



Guide to New Broadband Funding for HUD-Assisted Communities



ConnectHomeUSA



Deep Dive Guide

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This is a historic time for the advancement of high-speed Internet. The Department of Commerce’s **National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)** published three Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) which will distribute more than \$45 billion to states, territories and tribes for the advancement of broadband infrastructure and digital equity across the country. The grant programs were funded by the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)¹.

Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) and other HUD stakeholders may be wondering how this funding will benefit their communities and what role they can play in ensuring that funds do come to their neighborhoods. Continue reading for key information about two of the new programs, the **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD)** and the **Digital Equity Act (DEA)**. These programs are the most relevant to HUD-Assisted communities. This guide will also provide tips for engaging with state broadband leaders during the planning process – a necessary step in ensuring your community’s needs get full consideration during this historic time!

Table of Contents

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Overview.....	3
Priority Areas.....	3
Funding Administration and Community Consultation.....	3
Eligible Uses of BEAD Planning Funds.....	4
Five-Year Action Plan Requirements.....	4
Application and Funding Timeline.....	4
Program Fund Allocations and Subgrantee Projects	5
More Information	6
Digital Equity Act (DEA) Overview	6
Public Housing and other Housing Stakeholders’ Connection to the Development of the State’s Digital Equity Plan	6
Application Process.....	7
Key Items to be Included in Digital Equity Plans	7
Looking Ahead to 2024	8
More Information	8

¹ Pub. L. 117-58, 135 Stat. 429 (November 15, 2021).

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Overview

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) grant is the largest of the broadband grants with **\$42.45 billion in total funding**.

Primary Goal

Expand high-speed Internet access by funding planning, infrastructure deployment, mapping, equity, and adoption programs in unserved and underserved areas.

Minimum Funding

Funding is formula-based, but at a minimum, states will receive *\$100 million*, and territories will receive *\$25 million*.

Priority Areas

The priority areas for the BEAD grant are as follows:

1. **Unserved locations** defined as areas with no access to 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download/3 Mbps upload
2. **Underserved locations** defined as areas with access to 25/3 Mbps to 100/20 Mbps; and
3. **Community Anchor Institutions** which include **Public Housing Authorities (PHAs)** that do not receive gigabit speeds.



Public Housing Connection

Among other eligible uses, an AE may opt to fund deployment of **Wi-Fi infrastructure to multi-family buildings that lack high-speed broadband access in their entirety or contain units that lack such access**. AEs that choose to fund this type of project must prioritize residential buildings that either have a substantial share of unserved households; or are in locations in which the percentage of individuals with a household income that is at or below 150 percent of the poverty line applicable to a family of the size involved is higher than the national percentage of such individuals.

If this sounds like your community, consider reaching out to your state broadband leaders about potential projects.

Funding Administration and Community Consultation

As of the date of this publication, all eligible states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and territories, also referred to as **Eligible Entities**, [signed on to participate in this program](#) by submitting a **Letter of Intent to NTIA**. The letter stated their interest in participating and

designated an **Administering Entity** (AE). The AE will manage the grant funds on behalf of the entity.

AEs will have also submitted requests for Initial Planning Funds for activities that support development of the **Five-Year Action Plan which must be informed by collaboration with local, regional, and Tribal (as applicable) entities, among others**. This engagement must continue even after submitting the Action Plan to NTIA to ensure ongoing collaboration throughout the program.



Tip

Make your voice heard! Find your [State Broadband Leaders](#) listed here and reach out early to make sure your community's voice is being heard during the planning process. **These offices may be busy now, so be persistent!**

Eligible Uses of BEAD Planning Funds

Eligible uses of Planning Funds include surveying unserved, underserved, and underrepresented communities to better understand barriers to adoption and other activities to meet coordination requirements. For more information on eligible uses, please refer to Section 60102 (e)(1)(C)(iii) of the IIJA and Section IV.B.2 of the BEAD Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

Five-Year Action Plan Requirements

Among other requirements, the Action Plan must also identify digital equity and inclusion needs, goals, and implementation strategies, including ways in which the States and Territories plan to utilize IIJA grant funding and/or other funding streams in concert to remedy inequities and barriers to inclusion.

