

Alaska Broadband Office Broadband and Digital Equity Update



Lisa Von Bargaen, Deputy Director

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Alaska Infrastructure
Development Symposium

4/3/2024

Broadband Overview



Alaska Broadband Office Mission Statement

Facilitate access to the full benefits of broadband for all Alaskans with improved quality of service and lower costs.



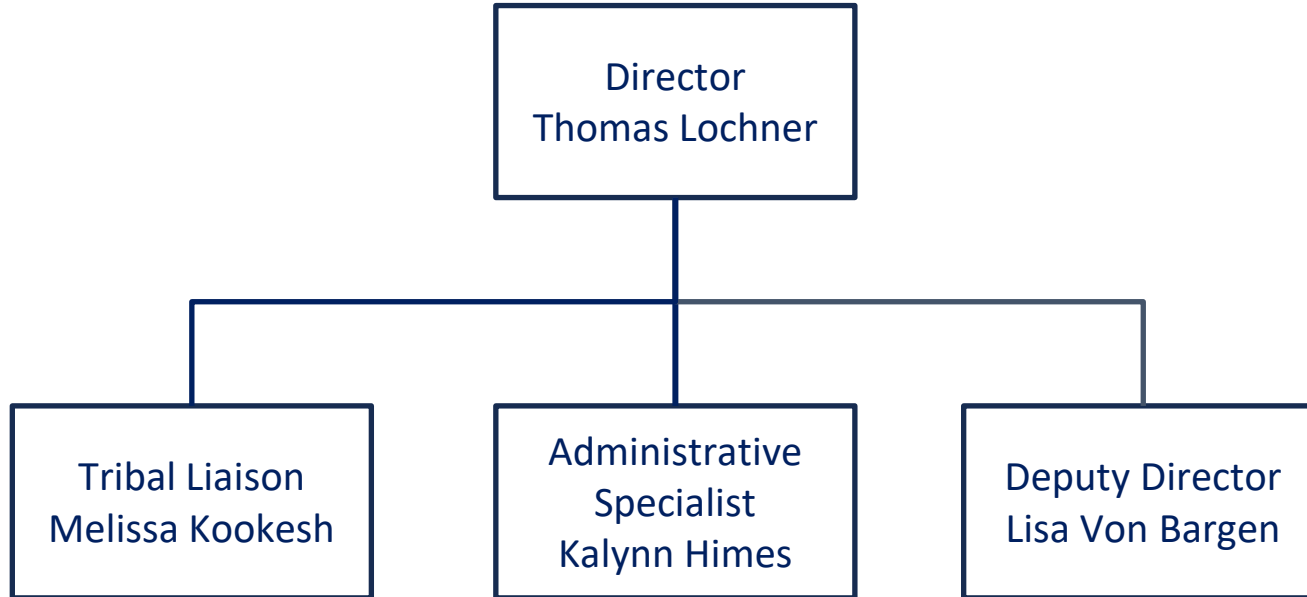
Digital Equity Listening Session



Broadband Overview

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Alaska Broadband Office



Broadband Overview

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State Partners

Division of Community and Regional Affairs

- Grant Administration
- Mapping Analytics & Data Resources

Department of Natural Resources

- Office of Project Management and Permitting
- Division of Mining, Land, and Water

Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

- Project Coordination
- Permitting

Department of Environmental Conservation

- Permitting



Broadband Overview

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Major Accomplishments

State of Alaska Digital Equity Plan

- Evaluates the status of Digital Equity among eight covered populations
- Approved March 14, 2024
- This makes the State eligible for an allocation of the \$1.44 billion Digital Equity Capacity Grant funds

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) State Mapping Challenge Process

- Creates a portal and process for Alaskans to challenge the internet speeds at their location
- Approved March 6, 2024
- This gives Alaskans a voice in where the infrastructure will be built

BEAD Broadband Grant Program

- Creates the program to distribute the \$1 Billion BEAD allocation
- Submitted to NTIA December 27, 2023
- After revision process with the NTIA, ABO will post Broadband Grant application period



