State Digital Equity Plan & Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program
Stakeholder Briefing
August 26, 2024
2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Meeting Recap and Transcript

The State Digital Equity Plan (SDEP) and Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program Stakeholder Briefing met virtually on Monday, August 26, 2024 at 2:30 p.m. Engagement and Operations Manager Anh Nguyen welcomed attendees and instructed them to introduce themselves in the Zoom Chat box with their name, job title, and affiliated organization.

Housekeeping

Engagement and Operations Manager Anh Nguyen reviewed a few housekeeping items for attendees to participate in the conversation and have the best participation experience throughout the duration of the meeting. ASL Interpreters were spotlighted throughout the meeting.

Agenda

Ms. Anh Nguyen briefly provided an overview of the State Digital Equity Plan & Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program Stakeholder Briefing agenda for the day.

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome & Recap

Deputy Director Scott Adams of the California Department of Technology (CDT) Office of Broadband & Digital Literacy welcomed attendees. He provided a recap of past milestones in the SDEP implementation process, the draft Capacity Grant Program Structure that have been shared previously, and a high level overview of the NTIA Competitive Grant Program and key dates. Deputy Director Adams also shared CDT's recent stakeholder engagement efforts, including large group presentations, market research and listening sessions, as well as competitive grant coordinating meetings.

Discussion

No attendees came off of mute to ask questions nor did Mr. Przybyla raise any questions from the Q&A Box.

Agenda Item 2 – Insights from the Device Program Questionnaire

Ms. Shawn Daugherty, Director at Broadband Equity Partnership, provided an analysis of the feedback from the Device Program Questionnaire. She began by reporting a summary of responses from the Device Questionnaire. Ms. Daugherty also reported on the analysis of the following: ranking of most useful devices, unique device needs for covered populations, preferences for new and refurbished devices, as well as pricing and baseline software.

Discussion

Assistant Deputy Director Cole Przybyla moderated the Discussion sessions, starting with those with their hands raised on Zoom, and then those received via the Q&A and chat box. Presenters proceeded to address questions.

The following meeting attendees raised their hands and came off mute to ask questions:
- Ralph Ibarra, DiverseAmerica Network
- Rebecca Kauma, County of Los Angeles/Internal Services Department
- Stewart Bruce, Solano County

Agenda Item 3 – Capacity Sub-Grant Program Design

Principal Alex Banh from Broadband Equity Partnership shared details regarding the Capacity Sub-Grant Program Design, including the framework for defining success and the various funding sources in the digital equity funding context. Mr. Banh then explained the two funding tracks for the draft capacity sub-grant design: Track 1 for regional/local ecosystems and Track 2 for targeted statewide ecosystems. Alex Banh closed his presentation with highlighting Track 1 formula considerations.

Discussion

Assistant Deputy Director Cole Przybyla moderated the Discussion sessions, starting with those with their hands raised on Zoom, and then those received via the Q&A and chat box. Presenters proceeded to address questions.

The following meeting attendees raised their hands and came off mute to ask questions:
- Shirley Lam, Insure the Uninsured Project (ITUP)
- Rebecca Kauma, County of Los Angeles/ISD
- Wally Siembab, South Bay Cities Council of Governments

Agenda Item 4 – NTIA Competitive Grant

Ms. Gladys Palpallatoc, Federal Program Officer for California at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, shared an overview of the NTIA Digital Equity Competitive Grant.

Discussion

For the sake of time, Assistant Deputy Director Cole Przybyla combined the discussion sections for NTIA Digital Equity Competitive Grant and Timeline & Closing agenda items.

Agenda Item 6 – Timeline & Closing

Deputy Director Scott Adams reported the tentative timeline on the approximate important milestones for Capacity Grant Program. He also highlighted a few key dates for the anticipated capacity grant award from NTIA. Deputy Director Adams pointed out the range of dates that CDT intends to further stakeholder partnership and collaboration on grant program design and the related public comment process in the Fall. He also highlighted NTIA Native Entity Capacity Grant opening on September 25, 2024 and closing on February 7, 2025.

