



Wisconsin Counties Association
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
& Exhibit Hall **2022**

3:30 - 4:30 PM

Access to Reliable, High-Speed
Broadband



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Wisconsin Broadband Office

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Presentation to the Wisconsin Counties Association
September 2022

Slides provided in part by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

Our Mission Statement:

The PSC of Wisconsin ensures **safe, reliable, affordable, and environmentally responsible** utility services and equitable access to telecommunications and broadband services.



PSC Commissioners



Rebecca Cameron Valcq
Chairperson



Ellen Nowak
Commissioner



Tyler Huebner
Commissioner



Agency Goals for 2022

- Continue to close the Digital Divide
- Build a Roadmap for responsible, cost-effective transition to zero carbon by 2050
- Center actions and decisions on inclusion, diversity, equity, and affordability



Expanding Affordable High-speed Broadband Internet

How far until we reach our goal

650,000

Wisconsinites Lack Access to Broadband Infrastructure

As of January 2021



How far until we reach our goal

650,000
Wisconsinites
Can't Afford
Broadband Service

As of January 2021

Since 2019...

\$105 Million

Federal Funds

Gov. Evers has directed \$105 million of our federal funds to expand access to reliable, affordable high-speed internet across our state.

\$177 Million

State Funds

The 2019-21 biennial budget provided a historic \$48 million investment in broadband expansion. The 2021-23 biennial provided \$129 million for the Broadband Expansion Grant Program.

Results:

Locations

387,000+

Thanks to the investments made for broadband expansion, more than 387,000 homes and businesses will have high-quality, high-speed broadband.

230,000+

More than 230,000 Wisconsin households are enrolled in the Federal Affordable Connectivity Program, which is more than 23% of all eligible Wisconsin households.

Federal Funding for Broadband



Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

- Federal program run by the FCC to help low-income households pay for internet service and connected devices like a laptop or tablet.
- Likely eligible if household's income is below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line.
- Up to a \$30/month discount on internet service (\$75 if on Tribal land).
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer.

Wisconsin Broadband Office

Vision

- All Wisconsinites have access to affordable broadband service and equitably share in the benefits of broadband technology.

Mission

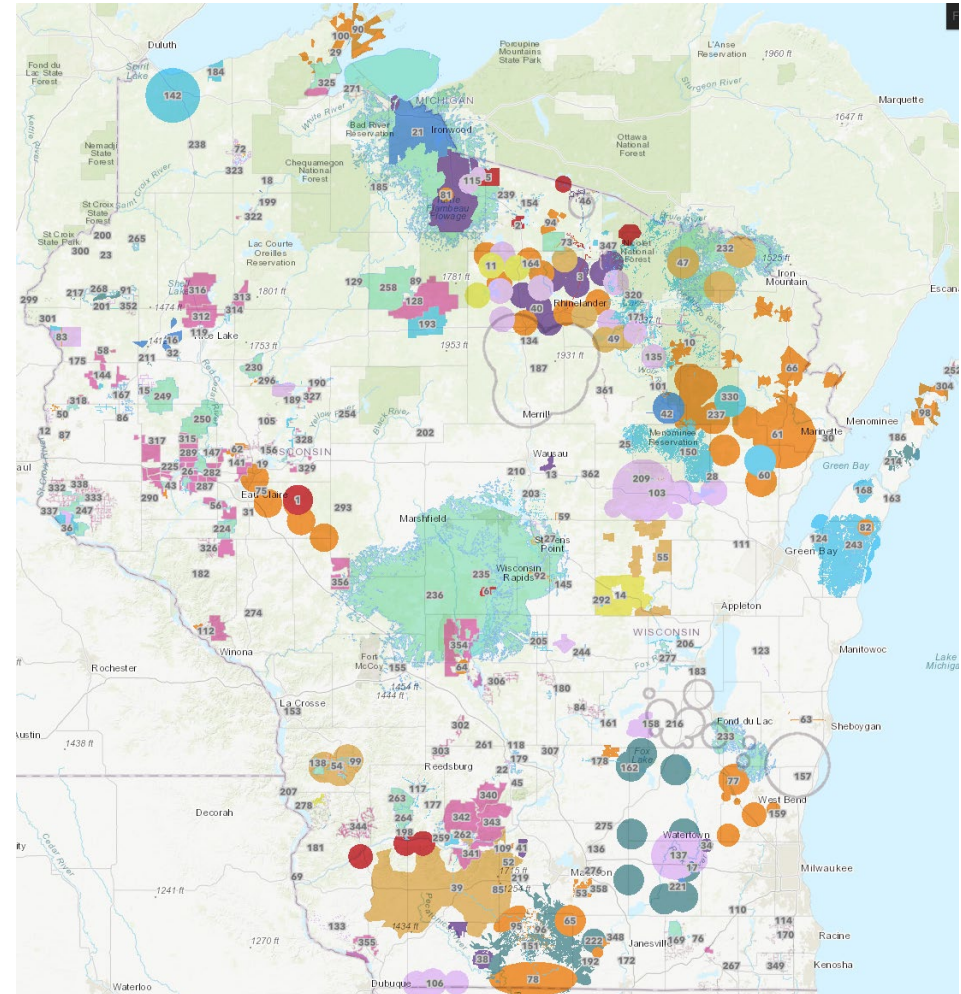
- Make high speed internet service accessible and affordable for all Wisconsinites.