Broadband Overview

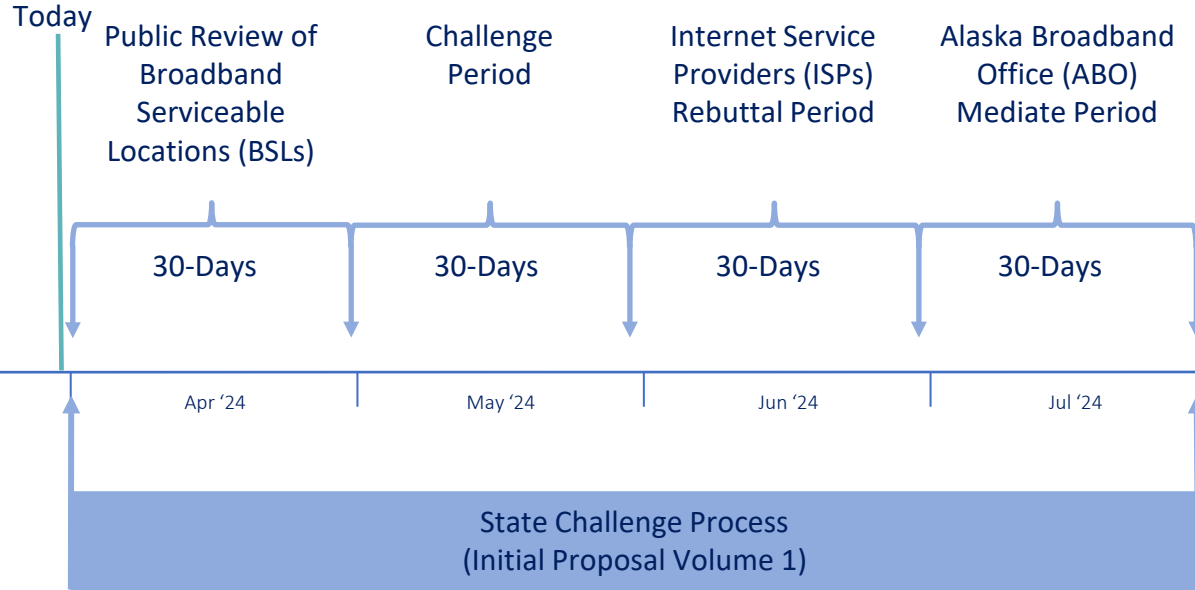
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Alaska Mapping Challenge



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BEAD – State Challenge Process



Continuing from 2023

Broadband Grant Program Approval Process (Initial Proposal Volume 2)

Note: all timelines estimated based on the best available information and may change.



Alaska Mapping Challenge

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Types of Challenges

TYPES OF CHALLENGES

- BSL Level of Internet Service
 - Unserved
 - Underserved
- CAI Service Availability
 - 1 Gbps/1 Gbps Unavailable
 - CAI Location
 - Planned Projects
- Enforceable Commitments
- Planned Projects



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ENTITIES AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT CHALLENGES

- Local Governments (Cities & Boroughs)
- Tribal Governments
- Non-Profit Organizations
- Internet Service Providers (ISPs)



When to Submit a Challenge

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS?

1. Does my Broadband Serviceable Location show the correct level of service?
 - Served = 100/20 Mbps and above
 - Underserved = above 25/3 Mbps but less than 100/20 Mbps
 - Unserved = Cannot reach 25/3 Mbps
2. Is my Community Anchor Institution on the List?
3. Does my Community Anchor Institution have qualifying service?
 - 1 Gbps/1 Gbps



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Broadband Serviceable Location (BSL) Challenges

TYPES OF SERVICE CHALLENGES

- Availability
- Speed
- Latency
- Data Cap
- Technology
- Business Service Only



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Broadband Serviceable Location (BSL) Challenges

AVAILABILITY: THE BROADBAND SERVICE IDENTIFIED IS NOT OFFERED AT THE LOCATION.

- Provider failed to schedule a service installation within 10 days of a request.
- Provider did not install the service at the agreed upon time.
- Provider requested more than the standard installation fee to connect the location.
- Provider denied the request for service.
- Provider does not offer the identified technology at this location.
- Provider does not offer the speed shown on the Broadband Map for purchase at this location.
- No wireless signal is available at this location (Wireless service only).
- New nonstandard equipment had to be constructed at this location.



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Broadband Serviceable Location (BSL) Challenges

SPEED: THE ACTUAL SPEED OF THE SERVICE TIER FALLS BELOW THE UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED THRESHOLDS.

