State Digital Equity Plan and Public Comment: Informational Webinar

Minutes & Transcript

Date: December 15, 2023

Time: 11AM – 12:10 PM PT

Registration Link: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

Registration (as of 12/15/23) | 266 Registered

	Topic	Presenter
	Welcome and Housekeeping Items	Laura Sasaki, Broadband Initiatives Manager
1.	**Introduction**	Liana Bailey-Crimmins, State Chief Information Officer & Director, California Department of Technology
2.	**How We Got Here**	Scott Adams, Deputy Director, Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy, California Department of Technology
3.	**Framework of the State Digital Equity Plan (SDEP)**	Scott Adams, Deputy Director, Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy, California Department of Technology
4.	**Where to Find the SDEP and How to Comment**	Anh Nguyen, Engagement & Operations Manager, Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy, California Department of Technology
5.	**Partner Outreach Toolkit**	Monica Hernandez, Deputy Director, Communications and Stakeholder Engagement, California Department of Technology
6.	**What's Next**	Scott Adams, Deputy Director, Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy, California Department of Technology
7.	**Q&A**	Shawn Daughtery, Senior Program Manager, Broadband Equity Partnership
	Closing	Scott Adams, Deputy Director, Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy, California Department of Technology

The California State Digital Equity Plan and Public Comment Informational Webinar was held on Friday, December 12, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. PST via virtual conference.

Broadband Initiatives Manager Laura Sasaki welcomed attendees to the webinar and reviewed some housekeeping items.

Agenda Item 1 – Introduction
State Chief Information Officer and CDT Director Liana Bailey-Crimmins welcomed attendees. She introduced a video highlighting SDEP engagement efforts and encouraged continued participation through the public comment process.

Agenda Item 2 – How We Got Here
Deputy Director Scott Adams explained that accessibility, affordability, and adoption are all critical components to close digital divide. He shared the evolution of California's coordinated efforts through legislation, prioritization of 10 covered populations, how SDEP was informed by a multi-pronged process, and scope of engagement.

Agenda Item 3 – Framework of the SDEP
Deputy Director Scott Adams shared an overview of the components of the State Digital Equity Plan. The State Digital Equity Plan consists of an Executive Summary, Introduction and Vision for Digital Equity, Current State of Broadband and Digital Equity, Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement, Implementation Strategies and Key Activities, Conclusion, and Appendices. For each section, he spoke to why the section is important, key content, and highlights.

Agenda Item 4 – Where to Find the SDEP and How to Comment
Engagement and Operations Manager Anh Nguyen shared images of the State Digital Equity Plan Landing Page and Public Comment Form online. She explained how to find the draft SDEP and submit a public comment as a resident or organization. Links and QR codes to the websites were shared in the presentation and in the chat. Ms. Nguyen then conducted a live demonstration on how to navigate the SDEP website and how to submit a public comment. She shared how the California Department of Technology developed an HTML version of the draft SDEP to be available in over 100 languages and compatible with assistive technology.

Agenda Item 5 – Partner Outreach Toolkit
Deputy Director Monica Hernandez thanked everyone for their work and asked attendees to help spread the word locally throughout the public comment period. She described how the toolkit contains social media graphics and a template newsletter to share. She highlighted that the toolkit is available in the following 7 languages: Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, Korean, Vietnamese, and English.

Agenda Item 6 – What's Next
Deputy Director Scott Adams provided a brief explanation of the timeline and next steps of the State Digital Equity Plan. The public comment period began on December 12, 2023 and will end on January 25, 2024.

Agenda Item 7 – Q&A and Closing
Questions were asked by Rebecca Kauma, Evy Posamentier, Philip Neufeld, Kawena deOcampo. Questions were also asked on the Zoom Q&A box and Shawn Daugherty verbalized questions. Deputy Director Scott Adams responded accordingly. He thanked webinar attendees for their continued partnership and concluded the webinar at 12:10 p.m.

Transcript

Good morning, everyone. I am Laura Sasaki. I'm the Broadband Initiatives Manager here at the California Department of Technology and the Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy. I'd like to welcome you this morning to the California State Digital Equity Plan and Public Comment Informational Webinar. This will be recorded. It will be available on the Broadband for All website following presentation, and you'll be able to view it there. I'd like to go into a few housekeeping items before we get started this morning. For the best, viewing experience for deaf and hard of hearing, please select the side-by-side speaker mode that will enable you to see the ASL interpreters. We also have closed captioning available that is, at the bottom of your screen. Just choose the closed captioning and it will subtitle, the audio for you. At the end of the presentation today there will be Q&A. And so, as we are going through the presentation. If you can use the Q&A function at the bottom of your screen to add questions for the presenters and panelists, we will address those at the very end the order that we will be going in when we do address, that is, individuals who raise their hand, please use the raise hand function. It has moved from where we have it on the screen. Currently, it is to the right of the reactions button. So you can use that raise hand feature. When you want to ask a question, when we are in the Q&A period. So we will go through individuals who've raised their hand, then we will go through the Q&A that's been submitted throughout the presentation, and then we'll also have the opportunity for those of you who may have dialed in to ask questions or raise your hand via phone. So, I now have the pleasure of introducing the State Chief Information Officer and Director, Liana Bailey-Crimmins of the California Department of Technology to share a brief welcome and review our agenda.

