nrtc PLANNING ALERT!

Professional Assistance for Today's Unprecedented Funding Opportunities

Digital Equity State Planning Grant Program

$60 Million

Program Name

Digital Equity State Planning Grant Program

Background

- Administrator: National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), U.S. Department of Commerce
- Authorizing Legislation: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), The Digital Equity Act, a provision of IIJA, begins with funding for the creation of Digital Equity Plans
- Available Funds: $60 million
- Allocation Approach: Formula grant, amounts are tentative and subject to state challenges
- Program Purpose: Promote the achievement of digital equity, support digital inclusion activities, and build capacity for efforts by States to design a State Digital Equity Plan. Ongoing funding programs often contain a digital equity component to which states and service providers must adhere. This funding is intended to assist states with the first steps of designing an approach to digital equity goals

Eligible Entities

- All 50 US States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico
- US Territories: United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
- Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, and Native Hawaiian organizations

Funding Amounts

- Page 13 of the NOFO outlines the formula funding allocations for each state, DC, and Puerto Rico
- $3 million total to award between these US territories: United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
- $15 million (tentatively) to award grants to Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, and Native Hawaiian organizations to create Tribal digital equity plans or support Tribal participation in the creation of relevant State Digital Equity Plans
  - Grant recipients can either use the funds to create their own digital equity plans or to fund expenses associated with participating in the planning process with the state(s) their Tribal land is located in
  - Grant Tribal allocations depend on the number of applications, but NTIA expects to allocate equally an amount between $50,000 and $150,000 to each participating Indian Tribe, Alaska Native entity, and Native Hawaiian organization

Key Dates

- **State Applications and Letter of Intent Due – July 12, 2022**
  - All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico
  - US territories and possessions (other than Puerto Rico), Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, and Native Hawaiian organizations will need to submit a Letter of Intent by this date
- **NTIA review, selection of successful applicants, and award processing complete -** September 15, 2022
- **Rolling Award Announcements Expected to Begin –** September 29, 2022

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Digital Equity Plan

At a minimum, the applicant's plan must include the following:
- A vision statement
- A needs assessment
- An asset inventory of existing digital inclusion resources, programs, plans, and strategies
- A coordination and outreach strategy
- A description of how existing local (municipal, regional, and/or Tribal) digital equity plans will be incorporated into the State Digital Equity Plan
- A holistic implementation strategy addressing barriers to participation in the digital world (including measurable goals, objectives, and proposed core activities, measures to ensure plan's sustainability and effectiveness, and mechanisms for ongoing evaluation and update)
- An explanation of how the implementation strategy addresses gaps in existing state, local, and private efforts to address the barriers to digital equity for covered populations
- A description of how the state will accomplish the implementation strategy by engaging and partnering with:
  - Workforce agencies
  - Community-based organizations and labor organizations
  - Higher education institutions
- A timeline for implementation
- Outline of how the state will coordinate its DEA, BEAD, and other federal or private digital equity funding

Application Review Process

- **Initial Eligibility and Administrative Review**
  - NTIA reserves the right to negotiate with the applicant relative to specific modifications to the application during review
- **Merit Review**
  - Review of application to ensure conformity with the program objectives, eligible activities, and related costs/budget
  - NTIA may ask applicants to submit additional information to clarify or further substantiate representations made in the application
- **Selection Process**
  - The Assistant Secretary or designee will serve as the Selecting Official and recommend approval of applications selected for funding based on the results of the review process
  - Final approval of selected applications and the issuance of awards pursuant to this NOFO will made by the NIST Grants Officer
- **Federal Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants**
  - Review of financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, the history of performance, reports and findings from audits, and/or the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities

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Allowable Uses

- To develop the State Digital Equity Plan
- To make subgrants to any of the following entities to assist in the development of the State Digital Equity Plan:
    - Community anchor institutions
    - County and municipal governments
    - Local educational agencies
    - Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, or Native Hawaiian organizations;
    - Nonprofit organizations
    - Organizations that represent—
        - i. Individuals with disabilities, including organizations that represent children with disabilities
        - ii. Aging Individuals
        - iii. Individuals with language barriers, including—
            1. Individuals who are English learners
            2. Individuals who have low levels of literacy
        - iv. Veterans
        - v. Individuals in the State who are incarcerated in facilities other than Federal correctional facilities
- Civil rights organizations
- Entities that carry out workforce development programs
- Agencies of the State that are responsible for administering or supervising adult education and literacy activities
- Public housing authorities in the State
- A partnership between any of the entities described above

Unallowable Costs

- Prohibition on Supplanting - a grant or subgrant awarded from this program shall supplement, not supplant, other federal or State funds
- Prohibition on Profit or Fees - a profit, fee, or other incremental charge above actual cost is not an allowable cost under this program
- Prohibition on the Use of Grant Funds to Support or Oppose Collective Bargaining- grant funds may not be used, whether directly or indirectly, to support or oppose collective bargaining
- Application preparation costs

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Application Requirements

- Description of the Administering Entity for the State
- Certification from State that, not later than 1 year after award date, the Administering Entity shall develop a State Digital Equity Plan
- Assurances required under Section 60304(e)
- Narrative describing grant project and activities and how they will support State Digital Equity Plan
- Detailed Budget and Budget Narrative
- The following standard grant forms and documentation:
  - Standard Form 424: Application for Federal Assistance
  - Standard Form 424A: Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs
  - CD-511 Certification Regarding Lobbying
  - Standard Form LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)
  - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (as applicable)

Links and Emails

- DE PLANNING GRANT NOFO.pdf (doc.gov)
- Digital Equity Act Programs | Internet for All
- Digital Equity Info Sheet.pdf (digitalinclusion.org)
- NTIA Webinars and Events
- NTIA Grants Portal (ntia.gov)
- Digital Equity Act FAQs (ntia.gov)
- Please submit questions to DigitalEquity@NTIA.gov

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funding@nrtc.coop

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Funding Practice offers key benefits including:**
- Opportunity Evaluation
- Effective Grant Writing
- Track Record of Success