- Three speed tests.
- www.ookla.com
- Performed at different times of the day.
- Mean of the three is taken.
- Only a valid challenge if the location is subscribed to the highest available service tier.



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Broadband Serviceable Location (BSL) Challenges

LATENCY: THE ROUND-TRIP LATENCY OF THE BROADBAND SERVICE EXCEEDS
100 MILLISECONDS (MS).

- Three speed tests – “PING” reaction time
- www.ookla.com
- Performed at different times of the day.
- Mean of the three is taken.
- Only a valid challenge if the location is subscribed to the highest available service tier.



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Broadband Serviceable Location (BSL) Challenges

DATA CAP

- The only service plans marketed to consumers impose an unreasonable capacity allowance (“data cap”) on the consumer.



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Broadband Serviceable Location (BSL) Challenges

TECHNOLOGY: THE TECHNOLOGY INDICATED FOR THIS LOCATION IS INCORRECT.

- Copper Wire
- Optical Carrier and Fiber to the Premises
- Non-geostationary Satellite
- Licensed Terrestrial Fixed Wireless
- Other

- Coaxial Cable and HFC
- Geostationary Satellite
- Unlicensed Terrestrial Fixed Wireless
- Licensed-By-Rule Terrestrial Fixed Wireless



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Community Anchor Institution (CAI) Challenges - Location

WHAT IS A CAI?

“...an entity such as a school, library, health clinic, health center, hospital or other medical provider, public safety entity, institution of higher education, public housing organization, or community support organization that facilitates greater use of broadband service by vulnerable populations, including, but not limited to, low-income individuals, unemployed individuals, children, the incarcerated, and aged individuals.”



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Community Anchor Institution (CAI) Challenges - Location

STANDARD CAIS

- Schools
- Libraries
- Health Care Facilities
- Public Safety Entities
- Institutions of Higher Education
- Public Housing Organizations



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Community Anchor Institution (CAI) Challenges - Location

ALASKA-SPECIFIC CAIS

- Specific Local, Tribal, State Government Facilities
- Remote Job Center
- Youth Support Organization
- Health Care Facilities
- Shelter
- Washeteria
- Community Gathering Location



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Community Anchor Institution (CAI) Challenges - Availability

CAI SERVICE AVAILABILITY

- Lacking 1 Gig Symmetrical Service
- When subscribed to Highest Available Tier of Service



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Questions?

Alaska Mapping Challenge Questions?



Alaska Mapping Challenge

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Alaska Broadband Grant Program



Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment

\$42.45 BILLION FOR ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES

Alaska's Allocation: \$1,017,139,672.42



Alaska Broadband Grant Program

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BEAD – Broadband Grant Program

Interested Parties
Application Period

Alaska Broadband Office
Application Review, Grading and Awards

120-Days

90-Days

Oct '24

Nov '24

Dec '24

Jan '25

Feb '25

Mar '25

Apr '25

Grant
Opportunities
Posted

Grant
Applications
Due

Grant
Awards
Announced

Broadband Grant Program
(Initial Proposal Volume 2)

Note: all timelines estimated based on the best available information and may change.



Alaska Broadband Grant Program

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Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment

Grants will follow the following location priorities:

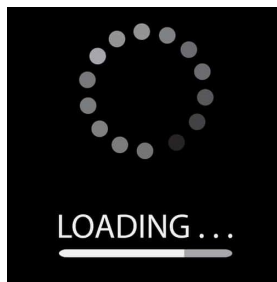
#1 - Unserved

Less than 25 Megabits per second (Mbps) download and 3 Mbps upload (<25/3)



#2 - Underserved

More than 25/3, but less than 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload (<100/20)