Thank you, Laura, and good morning. Welcome everyone to the statewide digital equity plan, informational webinar. As I was nicely introduced by Laura, I am Liana Bailey-Crimmins, The Director of the Department of Technology and today we are honored to share with you and unveil the Digital Equity Plan, and it is a important part of what the administration the governor, the legislature has been a prioritizing when it comes to Broadband for All. Over this past year, there have been over 50,000 participants from a California resident, and for local community leaders that have come together to make sure that we are hearing everyone across this great state of ours, of the potential barriers that are preventing us from participating and having that affordable equitable access to internet which all of us rely on in our daily lives. We have heard you and the California plans core objective was to ensure that we were identifying and making sure that we're also identifying those barriers that are looking at, what does it take when it comes to connections across the State, making sure that we're looking at, is there high speed availability in your area or not, looking at lack of potential access to devices and also digital literacy training. We know that it's important

to have connectivity and it be affordable, but it's also just as important to make sure that you have the training to access the digital government services and commercial services that are available to all of you. From when we look at those barriers, when we were looking at the data, it was very clear that it does not. Those barriers do not treat us all necessarily equally when we look at the densest part of our urban areas and isolated areas of rural communities. What we have found is that regrettably lower income communities are the greatest of need and we need to make sure, as we are looking at this plan as it's going through its review process. Hopefully, you will be providing comments. And as we finalize it to work with the Federal Government, how we potentially can get some grants and dollars to help us address this inequity that we need to address in our State. I am pleased that 2.8 million Californians have signed up for the affordable connectivity program that qualify, but there are many others that qualify for this discount as well. So I encourage you. If you don't know about that program, you can get more information from our website, and we can help with you and getting you close to a digital navigator to help you find those resources that you need. We want to make sure that as most is that we want to also show a video that will address our partner outreach, which will be addressed in our announcement here soon. So if we're at an okay point, can we go ahead and tee up the video?

Video plays.

Thank you so much. And, as you can see, one of the things we wanted to make sure is that this plan is as we talk about, we walk the walk, we talk the talk. And so this plan is available in over 100 languages. It can be translated, and we work with Department of General Services, Gov Ops agency and a Department of Rehabilitation to make sure it was remediated, so that again, because California is so great and it's so diverse, we wanted to make sure you have that opportunity to provide your comment. The pandemic we went through and it, you know, it affected a lot of our lives. It also pointed out the vast divide that we have when it comes to the digital divide. And one of the things that we want to make sure is we all understand as we go through and look at the plan and prepare for the vision of the future, there is no equity without digital equity in the 21st century. We all rely on technology, if it be, you know, ordering food, jobs from a remote perspective telework telehealth, And just really accessing the services that most of us require on our day to day lives. So with that, I hope you enjoy today's presentation, please. This is for you, so ask questions. We want to make sure that you have that opportunity to interact with us and figure out ways that you can continue to provide your comment. Because this is a multi stage. We heard you. We're going to hear you again through your comment process. And obviously we want the final product to be representative of this great state. So with that, I'd like to introduce Scott Adams. He's the Deputy Director of the Office and Broadband and Digital Literacy, and he and his team have been pivotal in working with all of you, CPUC, and many other CBOs, the community based organizations out there that have made sure that we were representing all of their communities. So, Scott, if you'd like to take it away.

Thank you, Director Bailey-Crimmins, welcome to everyone. You know, just super excited that we can be here for this key milestone to present to you the draft Digital Equity Plan and you know, usher and provide information and instructions on how to

provide public comment, which is really the next step in soliciting input, from partners, stakeholders, and residents across the State to make sure that we've got this all right. I am Scott Adams. I'm the Deputy Director of the Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy at the California Department of Technology. And really, what I'm going to do is kind of briefly walk through how we got here. Next slide, please. So for those of you who have been working in this space for in some cases many decades, and have been partners with many of the State agencies over the last several years, and particularly the last year in the digital equity and beat planning processes wanted to kind of tee up that obviously Broadband for All is the State's overarching program to close the digital divide and foster digital equity throughout the State, and really Broadband for All is predicated on the fact that access to infrastructure and service, affordability and adoption are all critical components to achieve digital equity in our state. Next slide real quick, I don't think this slide is going to be new to many of you. But we wanted to underscore the evolution of the State coordinated efforts to close the digital divide, which really began with the formation of the multi-agency Broadband Council in 2010 and it includes the work of the Council, member agencies and other State partners. It was further shaped by the Governor's Broadband Executive Order in 2020 further aligned by the Broadband for All Action Plan that was developed as a direct result of the executive order. And then really, you know, further shaped and informed by the historic structure, framework and funding that was set aside in Senate Bill 156, which developed that you know the State Middle Mile Broadband Initiative on one side, and further allocated funding to the Public Utilities Commission to add to their suite of last mile infrastructure programs that include infrastructure grants and other broadband adoption account efforts. You can see really in 2021, with the passage of the Federal Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act, there were 6 key federal programs that were formed that have really been leveraged to further shape Broadband for All. We definitely want to call out Assembly Bill 2750 here at the state level that directed the Department of Technology to work in consultation with the California Broadband Council, the Public Utilities Commission and members of the public to develop a State Digital Equity Plan. Next slide, please. So when we talk about the Digital Equity Plan as we've done over the last year, we want to make sure that we center that. This plan, and the instructions in the planning grant that funded it direct states to prioritize investments for 8 covered populations, which are the populations that are featured here in the darker blue which are individuals living in covered household aging individuals, incarcerated or justice involved individuals, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals with language barriers, members of racial and ethnic minority groups, and those who primarily reside in rural areas. And, as many of you know, given that the Digital Equity Plan and BEAD planning process, we're closely aligned that our joint data gathering efforts also included identifying barriers for you know, women and those who identify as female and the LGBTQI plus community. So again, that is that these populations are the main focus because they're most impacted by the digital divide. Next slide, please. We wanted to also stress and reiterate that many of you know, being participants and partners and stakeholders in the planning process. Over the last year that we developed a multi-prong cost cross-cutting process to enable engagement and to meet people where they were. So we developed in a, you know,

