

Project Narrative and Eligibility

Grant Request Number	GRN-000180
Funding Program Name	State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program
Funding Request Name	State of California - State Digital Equity - Planning Application
Applying Organization	State of California
Applicant Name	Scott Adams

Project Summary:

The California Department of Technology (CDT) seeks funding from the NTIA to develop California's State Digital Equity Plan (SDEP). CDT has been designated as the administering entity for the State Digital Equity Planning Grant.

CDT has broad responsibility and authority over all aspects of technology in California state government. CDT chairs the California Broadband Council (CBC) and leads and staffs the work of the council.

Since 2010, the 12-member CBC has promoted broadband deployment in unserved and underserved areas of the state. In 2020, Executive Order N-73-20 directed the CBC to develop a statewide Broadband Action Plan, which CDT led with input from more than 700 stakeholders.

The Broadband for All Action Plan stresses broadband access, affordability, adoption, and digital literacy as essential components of digital equity and inclusion. This Plan focuses on achieving three long-term goals:

- All Californians have high-performance broadband available at home, schools, libraries, and businesses.
- All Californians have access to affordable broadband and necessary devices.
- All Californians can access training and support to enable digital inclusion.

In the 2021 state budget, the Governor and State Legislature approved \$6 billion for broadband investments in Assembly Bill 164 and Senate Bill 156, which included \$3.25 billion in federal funds for CDT to fund and oversee the development of a statewide open-access middle-mile network; another \$2.75 billion was authorized for last-mile and technical assistance programs to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).

California's Digital Equity Planning effort will build on and expand the above efforts, to close the digital divide and foster digital equity throughout the state.

In Spring of 2022, CDT partnered with CBC members and other state entities to host four Broadband for All Roundtables to foster partnerships and establish dialogue with more than 1,000 entities committed to closing California's digital divide, including local and tribal governments, regional broadband consortia, schools, libraries, community-based organizations, and internet service providers. These roundtables included updates on the implementation of the State's Broadband for All initiatives.

Broadband for All's interagency collaboration, stakeholder network, and engagement infrastructure provide a strong foundation for CDT to develop the State Digital Equity Plan.

CDT is preparing a 52-week planning process which includes five components designed to meet the Digital Equity Act and NTIA's plan requirements, empower those facing barriers to digital equity, and to refine California's vision,

objectives, and strategies for digital equity.

State Digital Equity Task Force: CDT will establish a diverse and inclusive group that will oversee development of the SDEP. It will include the CBC and other key state entities that represent the Digital Equity Act-defined Covered Populations, labor groups, community-based organizations, as well representatives from the philanthropic and private sectors. This group will provide direction to planning activities, integrate engagement input, and create and finalize the SDEP.

Priority Area Subcommittees: Subcommittees will bring together subject matter experts and practitioners to develop strategies that align with other state priorities, including economic and workforce development, education, and health. Subcommittees will conduct research, assess assets of existing programs, and develop recommendations to promote outcomes in their priority areas to the Task Force.

California Digital Equity Survey: California will conduct a statewide survey across the state's 58 counties focusing on input from Covered Populations. Our goal is to reach more than 11,000 respondents, oversampling each Covered Population to understand barriers to digital equity (including broadband access and adoption, digital literacy, online privacy and cybersecurity, and access to digital opportunities) and preferred solutions. The survey will be offered through phone interviews, online forms, and in-person outreach.

Local and Regional Outreach: Outreach will support strategy ideation and SDEP development at the community level. Our goal is to host at least 20 convenings statewide, providing an ideation round to generate initial plan input, followed by a round for feedback on the draft SDEP later in the process. This outreach will facilitate integration of local and regional digital equity plans with the SDEP and support inventorying local assets and programs.

Statewide Public Engagement: The plan will include communication and ongoing engagement with stakeholders and the public through roundtables, listening sessions, e-newsletters and social media, earned media, and a public comment process facilitated through the Broadband for All Portal.

This structure ensures collaboration at every step with community, local, and regional stakeholders, with a strong emphasis on Covered Populations stakeholders.

Through this effort, CDT will lead the development of an SDEP for California with programs and strategies to engage all citizens in full digital participation in modern society through digital inclusion, achieving digital equity for all Californians. The plan will include mechanisms to ensure continued stakeholder engagement and participation in its implementation, measurable objectives, and ongoing evaluation of plan success, in addition to meeting all other requirements of the SDEP.

As required by the Digital Equity Act, our planning process integrates broadband and digital inclusion goals with statewide priorities on civic engagement, climate change, education, economic and workforce development, health, housing, homelessness, and transportation.

The SDEP will be developed in close coordination with the state's Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) planning effort led by the CPUC, producing an integrated plan to leverage both Digital Equity Capacity Grant funds and BEAD funds.

CDT is seeking its full allocation of \$4,001,525 for its SDEP process. These funds will support:

- 8 staff positions to execute each component and workstream
- A Digital Equity Survey administration and analysis
- An Outreach and Public Relations Consultant to develop marketing materials, promote awareness of the SDEP process and survey, especially among Covered Populations

- Sub-grants to entities with existing networks for local and regional stakeholder engagement, asset inventory, and data collection
- Printed materials for outreach to Covered Populations
- Translation and interpretation at events and for printed materials
- CRM licenses and support to develop a shared stakeholder engagement tracking system among partners and sub-grantees

Certification that, not later than 1 year after the date on which the Assistant Secretary awards the planning grant to the State, the administering entity for that State shall develop a State Digital Equity Plan. Such Digital Equity Plan shall comply with the requirements of Section 60304(c) of the Act. The administering entity shall submit the Digital Equity Plan to the Assistant Secretary within the one-year statutory deadline.

Response:

Yes