#3 - Unserved Community Anchor Institutions

Less than 1 Gigabit per second (Gbps) download and 1 Gbps upload



Alaska Broadband Grant Program

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Minimum Qualifications

1: Project Sustainability

2: Organizational/Managerial Capability

3: Financial Capability

4: Technical Capability

5: Cyber Security Risk Management

6: Supply Chain Risk Management

7: Weather/Climate Mitigation

8: Natural Hazard Mitigation

9: Civil Rights Compliance

10: Federal/State Laws Compliance

11: Local and Tribal Coordination

12: Other Public Funding Disclosure

13: Low-Cost Option

14: Middle Class Affordability



DRAFT SCORING CRITERIA

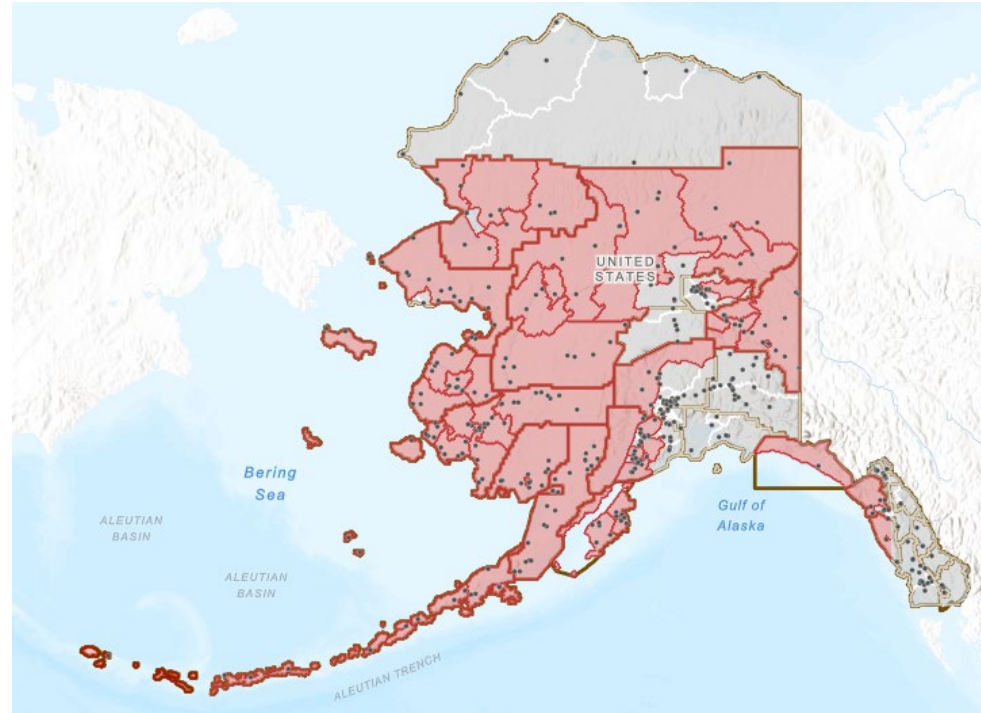
- Scoring Criteria in review by NTIA
- Primary Criteria must = 75%
 - Efficient Use of BEAD Funding
 - Affordability & Plans
 - Fair Labor Practices



Federally Designated High-Cost Map

High-Cost Area: 25% Match Requirement Waived.

Non-High-Cost Area: 25% Match Required. Waivers may be requested.



Alaska Broadband Grant Program

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Questions?

Alaska Broadband Grant Program Questions?



Alaska Broadband Grant Program

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Workforce Development



BROADBAND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN VISION & MISSION

Vision: Alaskans from every region of the state will learn about, train for, and fill broadband construction and deployment jobs to meet the labor supply needs of industry employers.

Mission: Alaska’s Broadband Workforce Development Plan will support development of a diverse and inclusive skilled labor force to meet the needs of employers who build, operate, and maintain telecommunication infrastructure in every region of Alaska.



Broadband Workforce Development Plan Goals

- 1.) Increase the number of Alaskans qualified to fill broadband construction and operations occupations;
- 2.) Develop a diverse and inclusive regional broadband industry workforce; and
- 3.) Strengthen and expand post-deployment capacity for residents to learn about and navigate education, training, and career opportunities, including self-employment, available using high-speed broadband access.



Broadband Workforce Development Plan Strategies

- 1.) Implement the Broadband Workforce Development Plan and build a sustainable, standards-based program, with a focus on public-private partnerships to produce a highly skilled and technically trained workforce that can meet industry labor supply challenges;
- 2.) Build on the existing construction industry training and workforce efforts;
- 3.) Increase career awareness and information about telecommunications occupations and employment;
- 4.) Increase education and training programs that prepare students and adults for apprenticeship and entry-level employment in telecommunications occupations; and
- 5.) Put in place recruitment, training, and employment efforts focused on historically underrepresented groups.



