

Next Century Cities

MAY 2022

MAP YOUR STATE

COMPLETE SURVEYS FOR
BROADBAND ACCESS AND
AVAILABILITY

THE BROADBAND ACCESS SUMMIT

JOIN US IN CLEVELAND, OH FROM
JUNE 21-22, 2022
REGISTER TODAY!

CLEVELAND, OH

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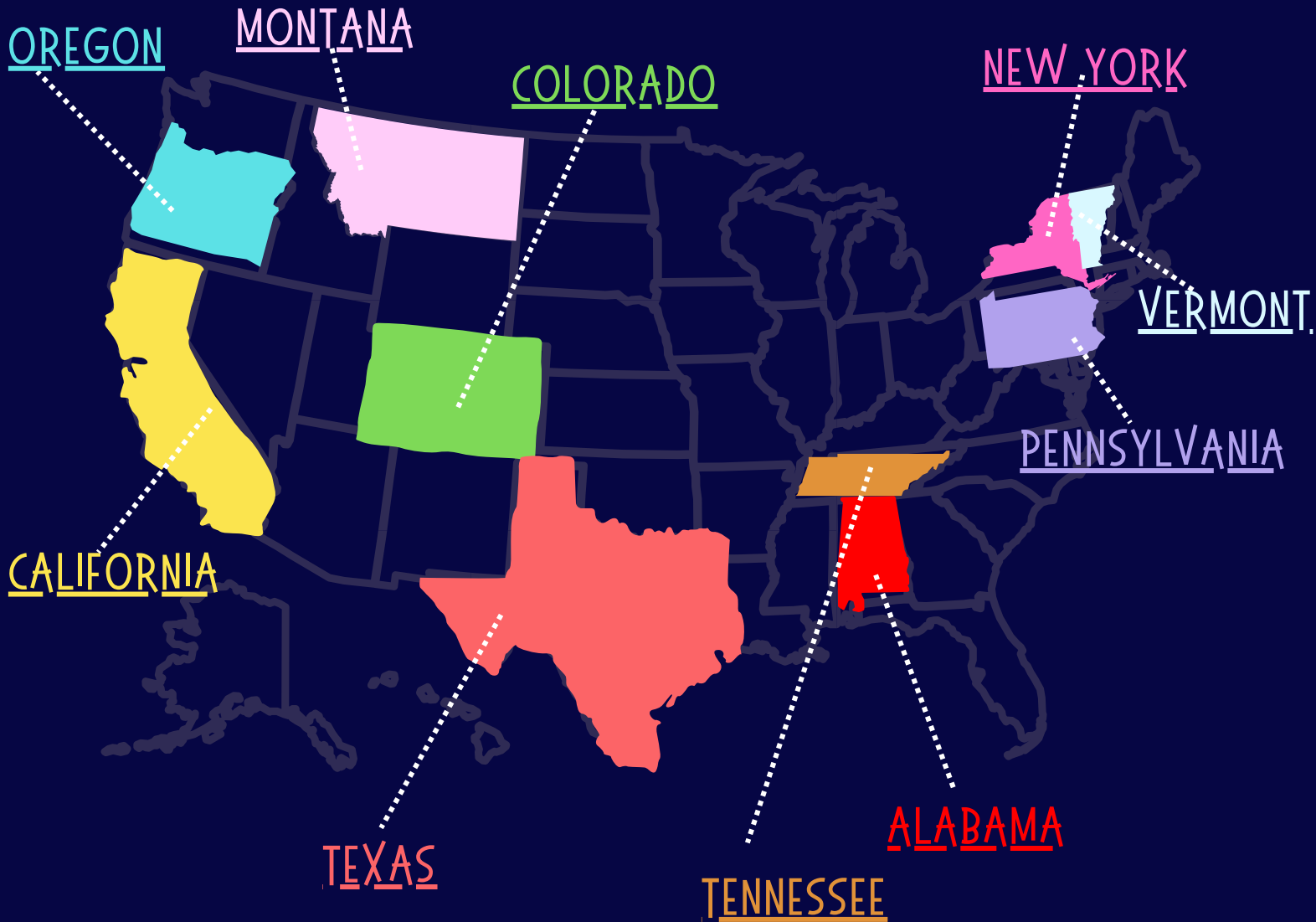
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CLICK TO LEARN ABOUT MAPPING IN YOUR STATE



States are seeking input from residents regarding their Internet connectivity experience. Click on your highlighted state to learn more about the surveys and information collection processes.