a Statewide Planning Group that really expanded the California Broadband Council to 22 statewide entities with a connection to providing services to the covered populations, or that had subject matter expertise. You know, on the outcomes that we were seeking to empower, we developed the 6 Outcome Area Working Groups and brought in subject matter experts and residents to provide feedback at those. We had numerous digital equity surveys to assist in the data gathering efforts. And then as we saw in the video and as the Director mentioned, we hosted 20 in-person, regional planning workshops in every economic region throughout the State. And then, our efforts were further informed by other forms of public engagement which included individual meetings, consultations, listing sessions and presentations that were kind of outside of, you know, the state's formal planning process. Next slide, please. Now, in terms of the scope of engagement you hear that number about 50,000 inputs into the process, this kind of further quantifies where you know, we got that number from, you'll see that we had the Broadband for All summit. They really kicked off this effort in October of you know 2022. We had the participants at the 4 quarterly Statewide Planning Group meetings, the participants at the 24 Outcome Area Working Group meetings. There were 466 respondents to the DEEM tool. The folks who responded to the statewide telephone call we did in con or survey that we did really, in partnership with the California Emerging Technology Fund and USC, thanks to your partnership, we had over 43 responses to the online and mobile, friendly survey in every county throughout the state, which really allowed us to get additional information. And then there were the planning workshops and the meeting engagement, so California is a big state in geography and population. And this just demonstrates where and how we got inputs that help shape this draft Digital Equity Plan. Next slide, please. And so we want to pivot now and share with you a little bit about how the framework of the Digital Equity Plan, how it's shaped, and what to be looking for and where to kind of focus the public comments. Because Director Bailey-Crimmins said, you know we have been very thoughtful and mindful to take the feedback and input and the lived experience of both the, you know, multiple levels of organizations throughout the state of residence. We want to make sure that we heard you but we also want to use your collective wisdom and subject matter expertise to perhaps share with us where the Plan could be further in shape before it becomes final. So next slide, please. So real quick you'll find, when you read the draft Plan, if you haven't already, that it is broken down into 7 different sections. There's an executive summary, which is the really condenses the plan for those folks who really want to absorb the contents. It's a fairly long plan to meet the requirements of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. There is a section that is really an introduction and outlines a shared vision for digital equity. There is a section on the current state of broadband and digital equity in California section that outlines collaboration and stakeholder engagement. There's a section on implementation strategies and key activities on how we will achieve digital equity. There is a conclusion. And then there is an opinion section you know, to provide reference, you know, on the inputs that inform the Plan and you'll see later. There's also pages on the Broadband for All portal that provide high level summaries of the different inputs that help shape the draft Plan. Next slide, please. And so the things that we wanted to draw to your attention that in the executive summary and we tried to break

these slides down to like. Why is it important, what's the key content to look for, and what are the highlights? And so the executive summary is really intended to provide an accessible summary of the entire Plan, including the structure and the key findings. The key content that you should be looking for in checking is that it summarizes objectives of the Plan barriers to digital equity and key strategies. To achieve collective goals, and some of the highlights are how these goals align with 3 goals of Broadband for All, and corresponding objectives. It summarizes, needs and barriers faced by covered populations in California that we heard from the planning process and describes both the assets that we learned about through the digital equity business and the gaps. And then, lastly, it outlines key strategies and implementation activities. Next slide, please. So when we go to Section 2, that really starts the long form of the Digital Equity Plan. And this will include an introduction and a vision for digital equity. It's really important, because this is the shared vision and goals that all of us will need to work towards to achieve digital equity in the State. The key content here is to introduce a collective vision, a draft collective vision that was shaped by the inputs received through the process for digital equity and it also sets objectives and strategies to achieve those goals. A highlight we wanted to draw for you is that in the draft land division for digital equity that aligns with the Broadband for All goals are a California in which all residents have access to high performance, broadband, affordable services and devices, and the training and the support necessary to enable digital inclusion for economic and other social benefits. Next slide, please. And so the next section is on the current state of broadband and digital equity. Here you will see in more detail. It sets the baselines from which progress on the Plan will be measured, or the proposed and draft baselines, the key content are really to identify the needs and barriers for California, you know, primarily covered populations and the key resources that are necessary to ensure digital equity. The highlights here are throughout the process. We have heard that there are universal or common barriers experienced by most of those folks, including covered populations impacted by the digital divide. You know, and those are largely around access, affordability and adoption but then also the thing to be looking for here are the specific barriers for covered populations, that all of the planning process and the input from you all, help shape and inform. Next slide, please. So the fourth section is collaboration and stakeholder and engagement. It really outlines the inclusive and participatory planning process that inform the plan it describes. In further detail, outreach approaches and engagement methods and really, highlights the planning process that you know, all are, most of you participated in and help get us to where we are. Here. The next section, please. So implementation strategies and key activities really, talks about what is the strategy to achieve the shared vision and goals? Outlining our priorities, particularly in relation to the outcome areas that this plan is seeking to empower in a digitally equitable world. So as Director Bailey-Crimmins said in education and health access and economic and workforce development, access to essential services and civic participation, tribal collaboration, etc. the real highlights here are really summarizing these into 7 key activities and how they'll work to meet the objectives of the Plan, how they'll address the gaps that have been identified, and how they will support and empower populations. Next slide, please. So you'll also see that there is a conclusion and an appendix. These really just will reemphasize how we're all proposing

