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Workforce Development & Covered Populations- NJ 3.23

Funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)

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

NTIA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Workforce Values

NTIA prioritizes the Good Jobs Principles jointly published by the Departments of Commerce and Labor as core values in building a stronger, more diverse telecommunications workforce.

- **Recruitment and Hiring:** Qualified applicants are actively recruited, especially from historically underserved communities.
- **Benefits:** Full-time and part-time workers are provided family-sustaining benefits that promote economic security and mobility.
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA):** All workers have equal opportunity.
- **Empowerment and Representation:** Workers can form and join unions.
- **Job Security and Working Conditions:** Workers have a safe, healthy, and accessible workplace, built on input from workers and their representatives.
- **Organizational Culture:** All workers belong, are valued, contribute meaningfully to the organization, and are engaged and respected by leadership.
- **Pay:** All workers are paid a stable and predictable living wage before overtime, tips, and commissions.
- **Skills and Career Advancement:** Workers have equitable opportunities and tools to progress to future good jobs within their organizations or outside them.

BEAD WORKFORCE REQUIREMENTS & GUIDANCE

BEAD Workforce Requirements and Guidance

The BEAD NOFO outlines four categories of workforce requirements and guidance for Eligible Entities as they prepare submissions and design and implement projects.

Requirements from the NOFO Necessary for complete and successful Five-Year Action Plans, Initial Proposals, and Final Proposals	**Guidance from the NOFO** Strongly encouraged by NTIA to promote a skilled, diverse, and inclusive workforce
Federal Labor and Employment Laws	How to comply with legal requirements that apply to all employers in the United States
Skilled Workforce	How to hire, pay, and consider skills of employees, contractors, and subcontractors
Equitable Training & Workforce Development	How to support a highly skilled and diverse workforce through recruiting, retention, and professional development
Contracting	How to partner with minority-owned businesses and other socially and economically disadvantaged businesses

Federal Labor and Employment Laws

Eligible Entities will be held to the federal labor and employment laws that apply to all employers in the United States, such as those listed below.

Federal Labor and Employment Laws

- Fair Labor Standards Act
- Occupational Safety and Health Act
- Service Contract Act
- Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- The Age of Discrimination Act of 1975
- Parts II and II of Executive Order 11246, Equal Employment Opportunity
- Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency
- Executive Order 13798, Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty

Skilled Workforce

A highly skilled workforce will help ensure job applicants have the skills and training they need to be competitive in the telecommunications labor market.

- **Eligible Entities will each define skilled workforce requirements and guidance for their subgrantees** that will shape the experiences of the workers on-site who will build and service high-speed Internet infrastructure.
- **These requirements may vary by state**, and each Eligible Entity can set requirements for subgrantee participation and evaluation for BEAD funding that will be approved by NTIA throughout the BEAD submission process.
- **Setting strong requirements** for a skilled workforce in areas such as pay and credentialing will ensure that Internet For All projects balance worker competence, training, and certifications with a competitive and attractive environment for workers in local and regional markets.

Equitable Training & Workforce Development

The BEAD NOFO includes requirements and guidance on equitable training and workforce development across four subsections.

Workforce Readiness	How to create an active and competitive telecommunications workforce prepared to meet the challenges of high-speed Internet implementation
Supporting a Diverse Workforce	How to attract, recruit, and retain historically underrepresented groups into the telecommunications workforce
Outreach & Engagement	How to engage local workforce partners in the planning and execution process for BEAD projects
Worker Protections	How to protect the individual worker and broader workforce to create a safe but competitive job environment

Contracting

NTIA encourages contracting with small and Minority Business Enterprises (MBE), Women's Business Enterprises (WBE) and Labor Surplus Area (LSA) firms. Working with contractors and subcontractors does not excuse Eligible Entities from complying with workforce requirements of the BEAD NOFO.

Contractor Considerations

Eligible Entities must consider not only directly employed workers but also **contractors and subcontractors** in their workforce development standards and activities.

Equity in Contracting

Contracting with MBEs, WBEs, and LSAs offer opportunities for economic growth, job creation, and to improve equity in the telecommunications workforce.