Grant Impact

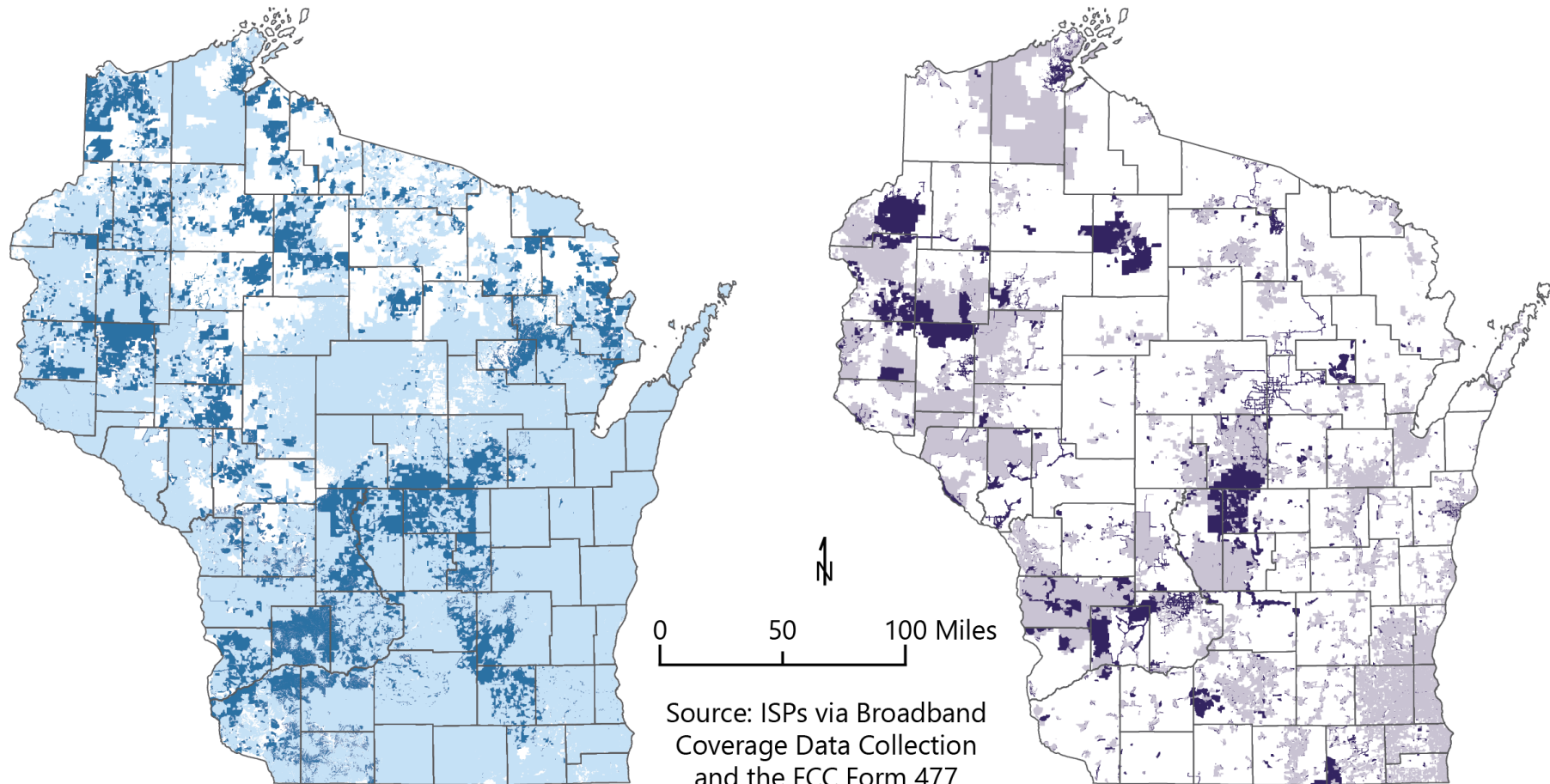
- Since 2014:
434 grants for \$303 million
- Since 2019:
387,000 homes and businesses



