



# Initial Proposal

Dec 2023

# IP Vol 1 Overview

## What is the Initial Proposal (IP)?



The IP is a detailed plan for implementing New Jersey’s BEAD allocation (\$263.7M)

Once approved, OBC will run its challenge and subgrantee selection process in alignment with its Initial Proposal



NTIA separated the Initial Proposal into two volumes:

**Vol 1:** A plan for identifying locations eligible for BEAD funding

**Vol 2:** A plan for subgrantee selection process

## What is IP Vol 1?

*Volume 1 focuses on identifying the set of locations that will be eligible for BEAD funding*

**IP Vol. 1  
Element**



**1.1**

**Existing funding**



**1.2**

**Eligible BSLs**



**1.3**

**CAIs**



**1.4**

**Challenge Process**

**Summary of requirements**

1.1.1: Identify existing efforts funded by federal, state or local government to deploy broadband

*May import from Five-Year Action Plan*

1.2.1, 1.2.3: Provide current list of unserved and underserved locations from the most recent version of the National Broadband Map (NBM)

*May export from the NBM*

1.3.1: Define and identify Community Anchor Institutions (CAI) and provide broadband availability information for each CAI

1.4.3 – 1.4.5: Describe process to identify and remove locations subject to enforceable commitments

1.4.1, 1.4.2, 1.4.6, 1.4.7: Describe the challenge process OBC will use to determine the final list of all locations (unserved, underserved, CAIs) eligible for BEAD funding

## 1.3 Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) context

*New Jersey must define and identify all CAIs within New Jersey and determine current broadband availability for each*

### What is a CAI?

The Infrastructure Investment Act (IIJA) includes schools, libraries, healthcare orgs, public safety entities, higher education institutions, public housing agencies, and select community support orgs as CAIs. For the purpose of the BEAD program, CAIs should support broadband use by vulnerable populations, typically through providing device loans, computer access, or training

Providers are eligible to receive subsidy to connect CAIs to 1 Gbps symmetrical service through the BEAD program



### Key considerations for NJ

To be eligible for BEAD funding, CAIs must also lack access to 1Gbps symmetrical connectivity

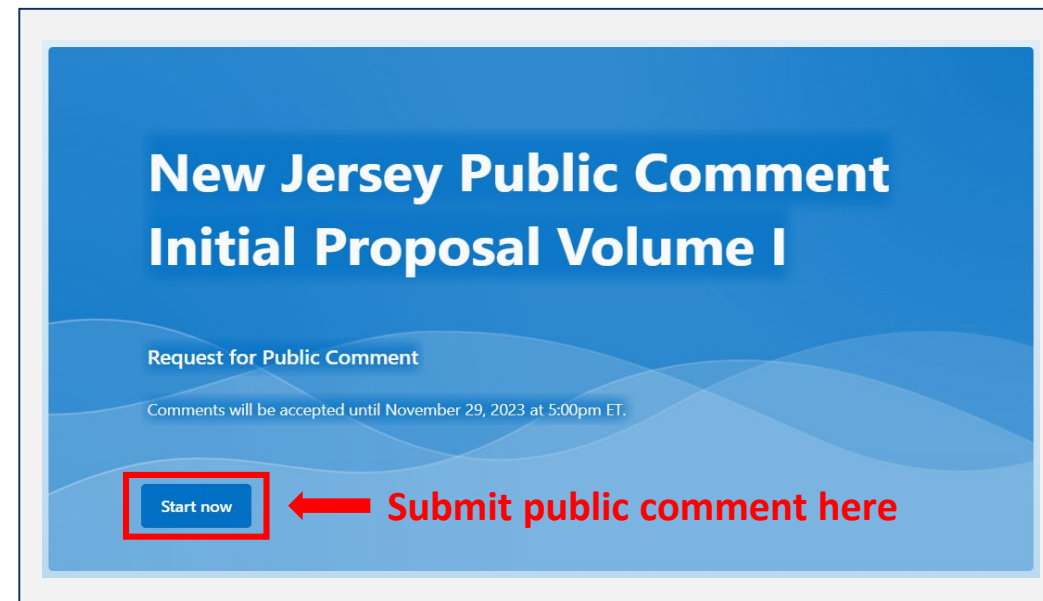
OBC has provided a preliminary list of CAIs in New Jersey in its Initial Proposal Volume 1, available now for public comment