DEVELOPING A BEAD WORKFORCE PLAN

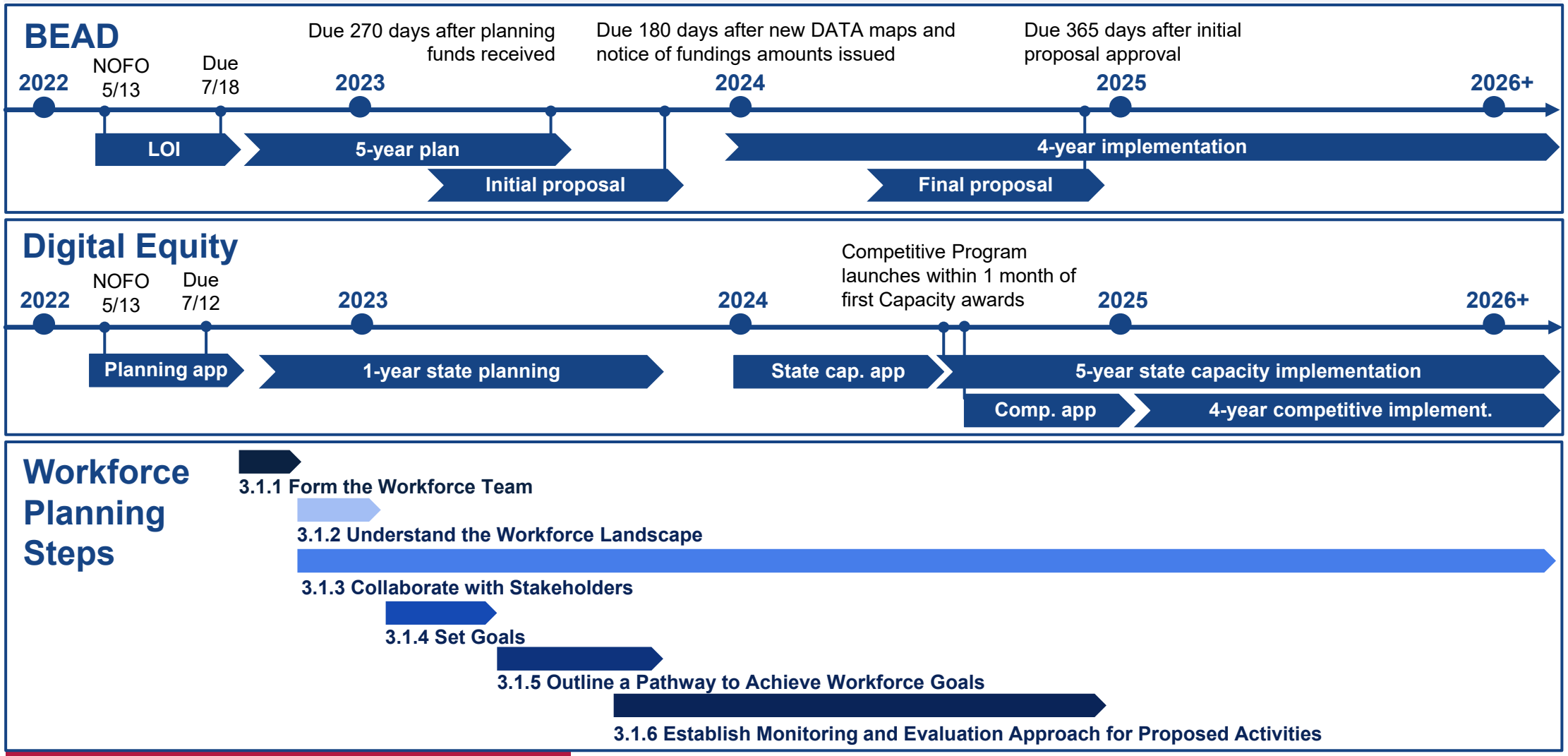
Workforce Planning Steps

Below are proposed planning steps for BEAD workforce plans. While these are suggested steps, following them can help the Eligible Entity's BEAD program team develop a strong Five-Year Action Plan, Initial Proposal, and Final Proposal.

1. Form the Workforce Team	Assemble a team to scope workforce-related project activities and develop workforce standards
2. Understand the Workforce Landscape	Review the state workforce landscape to understand the telecommunications workforce, analyze workforce policies, and identify challenges and ongoing initiatives
3. Collaborate with Partners	Engage and regularly convene federal, state, territorial, Tribal, and local partners to gather consensus and support collaboration
4. Set Goals	Establish a vision and clear, attainable goals for the telecommunications workforce
5. Outline a Pathway to Achieve Workforce Goals	Set realistic milestones and map out activities to attain the workforce goals
6. Establish a Monitoring & Evaluation Approach	Create a monitoring and evaluation plan to track proposed activities

BEAD SUBMISSION PREPARATION

Program Submission Timelines



Timelines are approximate unless exact date specified

BEAD Five-Year Action Plan

By the submission of the Five-Year Action Plan, Eligible Entities should have their team in place, understand the workforce landscape, and set workforce goals. They should think about strategies to promote fair labor standards, ensure a highly skilled workforce, and encourage equitable training and workforce development.

A BEAD Five-Year Action Plan should include…

- ❑ A list of full-time, part-time employees, and contractors of the eligible Entity who will assist in implementing and administering the BEAD Program, their duties, and any plans for expansion of the team.
- ❑ Identification and plans to address known or potential obstacles to successful project implementation, which may involve challenges related to workforce.
- ❑ A description of external engagement process, including to underrepresented communities, unions, and worker organizations
- ❑ Strategies to ensure an available and highly skilled workforce to complete BEAD projects, including through partnerships and training programs, with:
    - Plans to ensure strong labor standards
    - Plans to attract, retain, or transition the skilled workforce needed to achieve the plan's goals
    - Involvement and partnerships of sub-grantees, contractors, and sub-contractors with existing in-house skills training programs, unions, and worker organizations
    - Involvement and partnerships of community colleges, public school districts, supportive services providers, Registered Apprenticeship Programs and other labor-management training programs, and other quality workforce training providers
- ❑ Alignment of the Five-Year Action Plan with other existing and planned workforce development efforts and priorities

DIGITAL EQUITY INTEGRATION

Digital Equity Submission Requirements

NTIA expects that Eligible Entities applying for both BEAD and State Digital Equity Planning Grant funding will align their activities on workforce requirements and workforce partner coordination.