to work together to close the digital divide, and how we propose. We all continue to collectively work together to make progress towards these goals. So there's a conclusion, and an appendix a concluding statement, and then, as I mentioned before, the appendix has supporting information and charts. There's sections a through y but, as I mentioned before, and you'll see here on the on the Broadband for All portal, there's even more information that you can reference to help inform public comment for the State next line. I believe that concludes my portion going to hand it over to Anh when to provide information on where to find the Digital Equity Plan and how to provide public comment. Anh.

Thank you, Scott. Morning everyone. My name is Anh Nguyen. I'm the Engagement and Operations Manager of the Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy here at CDT. In the next few slides, I'll go over where you can find our draft State Digital Equity Plan, and where the forms are, as well as a few other pages that associate with the draft Plan and a live demonstration of all that as well. So next slide, please, So here's 2 screenshots of our SDEP landing page, where you will find an overview of our draw a step and in the thumbnail, you actually will be able to read and print the draft SDEP as a pdf. You'll see here on the read, read draft Plan that will open to the draft State Digital Equity Plan page, or you find alternative access to add them to read and review the Plan itself in the various sections that Scott mentioned just now. Please note that you can go on the top right corner of your browser to select languages of your choice, to review the Plan, as well as all of our Broadband for All portal pages and that the HTML version is compatible with assistive technology as well. And so next slide, please. In the public comment form, which is the third link on the left navigation bar, you find the form itself, and here we'll have it for a QR code. If you want to use your mobile device to scan it at this time, a member of our team will also drop in the chat, and also the link is right here on the screen as well. And so in the next few slides, a quick review, and I'll make sure to also go into detail on a live demonstration. But wanting you to have a still image of how our page looked like before we get there on the public comment form or resident. If you're commenting as a resident, and is shown here with the red asterisk, meaning that's a required section. Before you submit a comment, want to note that you can comment on more than one section of the draft SDEP and also, if needed, you can use voice-to-text comment to verbalize your comment, and the form will capture that in writing before you submit and please select organization if you are commenting on behalf of an organization, the fields change slightly, but not too much. And so you can find that on our page next slide, please and a quick reference to Deputy Director Scott Adams, below. Our landing page are various depository pages of different planning processes, work streams. We'll get on there to show you where you can find these. But state planning group outcome area working groups, regional planning workshops will lead you to our past events, pages where you can find recording PowerPoint and summaries as well as videos, photos of all of all that we took part in together, and the 3 links to the surveys, the California Statewide Digital Equity Telephone Survey, the California Digital Equity Public Online Survey, as well as the digital ecosystem mapping tool, also known as DEEM. There are reports as well as quick to page report for your high level key finding. So without further ado, let's go onto the website and take a look, You know out there we go. Just take a bit. Thanks, Ana. And so, as I mentioned before, this is our landing page that left Navigation Bar will get you to where I mentioned just now. So feel free to explore that and let's scroll down just a little bit on the screen. Just so folks

can see where the public comment form button is as well as when available, the submitted public comments will be available for you to read others books, comments as well and want to highlight that in addition to seeking your comments on the draft step. We have also reactivated reopen the DEEM tool for folks to input you know, by your organization. And you will, would like to be added to the previous data inventory So thanks, Ana, let's take a look at the form itself. Cool. Alright, so as we screenshot earlier. This is the draft, the digital equity apply and public comment form. Please know and we have this on many places that the public comment period will remain open until January 25, 2024 and at that time will be closed. So the form is pretty live and reactive. So you know, putting the first name, last name, and let's show folks how, if you select a different section, it will populate another comment section for you to write in. So choose, would you like to comment on a different section? Yes. And then let's choose. Yeah, inclusion or 5 perfect. And so you can comment up to7 sections, and the eighth one is any additional comments not related to any of the prior sections. Thank you for the demo, demo. And let's show folks how to use the translation tool. So up top, you see, select language drop-down. And I'm going to use Spanish as one where we translate this page to right there you were right there, all good perfect, So once you click on your language the page will be translated, and as you navigate between pages, it will stay in that language until you click on show original where that's when it revert back to English. Alright so that wraps up my needy demonstration, of course, will be available for more questions. If you need another demo and we'll record a portion of this record. Live demonstration as well on the past event pages. So if you ever need to reference it. oh, I see Scott raising his hand.