**Note:** Within the BEAD program, funding for un and underserved locations is prioritized, followed by CAI coverage. States must present a “strong rationale” for prioritizing non-deployment activities ahead of some or all CAIs that have access to less than 1Gbps symmetrical

## 1.3 Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) data

**New Jersey used an outside-in approach to compile an initial list of institutions identified as CAIs that do not have 1 Gbps symmetrical service (see initial dataset on OBC's website)**

**To refine this dataset, New Jersey is asking stakeholders to submit their organizational information through public comment if they facilitate use of broadband for vulnerable populations and do not have access to 1 Gbps broadband service**



**Please note:** Large institutions (e.g., colleges, universities, healthcare centers) may likely have different services than New Jersey's outside-in data analysis indicates. For this reason, OBC strongly encourages all stakeholders to provide feedback through public comment

## 1.4 Challenge Process context and decisions

### What is it

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The process the state will use to determine the final list of all locations (unserved, underserved, CAIs) eligible for BEAD funding

Only local or tribal governments, nonprofit organizations or broadband providers may participate

Unlike the FCC challenge process, individuals may not submit challenges to the state

Individuals may submit challenges through an eligible challenger

States must complete the challenge process within 120 days

### Overview of New Jersey's approach

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OBC has adopted NTIA's model challenge process:

- 1 **Publication of Eligible Locations** (tentatively published in March 2024, assuming OBC receives NTIA approval)
- 2 **Challenge Phase:** (Tentative date: April 1st– May 1st 24')
- 3 **Rebuttal Phase:** (Tentative date: May 1<sup>st</sup> – June 1st 24')
- 4 **Final Determination Phase:** (Tentative date: June 1<sup>st</sup> – July 1st 24', but OBC will reserve an additional 30 days if needed)

Additionally, OBC is adopting NTIA's option to reclassify all locations that currently receive broadband through a DSL connection only as underserved locations

# Summary overview of Initial Proposal Vol 2 (1/2)



Vol. 2 of the BEAD Initial Proposal focuses on the subgrantee selection process for BEAD funding and follows NTIA guidance<sup>1</sup>

	<b>Section summary</b>	<b>New Jersey response overview</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Long-term objectives</b>	OBC aims to build broadband infrastructure to connect 100% of NJ's un- and underserved locations, offer affordable service, and advance digital literacy and equity. <i>Based on OBC's 5 Year Action Plan</i>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Coordination with other broadband plans</b>	OBC has identified 4 local broadband plans and will continue to coordinate with the associated municipalities.
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Local coordination process</b>	OBC's broadband strategy has been centered on collaboration with stakeholders, including local and regional entities, mostly through stakeholder meetings, working groups, publications and communications, and public surveys.
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Subgrantee deployment, scoring, and minimum qual.</b>	OBC will hold a multi-round subgrantee process that maximizes competition in order to minimize cost to NJ, while also incorporating other priorities (e.g., climate, workforce, affordability).
<b>2.5</b>	<b>Non-deployment subgrantee Selection</b>	OBC will prioritize non-deployment funds to drive digital equity priorities, including for economic development purposes
<b>2.6</b>	<b>Activities NJ will drive as direct recipient</b>	OBC ~\$30M prior for non-deployment priorities that would be provisionally awarded at the same time as the deployment awards
<b>2.7</b>	<b>Labor Standards and Protections</b>	OBC will require prevailing wage (where applicable), use of local workforce, commitment to union neutrality, and use of appropriately skilled and credentialed workforce. OBC will also demonstrate how it has been and will continue to take actions to prevent the misclassification of workers.

1. [https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/sites/default/files/2023-10/BEAD\\_Initial\\_Proposal\\_Guidance\\_Volumes\\_I\\_II\\_10-2023.pdf](https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/sites/default/files/2023-10/BEAD_Initial_Proposal_Guidance_Volumes_I_II_10-2023.pdf)