State Digital Equity Planning Grant workforce requirements include…

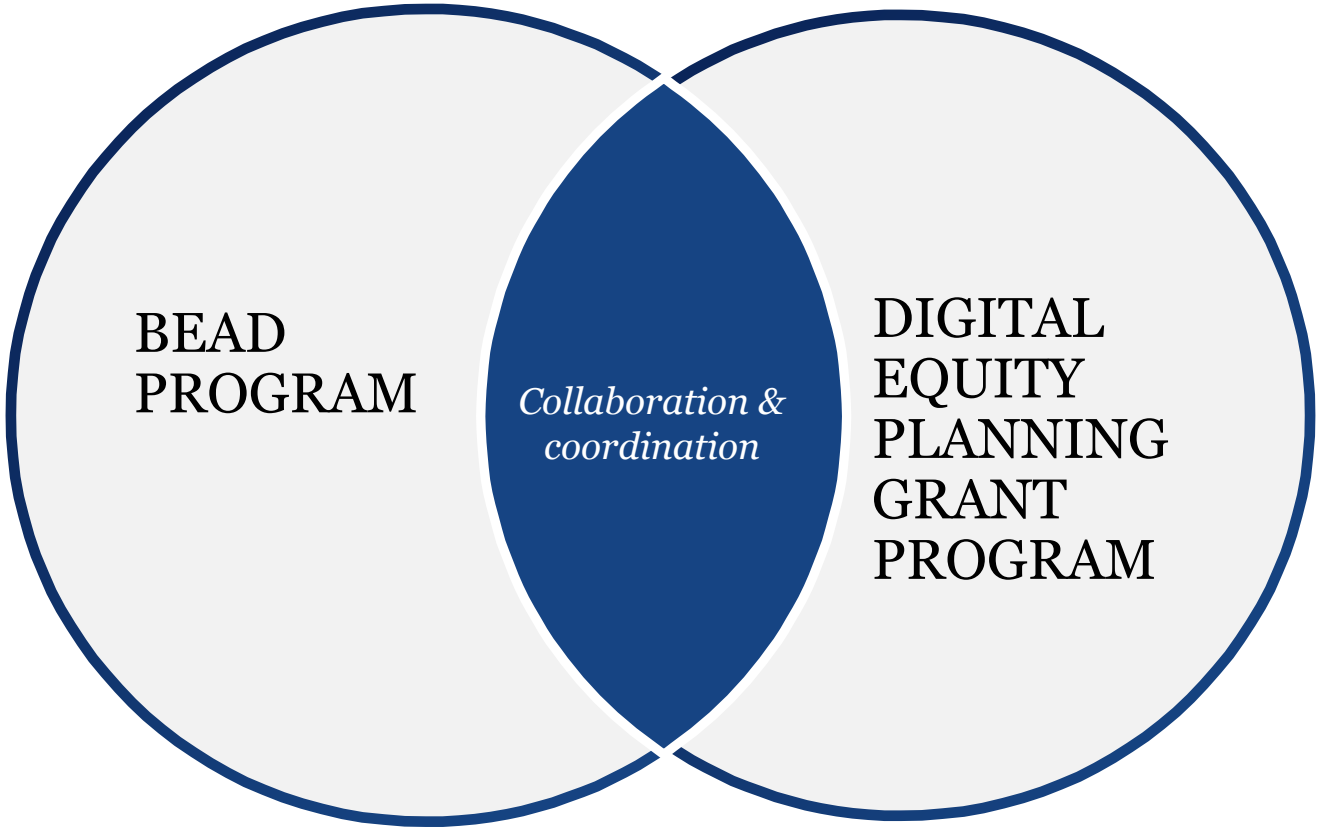
- ❑ Consideration of the state's economic and workforce development goals, plans, and outcomes in the context of digital equity barriers and program objectives
- ❑ Collaboration with key stakeholders through workforce development programs and other means
- ❑ Partnerships with workforce agencies, labor organizations, educational institutions, and other groups for strategy implementation
- ❑ Taking affirmative steps to contract with minority businesses, women businesses, and labor surplus area firms, when possible

Digital Equity: Community Outreach & Engagement

Version 1.0

Community Engagement in the BEAD and DE Programs

- Ensure equity is the central component
- Reduce the burden and confusion
- Develop robust, inclusive plans



Every stakeholder plays a role in the BIL programs

Illustrative, non-exhaustive

Telecom provider
- Provide States, other territories, and Tribal / Native entities with background data on their baseline and digital equity needs

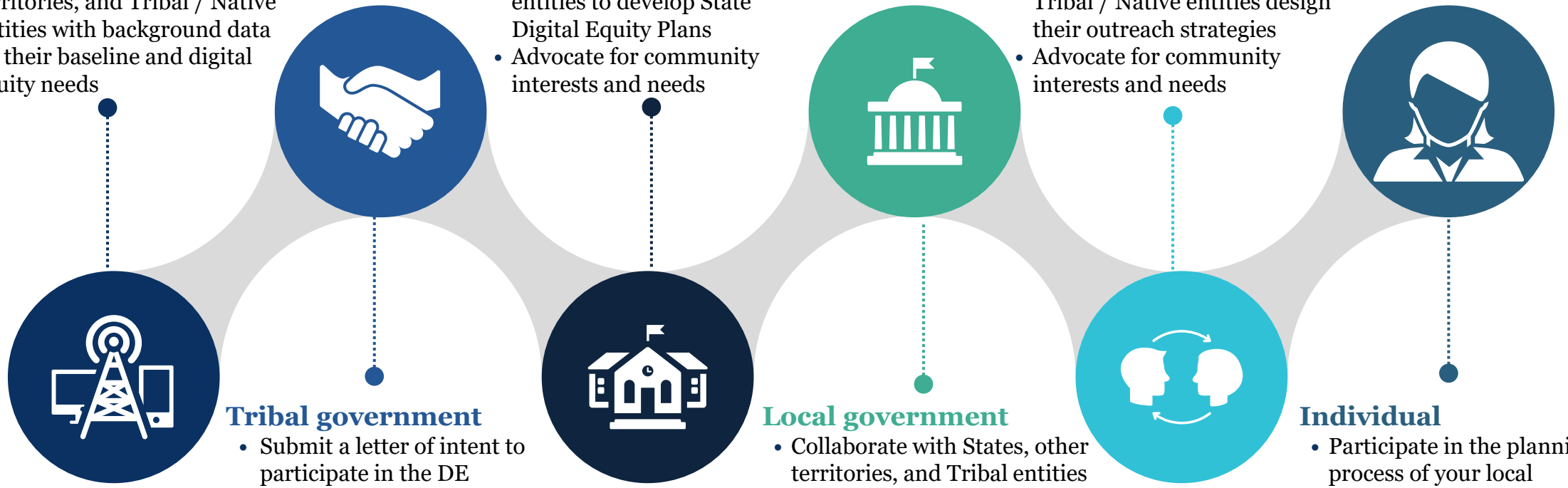
Tribal government
- Submit a letter of intent to participate in the DE Planning Grant Program
- Coordinate with relevant State(s) to develop state-wide Plans