Session Break



Digital Equity Moderated Discussion

Thomas Lochner, Director Alaska Broadband Office
Amy Hankins, Director Alaska Digital Equity Coalition



Digital Equity Milestone Dates & ABO Timeline

National Telecommunications
and Information
Administration (NTIA)
Publishes Digital Equity
Capacity Grant “Notice of
Funding Opportunity” (NOFO)

NTIA
Publishes
Digital Equity
Competitive
Grant NOFO

Today



State of
Alaska
Digital
Equity
Plan
Approved

State Responds to
the Digital Equity
Capacity Grant
Notice of Funding
Opportunity to
Develop Subgrants
(60 days)

Responses to Digital Equity Competitive
Grants
Notice of Funding Opportunity

Note: all timelines estimated based on the best available information and may change.



Digital Equity

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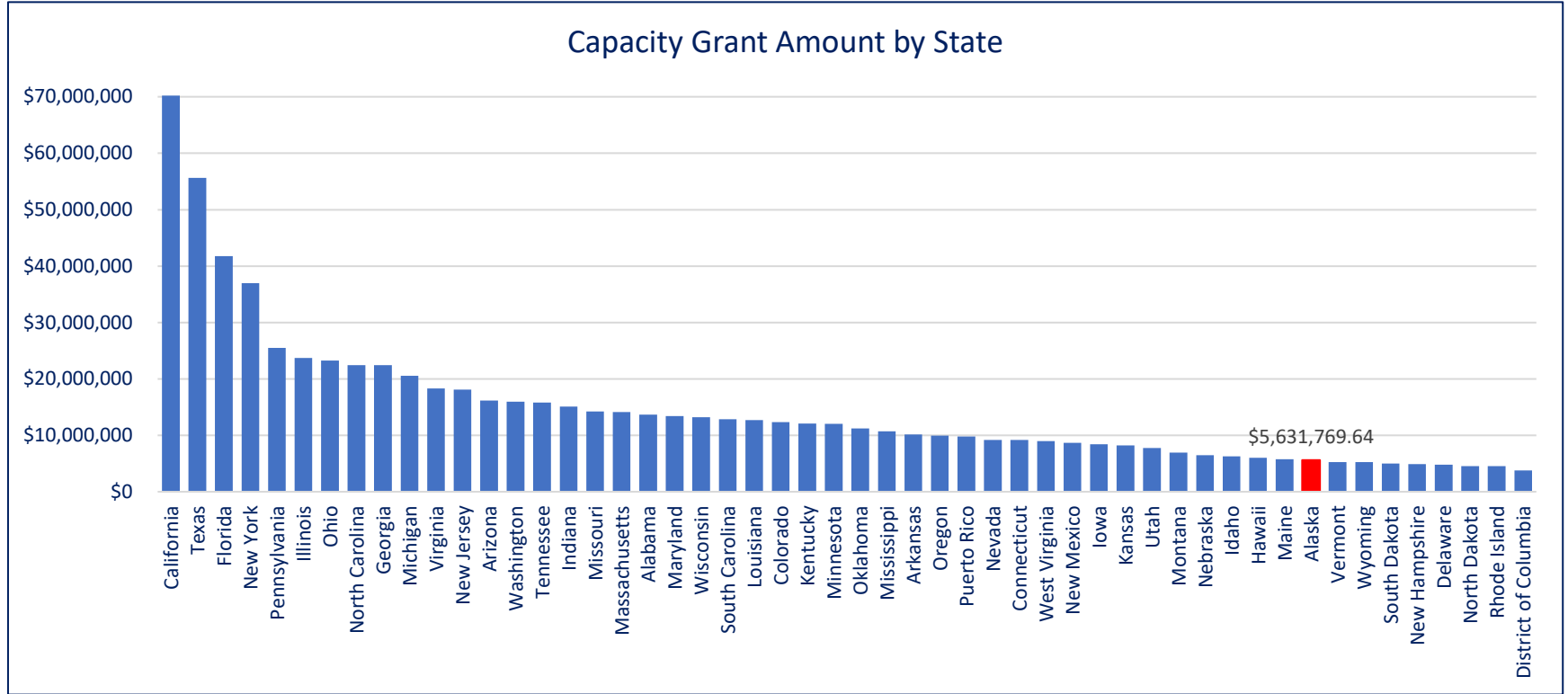
\$2.75 BILLION FOR ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES

- Planning Grants: \$60 Million – Alaska Awarded: **\$567,800**
- Capacity Grants: \$1.44 Billion – Alaska’s Award: **\$5,631,770¹**
- Competitive Grants: \$1.25 Billion – Alaska’s Award: TBD

1. Digital Equity Capacity Grant amount covers 2022 through 2024 only. A second and third tranche will be awarded in 2025 and 2026, respectively.