Best in Class: Wisconsin has a mature grants program with clear documentation of their application and awards processes.



Improvement: 2020 to 2021



**25/3
Mbps**

■ New 2021 Coverage ■ Existing Coverage

**100/20
Mbps**

■ New 2021 Coverage ■ Existing Coverage

Wisconsin Broadband Office



Leadership and Vision

Data and Maps

Strategic Investment in Infrastructure

Digital Equity and Inclusion Framework

Partnership and Capacity Building

Leadership & Vision

Statewide Coordination

- Technical assistance for community planning
- Phone & Internet helpline: (608) 267-3595

Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access

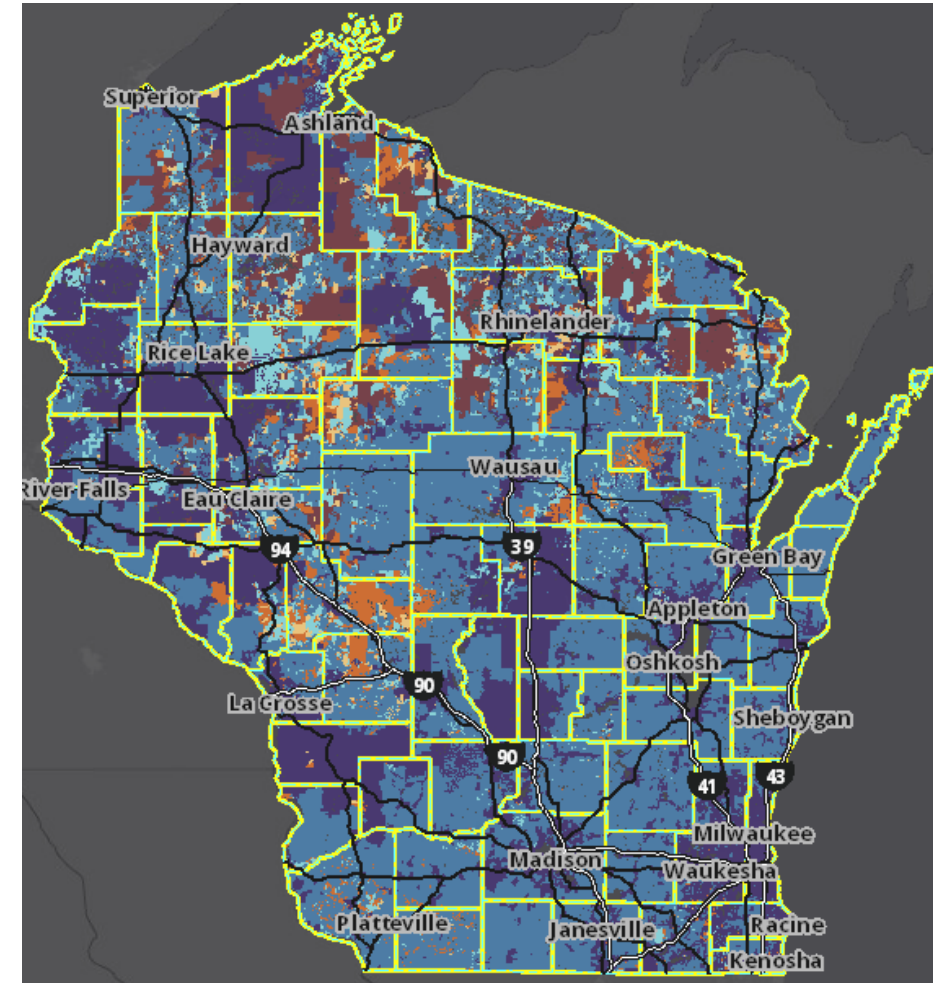
- Advising broadband development
- [2022 Task Force Report](#)