Community anchor institution
- Partner with States, other territories, and Tribal / Native entities to develop State Digital Equity Plans
- Advocate for community interests and needs

Local government
- Collaborate with States, other territories, and Tribal entities to develop State Digital Equity Plans

Community orgs
- Serve as a thought partner as States, other territories, and Tribal / Native entities design their outreach strategies
- Advocate for community interests and needs

Individual
- Participate in the planning process of your local jurisdiction



Defining Community Outreach and Engagement

Community Outreach vs. Engagement

Community Outreach	Community Engagement
Short-Term	Long-Term
Marketing	Relationship Building
What can A do for B?	What can A and B do together?
One Group Benefits Most	Community Benefits
Transactional	Connecting
Directional	Cyclical

Source: https://leadingdifferently.com/2019/06/06/community-outreach-vs-community-engagement/

Components of Community Engagement

Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement Model

Communicate

Sharing information and/or updates from state or locality to stakeholder(s)

Consult

Direct and targeted outreach to stakeholder(s) to gather input; at times, outreach may be most successful stakeholder-to-stakeholder (e.g., CBO to community)

Contact

Identify existing resources, programs, and strategies

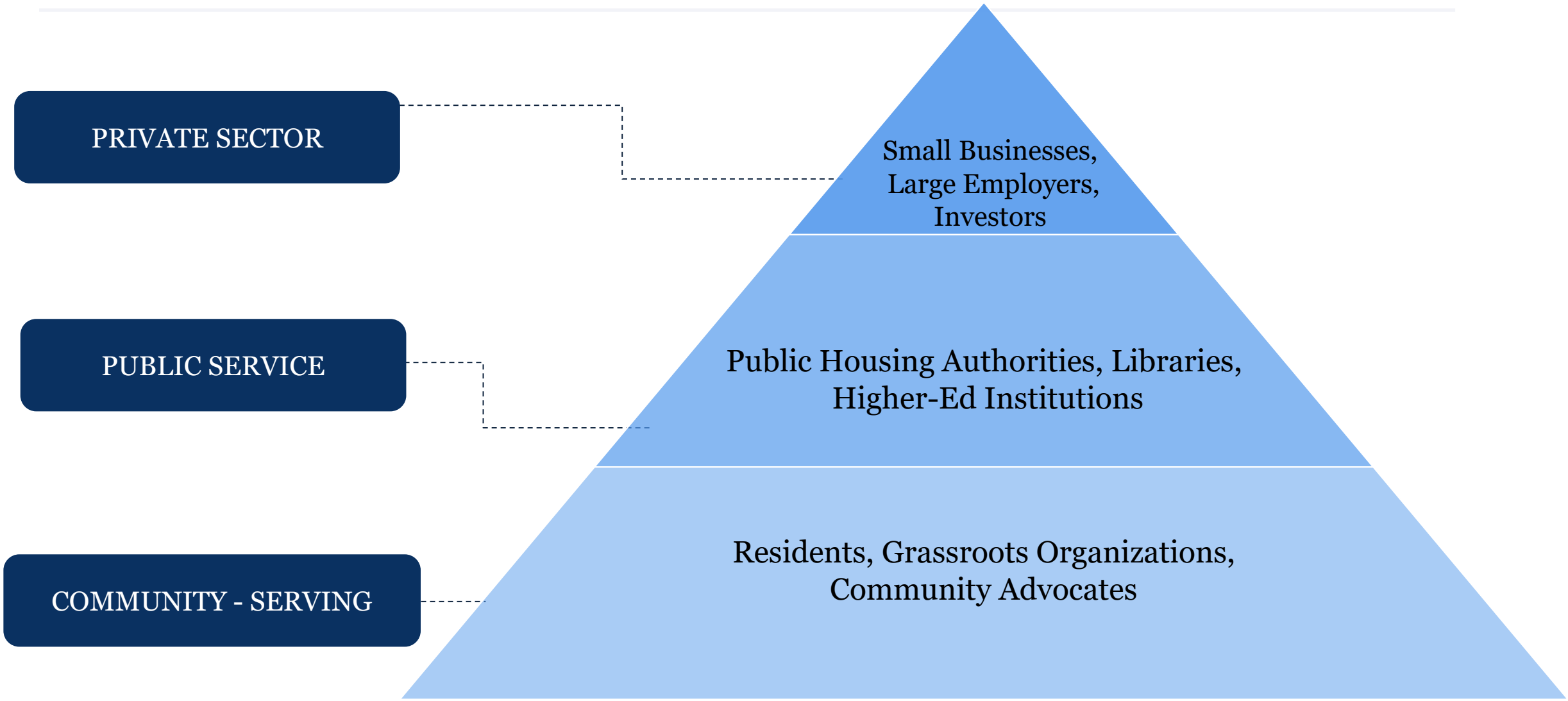
Coordinate

Coordination of interdependent stakeholder efforts

Collaborate

Working alongside stakeholders, sharing decision making power, data, lessons, and failure