NCC Meets with Local Officials and Nonprofit Allies in Houston, Texas

By Corian Zacher

On May 2, 2022, Next Century Cities hosted a listening session in Houston and virtually to discuss the digital divide in Texas. Participants included local and regional leaders and nonprofit partners from Texas, Maryland, Kansas, Missouri, and D.C., including Pew Charitable Trusts' Jake Varn, who shared state policy insights from across the country.

At a time when more local leaders are focused on expanding broadband access and adoption than ever, success stories abound. For instance, one participant works for a rural county in Maryland that partnered with a fixed wireless provider around five years ago. Using innovative strategies, the county and provider have been able to help connect residents who live in remote areas. The county has also been able to assist by providing public utility staff to dig trenches for broadband infrastructure in areas where it is cost-prohibitive for companies to dig on their own.

Continue reading about NCC's Texas Listening Session [here](#).

Exploring Digital Equity

WITH ILSR, AARP, AND NDIA

Together with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA), and the Local Institute for Self Reliance (ILSR) launched the **Exploring Digital Equity Fact Sheets** series to shed light on challenges and barriers that older adults face as they navigate our digital society.



WHAT IS BROADBAND?



BROADBAND ACCESS CHALLENGES



BROADBAND AFFORDABILITY CHALLENGES



BROADBAND AVAILABILITY CHALLENGES



KEY DIGITAL SKILLS FOR BROADBAND



EXPANDING DEVICE AVAILABILITY FOR BROADBAND

ANALYSIS: THE NATIONAL CONSUMER LAW CENTER RELEASES A REPORT ON THE CONSUMER PROTECTIONS IN THE AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

By Ryan Johnston

The Affordable Connectivity Program (“ACP”) is a federal broadband subsidy program that provides \$30 a month (\$75 on Tribal Lands) for those who qualify. As of April 2022, over 11.5 million households have already enrolled in the program.

The ACP has several significant differences from its predecessor, the Emergency Broadband Benefit (“EBB”) as detailed in a report by Olivia Wein, Staff Attorney with the National Consumer Law Center. The report explains what consumer protections have been implemented and how consumers can take advantage of them when enrolling for a broadband subsidy.

MONTHLY BENEFIT. ACP households are able to receive a “digital coupon” for up to \$30 per month that can be used for the cost of any home broadband or cellular plan that includes data from a participating provider. On Tribal lands and in high-cost areas, this amount increases, maxing out at \$75. Participants may also take advantage of a one-time benefit of up to \$100 towards a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer through a participating provider. Regardless of the device’s price, a household must contribute between \$10 and \$50 towards the purchase price of the device. Households that received a device payment under the EBB are not eligible for a device subsidy via ACP.

While consumers are limited to one ACP benefit per household, payments can be used in addition to the Federal Communications Commission’s (“FCC”) Lifeline Program (this choice is not mandatory and is up to the consumer). In other words, consumers could combine the up to \$30 ACP monthly benefit and the \$9.25/month Lifeline benefit for a total discount of up to \$39.25/month towards specified broadband services. Consumers should know that there are more ACP-covered services than Lifeline broadband services, so stacking benefits isn’t always going to be possible.

Continue reading about ACP consumer protections [here](#).

NEXT CENTURY CITIES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS PRESENTS THE

Broadband
ACCESS SUMMIT



JUNE 21-22, 2022
CLEVELAND, OHIO

Insights from local leaders are critical for ensuring that federal and state investments reflect communal needs. Register for the conference and program updates [here!](#)

Established community broadband projects expanded service to low-income communities even before Congress would consider funding a program like the ACP.

In the absence of federal subsidies, some municipal providers took a leadership role in building affordability programs into their plans. For example, **Chattanooga, Tennessee**, offers free high-speed Internet to low-income households with public school students across Hamilton County.

In **Longmont, Colorado**, the NextLight municipal broadband network has made huge strides in offering affordable services to Longmont residents and has used the ACP to continue reaching this goal. NextLight provides free 100-megabit and \$19.95 gigabit symmetrical internet service to qualifying individuals and families using a combination of federal support and NextLight's own funds. Nearly 800 households benefit from these discounts and more continue to be added. In 2019, even prior to the pandemic, NextLight introduced its "Sharing the NextLight" program, and began offering free connections for school families on free and reduced lunch programs. In 2020, when the pandemic forced students and parents alike to work from home, NextLight introduced income-qualified and COVID-hardship discounts as part of the Emergency Broadband Benefit, and also expanded Sharing the NextLight to include pre-school and Pell Grant college students. Continued [here](#).