Application and Funding Timeline

The BEAD program is a multi-step, multi-year program. The chart below summarizes the various steps throughout the life of this program. HUD-assisted communities can be involved formally and informally in the BEAD application process.

BEAD Timeline

<p>1. Letter of Intent – due July 18, 2022</p> <p><i>Eligible Entities submit letters of intent which may include requests for planning funds.</i></p>	<p>2. Request for Initial Planning Funds – due August 15, 2022</p> <p><i>Administering Entities (AEs) submit a budget narrative and other required forms.</i></p>	<p>3. Five-Year Action Plan – due 270 days after receipt of Initial Planning Funds.</p> <p><i>AEs develop a 5-Year Action Plan informed by community consultation.</i></p>
<p>4. Program Fund Allocation and Notice of Available Amounts</p> <p><i>AEs are notified of their fund allocation, calculated using a formula and based on new FCC Broadband Data maps.</i></p>	<p>5. Initial Proposal – due 180 days after program fund allocation</p> <p><i>AEs are notified of their fund allocation, calculated using a formula and based on new FCC Broadband Data maps.</i></p>	<p>6. The Challenge Process</p> <p><i>Local entities, and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) may challenge the allocation of funds based on the FCC broadband maps by gathering and sharing their own broadband data.</i></p>
<p>7. Subgrantee Selection</p> <p><i>Subgrantees include co-ops, nonprofits, public private partnerships, private companies, utilities, public utility districts, or local government.</i></p>	<p>8. 20% Funding Release – end of 2023</p> <p><i>Partial funding release follows approval of the Initial Proposal</i></p>	<p>9. Final Proposal and Release of Remaining Funds</p>

Program Fund Allocations and Subgrantee Projects

Total funding allocations for states and territories will be determined using a formula based on the FCC’s new [Broadband Data Maps](#). These maps will show location based broadband data and will guide the State’s initial proposal by identifying **unserved** and **underserved locations**. Stakeholders including local entities and Internet Service Providers may challenge the allocation of funds by gathering and sharing their own broadband data. The FCC will provide technical assistance to stakeholders and participants in the challenge process.

States are likely to begin deploying funds at the end of 2023, following the 20% funding release. AEs will select subgrantees following the process outlined in their initial proposal.

Priority areas relevant to HUD-assisted communities are projects serving unserved and underserved locations, connecting eligible community anchor institutions (such as PHAs), and installing or reducing the cost of Wi-Fi in multi-family residential buildings.

More Information

For more information on BEAD and other federal broadband grants, visit <https://www.InternetForAll.gov/>.

- [BEAD NOFO](#)
- [BEAD Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)
- [BEAD Program Overview](#)
- [FCC Broadband Data Collection Resources](#)
- [NDIA “The IIJA Money is Finally \(Almost\) Here](#)
- [NTIA’s Pre-NOFO/NOFO Technical Assistance Webinar Series](#)

Digital Equity Act (DEA) Overview

The Digital Equity Act is comprised of three grant programs: the **State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program**, the **State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program**, and the **Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program**.

The **State Digital Equity Planning Grant** program is the first bucket of funding to be released. It provides \$60 million for states, territories, and Tribal organizations (also referred to as “Eligible Entities” or “EEs”) to develop digital equity plans. EEs must identify an entity to administer the State Digital Equity Planning and Capacity grants; for state EEs, the entity is referred to as the Administering Entity (AE). If designated by the Governor, a PHA or multi-family housing organization located in the state can serve in this role, however if they serve in this role, they will not be eligible to receive capacity grant funding.

Primary Goal

States identify barriers to digital equity and strategies for overcoming them in Digital Equity plans.

Public Housing and other Housing Stakeholders’ Connection to the Development of the State’s Digital Equity Plan

In order to develop their digital equity plan, the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program NOFO requires AEs to collaborate with key stakeholders in the State, which may include public housing authorities and further encourages AEs to collaborate with other groups not named in the IIJA statute, including multi-family housing developers and owners. **Importantly, AEs can also subgrant to PHAs and other organizations to help them develop their digital equity plans** which are generally due one year after they receive planning funds.

