



INTERNET FOR ALL

FUNDED BY THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW

ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE'S NATIONAL
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION



Digital Equity Act created three programs for digital equity and inclusion



Funding pool
\$2.75B

Three programs that provide funding to promote digital inclusion and advance equity for all. They aim to ensure that all communities can access and use affordable, reliable high-speed Internet to meet their needs and improve their lives.

PROGRAMS HIGHLIGHTS

The Digital Equity Act created three programs:

State Planning

- \$60M formula funding program to develop digital equity plans

State Capacity

- \$1.44B formula funding program to implement plans & promote digital inclusion

Competitive

- \$1.25B to implement digital equity and inclusion activities

Example eligible uses of funds include:

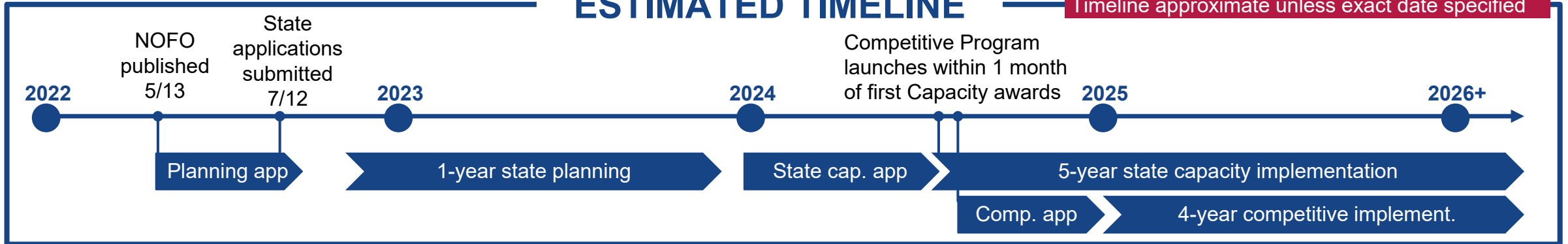
- ☆ Developing digital equity plans; states must develop a plan to be eligible for state capacity grants
- ☆ Implementing digital equity plans and related activities

- ☆ Making awards to other entities to help make digital equity plans
- ☆ Providing digital literacy and digital skills education

- ☆ Improving accessibility and inclusivity of public resources
- ☆ Facilitating the adoption of high-speed Internet

ESTIMATED TIMELINE

Timeline approximate unless exact date specified



Defining Digital Equity and Digital Inclusion



A condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy.



The activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

The Digital Equity Act focuses on addressing the needs of "covered populations" as defined by the statute

Covered Populations

Identity groups and communities disproportionately impacted by digital inequity



Low-income households



Aging populations



Incarcerated individuals



Veterans



People with disabilities



People with language barriers



Racial and ethnic minorities



Rural inhabitants

Planning funds will be used to develop State Digital Equity Plans, which must contain several components



Vision

- Stated **vision** for digital equity



Coordination and Outreach Strategy

- **Description of plan to collaborate** with key stakeholders to achieve its digital equity goals
- **List of organizations** that collaborated on and contributed to digital equity plans



Objectives

- **Measurable objectives**
- Assessment of how those objectives will **impact the State's plans and outcomes**