Digital Equity and Inclusion Stakeholder Group

- Convening connectivity practitioners
- Reaching our hardest to connect communities

Data & Maps

- Wisconsin Broadband Map
- Federal Communications Commission Mapping
 - Granular coverage data
 - Challenge process
- Wisconsin Broadband Grant Footprint



Data & Maps

- Wisconsin Internet Self Report (WISER) survey tool
- Leverage WISER for your community
 - Data sharing & integrated strategy
- Door County's success in using WISER
 - ~2000 responses and counting

16. Can you participate in a virtual meeting or stream a video on your primary devices without Internet service interruptions?*

☐ Yes - No Issues >95% of the Time

☐ Sometimes, but Inconsistently

  **WISER**
WISCONSIN
Internet Self-Report



18. Who is the Internet Service Provider at this location?
Select "Unknown" if unknown.

19. (Optional) What connection types are used to access the Internet at this location?
(Select all that apply.)

☐ Ethernet (Wired connection to your device)

Digital Equity & Inclusion Framework

What is Digital Equity?

- The condition in which individuals and communities have the **information technology capacity** that is needed for **full participation** in the society and economy of the United States.

Key Elements:

- 1) Affordable, robust broadband internet service;
- 2) Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user;
- 3) Access to digital literacy training;
- 4) Quality technical support; and
- 5) Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration.

Digital Equity & Inclusion Framework

Convening community connectors

Affordable Connectivity Program outreach

Leveraging community institutions

Strategic Investment in Infrastructure

Awarded

- State Broadband Expansion Grant Program
- Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) Grants
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Broadband Access Program

Upcoming

- Capital Projects Fund
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
 - Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program
 - Digital Equity Act Programs
- Additional local, federal, and private investment

Strategic Investment in Infrastructure

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

BEAD	DIGITAL EQUITY	TRIBAL	MIDDLE MILE
\$42.45B	\$2.75B	\$2.00B	\$1.00B
<i>Title I - Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment Program</i> Formula-based grant program for U.S. states and territories. BEAD aims to close the access gap for unserved & underserved areas of the country.	<i>Title III – Digital Equity Act</i> Three programs, established for planning & implementation of programs that promote digital equity, support digital inclusion activities, and build capacity related to the adoption of broadband.	<i>Title II - Tribal Connectivity Technical Amendments</i> Furtheres current Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program by investing an additional \$2B to fund broadband adoption and infrastructure projects.	<i>Title IV - Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure</i> Provides funding to extend middle mile capacity to reduce cost of serving unserved and underserved areas and enhance network resilience.

Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment

Funding pool

\$42.45B

A program to get all Americans online by funding partnerships between states or territories, communities, and stakeholders to build infrastructure where we need it and increase adoption of high-speed internet.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Entities eligible to apply for this program include:

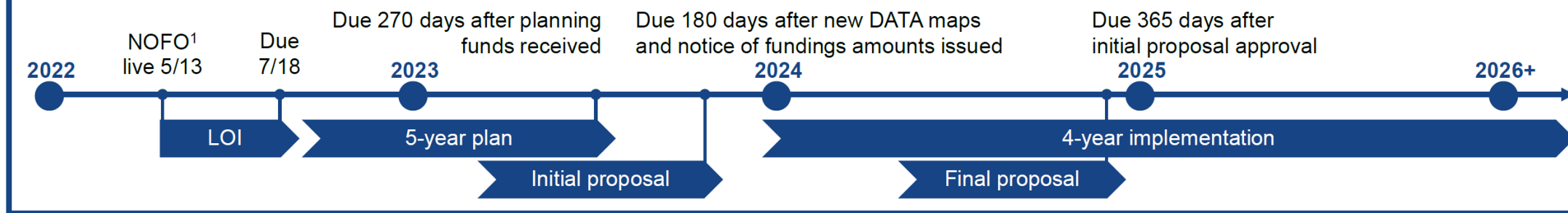
- All 50 States
- The District of Columbia and Puerto Rico
- Other Territories: U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Example eligible uses of funds include:

- ☆ Planning for deployment of Internet
- ☆ Deploying or upgrading Internet
- ☆ Installing Internet in multi-tenant buildings
- ☆ Implementing adoption and digital equity programs
- ☆ Workforce and job training

ESTIMATED TIMELINE

Timeline approximate unless exact date specified



Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment

2

Five-Year Action Plan | Eligible Entities that receive Initial Planning Funds must submit their Five-Year Action Plans



An Eligible Entity may choose to request \leq \$5M Initial Planning Funds

An Eligible Entity that receives Initial Planning Funds must submit a Five-Year Action

Example uses for Initial Planning Funds for planning and pre-deployment activities

- Establishing capacity in office of Eligible Entity running program
- Research and data collection
- Development of a preliminary budget for pre-planning activities
- Publications, outreach & communication support
- Providing technical assistance to potential subgrantees
- Training for employees (e.g., Eligible Entity, stakeholders, etc.)
- Conducting surveys of unserved, underserved, and underrepresented communities
- Local coordination, including capacity building

Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment



2 Five-Year Action Plan | Eligible Entities that receive planning funds must submit a Five-Year Action Plan

- 1 Details of the **existing broadband program**, including its activities, any previous entity-wide plans or goals for availability of broadband, and any prior experience awarding broadband deployment grants
- 2 **Current funding available for broadband deployment** or other related activities and the sources of that funding, including additional funds that may be pursued but are not yet in hand
- 3 **Existing efforts funded by the federal government** or an Eligible Entity within the jurisdiction of the Eligible Entity to deploy broadband and close the digital divide.
- 4 **Current employees** who will assist in implementing and administering the BEAD Program and their duties, as well as any existing contracted support, and any planned expansion
- 5 **Known or potential obstacles or barriers** to implementation and corresponding plans to address them.
- 6 **An asset inventory** that catalogues broadband adoption, affordability, equity, access, and deployment activities and provides details regarding any relevant partners
- 7 Details of its **external engagement process**, demonstrating collaboration with local, regional, and Tribal / Native entities
- 8 Available federal, Eligible Entity, or local **broadband availability and adoption data**
- 9 **Local broadband service needs and gaps**, including un- or underserved locations and CAIs without gigabit service, and/or any plans to make determinations where availability is unclear
- 10 **A comprehensive, high-level plan** for providing universal, reliable, affordable, high-speed broadband service throughout the jurisdiction
- 11 **Digital equity and inclusion needs, goals, and strategies**, including ways it plans to utilize BEAD funding, Digital Equity Act funding and/or other funding in concert
- 12 Alignment of the Five-Year Action Plan with **other existing and planned priorities**, incl. economic development, telehealth, workforce development, related connectivity priorities
- 13 **Technical assistance and additional capacity needed** for successful implementation of the BEAD Program

Digital Equity Act Programs



Digital Equity Act created three programs to promote 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 across three programs include:

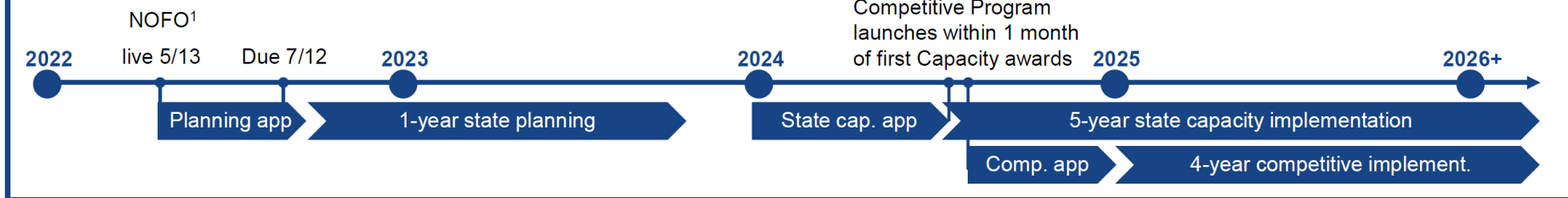
- ☆ Developing digital equity plans; states must develop a plan to be eligible for state capacity grants
- ☆ Implementing digital equity plans and related activities