Stakeholder Groups by Category



Potential to engage a large and diverse group of stakeholders

Potential stakeholders include any individuals, groups, and/or organizations **involved in, impacted by, or interested in** State and Local broadband efforts

Public service stakeholders

- **Federal government**
- **Localities** *(counties, cities, & other political subdivisions)*
- **State agencies** *(e.g., housing, transportation, and public works)*
- **Tribal governments**
- **Elected officials**
- **Public utilities commissions**

Private sector stakeholders

- **Broadband service providers**
- **Economic development organizations and/or chambers of commerce**
- **Local businesses**

Community-serving stakeholders

- **Nonprofit organizations**
- **Community anchor institutions** *(e.g., libraries, academic institutions, healthcare institutions)*
- **Community-based organizations**
- **Coalitions or associations** *of any stakeholders*
- **Community activists, residents, and other community leaders**
- **Faith-based organizations**

Strong stakeholder engagement can support the development of an inclusive, ambitious, and responsive broadband plan grounded in a deep understanding of community needs

Digital inequity disproportionally impacts our stakeholders

DE & BEAD
Covered Populations and Underrepresented Communities

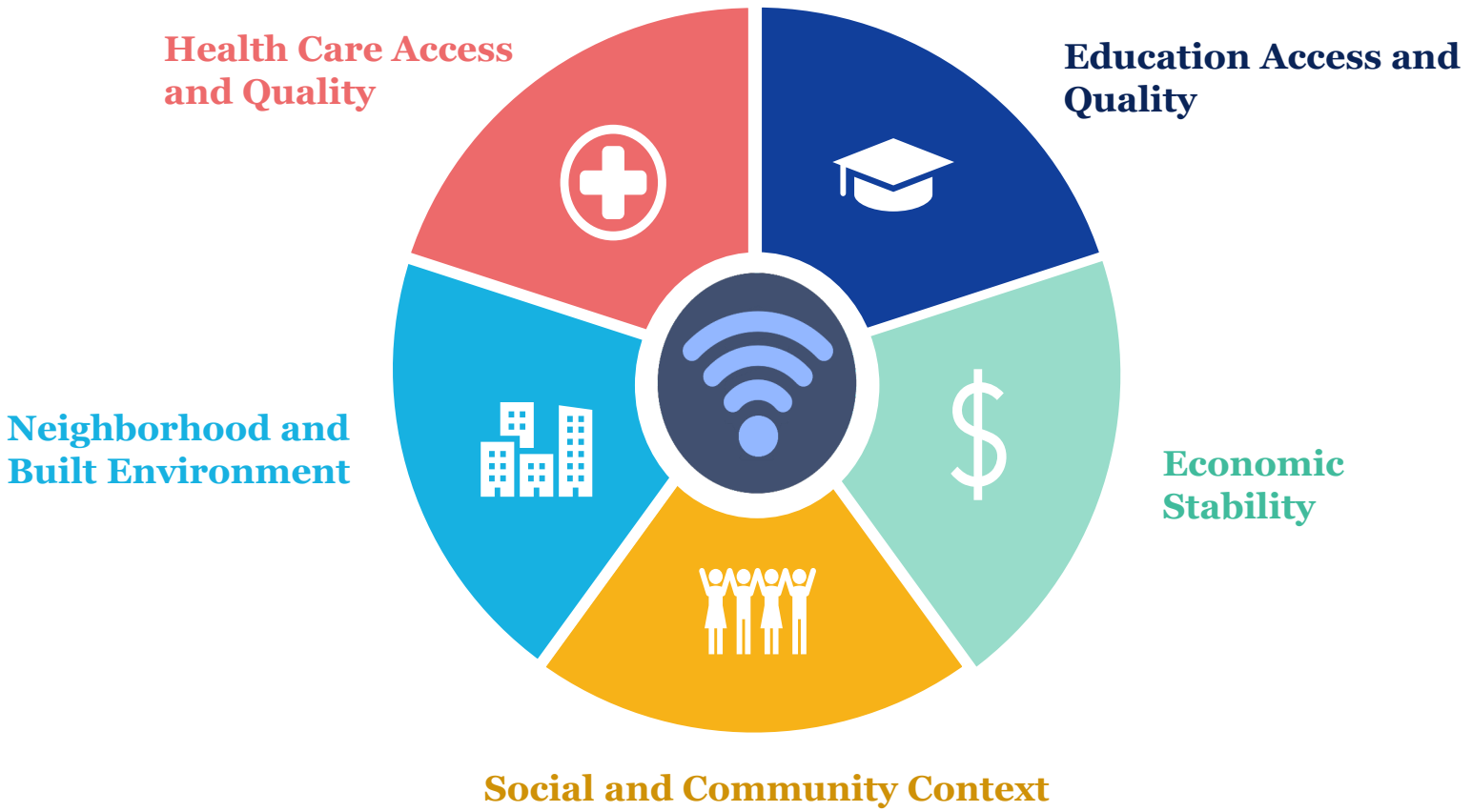
Identity groups and communities disproportionally impacted by digital inequity