Implementation

- Implementation **strategy**
- **Timeline**



Barriers to Digital Equity

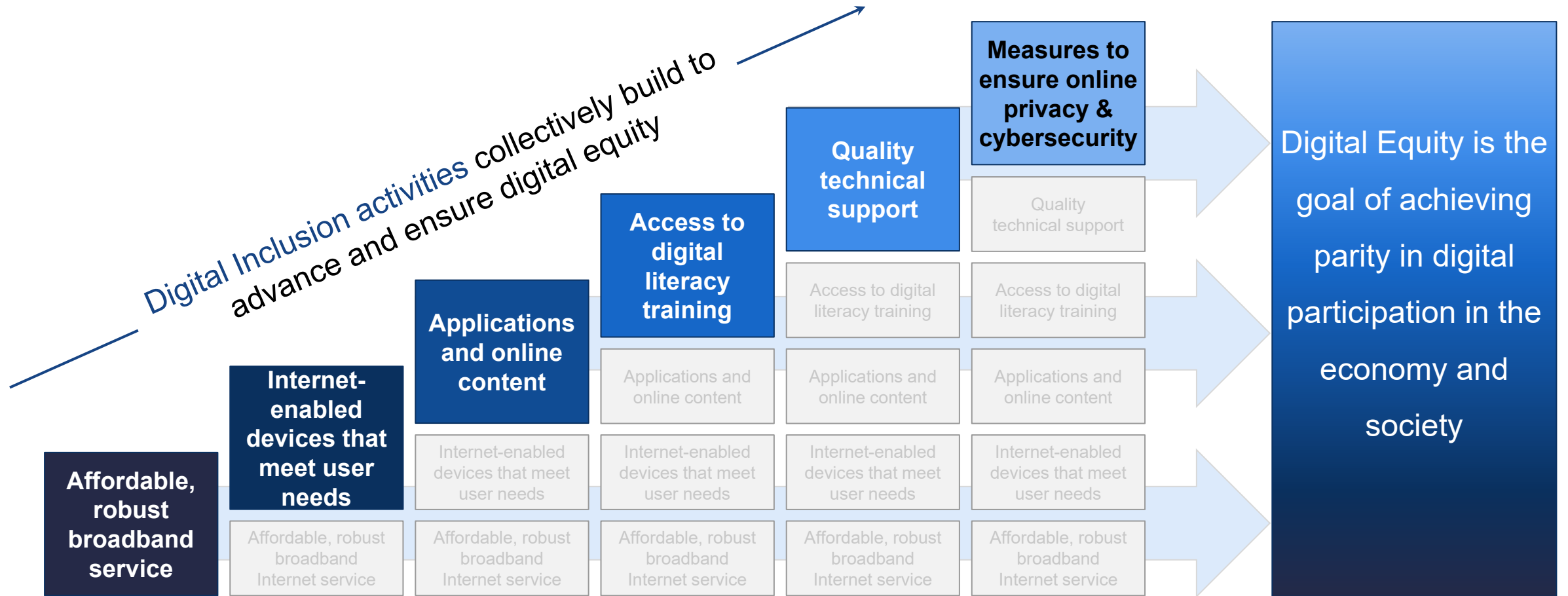
- **Identify barriers** to digital equity
- Include a **digital needs assessment**

Eligible entities are required to engage with key stakeholders as a part of developing digital equity plans

Key stakeholder groups may include:

- Community anchor institutions
- County and municipal governments
- Local educational agencies
- Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, or Native Hawaiian organizations, where applicable
- Nonprofit organizations
- Organizations that represent covered populations
- Civil rights organizations
- Entities that carry out workforce development programs
- State agencies that administer or supervise adult education or literacy activities
- Public housing authorities

The digital inclusion activities planned and implemented under these Programs build towards achieving digital equity



The Programs also support the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's broader goals of improving access, affordability, and adoption



Access



Promotes the **availability of reliable, high-speed Internet technology** through stakeholder outreach and engagement



Advances the **online accessibility of public resources** and services



Affordability



Promotes **awareness of existing programs** (e.g., Affordable Connectivity Program) that **help low-income households afford** high-speed Internet service



Offers **Internet equipment and software at low or no cost**



Adoption and equity



Narrows adoption disparities across covered populations by engaging with diverse stakeholders



Implements **digital inclusion programs** that include digital skills and literacy training, technical support, and workforce development

Every stakeholder plays a role in the Digital Equity programs

Illustrative, non-exhaustive

Telecom provider

- Provide States, other territories, and Tribal / Native entities with background data on their baseline and digital equity needs



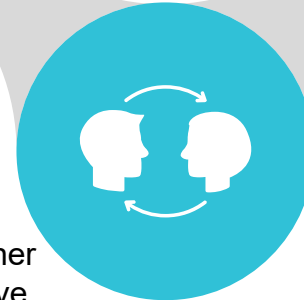
Community anchor institution

- Partner with States, other territories, and Tribal / Native entities to develop State Digital Equity Plans
- Advocate for community interests and needs



Community orgs

- Serve as a thought partner as States, other territories, and Tribal / Native entities design their outreach strategies
- Advocate for community interests and needs



Tribal government

- Participate in the Planning Grant Program
- Coordinate with relevant State(s) to develop state-wide Plans

Local government








- Collaborate with States, other territories, and Tribal / Native to develop State Digital Equity Plans

Individual

- Participate in the planning process of your local jurisdiction

State digital equity plans

State Digital Equity Plan components (I/II)

-  1 The **identification of the barriers to digital equity** faced by covered populations
-  2 **Measurable objectives for documenting & promoting** broadband technology; the online accessibility of public resources and services; digital literacy; secure online privacy / cybersecurity; consumer devices and tech support
-  3 An assessment of how the **objectives will impact and interact** with the State's economic and workforce goals; health, education and civic engagement outcomes; and delivery of other essential services
-  4 A description of how the State **plans to collaborate with key stakeholders** (e.g., anchor institutions, municipal government, educational agencies, non-profits) to achieve objectives
-  5 A list of organizations with which the administering entity for the State **collaborated in developing and implementing the Plan**
-  6 A stated **vision for digital equity**
-  7 A **digital equity needs assessment**, including an assessment of the baseline and the State's identification of the barriers to digital equity