HOW LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ARE MAKING THE AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM STRONGER

BY COLLEN MCCROSKEY, CORIAN ZACHER, AND BRIAN DONOGHUE

Longmont, CO



Chattanooga, TN



Seattle, WA





LOCAL OFFICIALS SHARE ADVICE AND LEARN ABOUT INNOVATIVE CONNECTIVITY STRATEGIES AT ANNUAL BROADBAND COMMUNITIES SUMMIT

BY CORIAN ZACHER

Community leaders, nonprofit advocates, and broadband providers from across the country convened in Houston, Texas, the week of May 2nd through the 5th for the Broadband Communities Summit. The conference focused on making the most of upcoming grant funding opportunities, highlighting successful partnership strategies, and showcasing models for broadband deployment.

Among a wide range of topics, the need for building relationships between local, state, and federal governments was a centerpiece. For instance, unlike past federal funding programs, the American Rescue Plan Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act both channel funding through state leaders, making coordination efforts between federal and state as well as state and local relationship-building imperative. While new federal programs introduce funding possibilities for nontraditional broadband providers, like local governments, nonprofits, and cooperatives, state plans need local input. Reaching out to state broadband officers is an important step for local officials, but that may be easier said than done in states like Michigan, which have yet to designate a state officer.

For anyone interested in improving broadband in their community, developing partnerships is a crucial first step. Community leaders, providers, and members of the public all bring important insights and assets to the table.

Traverse City, Michigan, is a successful example of this practice. What began as a municipal utility that built out fiber for its electrical grid became a community broadband network through thoughtful strategic planning and partnerships. As Scott Menhart, Chief Information Technology Officer for Traverse Power & Light, explained during a panel on becoming investment ready, understanding physical and human infrastructure in communities is critical to finding advantageous solutions for everyone.

KC Digital Drive, a nonprofit in **Kansas City, Missouri** and **Kansas**, takes a different approach. Through building relationships with members of the community who represent different sectors, subject areas, and layers of engagement, Aaron Deacon KC Digital Drive's Managing Director explained that broadband is a tool that helps achieve a community-wide impact.

Continue reading about conference highlights [here](#).



BROADBAND COMMUNITIES SUMMIT: CONNECTING THE PEOPLE WHO CONNECT OUR COMMUNITIES

By Brian Donoghue

The Broadband Communities Summit kicked off an exhilarating month for broadband advocates in Houston, Texas, from May 2nd through 5th, 2022.

In addition to the excitement of gathering together for the first time in years, the anticipation for upcoming clarifications for the broadband funding sections of the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) was palpable. This energy peaked on day two with a panel discussion with NTIA, Treasury, FCC, and USDA officials who provided status updates on their funding initiatives. Each representative shared current operational perspectives and candidly answered questions from local leaders and service providers.

Read more about Brian's experience at the Broadband Communities Summit [here](#).



University of Pittsburgh Hosts 2022 Pennsylvania Broadband Symposium

BY BRIAN DONOGHUE

The University of Pittsburgh hosted the Pennsylvania Broadband Symposium, a virtual convening where regional, state, and local digital equity leaders gathered to discuss the future of connectivity statewide. These critical discussions were particularly timely in light of the passage of the **Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act** and NTIA's forthcoming **Notice of Funding Opportunity** expected in mid-May.

Following a welcome from the University of Pittsburgh's Vice-Chancellor Mark Henderson, NTIA Chief of Staff Aadil Ginwala offered opening remarks. Ginwala gave a big-picture perspective on the opportunities created by this unprecedented funding and provided guidance for local advocates looking to best position their regions, highlighting the importance of mapping regional connectivity. As Ginwala rightly noted, "**nobody knows the locality better than the people there.**"

PARTICIPATE IN THE WELINK CITIES CHALLENGE

The WeLink Cities Challenge could invest up to \$100 million in Internet connectivity for low-income households in dense urban communities. Cities can get information and enter submission forms on the [WeLink website](#).



