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NOTICE

IN THE MATTER OF DIGITAL EQUITY PLANNING GRANT PROGRAM

Docket No. [TG23100748](#)

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities ("NJBP" or "Board") invites stakeholders and members of the public to provide written comments on this Notice regarding a draft of New Jersey's Digital Equity Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Digital Equity ACT ("DEA"), passed as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, aims to promote the achievement of digital equity and support digital inclusion activities. The DEA allocates \$2.75 billion to establish three main grant programs: the (1) State Digital Equity Planning Grant, which awards \$60 million to States to develop State Digital Equity plans or similar plans; (2) the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program, which will award \$1.44 billion over 5 years to States for the purpose of implementing their State Digital Equity Plans; and (3) the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program, which makes available \$1.25 billion in grant awards over 5 fiscal years for private sector, public sector, and not-for-profit entities to advance digital equity and engage in digital inclusion activities.

Under the Act, States interested in participating in the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program must first apply for State Digital Equity Planning Grants and complete State Digital Equity Plans. A State Digital Equity Plan is a critical predicate for achievement of digital equity goals as the drafting of such a plan provides states the opportunity to cast a vision for, and think critically about, how they will support the achievement of digital equity in their state. Planning should bring a diverse set of stakeholders to the table, assess data, and more to ensure that capacity funding is used most effectively to close the digital divide in each state. Upon receipt of the planning funds, States have one year to complete their Digital Equity Plans. Once completed, states will be eligible to apply for funds to implement the plans through the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program.

The Office of Broadband Connectivity ("OBC") received a Digital Equity Act planning grant for \$1,176,741, which requires the State to post a Digital Equity Plan ("the plan") for public comment by October 31, 2023.

Digital Equity

Among Covered Populations as outlined by the Digital Equity Act, the Draft Plan identifies gaps where there are high levels of digital inequity and include recommendations of best practices around digital equity interventions that can be scaled within New Jersey's historically marginalized communities to support: (1) economic and workforce development, (2) educational outcomes, (3) health outcomes, and (4) civic and social engagement outcomes.

In accordance with NTIA instructions, OBC is sharing this draft of the Plan to solicit public comment on its contents.

TAKE NOTICE that the Staff of the NJBPU (“Staff”) hereby invites all interested parties and members of the public to submit comments in connection with the draft of the Plan pursuant to the terms of the State Digital Equity Planning Grant. The draft of the Plan is available at the following location:

<https://www.nj.gov/connect/grants/digital-equity/>

The deadline for comments on this matter is 5 p.m. on November 30, 2023.

Please submit comments directly to the specific docket listed above using the “Post Comments” button on the Board’s Public Document Search tool. Comments are considered “public documents” for purposes of the State’s Open Public Records Act. Only public documents should be submitted using the “Post Comments” button on the Board’s Public Document Search tool. Any confidential information should be submitted in accordance with the procedures set forth in N.J.A.C. 14:1-12.3. In addition to hard copy submissions, confidential information may also be filed electronically via the Board’s e-filing system or by email to the Secretary of the Board. Please include “Confidential Information” in the subject line of any email. Instructions for confidential e-filing are found on the Board’s webpage. <https://www.nj.gov/bpu/agenda/efiling/>

Emailed and/or written comments may also be submitted to:

Sherri L. Golden

Secretary of the Board

44 South Clinton Ave., 1st Floor

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Trenton, NJ 08625-0350

Phone: 609-292-1599

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Sherri L. Golden

Dated: October 31, 2023