 Yeah, I just wanted to make sure that where we're where we are right now in the form that we make it clear to folks that the public comment form is intuitive. So there's a form for residents to provide public comments. And then if individuals are commenting on behalf of an organization or a group of organizations that we recommend and prefer that you fill out the organizational public comment for you. Thank you. Thank you for clarifying that for folks and let's show them the submitted public comment page on a real quick, perfect. So this you had didn't see in the PowerPoint earlier, but as comments are being submitted, not immediately, but within time period, we'll make sure the comments are reviewed and posted on here as it is submitted. You can use different filters to find the sections that's being commented on and then we can on default. It's sort by newest that you can revert that, and then of your submitted comment is by a resident. You can also filter through that as well.

 Thank you so much. Now, without further ado, I would like to hand the mic over to Monica Hernandez, who is our Deputy Director of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement for CDT. Okay.

Buenos dias everyone. Good morning. Thank you for joining us, I'm pleased to speak with you briefly today. First, I want to thank all of you, and thank the team for the work to get here. You are all remarkable, and have accomplished so much. In addition to providing your own comments on the draft Statewide Digital Equity Plan, we hope that we can count on you to help spread the word locally throughout the public comment period. In the announcement we sent on Tuesday, we included a link to a partner toolkit and I believe we're also going to put a QR code on the screen, so you can get

to that toolkit easily. In the toolkit, you can find social media graphics and copy a template newsletter to share with your community. This is really designed to be accessible, and the materials are available in 7 languages-Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, Korean, Vietnamese, and English. Your ongoing participation and support and elevating community voice is greatly appreciated and greatly needed. I hope we can count on you again to spread the word throughout the public comment period, and I told you, I would be brief. So with that, I'm going to turn it back to Scott Adams. Thank you again.

Thank you, Monica. So real briefly want to open it up to questions so we can start you know, having the interactive section here briefly wanted to share what's next. If we could go to the next slide, please. So to high level where we are today is in the public comment period, which began on December 12th and will end on January 25th. The next step after that will be that the Department of Technology will integrate public comments, those into the final draft, Digital or the final Digital Equity Plan. We will submit it to the NTIA for a 45-day curing process. We will publish the Digital Equity Plan sometime around the end of March of 2024, and then I think, for the folks who have been involved in the process, this is a multi-step process. Once the plan is finished, once it's approved by the NTIA, there will be a Notice of Funding Opportunity where the State can apply for its allocation of very specific and dedicated digital equity grant funding that will fund the things called out in the Plan, like broadband adoption efforts, digital literacy training, digital navigation, device distribution, economic and workforce development partnerships for training. That will come out sometime in the second quarter of 2024, and then following on the heels of that will be the Digital Equity, Capacity Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity. Want to note that that pool of funding will not be State managed. It will be a direct competitive grant program that entities in California will be able to apply directly to the NTIA for. And so at a high level, those are the next steps and we can go to the next section.

Great. So we're going to take some time to answer some questions from the from the community. Here, as Laura mentioned earlier, we will first address questions of individuals who raise their hand. And I will announce your name, and we will pull you off of mute as well as allow you to come on camera, if you so choose. I was going to ask a question, but I see we have hands some hands raised already. So Rebecca Kauma from LA County we'll unmute your mic and if you'd like to ask the question, you are, you are live.

Alright, awesome. Thank you so much, and I will not be a camera today but I'm so happy to be here. And I just want to first and foremost, say congratulations to the entire team here on the Plan. I've already been scrolling through it, and it looks really really great. And I appreciate all of the intentionality that you guys put into it and also making sure that this process is very easy for us to be able to submit comments. So a couple of the questions that I have. So I, as you guys already know, I'm Rebecca Kauma County of Los Angeles, Director of Digital Equity. So I am working closely with a variety of different stakeholders within the Los Angeles County region to provide collective public comment, especially as it pertains to collaboration on grant applications. So I know you guys touched upon this a little bit so based on when I'm looking at the public comment feature, it looks like there's an opportunity for us to add, like one primary organization's

information. So if I wanted to include other organizations, that are represented as part of the public comment, would I just include their organizations name at the bottom as part of the summary of public comment?

Yeah, thank you. And, Rebecca, it's great to see you. And just want to thank you so much for your leadership and participation in this process to get to where we are. So if I think I heard you correctly, that you know, given the size of LA County that you are going to potentially pull together comments on the Plan or specific sections that will be sort of aligned from different stakeholder groups that you work with, and wanted to know where in the form you would include the other entities? Is that correct?

Yes, that's correct.

Yeah. I would suggest filling out the organizational form, and then in the body of the section that you supply or that you provide comment that you say you know on behalf of multiple entities. And then, at the bottom of that comment, list out the entities that, you know, are providing those comments. One thing that I would say, if you have any problems. If anyone has problems with the public comment form we, you know, are happy to have you contact us, and we'll make sure that we're capturing joint comments in the right way if it if it doesn't work as I just described.