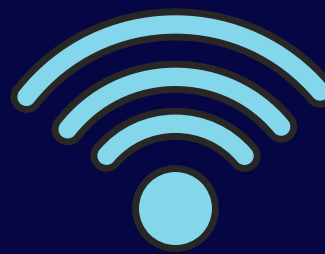
Express interest
through May 27, 2022.



**Identify neighborhoods in
need from June 1-24, 2022.**



**Co-design a solution for
multi-gigabit speeds
(Summer 2022).**



**WeLink invests and connects
the first households within
weeks (Fall 2022).**

member resources and opportunities

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

The City of Lancaster, PA, will [receive proposals](#) online for City of Lancaster's RFP-Smart Lancaster Fiber Initiative Contract until **June 8, 2022 at 11:00AM**.

DIGITAL EQUITY ACT POPULATION VIEWER

The United States Census Bureau announced the release of the Digital Equity Act Population Viewer, an interactive collection of maps that highlight various demographics and broadband Internet availability and adoption by state. Access the viewer [here](#).

NTIA NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

NTIA released its Notice of Funding Opportunity detailing key dates, eligibility info, and award requirements for the \$42.5 billion in Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program that will be distributed through states and territories. Learn more at <https://internetforall.gov>. NTIA also published explainers on BEAD, Digital Equity, Tribal, and Middle Mile funding opportunities which can be found on the following pages.

INTERNET FOR ALL

FUNDED BY THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW

Where we are today...

Many Americans lack access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet

America runs on high-speed internet. A strong internet connection powers our economy and supports education. It fosters better public health. And, it connects loved ones and strengthens social ties. But not everyone is connected. Too many Americans are cut off from the opportunities that high-speed internet makes possible. That's why we're working to bring high-speed internet to all Americans.



... and where we're going

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law includes \$65B to connect all Americans to high-speed Internet

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, passed by Congress and signed into law by President Biden on Nov. 15, 2021, provides new funding to connect everyone in America with affordable, reliable, high-speed internet. The Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) will administer \$48B to support high-speed internet planning, infrastructure, and adoption and meaningful use.

NTIA will administer ~\$48B of funding across four programs

BEAD - \$42.45B

Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment

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

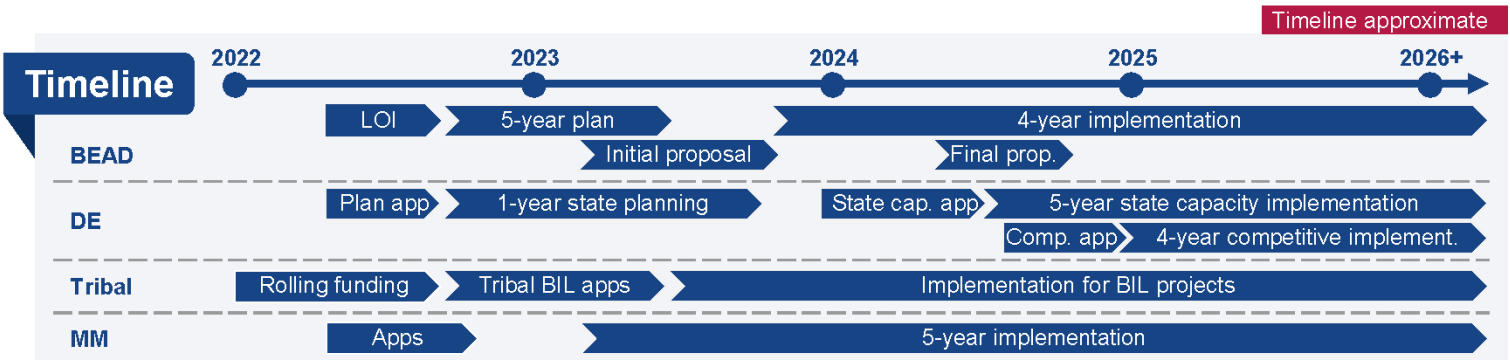
Tribal Connectivity Technical Amendments

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.



THE BROADBAND EQUITY, ACCESS AND DEPLOYMENT (BEAD) PROGRAM OVERVIEW

FUNDED BY THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW

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... and where we're going

The BEAD Program includes \$42B for high-speed Internet access

Funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, BEAD is a federal grant program that aims 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. BEAD prioritizes unserved locations that have no internet access or that only have access under 25/3 Mbps and underserved locations only have access under 100/20 Mbps.