State Digital Equity Plan components (II/II)



8

An **asset inventory**, including current resources and strategies that promote digital equity and existing digital equity plans and programs



9

A **coordination and outreach strategy**, including opportunities for public comment by, collaboration with, and ongoing engagement with the covered populations and the full range of stakeholders



10

Description of how **municipal, regional, and/or tribal digital plans will be incorporated**



11

An **implementation strategy** (1) establishing measurable goals, objectives, proposed core activities, (2) setting out measures ensuring the plan's sustainability, and (3) adopting mechanisms to ensure that the plan is regularly evaluated and updated



12

Explanation of how the strategy **addresses gaps in existing efforts** to address barriers to digital equity



13

Description of how the State intends to accomplish the implementation strategy by **partnering with workforce organizations and institutions of higher learning**



14

A **timeline** for implementation of the Plan



15

Material indicating how the State will coordinate its use of Digital Equity Capacity Grant funding and **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding**

State Digital Equity Plans may propose a variety of digital inclusion activities to later be implemented with capacity grant funds

Example Uses of State Capacity Grant Program funds

- Updating and maintaining State Digital Equity Plans
- Pursuing digital inclusion activities
- Facilitating adoption of broadband
- Implementing training and workforce development programs
- Providing equipment and software for broadband services
- Constructing or upgrading public access computer centers

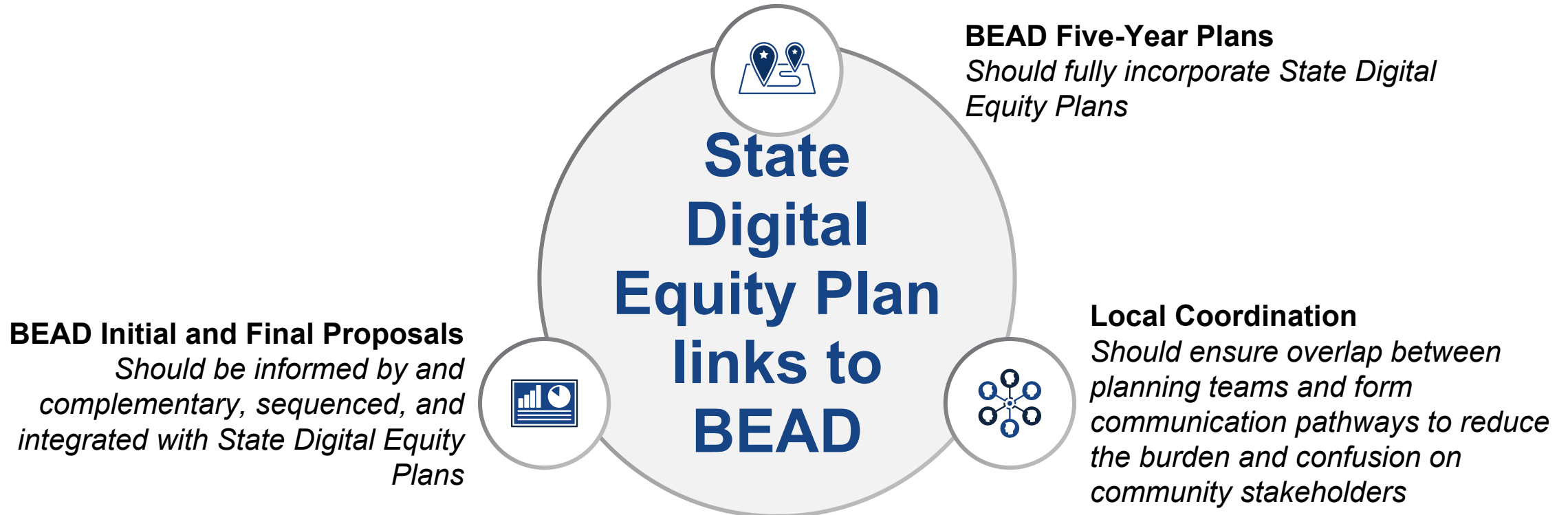
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State Digital Equity Plans are closely linked to requirements for the BEAD Program

States and territories should view the State Planning Grant Program NOFO and the BEAD NOFO holistically under a **singular, unified objective of closing the digital divide**



Additional resources about the Digital Equity Programs

- 1 Engage with your State or territory regarding their plans to improve high-speed Internet access and achieve digital equity
- 2 Submit questions to broadband@bpu.nj.gov
- 3 Attend future NTIA webinars and events