# Summary overview of IP Vol 2 (2/2)

	<b>Section Summary</b>	<b>New Jersey response overview</b>
<b>2.8</b>	<b>Workforce readiness</b>	OBC will prioritize apprenticeship and career development programs (including leveraging existing programs). OBC will also incentivize project labor agreements and labor peace agreements through the scoring process.
<b>2.9</b>	<b>Minority &amp; women's business &amp; labor surplus areas</b>	OBC will coordinate with other NJ agencies to increase awareness of BEAD and other opportunities for minority- and women-owned businesses.
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Cost and barrier Reduction</b>	OBC will promote the use of existing infrastructure, the adoption of dig -once policies, and the streamlining of permitting processes.
<b>2.11</b>	<b>Climate assessment and mitigation strategy</b>	NJ faces a high threat of wind- and water-related climate hazards. Subgrantees will be required to bury 90% of fiber in the highest risk coastal counties, and the scoring process will strongly incentivize them to do the same throughout the rest of the state.
<b>2.12</b>	<b>Low-cost broadband service option</b>	OBC will adopt the NTIA-provided example low-cost service option, which costs a maximum of \$30 per month, inclusive of all taxes, fees, and charges.
<b>2.13</b>	<b>Middle class affordability plan</b>	OBC will incentivize affordability through the scoring process. Providers will be required to commit to a monthly price for 5 years that can be no greater than 10% more than their lowest non-promotional price.
<b>2.14</b>	<b>Funding allocation request</b>	OBC is requesting 100% of the allocated ~\$264M upfront and may request to use a portion of the funds to support non-deployment activities at the same time as BEAD selection is taking place.
<b>2.15</b>	<b>Regulatory approach</b>	NJ will not modify any existing statutes.
<b>2.16</b>	<b>Certification of compliance with requirements</b>	OBC will employ various strategies to ensure project benchmarks are being met, including withholding funds, clawback procedures, risk assessments, and subgrantee-tailored monitoring plans.



# DRAFT New Jersey Digital Equity Plan

Plan summary and overview







# 1 Overview of the Digital Equity Act

**Digital equity** is the condition in which individuals and communities have **sustained access and the capabilities for productive use** of information technology that is needed for full participation in the society and economy of the United States.



# Digital equity matters because it can help New Jerseyans achieve their goals and bridge social and economic divides across the state

*“The Digital Equity Act (DEA) presents an opportunity to improve internet adoption through increases in affordability and accessibility for all communities, particularly New Jersey’s most vulnerable, to close the digital divide and raise the quality of life for all residents.”*

*–from the NJ State Digital Equity Plan*

## Digital equity can help...



**Advance workforce and economic development**

- Residents looking for work to find jobs that are good fit for their skills
- Employed residents to skill up to maintain their jobs
- Small business owners to use digital tools to grow their businesses



**Improve K-12 education**

- Students to continue their learning from school at home using computers and high-speed internet connections
- Students to learn how to navigate the internet safely and consume information critically



**Improve healthcare**

- Patients connect with healthcare providers more easily
- Patients access more information about their condition or concerns online



**Create online safety**

- Residents understand how to navigate the internet securely without compromising their personal information
- Residents of all ages to consume online information critically to protect themselves and to use cybersecurity tools effectively

**...among many other goals!**

# The Digital Equity Act (“DEA”) was passed in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and represents a new opportunity to close the digital divide

■ Focus of today’s webinar

## The Digital Equity Act is a historic piece of legislation ...

**Context** The **Digital Equity Act (DEA)** is part of the **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law** and represents the largest federal package for digital equity in history



The DEA was passed alongside the **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD)**, which appropriated \$42.5B to build broadband infrastructure across the country




The funding will be administered by the **National Telecommunications and Information Agency (NTIA)**, within the Department of Commerce

**Amount** The **DEA will dedicate \$2.75B** in total toward states and other grantees to advance digital equity goals



The funding for states is formula-based, but New Jersey’s award has not yet been announced

## ... and includes three different components

Opportunity	Total amount	Intended recipient	Status
 <b>State Digital Equity Planning Grant</b>	\$60M	States and territories	Planning grant awarded to NJ
 <b>State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program</b>	\$1.44B	States and territories	In progress
 <b>Digital Equity Competitive Grant program</b>	\$125B	Non-profits; municipalities and local government; private sector	Not open