Select BEAD program details

Eligible entities

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

Example eligible uses of funds

- 1 Planning for the deployment of high-speed Internet, including conducting research, collecting data, outreach, and training
- 2 Deploying or upgrading Internet in unserved or underserved areas or improving service to community anchor organizations
- 3 Installing Internet and Wi-Fi in multi-unit residential buildings
- 4 Adoption and digital equity programs
- 5 Workforce development programs and vocational training

Ways to get involved

Eligible entities must conduct coordination with local governments, Tribes, community orgs, and individuals within their jurisdiction. Members of the public are encouraged to contact U.S. states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and territories to learn about more ways to get involved.

Timeline

Timeline approximate unless exact date specified



THE ENABLING MIDDLE MILE BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE (MM) PROGRAM OVERVIEW

FUNDED BY THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW

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... and where we're going

The Middle Mile (MM) Program includes \$1B for high-speed Internet access

Funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the MM Program is a program to expand middle mile infrastructure, to reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas. Middle mile infrastructure broadly refers to the mid-section of Internet infrastructure that carries large amounts of data at high speeds over long distances. This program will also increase the resilience of Internet infrastructure.

Select MM program details

Eligible entities

- 1 **Government:** States, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, other territories, Tribal government, local government
- 2 **Industry:** Tech company, electric utility, utility cooperative, public utility district, telecom company/cooperative
- 3 **Non-profits and other associations:** Non-profits, regional planning council, Native entity, or economic development authority
- 4 **Partnerships:** A partnership of two or more entities described above

Example eligible uses of funds

Grants can be used for the construction, improvement, or acquisition of middle mile infrastructure, including:

- 1 Construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment
- 2 Engineering design, permitting and work related to project reviews
- 3 Personnel costs, incl. salaries and benefits for staff and consultants
- 4 Other costs necessary to programmatic activities

Timeline

Timeline approximate unless exact date specified



DIGITAL EQUITY ACT PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

FUNDED BY THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW

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... and where we're going

The Digital Equity Act includes \$2.75B to drive digital inclusion and equity

Funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Digital Equity Act Programs are planning and implementation 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. The three programs include two state formula programs and one competitive program.

Select Digital Equity programs details

Three federal grant programs

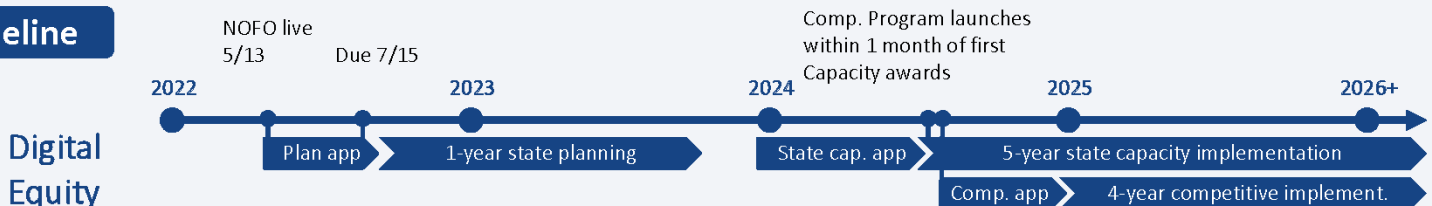
- 1 State Planning Program: A \$60M formula grant program for states, territories, and tribal governments to develop digital equity plans.
- 2 State Capacity Program: A \$1.44 billion formula grant program for states, territories, and tribal governments. It will fund an annual grant program for five years in support of digital equity projects and the implementation of digital equity plans.
Note: US territories other than Puerto Rico and Tribal / Native entities have separate funding allocations and different programmatic requirements for the State Planning and Capacity Programs
- 3 Competitive Program: A \$1.25 billion competitive grant program. It will fund an annual grant programs for five years to implement digital equity projects. Several types of entities can apply for these funds.

Example eligible uses of funds

- 1 Develop, implement, and oversee digital equity plans
- 2 Make awards to other entities to help in developing digital equity plans
- 3 Improve the online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources
- 4 Implement digital equity plans and digital inclusion activities
- 5 Provide digital literacy and skills education to covered populations
- 6 Facilitate the adoption of high-speed Internet by covered populations

Timeline

Timeline approximate unless exact date specified





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