Digital Equity Capacity Grant Funding



Digital Equity

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Digital Equity Table Discussion

Amy Hankins - Facilitator



Thank You

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Digital Equity Reference Slides

Appendix A



Digital Equity Notice of Funding Opportunity – Subsection C.3.a.

Allowable Uses of State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Funds

...grant funds **only** for the following purposes:

- i. To update or maintain the State Digital Equity Plan of the State or Territory, provided, however, that the awardee may not use more than twenty (20) percent of the amount of the grant for this purpose.
- ii. To implement the State Digital Equity Plan of the State or Territory.
- iii. To make subgrants to any of the eligible entities identified at 47 U.S.C. §1724(b) that are located in the State or Territory to: (a) assist in the implementation of the Digital Equity Plan of the State or Territory; (b) pursue digital inclusion activities in the State or Territory consistent with the Digital Equity Plan of the State or Territory; and (c) report to the State or Territory regarding the digital inclusion activities of the entity.

The State of Alaska must require that the entity to which a subgrant is to be awarded certify that:

- 1) The entity shall carry out the activities required under items (a), (b), and (c) of this subsection;
- 2) The receipt of the subgrant shall not result in unjust enrichment of the entity; and
- 3) The entity shall cooperate with any evaluation of the program as it relates to a grant awarded to the entity and that is carried out by or for the Administering Entity or Administering Organization, the Assistant Secretary, or another federal official.



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Digital Equity Notice of Funding Opportunity – Subsection C.3.b.

Focus of Programs and Permitted Activities

State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program and the State or Territory’s Digital Equity Plan, grant recipients must consider the following criteria and focal points:

- i. Focus on Covered Populations:** The project should align with the Digital Equity Plan's goals and objectives, and the priorities of the Covered Populations being served, including subgroups within each Covered Population. Priority should be given to projects with the greatest potential impact, such as targeting Covered Households (i.e., low-income individuals) within other Covered Populations.
- ii. Long-lasting and Meaningful Change:** Digital Equity Plans are intended to address the systemic barriers and gaps to digital access. Projects/activities should reflect this goal and consider the sustainability of initiatives created through this funding.
- iii. Measurable Implementation Strategies:** Proposed programs and activities should be based on objectives that are measurable, achievable, sustainable, timebound, and are designed to address identified disparities directly and logically.
- iv. Stakeholder Engagement:** Stakeholders who are directly affected by the proposed strategies and interventions should be involved to encourage ongoing feedback regarding the effectiveness of the interventions and to seek input on potential solutions and improvements.



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Digital Equity Notice of Funding Opportunity – Subsection C.3.b.

Focus of Programs and Permitted Activities (Continued)