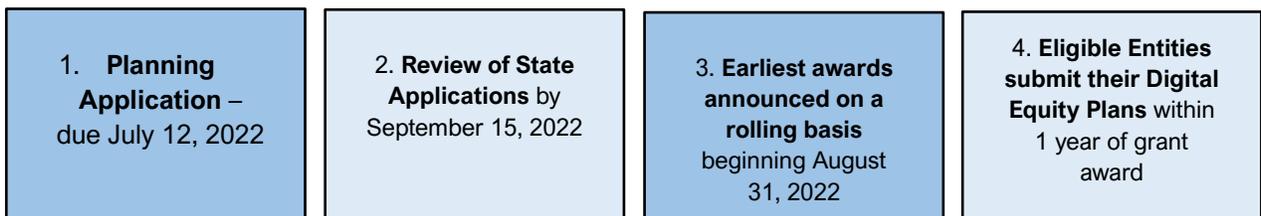
The [State Digital Planning Grant NOFO](#) lists tentative funding amounts for each state, tribe and territory. The amount of funding states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico will receive through the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program will be calculated by applying a formula, which is based, in part, on the number of individuals in each State who are members of “covered populations.” Covered populations are individuals who live in covered households, or

households, the income of which for the most recently completed year is not more than 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level; aging individuals (60 and above); incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility; veterans; individuals with disabilities; individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners, and have low levels of literacy; individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group; and individuals who primarily reside in a rural area. More information about the covered population in each state can be found through the [Digital Equity Act Population Viewer](#), an interactive collection of maps that highlight various demographics and broadband Internet availability and adoption by state.

To be eligible for the subsequent State Digital Equity Capacity Grant funding (\$1.44 billion over 5 years), states must complete and submit their Digital Equity Plans to NTIA.

TIP: *Make sure your voice is heard!* PHAs and Multifamily owners and operators should make sure to connect with their [state's AE](#) to ensure their voices are heard.

Application Process



Key Items to be Included in Digital Equity Plans

Statutory requirements for the contents of the State Digital Equity Plans are set forth in Section 60304(c)(1) of the IIJA. Some additional requirements include the following:

- Digital Equity Vision Statement
- Needs Assessment
- Coordination/outreach strategy
- **Inventory of existing digital inclusion resources, programs, plans and strategies** – *this should include ConnectHomeUSA programs!*
- **How existing local Digital Equity Plans will be incorporated into the State Digital Equity plan** – *again, this should include ConnectHomeUSA programs!*
- Implementation strategy that addresses barriers to participation in the digital world, and includes measurable goals, objectives, and core activities
- 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
- Outline of coordination across DEA, BEAD, and other federal or private digital equity funding

For more information and a full listing of additional minimum requirements, please refer to Section IV.C.1.b.ii of the NOFO.

Looking Ahead to 2024

In 2024, both remaining Digital Equity grant programs will get underway.

Sometime in early to mid-2024, the **State Digital Equity Capacity Grant** will award \$1.44 billion over 5 fiscal years to States (including the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico), other territories, and Tribal entities for the purpose of implementing their State Digital Equity Plans.

Later in 2024, The **Digital Equity Competitive Grant**, which makes available \$1.25 billion in grant awards will be released. It provides annual grant programs for five years for entities, including private sector, public sector, and not-for-profit entities, to support efforts to achieve digital equity, promote digital inclusion activities, and spur greater adoption of broadband among covered populations. The NOFO must be released no later than 30 days after NTIA begins awarding State Digital Equity Capacity Grants.

More Information

For more information related to the Digital Equity Act programs, visit these resources:

- [DEA Program Overview](#)
- [DEA Application Guidance](#)
- [State Digital Equity Planning Program NOFO](#)
- [NTIA's NOFO Technical Assistance Webinar](#)