- Low-income households
- Aging individuals
- Incarcerated individuals
- Veterans
- Persons of Color
- Indigenous and Native American persons
- Members of ethnic and religious minorities
- Women
- LGBTQI+ persons
- Persons with disabilities
- People with language barriers
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Rural inhabitants
- Persons adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality

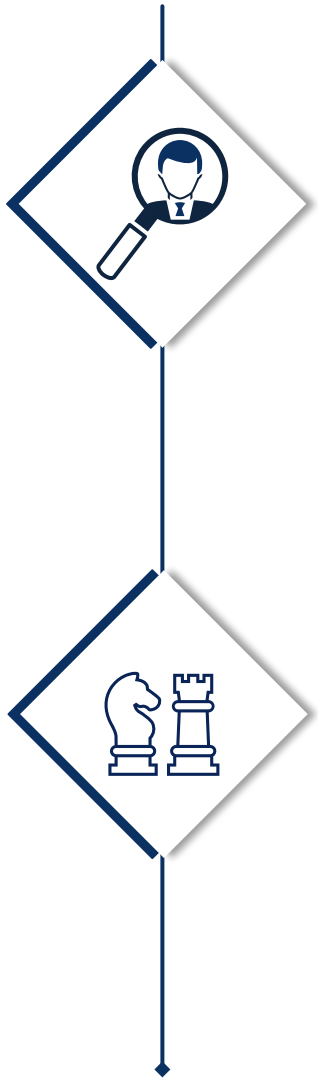
DE NOFO

BEAD NOFO

Digital equity and the social determinants of health



Group Feedback

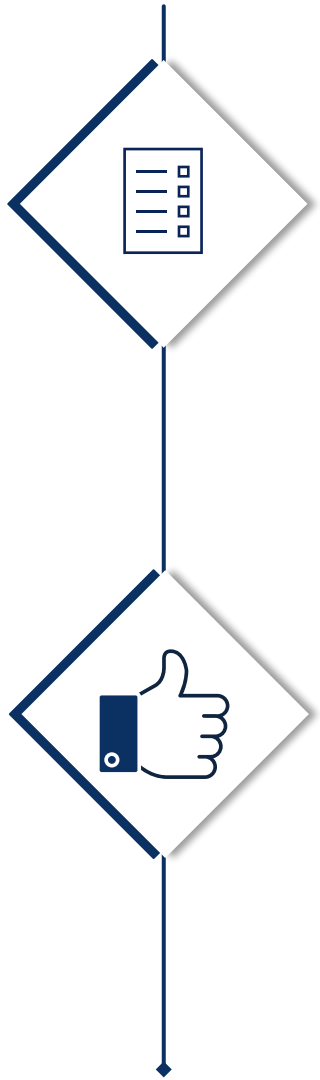


Goal / Desired Outcomes

- Improve rural health outcomes

Strategy

- Build capacity of rural health centers and libraries to increase use of telehealth