- ☆ 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



Digital Equity Act Programs

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

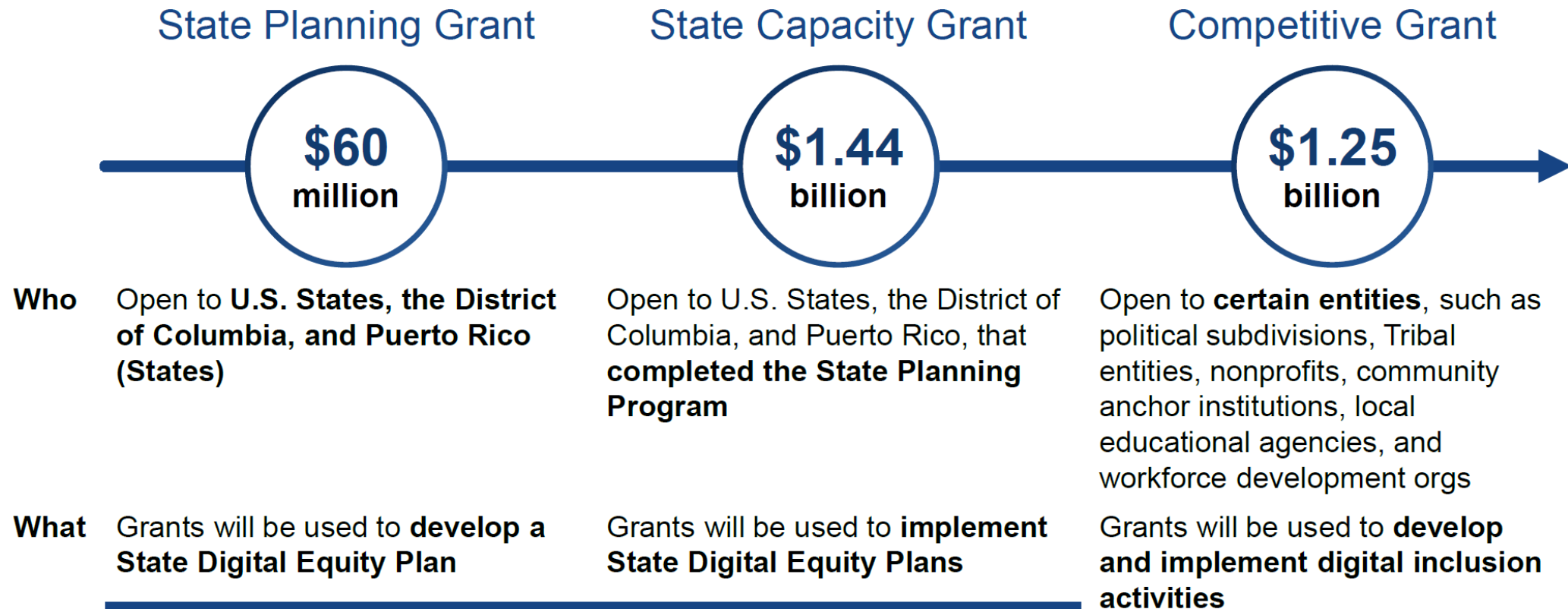


Racial and ethnic minorities



Rural inhabitants

Digital Equity Act Programs



Other U.S. territories, Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, and Native Hawaiian orgs have a separate statutory set-aside and separate program requirements under the State Planning and Capacity Programs, as detailed on the next page










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Digital Equity Act Programs



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

Digital Equity Act Programs



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**

Partnership & Capacity Building

Local Planning Toolkits

Coordination with local advisory bodies

Surveys and data sharing

5 Steps for Connected Communities:

- 1) Start conversations: who is addressing community broadband needs and how can I support them?
- 2) Collect data: coordinate with WBO to collect, understand, and improve survey data and maps.
- 3) Find partners: engage with internet service providers in your community early and often.
- 4) Get involved: host a planning event in your community (we can help!).
- 5) Stay up to date: [sign up for our newsletter](#) and share it.



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