- **Digital Literacy and Skills Training:** Develop and implement digital literacy and skills programs that provide training and education to members of the Covered Populations on the use of digital tools, accessing online resources, and practicing safe and responsible online behavior, including programs that focus on youth training. The program may address issues such as online safety, prevention of online harassment and abuse (“cyberbullying”), privacy, and digital financial literacy, and may include the development of digital opportunity centers where individuals can access technology, receive training, and receive assistance with digital tasks.
- **E-Government and Civic Engagement:** Develop digital tools that enable online community engagement and empower individuals to participate in the democratic process, including digital tools that make it easier for individuals to register to vote and participate in civic activities. Develop online resources for legal assistance, government aid programs, and access to justice services for those in need. Enable access to social services, benefits, and government resources through digital platforms, simplifying processes and reducing barriers, including accessibility for people with disabilities.
- **Device Distribution Programs:** Provide devices such as laptops, smartphones, tablets, or other internet-enabled devices that are both practical and responsive to the digital inclusion needs of the Covered Populations, prioritizing individuals, or groups, with the greatest need. Eligibility criteria should be clearly defined and include appropriate safeguards, such as periodic financial audits and asset management systems. Digital literacy and skills training must be an integral part of any device distribution program to ensure that the beneficiaries receive training on how to use the devices effectively, access online resources, navigate digital platforms, use accessibility features, and employ best practices to protect their personal information and data.
- **Economic Development:** Support digital entrepreneurship, online job training, and remote work opportunities, fostering economic empowerment and reducing disparities. Create and/or promote programs and platforms that offer job training and remote work opportunities, helping members of the Covered Populations secure employment and gain economic self-sufficiency. Engage young people within the Covered Populations in digital economic activities that involve digital skills development that will lead to a constructive path to financial independence, a sense of purpose, and shared responsibility to positively contribute to their communities.
- **Online Access to Health and Mental Wellness Services:** Provide tools that directly help patients and end users within the Covered Populations to access healthcare services online, particularly in remote or underserved areas, to reduce health disparities. Expand mental health crisis training to Covered Population youth through digital channels utilizing interactive and multimedia elements to make the online training more engaging and effective. Promote patient use and adoption of digital health records, access to medical and health services, and improved healthcare coordination. Such programs should focus on the Covered Populations and not health or wellness providers or institutions.
- **Online Accessibility:** Programs to ensure that websites and applications are designed with accessibility in mind, making them usable by individuals with disabilities. In addition, projects that provide improved digital access to emergency communications that enhance the ability of emergency response personnel to provide timely, effective, and life-saving interventions that can ensure the health and safety of individuals with disabilities, particularly those who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, low vision, deafblind, deaf disabled or speech disabled. To address concerns for individuals with a language barrier, ensure that online services are available in multiple languages, including culturally responsive American Sign Language, to enhance accessibility to education, employment, healthcare, housing, essential services, civic engagement, and critical life-saving interventions.
- **Access to Affordable Broadband Service:** Promotion of programs to provide low-cost services administered by the Federal Communications Commission, as well as any other relevant local, State, or federal programs, should take precedence. While an Eligible Entity may establish a new affordable access program, it must first conduct a thorough assessment and inventory of existing subsidy programs, grants, or other resources available, leverage those existing resources, and use them as the primary source of funding while using the funding from this Program as a last resort. Any affordable access program shall provide digital literacy and skills training to empower program participants on how to use digital resources effectively and may not exceed ten (10) percent of the total amount of the grant award.



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Digital Equity Notice of Funding Opportunity – Subsection C.3.c.

Prohibited Uses of State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Funds

- i. Twenty Percent (20%) Cap on Digital Equity Plan Updates:** No more than twenty (20) percent of the amount of the grant may be used to update or maintain the Digital Equity Plan of the State or of the Territory (as applicable).
- ii. Five Percent (5%) Cap on the Evaluation of Program Efficacy:** 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 of the Digital Equity Plan of the State or Territory; (b) pursue digital inclusion activities in the State or Territory consistent with the Digital Equity Plan of the State or Territory; and (c) report to the State or Territory regarding the digital inclusion activities of the entity.
- iii. Three Percent (3%) Cap on Administrative Costs:** 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 a State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program (“SDECGP”) award. For this purpose, the three (3) percent limitation on administrative expenses includes the combined total of indirect and direct administrative costs charged to an award. The applicant must clearly describe in the budget narrative how it applied or calculated the three (3) percent limitation on administrative costs.
- iv. Ten Percent (10%) Cap on Affordable Broadband Programs:** 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.
- v. Prohibition on Supplanting and on Certain Website Upgrades:** Pursuant to 47 U.S.C. §1723(h), a grant or subgrant awarded under the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program shall supplement, not supplant, other federal or State funds that have been made available to carry out activities described at 47 U.S.C. §1723 and in this NOFO. Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program funds, including funds used for nondeployment expenditures, are subject to separate financial assistance award terms and conditions and must not be supplanted by State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program funding. In addition, grantees are prohibited from using Capacity Grant funds to conduct website upgrades or other accessibility projects that are otherwise required by law.
- vi. 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. However, to the extent that installation of broadband infrastructure is necessary to accomplish an eligible program, activity, or intervention (e.g., installing fixed equipment on a building as part of a strategy to promote access to affordable broadband service), additional information will be required to determine the potential for environmental impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. §4321 *et seq.*) and potential impacts to historic properties under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (54 U.S.C. 300101 *et seq.*). Additionally, any portion of a State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program award that will be used for an “infrastructure project” (as defined in 2 C.F.R. 184.3) is subject to the Build America, Buy America Act (Pub. L. No. 117-58, §§ 70901-52) and to the regulations promulgated thereunder at 2 C.F.R. part 184). See Section IV.D.4. of this NOFO for additional information concerning the Build America, Buy America requirements for this program. In accordance with section 60506 of the Infrastructure Act, the Federal Communications Commission adopted rules to prevent digital discrimination of access on the basis of income level, race, ethnicity, color, religion, or national origin. 89 Fed. Reg. 4128 (Jan. 22, 2024); 47 U.S.C. 1754.
- vii. Prohibition on Profit or Fees:** A profit, fee, or other incremental charge above actual cost is not an allowable cost under this Program.
- viii. 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.