Okay, thank you so much for that. And then in terms of what can be changed. So, for example, as part of our engagement, we'll be primarily focusing on the key activities for implementation, because obviously, that is what would be utilized to be able to implement key aspects of the Capacity Grant program. So my other follow-up question to you, obviously, you guys included the process that you guys did for engagement, and there's certain things that are statutory requirements that can't be changed. So, for example, the covered populations can't be changed. We've been advised that if we wanted to uplift other sub populations to ensure that they align with a main cover population. So with that being said, is there any way for us to know what is included in the Plan that can't be changed? That way, we don't waste time commenting on it.

You know, that's a really great question, Rebecca and really defer to your expertise. And again, we're happy to have an offline conversation about this. My recommendation would be and that I really appreciate the acknowledgement that there, there are some statutory requirements associated with, you know the objectives that we have to achieve to receive the federal funding. But I would recommend making suggestions in the appropriate comments and the additions that you and various stakeholders would like to see made. We will consider all public comments and all recommendations. And when we you know, provide the final draft, one of the requirements is that we you know, and Shawn Daugherty from Broadband Equity Partnership. I think I need your help on this. We're required to actually put like a log of the public comments we receive, those we integrated into the plan and to identify, you know, what sections and pages we made those changes.

Okay, awesome. Thank you. And one final question, I don't want to take up too much time, but in terms of public comment in the implementation and activities section, so when we're making public comment for the Capacity Grant Program in itself, would it

be best to provide public comment in that particular section? So let's say, we had recommendations on once you guys stand up your actual program like what that would look like, what implementation would look like, evaluation, community storytelling would go in that particular area of the public comment document?

Yeah, I think that's the right place for it Rebecca. And thank you again for elevating this question for everybody else. One of the potential challenges of the sequencing. We want as many of these recommendations and comments as possible. One challenging factor is that we're developing the Plan and don't really know until the Notice of Funding Opportunity comes out afterward the very specific kind of rules and requirements and guardrails that are placed on that Capacity Grant funding but it definitely allows the State to get a head start. We heard throughout the process that in an ideal world, given that most of the digital equity work occurs at the regional and local and even neighborhood level, and that the preference would be to have you know, a flexible grant program that would allow for existing and new entities to easily navigate the process to do that work. Just know that we're to some extent going to be bound by restrictions on guidelines which we have not yet seen.

Okay, got it. Thank you so much. I appreciate your clarity.

Thank you.

Thanks, Rebecca. And next up we have Evy. You are I believe you just muted yourself again but if now you are unmuted, there you go.

Hi! This is just going back to some very basic question when you were scrolling through part of the slide deck there it looked like a barrier to access has actually been raised. The eligibility is even it looks like it's even more challenging lower to a 150% of the FPL rather than the already the barrier to us Bay Area and LA folk from 200% lowered down to the barrier of a 150%. Am I wrong? Did I not see that?

Evy, thank you for the question. And you did on the covered population slide that the Digital Equity Act defined the covered populations, and that the Digital Equity Planning Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity directed States to identify barriers for…

It raised the barrier. It raised the barrier. When did that happen? From 200% to 150%, when did that raise that barrier go up further? At what time did that happen?

It is so covered populations is defined by the Digital Equity Act and in the NTIA Notice of Funding Opportunity, are defined as individuals living in residences at or below 150% of the Federal poverty level. And so I think the way that I could answer this question is that while we are you know have to follow the guidelines that you know the Federal Government is given us in terms of following the definitions. what we did here throughout the signing process is that in in high-cost States and high-cost urban areas in California that for certain programs like the Affordable Connectivity Program, and others that that threshold is not higher. So you know, there is a place, a section on the Plan where we acknowledge that but I do want to make it clear that we have not changed that definition. That is the consistent definition that we've used and work

towards throughout the process, because those were the guidelines and the planning gram we use to develop the plan.

Wow, it looked, I had never heard that 150% figure. I only heard 200%. Wow, so that was originally what came down, or did that change since our regional meeting in the Bay Area? I guess it was in 2022, right?

Yeah, it didn't change.

I think we met there. We talked there.

Yeah. And Evy, it didn't change. I didn't mean to cut you off there.

I, you know would encourage that that you know if we did not you know, clearly identify that issue, that you're raising that that be a public comment that you submit to us for consideration if we didn't go, if we didn't acknowledge it clearly enough.
So we were talking Scott about actually in higher cost of living areas that it would be lower to, even, you know more than less than 200%. Like in San Francisco, maybe 300. You know something a little bit more, because 200% in the Bay Area or LA is just ridiculous. It's you know well beyond lower than the Federal poverty guideline. Why not? Because San Francisco has its own poverty guidelines so I wish we could follow those.

Yes, I we acknowledge that.

Great. So thank you Evy for your question. Philip Neufeld, we're going to unmute your line and allow you to access.

Hi, Scott, thank you for everything that you and the team have done to put together the Digital Equity Plan. I was in Washington, DC last week talking to some leadership with NTIA and they said, the most one of the most important pieces and I'm most concerned about is, how will the challenge process be played out at the State level to improve the counting of those who are unserved and underserved? And, as you know, Scott in our market here, with Fresno Coalition for Digital Inclusion. We've got over 14 million security test measurements but so far I haven't been acknowledged in the CPUC maps, and it was a problem with the SB 156 Federal funded account last mile data. It's an orders of magnitude later than what's specified in CPUC. In our county, 4% is what CPUC says the likely reality based on local source of data somewhere around 37 to 50%. So just want to make sure, Scott, that one their support for anchor institutions and community-based organizations that have this sort of data. You know, Ready.net and others can help us do challenges. And 2, that challenge process doesn't require indicating what plan tier someone's on. We know that the minimum plans are, for example, from Comcast 50 Meg. Let's just make the assumption that their basic plan is but should be performing and use that data. But that's really important. To make sure we achieve the State's goals of Broadband for All. That we actually count where the unserved are and focus in that direction. So we'll be sending comments out, as many others will. But I just want to make sure that we hit that Mark, Scott so you and all, and all the team has done this great work that we truly do use this moment in history to make a difference from an equity standpoint. Thank you.