# The Digital Equity Act (“DEA”) focuses on eight “Covered Populations”

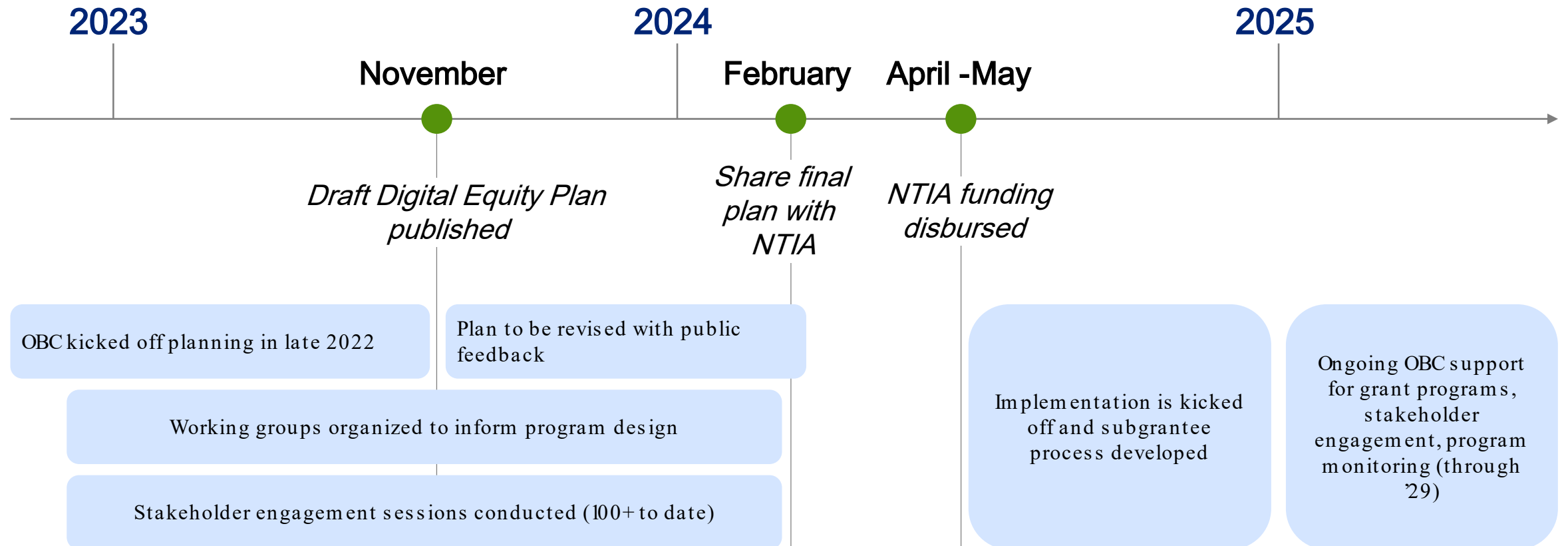
The DEA identifies eight groups as being especially vulnerable to digital equity challenges

Covered Population	NTIA Description ( <a href="#">link to source</a> )
1. Lowincome households	Referred to in the DEA as individuals who live in "covered households", or households' whole income is not more than 150% of the poverty level. This is defined as a household of three individuals with total income at or below ~ \$35,000 in New Jersey as of 2023.
2. Aging individuals	Individuals age 60 or older.
3. Incarcerated individuals	Individuals incarcerated in state -level prisons or detention centers. Though not required by NTIA, the New Jersey Digital Equity Plan will also prioritize serving returning citizens with digital equity resources and programs.
4. Veterans	All persons aged 18 years and who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.
5. Individuals with disabilities	All persons who have 1. A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; 2. A record of such an impairment; or 3. Being regarded as having such an impairment.
6. English language -learners	English learners are defined as individuals who speak a language other than English at home and speak English less than "very well" and/or individuals with low levels of English literacy.
7. Communities of color	Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group. Though not required by NTIA, the New Jersey Digital Equity Plan will also prioritize tribes that are state-recognized, even if not federally recognized.
8. Rural residents	Individuals who primarily reside in any area other than: 1. A city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants; 2. Any urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants; and 3. in the case of a grant or direct loan, a city, town, or incorporated area that has a population of greater than 20,000 inhabitants.