Digital Equity

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Digital Equity – Eight Covered Populations

- Aging Individuals
- Incarcerated Individuals
- Individuals with Disabilities
- Individuals with a Language Barrier
- Individuals who are Members of a Racial or Ethnic Minority
- Individual in Low-Income Households
- Individuals who Reside in Rural Areas
- Veterans



Digital Equity

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General Key Performance Indicators

- Broadband Availability and Affordable Internet
 - Develop an initiative for broadband affordability that includes policy, available pricing, ACP enrollment, and identification of new funding strategies.
 - **Increase share of Alaskans for whom broadband is affordable.**
- Online Privacy and Cybersecurity
 - Launch a statewide digital literacy campaign.
 - **Increase the number of Alaskans who are digitally literate.**
- Devices and Affordability
 - Create a program for device refurbishment, distribution, and maintenance.
 - **Increase the number of Alaskans who have access to an affordable device that meets their needs.**
- Digital Literacy
 - Ensure information and training is accessible in ways meaningful to Alaska's eight covered populations.
 - **Increase the number of pathways to broadband access at public entities.**
- Online Accessibility and Inclusivity
 - Increase support for Alaska's Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) by developing an effective and low-cost Digital Equity Policy Plan.
 - **Encourage non-profits to increase their focus on digital equity.**



Digital Equity

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INDIVIDUALS WITH A LANGUAGE BARRIER

GOAL: Make digital resources widely available to Individuals with a Language Barrier

STRATEGY: Ensure resources including government websites and digital literacy materials are available to English learners.

KPI: Identify best practices for website readability and language accessibility and incorporate them into State of Alaska practices.



INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

GOAL: Ensure accessibility and digital literacy for Incarcerated Individuals

STRATEGY: Provide access to technology within correctional facilities across Alaska to facilitate opportunities for rehabilitation and reentry in ways that promote public safety, without cost to Incarcerated Alaskans.

KPI: Improve digital literacy education levels.



INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

GOAL: Digital skills, privacy, and cybersecurity

STRATEGY: Launch a Statewide Digital Literacy campaign focused on reaching Alaskans with Disabilities.

KPI: Make digital resources ADA Accessible for People with Disabilities.



INDIVIDUALS IN LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

GOAL: Increase economic opportunities available through broadband for Alaskans in Covered Households

STRATEGY: Increase access to educational opportunities for economic growth of Low-Income Alaskans.

KPI: Increase online options for covered Low-Income Household members.



AGING INDIVIDUALS

GOAL: Increase digital safety, security, and digital literacy and competencies in Alaskans Aged 60+

STRATEGY: Launch a statewide digital literacy campaign for Seniors.

KPI: Increase the number of Alaskans over Age 60 who are digitally literate and Use the internet safely.



VETERANS

GOAL: Increase mental health outcomes of Veterans through the use of digital options

STRATEGY: Equip Alaskan Veterans with digital technology so they can meet virtually regarding their healthcare needs.

KPI: Increase the availability of mental health resources to Veterans.



RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

GOAL: Ensure full inclusion of Minorities in Alaska through digital literacy campaigns

STRATEGY: Provide digital resources in culturally appropriate formats.

KPI: Develop culturally appropriate digital literacy trainings and materials.



INDIVIDUALS LIVING PRIMARILY IN RURAL AREAS

GOAL: Ensure Rural Alaska online participation through increased access to broadband

STRATEGY: Deliver 100/20 Mbps broadband internet to Rural Alaskans.

KPI: Manage through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, the list of unserved and underserved locations.

