STATE DIGITAL EQUITY PLANNING GRANT PROGRAM

Project Narrative Sample

*Applicants should provide a clear and compelling description of the project. For States, the project should align with the statutory purposes described in the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Applicants need to provide an overview of the grant project and activities to be funded by the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program funds and how these activities will support the development of a State Digital Equity Plan, as specified in Section IV of the NOFO. This content will be limited to 7,500 characters, or approximately 1,000 words.*

*This guidance document is for informational purposes only and is intended solely to assist applicants in better understanding the National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA) State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program, and the requirements set forth in the program’s NOFO. This guidance does not and is not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, or the specific application requirements set forth in the program’s NOFO. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the program’s NOFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in the guidance below.*

*The narrative detailed below is for illustrative purposes only; actual details will vary by State.*

**OVERVIEW**

**[State name]** will create a robust and comprehensive five-year statewide digital equity plan that will serve as a benchmark and a roadmap for achieving digital equity in our state and meet the requirements established by NTIA in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. We will invest the State Digital Equity Planning grant funds in four major activities:

1. Staff recruitment and development
2. Community and stakeholder engagement
3. Data collection and analysis
4. Report development and distribution

First, our state will hire and equip digital equity staff to lead the planning process on behalf of the state. We will issue a request for proposal (RFP) to sub-award to external entities to support community outreach and engagement, plan development, and data collection and analysis. We estimate these sub-awards to total $221,570. However, internal staff will lead and guide the overall effort. Second, we will robustly engage communities and stakeholders throughout the entire planning process deploying multiple strategies including but not limited to: form a core planning team comprised of a diverse set of stakeholders and partners to lead and advise the plan’s development, conduct a series of in-person and virtual public listening sessions throughout the state, provide multiple feedback mechanisms, and ensure all written materials are translated into multiple languages reflecting the communities we serve. Importantly, we intend to include residents or ‘lived experts’ on the core planning team and compensate them with a stipend, so the perspective of the disconnected can inform the entire planning process.

Third, we will collect and analyze data on the disparate impacts of the digital divide on the covered populations and state residents and collect all local digital equity plans developed by local communities to inform the plan’s recommendations. The data and local plans will inform the plan’s measurable objectives and implementation recommendations. Finally, we will develop, publish, and disseminate the written plan.

**TIMELINE**

The plan development process will begin after funding is received by the State and will be concluded within 12 months with the delivery of a five-year State Digital Equity Plan. We will develop the plan in accordance with the statute and provide a minimum of 30 days for public comment and will incorporate comments, and responses to comments, prior to submission to NTIA.

**DELIVERABLES**

Deliverables will include: (1) State Digital Equity Plan printed document; (2) a digital version of the plan hosted on the State’s website; and (3) an open access, downloadable interactive online dashboard and map displaying the data collected to inform the measurable objectives.

# **DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

**Strategy Overview**

Community and stakeholder engagement and a robust data collection process will be the core strategies driving the plan’s composition. As such, the State will seek input from the community and stakeholders while simultaneously collecting data. Our strategy weaves stakeholder engagement throughout the entire planning process and elevates the voices of those who directly work with or who themselves have direct lived experience of being disconnected. We will employ a mix of strategies, communications channels, and messengers to be effective.

At a minimum we intend to engage with the key stakeholders outlined in the NOFO to provide input to the plan. Additional stakeholders we will deliberately engage include but are not limited to:

* Members of the covered populations and historically disconnected communities (lived experts)
* State cabinet-level agencies
* State corrections department/agency
* State departments of education
* Digital inclusion coalitions in the state
* State and local chambers of commerce or industry associations
* Regional councils of governments
* Economic development authorities
* Higher education institutions
  + State higher education coordinating board or governing board
  + Community or Technical College System
  + Public and Private Universities
  + Historically Black Colleges & Universities
  + Tribal Colleges & Universities
  + Minority Serving Institutions
* Public housing resident associations and other low-income housing providers
* Labor unions (particularly telecommunications workers’ unions)
* Healthcare systems and networks
* Homeless continuum of care providers
* Private and nonprofit multi-family housing developers and owners
* Faith-based institutions (e.g., churches, temples, mosques)
* Entrepreneurs and business owners
* State or local foundations and funders
* Advocacy organizations
* Existing multi-stakeholder groups (e.g., councils on aging)
* Refugee resettlement organizations
* Re-entry organizations
* Organizations serving undocumented residents
* Early intervention coordinators (e.g., those providing in-home therapy for children ages 3 to 5)
* Trade organizations
* Agriculture extension offices
* Cultural organizations
* Local media outlets such as Public, Educational, & Governmental station leaders and Ethnic media

**Community Outreach and Engagement**

1. Form core planning team:
   1. Four to ten people representing a diverse set of stakeholders and partners including a member of the team developing the State’s BEAD program, community-based organizations with digital inclusion programs, state agency peers (such as State Library, Department of Education, etc.), community-based organizations, community anchor institutions, universities and lived experts.
   2. The administering entity staff will lead and staff the core planning team meetings.
   3. The core planning team will serve in an advisory capacity, providing guidance and support throughout the planning process particularly in supporting the development of a community stakeholder engagement plan.
2. Conduct 6-10 regional public listening sessions throughout the state where community members and residents may provide the state with the following:
   1. Lived experiences being disconnected
   2. Digital inclusion assets, including current resources, programs and strategies that promote digital equity for each of the covered populations
   3. Identification of barriers to digital equity
   4. Priorities for investments
   5. Ideas for solutions
3. Leverage a diverse array of communications tools to connect and keep community members and stakeholders informed throughout the process. All written materials are translated into multiple languages reflecting the communities we serve. The communication tools we will leverage are:
   1. State websites
   2. Social media
   3. Information sessions
   4. Radio and print notices
   5. Flyers
   6. Sharing information through partner agencies
   7. Other mechanisms to be determined
4. Incorporate public input into the plan:
   1. Gather and incorporate existing local Digital Equity Plans
   2. Publish plan for a minimum of thirty days to gather and incorporate public input

**Data Collection and Analysis**

1. Identify, review, and compile local digital equity plans and data into the plan.
2. Conduct primary and secondary data analysis to identify and document barriers and resources related to digital equity for covered populations and all state residents including but not limited to the following methods:
   1. One-on-one interviews and/or focus group interviews with key stakeholders and lived experts
   2. Scientific surveys
   3. Analysis of Census and other secondary data sources
   4. Statewide digital equity asset mapping

**The Plan**

The plan will contain all the statutory and additional requirements set forth in the NOFO.

**Delivery**

Upon completion, we will submit the plan to NTIA and distribute to our state’s residents through the following mechanisms:

* A public event to unveil the contents of the plan
* A dedicated website related to the plan, with information about its background and online dashboards tracking its implementation progress
* Distribution of the plan to all stakeholders who participated in the planning process