Yeah, thank you for the comment, Phillip, and thank you for your leadership and participation throughout the process. It was I think at one of the early education Outcome Area Working Groups that you provided an outstanding presentation to the folks about the unique efforts that you have been leading down in the Central Valley and in Fresno. So want to let you know that that we hear you, and you'll see that in the Plan itself, it acknowledges that while there's been significant improvement and broadband mapping data, both the State and Federal level. That I think, as we discussed at the regional workshop, there is an acknowledgement and a commitment to evolving the state, mapping and data gathering so that it reflects the more better reflects the lived experiences of you know our residents so appreciate you being a champion for that.

Thank you.

Thank you, Philip. Next speaker will be Kawena DeOcampo, and just a reminder for anybody on the call. If you'd like to ask a question to raise your hand, and we'll have you address live and Kawena, it looks like the line is open.

Hi! Thank you. Kawena is my coworker and shared this link generously. My name is Crystal Rawls. Hi, good to see you again, Scott, and I am at the Workforce Integration Network at Cal State University, Dominguez Hills. My question is, I've already started. It's more of a comment but also I wanted you to be aware I've already started looking at the Plan, and of course the first thing I did was check the readability index. So given this 45-day period over the holiday point/time right it would seem that if we really want people to be able to digest this information, we would have made it a little more readable. So right now, it's basic index is at 15, which means you need a college degree to read it. And we shared this information back as we assess some information while we were doing the State. yeah, listening, the state or the regional listening. So I'd like to know how does CDT intend to really engage community partners when we're looking at really short periods of time to digest a lot of information at a really complex reading level?

Yeah, and thank you very much, for it's good to see again and thanks for raising that. As you mentioned, this is the digital divide is a persistent and complex issue. It's quite complicated and the challenge is, how do we, you know, communicate and put together the information in a way that communicates from a policy and implementation standpoint, what needs to be done, but is also a accessible to those who we are seeking to work with, to, you know, empower individuals and communities? And so we've endeavored to make the current draft as accessible as possible through language and other technologies. And we would appreciate any additional suggestions how, through the public comment process, we could make the final document more ex even more accessible. And so whether that's through public comment, or you'd like to. You know. You know. reach out to our office and provide some, you know, additional week. We welcome any input you have on that.

Thank you. And as, as always, I appreciate all of the work that you folks do, and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Thank you so much. And likewise it's a it's a 2 way street there where we acknowledge how much time and you know, subject matter experts that the ecosystem has been so generous and bringing to the process.

Thank you, Crystal. I see no other hands raised so answering some questions from the chat I think that are very relevant for people here. They might have Scott. One question is, it looks like the comment page will not accept attachments. If you want to address that in a second one that goes along with that, is there a limitation on the amount of text that can go into those text boxes?

Yeah. so I think 2 things on the attachments. Yes, there's not an attachment function and so we would prefer and recommend that folks provide their comments in the comment box. We anticipate, given the size and scale of the engagement process, and we would hope that, given that interest and participation in the process, that we'll get as many public comments as possible so definitely would prefer that that comment are put in the text box. And if there's references, perhaps put a link to where you would like to direct us. One of the challenges that we have is given that state accessibility you know, requirements that are already in place, it's quite a bit of a challenge to manage and remediate and post those, and make those documents accessible, and any attachments that would be, sent in a reasonable manner of time, and then on the on the issue of the character limitation. There is no word limit on or character limit on those text boxes.

Great and acknowledging we have about 1 min left. I think this one last question would be good is how will people know if my comment has been considered? Or I'm sorry, how will I know if my comment has been received?

Yeah, got it. So Shawn or Anh, I'd love you to kind of explain how that process is going to work.

Sure. As someone submits a comment it, you'll actually on the screen, it'll pop up and say, thank you for submitting your comment. And then you will get an email acknowledging it and it'll actually have the text of what you've submitted, so you'll have an instantaneous acknowledgement on the screen as well as an email will be received that says, thank you for your comment obviously, and then we'll include the text of what was submitted in that application.

And it looks like we're right at time, Scott so we are at 12 noon.

So, Shawn, I appreciate that. I think if folks are willing to go over, there are a couple of questions that I'm not sure we answered in the Q&A. And to the extent possible, would like to make sure we answer as many questions as possible before we close.

Sure.

And okay. Great.

Great. Alright so I think there's a couple questions in here about ensuring access to students in rural or isolated regions where the digital divide is the greatest. What if entities in this area do not apply on behalf of those individuals? And that was submitted by Adele McClain. I'm sorry, McClain.

