



Request for Comment Listening Session

April 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

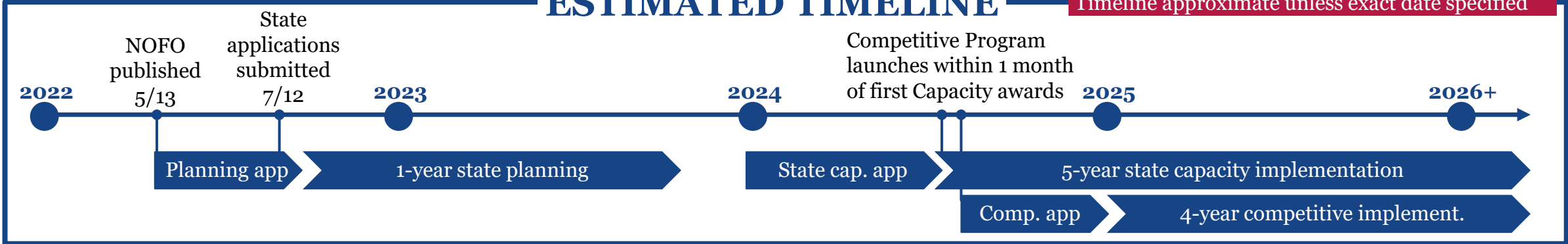
- \$1.25B to implement digital equity and inclusion activities

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

How to Submit Comments



1. The Digital Equity Act comment period will close **60 days after date of publication on the Federal Register on May 1st at 5:00pm**
2. 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](https://www.regulations.gov) web form.
3. 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
4. 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.



Listening Session Questions

Listening Session Questions



Question 1: During the public comment period for the States' Digital Equity Plans, what guidance should NTIA and/or each State provide to enable communities to review and provide actionable feedback to States regarding their State Digital Equity Plans?

What criteria/factors/outcomes should communities focus on in their review? How can NTIA ensure that States/Territories consult with Tribal entities about how best to meet Tribal members' needs?



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Question 2: What **additional guidance/resources** should NTIA provide to States, Territories, and Tribal entities as they develop their Digital Equity Plans?



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Question 3: How should NTIA define success for the Capacity Grant Program? What outcomes are most important to measure? How should NTIA measure the success of the Capacity Grant Program, including measures and methods?



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Question 6:

What reporting requirements should NTIA establish for grantees to ensure that the voices of those most impacted by the digital divide are reflected in the implementation and updates of the Digital Equity Plans? What steps, if any, should NTIA take to monitor and evaluate implementation practices?

From a sustainability perspective, what role can collaborations, partnerships, and coalitions play?

Please share examples of any existing impactful collaborations, partnerships, and/or coalitions.



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Question 17:

What metrics and performance data infrastructure and data governance strategies and tools are needed to create a vibrant digital equity ecosystem (e.g., metrics, digital skills, sustainability) to measure program effectiveness and effects for Covered Populations?

What publicly available datasets and tools should NTIA and grantees (e.g., States, Territories, non-profits, develop) enhance or support to benchmark and to track progress of grantee goals and objectives?



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Question 19:

For each of the Covered Populations, what are proven **strategies and tactics, projects or programs, with outcome-based measures and impacts**, that promote and achieve digital equity?



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Question 20:

Youth and young adults are members of each of the Covered Populations except for Older Americans. The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on academic achievement, physical and mental health, and earning opportunities for our youth and young adults.

How can NTIA encourage and measure the effects of investments in our youth and young adult?



Listening Session Questions



Question 21: To ensure all learners (youth, adult, incarcerated, etc.) have access to the opportunities that technology unlocks, **how should NTIA promote a baseline or fundamental standard for digital literacy for all learners?**

What kind of baselines should NTIA's grant programs strive to achieve and should the intended outcomes be based on a type of standard which includes varying levels of digital skills, such as pre-basic, basic, intermediate and advanced? If so, please elaborate.



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Question 23: How can NTIA encourage the design and implementation of Digital Equity Programs to support and advance the economic mobility of members of Underrepresented Communities/Covered Populations to support BEAD implementation and broader economic outcomes (e.g., through new skills, upskilling, re-skilling, career pathways, and other high-quality workforce development activities)?



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Question 24: How can the BEAD and Digital Equity Programs support and promote youth employment and skills building?

What kind of programs, projects, and partnerships—based on existing evidence—would encourage and prepare youth to have the digital skills needed to be workforce-ready, but also to enter internet and internet-related careers?





THANK YOU

