded to Native Entities on a competitive basis using the following stages of review and will be prioritized for funding as described in Section III.D.3.a.₁



Programmatic Review

Review Phase 3

What: Programmatic review will occur, as state in NOFO Section III.D.3.a, of prioritized applications with a minimum score of 65 during the Merit Review. NTIA Program Staff will summarize their analysis and scoring for each application reviewed, and will provide a ranked list of proposed projects, based on each project's weighted score to the OICG Associate Administrator.

PRIORITIZATION

During Programmatic Review, applications with an average score of 90 or higher will be prioritized. Reviewers will first consider applications that:

- are from an eligible entity, or entities in a consortium, that did not receive TBCP funding
- **and**
- address three or more of the Covered Populations.

Why: Assess applications to consider the extent to which those applications meet the criteria listed in NOFO Section III.D.3.b and will calculate weighted scores to reflect each application's likelihood of advancing those goals.

Reviewing Applications: Phase 4

Capacity & Planning Grant Funds will be awarded to Native Entities on a competitive basis using the following stages of review and will be prioritized for funding as described in Section III.D.3.a.₁

OICG Associate Administrator Review *Review Phase 4*

What: Reviews ranked list of applications provided by programmatic review, then creates a final recommendation list for the NTIA Assistant Secretary.

Why: The OICG Associate Administrator's recommendations to the Selecting Official may differ from the ranked list of applications developed during the Programmatic Review based on consideration of the following selection factors: (a) geographic diversity, (b) diversity in the size of the funding amounts of the proposed awards, (c) consideration for consortia applications, and (d) to ensure funding reaches those Native Entities with the highest rates of poverty.

Reviewing Applications: Phase 5

Capacity & Planning Grant Funds will be awarded to Native Entities on a competitive basis using the following stages of review and will be prioritized for funding as described in Section III.D.3.a.₁



Final Project Selection

Review Phase 5

What: The NTIA Assistant Secretary will submit the applications recommended for funding, along with the bases for the selection decisions, to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Grants Officer, who serves as the Grants Officer for the Capacity Grant Program. The final approval of selected applications and the issuance of awards will be made by the NIST Grants Officer. The award decisions of the NIST Grants Officer are final.

Why: As the Selecting Official, the NTIA Assistant Secretary retains discretion to select and recommend an application for funding that was not recommended by the OICG Associate Administrator based on the selection factors list in Section III.D.4. of this NOFO. The NTIA Assistant Secretary also retains discretion not to recommend an application for funding that was recommended by the OICG Associate Administrator and will appropriately document the basis of this decision.

Submission Requirements

Submission Requirements: NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program

Applicants are encouraged to review the full description of requirements as detailed in the NOFO.

MAJOR APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW: 1

- 

Formal authorizing documentation from the governing body of the Native Entity providing express authority to apply
- 

A List of each Native Entities participating in a consortium provided by the lead applicant
- 

A MOU with each Native Entity in the consortium demonstrating approval provided by the lead applicant
- 

Project Narrative
- 

Certification that funds will be used in a manner that is consistent with 47 U.S.C. 1723 and this NOFO, and that if seeking Planning Grant and Capacity Grant funds, certify that funds will be budgeted and tracked separately
- 

Certification that the funds will be used to supplement, not supplant, other Federal or State funds
- 

The assurances required under 47 U.S.C. §1723(e)
- 

Consolidated Budget Form
- 

The following standard federal financial assistance forms and documentation: SF 424, CD-511, SF LLL, and NICRA

Key Dates and Deadline

Reminders: Native Entities



As a reminder, the NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program award process is a **competitive process**. Applications must be complete at the time of submission.

KEY DATES FOR NATIVE ENTITIES:



Application Window

The application window for Native Entities **opens September 25, 2024**, and **closes February 7, 2025**.¹ The NGP will begin accepting applications for submission on **October 30, 2024**.



Period of Performance

Native Entities shall expend the grant funds during the **5-year** period beginning on the date on which the Native Entity is awarded grant funds.²



Issuing Awards

NTIA expects to begin making awards under this NOFO in Summer 2025, NTIA may issue awards made under the NE Capacity & Planning Grant Program on a rolling basis.³

Note: Award decisions and communications during the application period will be conducted via email. Please reach out to digitalequity@ntia.gov if you have questions or concerns.



Available Resources



Throughout the application period, applicants will have access to several technical assistance resources including trainings, application guidance documents, Frequently Asked Questions, and 1-pagers.



Technical Assistance

NTIA will provide various documents to support Applicants and Awardees.

For more information, Applicants should go to
BroadbandUSA → Digital Equity Act Programs → State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program: Native Entities

<https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/funding-programs/digital-equity-act-programs/NE-Capacity-and-Planning-Grant-Program>



Program Questions

Questions about the program can be submitted to the Digital Equity inbox:

digitalequity@ntia.gov



Application Guidance

Application Guidance and forms will be available for applicants applying through the NGP and for those applying via email or by mail or courier at a later date.