Got it. We have, I think we very much appreciate the process, and do want to say that. That you know the they could. The folks that were mentioned in that question I believe, are inclusive of the covered populations that the Plan and you know we'll focus on overcoming barriers for. I would welcome, we would welcome a public comment, perhaps, in the implementation phase about how we could go further. I think it's going to be incumbent upon the State to make sure that those entities that you suggest are aware. So if you don't see in our implementation phase enough detail about how we're going to outreach and make sure those folks are aware of the eventual Capacity Grant and the program that we develop would appreciate your comments.

Wonderful. And another comment is around, is there a mechanism in place for stakeholders in the California Digital Equity Plan and the Raise the Bar initiative? They are initiatives of the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Commerce. Is there a way for stakeholders to collaborate?

Well, certainly, this Plan acknowledges that the collaboration is required. I think given that we're all residents of the State, you know it's you know. I think we can all acknowledge that, given the size of our geography and population and the level of need that you know, a variety of sources of funding and partnership are going to be needed, and that in response to the guidance that the NTIA's given us to develop the Plan. That really identifies existing efforts, and how we leverage those and to work with other entities and other sources of funding, including participation of you know the private sector and philanthropy. Most certainly, and I think if you know, would welcome a public comment that suggests how we can, you know, potentially adjust our Plan if we haven't done that and made it clear in its current draft.

Great and another comment that came in from Andrew Broderick. How does the State plan for capacity building, funding, or the capacity funding? How does it what is the plan for reaching local communities? Which entities will be eligible to receive funding? And what criteria will the State use to prioritize how that funding is allocated?

Yeah, really appreciate the question. And hello and thank you, Andrew, for all of the wonderful subject matter expertise and participation that you folks brought to the Outcome Area Working Groups and the regional planning groups and that you shared with us. And so I had mentioned earlier in the in the presentation that the that the specificity on the requirements that we will have to follow for the Capacity Grant Program that the State will develop will be included in the Notice of Funding Opportunity that comes out for the block set of funding, you know, for Capacity Grants to the State. So there's a certain lack of clarity around that right now. But suffice to say that we have heard from the community, as I'd mentioned earlier that we would like, you know, we would hope that the NTIA provides flexibility for you know a grant program to be developed that could be you know as uncumbersome or onerous as existing you know, programs that would allow for new entities to particularly those at

the very local level where the work needs to be most to be done. And so I think you know, Rebecca might have asked that question earlier, Andrew, we would love you know, any suggestions from the folks in San Francisco on how we might you know what we might consider.

Great and another question that came in from Crystal earlier in the chat is, will the DEEM tool provide the names of organizations, programs, services, funding and other resources in a heat map visual?

Yeah. So a lot of pieces there Crystal. So that the first thing that clarifies is that the digital equity ecosystem mapping tool itself was developed for us to gather data from organizations and support the further development of a state asset inventory of you know, organizations, funding programs, tools and resources that could be leveraged to support. This, this, the implementation of the Digital Equity Plan so wanted to clarify. You know, one piece that we've opened the DEEM tool to further allow folks who might not have been able to complete that, you know, during the formal process, to provide information so that that it can be included in the final draft Plan. I believe the second part of that question was how are we going to take the information we gathered through the DEEM tool and make it accessible to folks at the regional county, even local level? We are looking through you know how we can visualize that, and I think you know, would like to get your you know public comment on, you know, suggestions on how we can make that useful because we do intend or we do suggest in this draft that that we regularly update the asset inventory and that we leave the digital equity good system mapping tool open to continue to build that asset inventory. But it is a proposed aim of this Plan that then that information be shared with the public to help them easily, like, identify partners, to help them get connected and find training and digital navigation services, or other things.

Great, and I acknowledge that Rebecca has her hand raised again. So if we want to unmute Rebecca. Alright.

Alright, thank you. Yeah. One last question for me. So I've been meeting with a lot of different stakeholders here regionally and what I'm noticing is that there's a lot of different communities and different challenges and barriers sub regionally as well, so how in the weeds do you want us to provide our public comments? So if there's any recommendations that are included as part of the Plan, do you want us to clarify what community, city, we're referencing like, how much in the weeds do you really want us to localize our input? Does that make sense?

I think it does make sense Rebecca. Obviously, you know, the state, what the draft Statewide Digital Equity Plan is a plan for the entire State. And so you know, we've heard a lot of specific barriers. I think if there's important and unique barriers that are not included in the Plan that you know, are important in the Plan, I would say, be as specific if you and your partners feel you need to be, and we'll, you know, consider those.

Alright awesome. Thank you so much and have a good rest of the weekend.

Thank you, Rebecca. I really appreciate it.

Wonderful! And I believe that answers all of the questions that were posed in the chat, and I don't see any further hands raised. Alright, Scott, I believe that concludes our question and answer portion.

Excellent. Well, on behalf of the California Department of Technology, and the Broadband office we just are incredibly thankful and grateful for your continued partnership as we all work towards Broadband for All and for like, I said. We're very excited to achieve the milestone, and having a draft Plan out for you all to review and comment on. And we're I think, just looking forward to continue to tap your combined wisdom and expertise to kind of shape this final Plan so that it's one that we're all proud of, and we can all work towards and you know, leverage it to achieve why, we're all here. And that's to get Broadband for All into close the digital divide here in California so thank you very much.