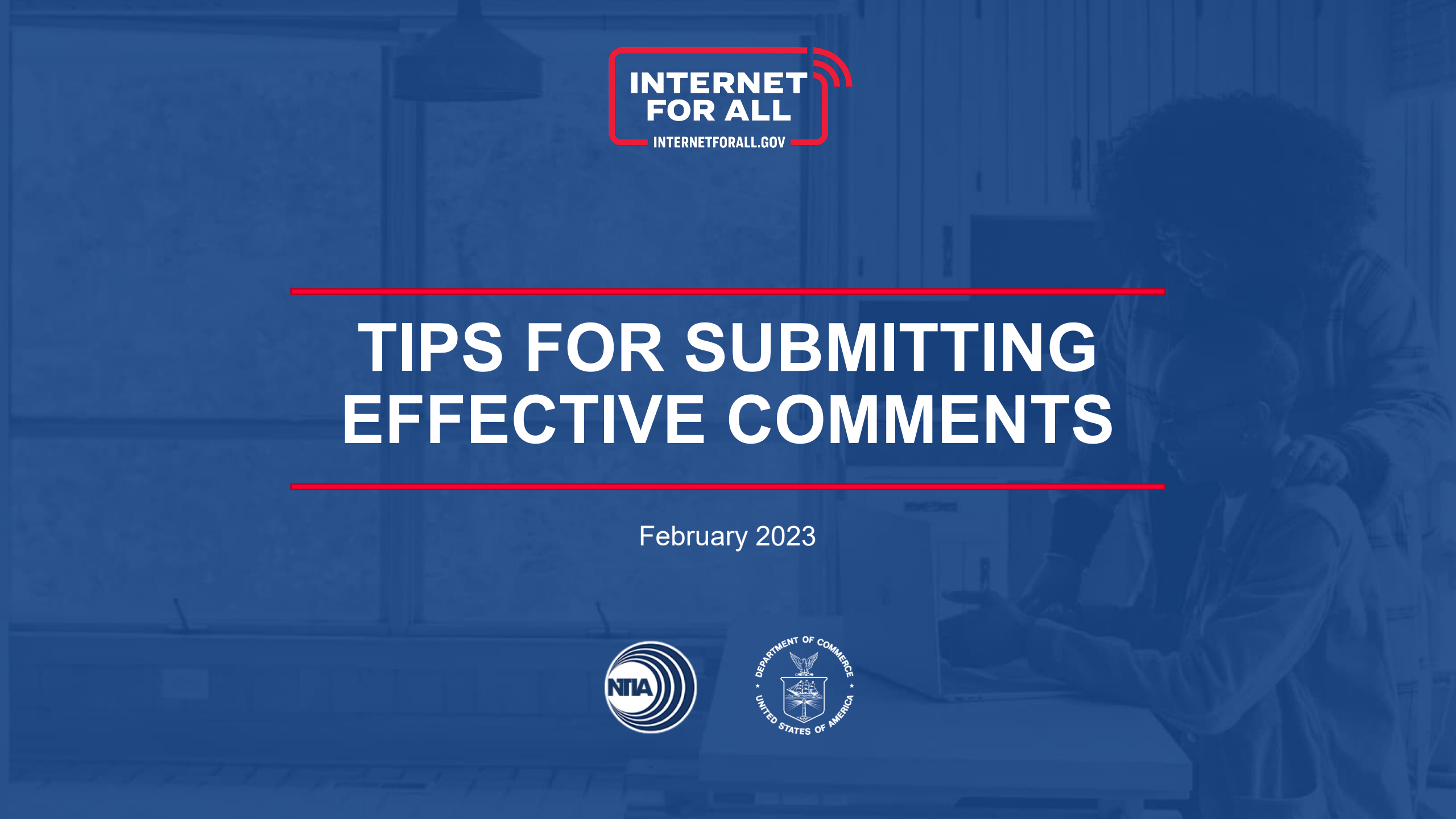


Tactics:

- Digital Health Navigator programs
- Subsidized broadband programs (like ACP) – outreach and sign-up support
- Laptop lending for patients
- Training on health monitoring applications, Zoom, online health portals, sources of reputable health information
- Provide private cybersecure kiosks at health centers and libraries for appointments
- Increase bandwidth to the rural health centers

Indicators of Success

- Increased usage of online health portals
- Increased telehealth appointments
- 2nd order indicators – increased health outcomes (maternal mortality, rates of disease, etc.)



TIPS FOR SUBMITTING EFFECTIVE COMMENTS

February 2023

Overview

The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to ensuring that all Americans have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet service.

As part of this goal, NTIA has published a Request for Comment on Regulations.gov to help inform how the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Digital Equity Act programs can work to achieve this national and community driven opportunity for change.

This Request for Comment is part of NTIA's wider strategy to engage with partners, stakeholders, and most importantly, individuals with lived experiences who are impacted by the digital divide.

These tips are meant to help you submit effective comments that have an impact and help us improve our programs.

Background

The Digital Equity Act - Three Programs to Promote Digital Equity and Inclusion

Funding pool
$2.75B

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 service to meet their needs and improve their lives.

PROGRAMS HIGHLIGHTS

The Digital Equity Act created three programs:

State Planning
- $60M formula funding program to develop digital equity plans

State Capacity
- $1.44B formula funding program to implement plans & promote digital inclusion

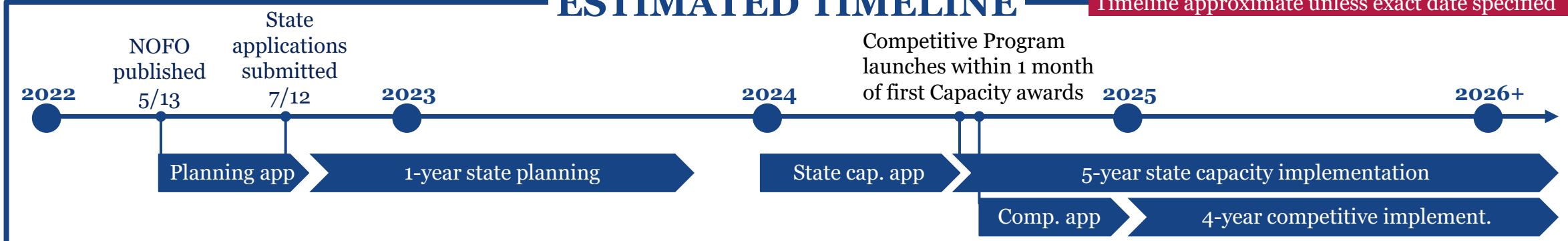
Competitive
- $1.25B to implement digital equity and inclusion activities

Example eligible uses of funds across three programs include:

- Developing digital equity plans; states must develop a plan to be eligible for state capacity grants
- Making awards to other entities to help make digital equity plans
- Improving accessibility and inclusivity of public resources
- Implementing plans related and activities
- Providing digital literacy and digital skills education
- Facilitating the adoption of high-speed Internet service

ESTIMATED TIMELINE

Timeline approximate unless exact date specified



Request For Comment

NTIA's Request for Comment on the Digital Equity Act programs is **currently open.**

The Notice and RFC is available here. Comments can be submitted at regulations.gov under Docket **NTIA-2023-0002**.

The deadline for all comments is: **May 1st, 2023, 5:00 PM EST**

How to Submit Comments

1. The Digital Equity Act comment period will close **60 days after date of publication on the Federal Register (March 2 to May 1)** - begin work well before the deadline.
2. If you are uploading more than one attachment to the comment web form, it is recommended that you use the following file titles:

   Attachment1_<title>; Attachment2_<title>; Attachment3_<title>; etc.

