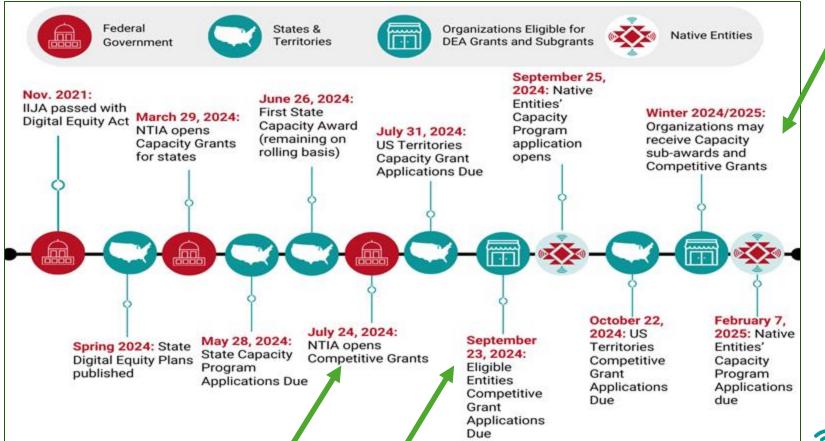# The NTIA's Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program (DECGP)

The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) released.

NATOA invites member communities and PEG operations to join our coalition (partnership) as "Eligible Entities"

- *What is the DECGP?*
- *How can you participate*
- *Q&A*

Thank you to NDIA, the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, for this great timeline graphic!

NATOA & NTIA's Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program (DECGP)

NTIA's Digital Equity (DECGP) Competitive Grant Program

DECGP Competitive Grants

- The Competitive Grant NOFO released July 24, 2024

- $750 Million Available

- An additional $250M <u>may</u> become available in October 2024.*

DECGP Awards & Amounts

- Award Amounts will range between $5-12 million by Winter, 2024 (before April 20, 2025.)

- NTIA anticipates 150-200 total awards

- Partnerships are actively encouraged for larger award amounts

Eligible Organizations to apply…

- Political subdivisions, agencies or 'instrumentalities of the State

- Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, or a Native Hawaiian entities

- Foundations/corporations/institutions/associations (Non-profits)

- Community Anchor Institutions

- Local Educational Agencies

- Workforce development programs

- Partnerships between any of the above

Who are considered "Covered Populations"?

As defined in Section I.C. of the NOFO, Covered Populations are:

1. Individuals who live in covered households (<=150% of poverty).

2. Aging individuals (60 and above).

3. Incarcerated individuals, though not in a Federal correctional facility.

4. Veterans.

5. Individuals with disabilities.

6. Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners; and have low levels of literacy.

7. Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group.

8. Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.

DECGP Eligible Uses for funding:

- Digital inclusion activities that benefit covered populations

- Broadband adoption for covered populations for education & employment opportunities

- Training programs for basic, advanced and applied skills

- Other digital inclusion workforce development programs

- "Equipment, instrumentation, networking capability, hardware and software, or digital network technology for broadband services to covered populations at low or no cost."

- Create new or operate existing public access computing centers for covered populations through community anchor institutions

- (Any other project or activity the Assistant Secretary approval)

What NATOA's member community could offer as part of a proposal:

1. Training programs like OATS or TGH in participating communities.
2. Video-delivered trainings on cable.
3. Gov channel programming for outreach, assistance, etc.
4. All PEG channels – creation of video content aimed at DE outreach, education
5. Grassroots outreach & Covered populations outreach
6. Local gov and PEG centers' staff trained as digital navigators.
7. PEG centers as community (digital) access centers.
8. Target smaller communities for DE outreach
9. Local solutions are the best solutions.
10. Look at your state plan to trigger ideas.*

DECGP Partnerships are urged by NTIA

- Partnerships between multiple eligible entities are encouraged

- Only eligible entities are eligible members of any partnership
  - Each partnership will require -
    - An Authorized Representative as lead entity
    - A Letter of Commitment from each member organization.

- For complete information on partner applications, see pages 22-23 of the NOFO

Match Commitment for Applicants

There is a minimum 10% match for all applications

- This may be waived with a waiver request to NTIA but is not guaranteed or likely.

- The match may be any combination of <u>cash or in-kind contributions</u>

- In-kind matches may include third-party contributions from an organization other than the applicant or partners.

Expense Caps and Ineligible Uses

Expense Caps

- 10% cap on evaluation
- 10% cap on administration, which includes both direct and indirect funds

Ineligible Uses

- Previously awarded federal or state grant funds to create a digital equity plan or implement digital inclusion activities must be used before using Competitive Grant Program funds.
- Profit, fee, or other incremental charges above the actual cost
- Funds may not be used for general research or academic studies of digital equity

Performance Measurement and Evaluation

Requirements

Program measurement and evaluations is required as part of program design and implementation

- Required annual and semi-annual reports

- An overall assessment of the effectiveness of the grantees' program(s)

- Participation in NTIA's evaluation of the entire Competitive grant program (if completed)

Application Details:
Align your Proposal with State's Digital Equity Plans

Projects should:

- Address gaps in the implementation of your State's Digital Equity Plans, and/or

- Supplement or further advance your State's Digital Equity Plans, and/or

- Address barriers to digital equity that your State Digital Equity Plans failed to identify

See your State Digital Equity Plans at:

- https://www.benton.org/blog/whats-your-states-digital-equity-plan

or

- https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/public-notice-posting-state-and-territory-bead-digital-equity

DECGP Application Requirements

1. A detailed explanation of the submitted project activities and interventions, barriers addressed, and covered populations served

2. A project timeline that demonstrates the use of funds in the allotted timeframe and implementation plan

3. A detailed budget and funding request justification, including identification of subgrantees

4. Demonstrate applicants can perform all grant administration and implementation duties

5. Strategies to create sustainable long-term impact

Application Requirements (continued)

6. Disclosure of all other funds related to the grant proposal
7. Measurement and evaluation strategy
8. Geographies to be served or stating if the service area is state or territory-wide
9. Alignment with the state Digital Equity Plan
10. Consolidated Budget Form

Applicants must comply with the requirements of 47 U.S.C. §1724(d)(2) of the Digital Equity Act and this NOFO. An Eligible Entity or U.S. Territory to which a Competitive Grant is awarded must use the grant funds to support not less than 1 of the following activities:

(a) To develop and implement digital inclusion activities that benefit one or more of the Covered Populations.

(b) To facilitate the adoption of broadband by Covered Populations to provide educational and employment opportunities to those populations.

(c) To implement training programs for Covered Populations that cover basic, advanced, and applied skills or other workforce development programs, including, for example, digital inclusion projects that address online safety, and work to prevent online harassment and abuse.

(d) To make available equipment, instrumentation, networking capability hardware and software, or digital network technology for broadband services to Covered Populations at low or no cost.

(e) To construct, upgrade, expand, or operate new or existing public access computing centers for Covered Populations through community anchor institutions.

(f) To undertake any other project or activity that the Assistant Secretary finds to be consistent with the purposes for which the Program is established.

Partnership Application Requirements

✓ Statement of the Authorized Representative

✓ Evidence of the Authorized Representative's experience.

✓ Table listing all members of the partnership

✓ Letter of Commitment from each partner

✓ All applicants (including partners and subgrantees) must have a federal **Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)** and register with SAM.gov before applying.

- Start this process now.
- We'll send instructions.
- Local governments probably already have this.
- PEG center may not have this, but can apply via **https://sam.gov/content/home**

What key strategies will NTIA seek in the applications?

- ✓ Will the proposal increase broadband internet &adoption of the Covered Populations?

- ✓ Is this a geographically diverse application?

- ✓ Does is compliment existing programs or is it duplicative or conflicting?

- ✓ Are the proposals in line with the Digital Equity Act Competitive Grant Purpose?

- ✓ Let's look at the next slide to find out!

Are proposals in line with the Digital Equity Act Competitive Grant Purpose?

- Economic stability, including workforce development and employment opportunities

- Access to quality education

- Access to healthcare

- Social and civic engagement; and

- Community access to the benefits of internet technology

How Will NTIA Determine Awards?

Initial Eligibility & Administrative Review

Are the applicant and sub-applicants eligible entities?

Are the application materials complete and submitted on time?

Merit Review

Project need, purpose, and benefits (40 points)

Strength of applicant's organizational capability (25 points)

Strength of project implementation plan and budget (25 points)

Project results and evaluation (10 points)

Programmatic Review

NTIA will group proposals in 5-10 points range

Starting at the highest and funding downward until funds depleted.

What To Do Now?

Register with **SAM.gov** and get your Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) ....
https://sam.gov/content/home

Read the NOFO & check NTIA's website for updates –
https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/DE_Competitive_FAQs_Round_1.pdf

Sign up for NTIA's BroadbandUSA newsletters
https://ntiacrmgrants.my.site.com/broadbandusanewsletter/s/

Check out the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Frequently Asked Questions
https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/technical-assistance/DE_Competitive_FAQs

Read your State Digital Equity Plan
https://www.benton.org/blog/whats-your-states-digital-equity-plan

What To Do Now?

Register with <u>SAM.gov</u> and get your Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

What is SAM.gov?

SAM stands for the System for Award Management.

SAM.gov is the federal government's database for getting money from federal grants & contracts.

What is a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)?

A UEI is a 12-digit number assigned to an organization. To receive a UEI, you must first be verified by providing documentation and complete a registration in SAM.gov

Why do I need a UEI?

Once verified and registered, the federal government can then disburse federal award money to organizations with a UEI.

Helpful Links

NATOA Digital Equity Competitive Grant Application link:
https://www.natoa.org/events/webinar-to-join-in-the-natoa-digital-equity-competitive-grant-application#overview

NTIA's next Digital Equity Competitive Application Webinar: Plans (Risk, Etc.)
Wednesday, August 21, 2024 - 3:00 PM
https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/events/latest-events/digital-equity-competitive-application-webinar-part-4-plans-risk-etc

NTIA's Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program Overview:
https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/funding-programs/Digital_Equity_Competitive_Grant_Program

NTIA's Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
https://ntia.gov/federal-register-notice/2024/notice-funding-opportunity-digital-equity-competitive-grant-program

The NTIA's Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program (DECGP)

How can you participate?

- ✓ *Please review the materials presented here.*
- ✓ *Join our NATOA Members NTIA Grant Application!*
- ✓ *Email any Q's to MLynch@NATOA.org*

- ✓ **Better yet, email MLynch@NATOA.org that you want to join us!**

- ✓ *Q&A*
- ✓ *Thank you!*