# New Jersey expects to receive an award in spring 2024 and begin deploying funds as early as fall 2024

## Timeline for Digital Equity Act Capacity Grant Program



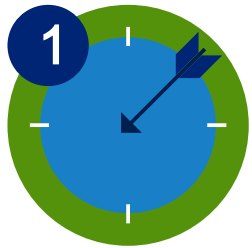
## 2 Overview of New Jersey's Draft Digital Equity Plan



# New Jersey has defined a vision for digital equity and four corresponding goals

*New Jersey's digital equity vision is for every resident to have the confidence and competence to harness power of the internet, devices, and digitally accessible services. Digital equity can help New Jersey bridge economic and achievement disparities among all residents, enabling them to lead fulfilling lives with dignity.*

## Goals



Ensure access to **affordable high -speed Internet** for every New Jerseyan



Ensure that every New Jerseyan has the **confidence and competence** they need to use computers and the internet to achieve their goals



Ensure that every New Jerseyan has **access to devices, software, assistive technologies, training, and technical support**



Ensure that every New Jerseyan has **efficient and effective digital experiences** with state government



# OBC engaged many stakeholders to create a fact base that informed the goals and overall plan

Stakeholder engagement to date ...



... which informed two aspects of the Digital Equity Plan

120+

number of listening sessions and meetings

600+

participants engaged

10

months of engagement

8

Covered Populations included

1



**Asset Inventory:** a stakeholder-informed inventory of the digital equity programs, plans, and resources that can help the state achieve digital equity

2



**Needs Assessment:** a data-based assessment of digital equity gaps and barriers for Covered Populations

# 1. The draft asset inventory documented 40+ programs and plans that help advance digital equity

X Count of assets

## The inventory includes assets that...

## Illustrative examples

...Increase enrollment in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) to reduce broadband cost

5



..Expand access to computers and devices

5+



..Support digital literacy trainings and help people use devices

20+



...Act as standalone municipal or regional plans and resources that support digital equity goals

5



... among many others

## 2. The needs assessment revealed digital equity gaps and will be used to prioritize areas for investment

X% State average



Share with broadband subscriptions



Share with access to a device (not including smartphones)

Gap from state average by Covered Population

80.7%

88.9%

Covered Population	Share with broadband subscriptions	Share with access to a device (not including smartphones)
Low-income households	-19.3	-17.8
Aging individuals	-8.8	-7.6
Incarcerated individuals	N/A	N/A
Individuals with disabilities	-14.7	-7.9
English language learners	-18.4	-19.8
Veterans	-7.5	-4.3
Communities of color	-	-
• American Indian	-8.8	-4.1
• Asian	+9.0	+7.1
• Black/African American	-4.8	-4.2
• White	+1.8	+1.7
• Hispanic/Latino	-6.9	-6.4
• Some other race	-1.1	+1.9
• Two or more races	-0.3	+2.1
Rural	-1.5	-1.8





### Insights

Despite New Jersey's high overall rate of connectivity, gaps persist

Low-income households, English language learners, and individuals with disabilities display some of the most significant gaps of all the Covered Populations

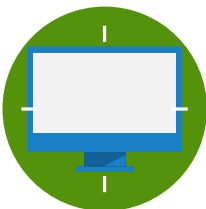







Each Covered Population faces unique barriers and solutions must be tailored to those specific needs

# As a result of these efforts, OBC is proposing the following strategies and activities to achieve the state's goals (1/4)









Goal	Proposed strategies	Proposed activities (non -exhaustive)
<p><b>1</b> Ensure access to <b>affordable high - speed Internet</b> for every New Jerseyan both in their home and in their communities</p>	<p><b>1.1</b> Build internet infrastructure to ensure New Jerseyans have <b>internet access</b> , focusing on where it is needed most</p> <hr/> <p><b>1.2</b> Increase <b>broadband subscriptions</b> among New Jersey residents</p>	<p> See BEAD Draft Initial Proposal Volume 1 (posted) and Draft Initial Proposal Volume 2 (pending)</p> <hr/> <p> Partner with ISPs and other organizations to drive ACP uptake</p> <hr/> <p> Partner with other statebased programs with income-eligibility requirements to drive uptake of ACP</p> <hr/> <p> Investment ACP outreach and enrollment in multiple languages (e.g., toll-free call number, digital marketing)</p> <hr/> <p> Consider direct state investments in affordability leveraging eligible BEAD funds (or other federal, state, or private funds)</p>



# As a result of these efforts, OBC is proposing the following strategies and activities to achieve the state’s goals (2/4)