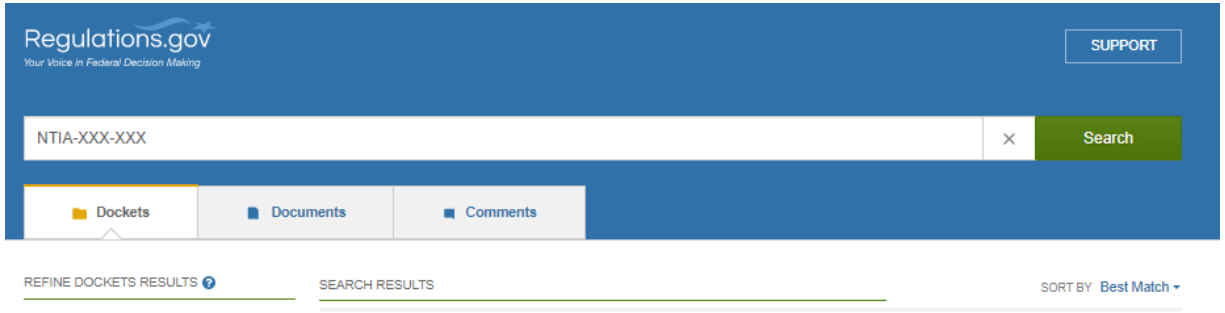
3. Keep a copy of your comment in a separate file - this practice helps ensure that you will not lose your comment if you have a problem submitting it using the Regulations.gov web form.
4. Additionally, NTIA will accept comments via email. Please include the docket number NTIA-2023-0002 in the subject line of the message, and direct your comments to digitalequity@ntia.gov
5. You may also mail a printed submission to

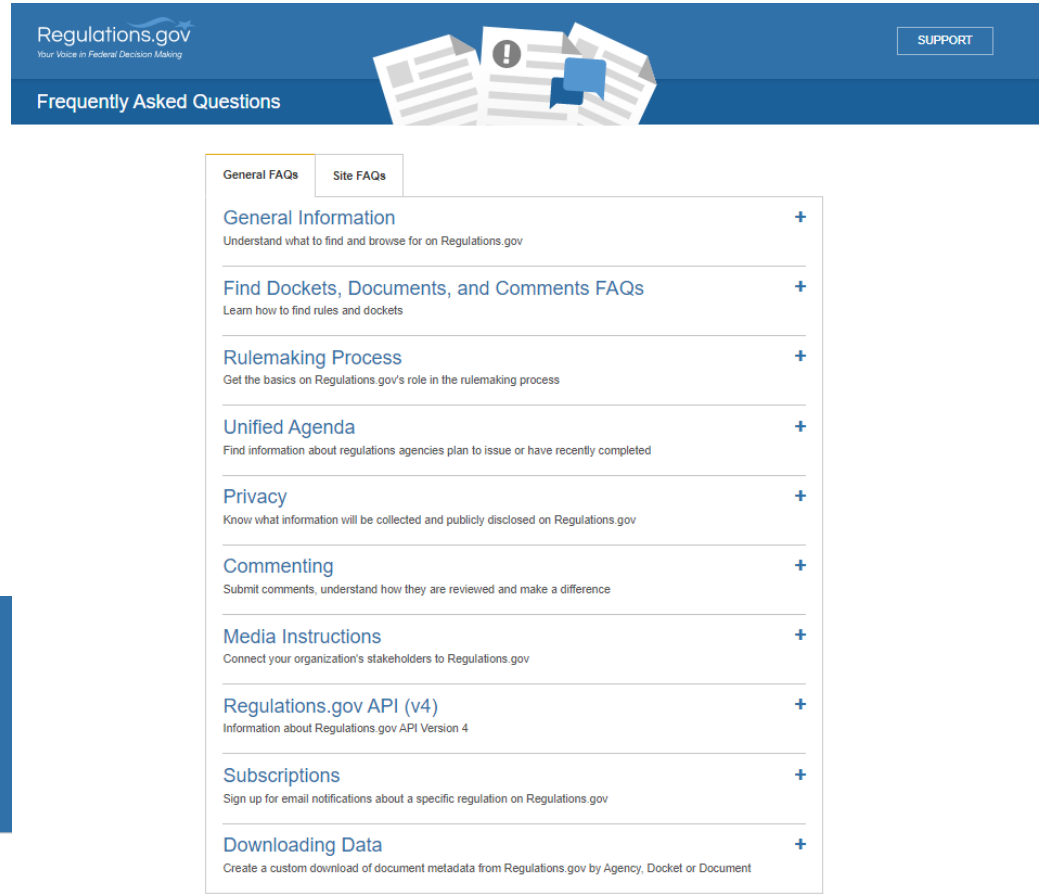
   National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 4878, Washington, DC 20230, Attn: Digital Equity RFC.

Regulations.gov

To submit a comment via regulations.gov enter the Docket “NTIA- 2023-0002 in the search bar, then click on the ‘Dockets’ tab (as shown below).

For further questions, please refer to the regulations.gov FAQs.





How to Write an Effective Comment

Tips on Crafting Effective Comments

1. While NTIA encourages you to support your comment with substantive data, facts, and opinions, **you do not need to be an expert or professional to provide a comment.** You are encouraged to provide your lived experience in your comment.
2. Clearly identify the question(s) that you are commenting on and include the question number. There is no minimum or maximum length for an effective comment, and you are encouraged to reply to any or all questions posed.
3. If you disagree with an aspect of our programs, suggest an alternative and include an explanation and/or analysis of how the alternative might meet the same objective or be more effective.
4. Include pros and cons and trade-offs in your comment. Consider other points of view and respond to them with your views. Include examples of how our programs would impact your life and work positively or negatively.
5. Please reach out to NTIA via digitalequity@ntia.gov if you have any questions about the Request for Comment, and stay up to date on NTIA information by visiting broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov and www.internetforall.gov

April 17 2023, New Brunswick NJ: Internet for All: New Jersey Local Coordination Workshop

Next public event online April 27, 2023

THANK YOU

bdeprey@ntia.gov

240.328.5171