Goal	Proposed strategies	Proposed activities (non -exhaustive)
<p><b>2</b> Ensure that every New Jerseyan has the <b>confidence and competence</b> they need to achieve their goals using computers and the internet.</p> 	<p><b>2.1</b> <b>Create digital skills standards</b> and partnerships to implement them</p>	<p> Convene a Digital Literacy Committee with the mission to recommend or create Digital Literacy standards, assessments, and credentials for all New Jersey residents</p> <p> Establish draft standards for assessment and credentialing</p>
	<p><b>2.2</b> <b>Increase digital skills for key life activities</b> and goals related to education, workforce/ economic development, healthcare, civic engagement, cybersecurity, etc.</p>	<p> Identify, fund, and monitor programs that tailor digital literacy trainings to key applications (e.g., healthcare, economic development, workforce, education, etc.) and evaluate program performance</p> <p> Implement digital literacy standards, including the 2023 Senate 588 K-12 Information Literacy Standards</p> <p> Support K-12 education system in increasing digital skills of students, including developing and piloting information literacy assessment tool</p>
	<p><b>2.3</b> <b>Strengthen the collaboration</b> between organizations that help build digital skills of New Jersey residents</p>	<p> Launch regular convenings to build a “community of practice” for public and private sector organizations that contribute to building digital skills of New Jersey residents</p> <p> Designate governance model for community of practice, including appointing leads to manage meetings and cultivate long-term relationships</p>

# As a result of these efforts, OBC is proposing the following strategies and activities to achieve the state's goals (3/4)

Goal	Proposed strategies	Proposed activities (non -exhaustive)
<p><b>3</b> Ensure that every New Jerseyan has <b>access to devices, software, assistive technologies, training, and technical support</b> to achieve their well-being</p>	<p><b>3.1</b> Increase the <b>affordability</b> of computers, software, assistive technologies, and technical support</p>	<p> Provide funding (directly or through existing programs) to subsidize the cost of devices for Covered Populations</p> <p> Facilitate partnerships between and among public, nonprofit, and private organizations to increase the affordability of devices</p>
	<p><b>3.2</b> Increase the <b>availability</b> of computers, software, assistive technologies, and technical support</p>	<p> Provide funding for programs that make these resources available to Covered Populations (e.g., library-based device access programs)</p> <p> Invest in programs that use or feature digital navigators</p>
	<p><b>3.3</b> Increase resources for <b>device technical support</b> to residents</p>	<p> Market the availability of cybersecurity guidance and training to residents, including in multiple languages</p> <p> Create partnerships to provide technical support (e.g., community-based helpdesks)</p>
	<p><b>3.4</b> <b>Strengthen the collaboration</b> between organizations that help build digital skills of New Jersey residents</p>	<p> Launch regular convenings to build a “community of practice” for public and private sector organizations that contribute to increasing meaningful access of New Jersey residents</p> <p> Designate governance model for community of practice, including appointing leads to manage meetings and cultivate long-term relationships</p>



# As a result of these efforts, OBC is proposing the following strategies and activities to achieve the state’s goals (4/4)

Goal	Proposed strategies	Proposed activities (non -exhaustive)
<p><b>4</b> Everyone has <b>efficient and effective digital experiences</b> with state government to obtain information or services</p>	<p><b>4.1</b> Simplify the “front end” resident experience to access government services online, using principles of human-centered design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Identify internal capability gaps for user experience and technical design and draft a plan to improve it</li> <li> Allocate pilot funding to improve resident experience of select online government services that are used by a disproportionate number of Covered Populations</li> <li> Explore piloting a centralized service hub for selected income based qualification programs that serve a high proportion of Covered Populations</li> </ul>
	<p><b>4.2</b> Collaborate with state agencies to improve “back end” data infrastructure, data management policies and practices, and cybersecurity of state websites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Set up interagency task force focused on sharing best practices to manage and protect resident data and streamline digital processes for residents</li> <li> Build data infrastructure and tools to increase efficiency in access to government systems for residents</li> <li> Partner with private sector data providers to stand up internal data management and warehousing capabilities and new applications, including security protections and protocols</li> </ul>



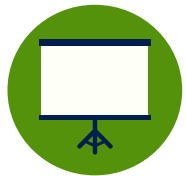
## We want to hear from you



Read the draft plan, available on [the OBC website](#)



Provide your feedback during the public comment period open through November 30, 2023



Attend the Office of Broadband Connectivity webinar on **November 17, 2023, at 1:00pm** .



If you have any questions, please direct inquiries to: **BROADBAND@bpu.nj.gov**