Discussion

Assistant Deputy Director Cole Przybyla moderated the Discussion sessions, starting with those with their hands raised on Zoom, and then those received via the Q&A and chat box. Presenters proceeded to address questions.

The following meeting attendees raised their hands and came off mute to ask questions:

- Patrick Messac, #OaklandUndivided

Deputy Director Scott Adams thanked attendees and presenters for joining the briefing meeting. The meeting adjourned at 4:11 p.m.

(The recording and presentation slides from the meeting will be posted on the Broadband for All portal.)

Transcript

Let's wait a minute for everyone to come in. Alright. Good afternoon. Welcome to the August 26th State Digital Equity Plan and Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program Stakeholder Briefing. On behalf of the State of California and the Department of Technology, we thank you for being here. We will begin the meeting shortly. Please use the chat box to share your job title, name, and affiliated organization as more folks are coming in. Before we begin, a few housekeeping items. Next slide, please. This meeting is being recorded. We will be posting the recording of this meeting, the presentation slides, minutes, and transcripts to the Broadband for All Portal. Presenters, please cue Amanda to advance your slides. Viewers, please select side by side, speaker mode for the best viewing experience when slides are shared, and visibility of the ASL interpreters. Closed captioning is available. Please select "CC closed caption" on your toolbar and select "show subtitle". The Q&A box is available throughout. Please note there is time allocated at the end of each agenda item for questions. Please use the Q&A box to type your questions related to that portion of the agenda while the presenter is presenting. While that's happening, we will temporarily turn off the chat while the presenters are speaking, so that no questions are lost in the chat. Chat will be available during the discussion portion. Additionally, at the end of each general portion, please use the raise hand icon on Zoom or star 9 if you're calling in by phone. Our team will elevate you and request that you come off mute or video. Next slide, please. We have a full agenda this afternoon, and we thank you for being here for it. We have an opportunity for discussion after each agenda item, we welcome you to turn on your camera and mic to participate during the discussion. In a moment, we will begin the welcome remarks and a recap from CDT's Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy Deputy Director Scott Adams. Next Shawn Daugherty, Director from Broadband Equity Partnership, will share insights from the recent device program questionnaire. Alex Banh, Principal from Broadband Equity Partnership, will discuss the Capacity Sub-Grant Program Design. Then, Gladys Palpallatoc, our Federal Program Officer, from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, also known as NTIA, will share information regarding the NTIA Competitive Grant program. Lastly, Deputy Director Scott Adams will briefly review a timeline of key milestones and close the meeting. As a reminder, at the end of each presentation, we will have time for a bi-directional conversation and discussion. Please feel free to turn on your mic and turn on your video at that time. First, we would like to introduce Deputy Director Scott Adams to provide a brief welcome and recap of the SDEP Implementation and Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program Design thus far. Deputy Director Adams.

Yeah, thank you very much, Anh, and good afternoon everybody. It's a pleasure and an honor to be back with you all to provide an update and, you know, a recap of how we're, you know, evolving or thinking on developing the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program. If you could, please advance to the next slide. So what we wanted to do is give a brief recap of the things that have occurred over the last several months. First, on March 28th, the Digital Equity Plan that the State of California ecosystem developed was approved by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. The very next day, on March 29th, the NTIA released the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant, which determined by formula and allocation for the State of California of $70.2 million dollars of funding that would help the State and various ecosystem partners implement the Digital Equity Plan. On May 23rd, we had the first of our summer series of Digital Equity Plan Implementation and Capacity Grant Program Design Stakeholder Briefings. On May 28th, we completed our administrative application for the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant, that began the May 29th through the present, the NTIA's review of our application for both curing and merit review. We're still in that process.

Hello, and good afternoon. It seems like we may have lost Deputy Director Adams. I am. Oh, I think, Scott, you are back if you want to continue.

Yeah. Can. Can you hear me?

Yes, now we can. You are back.

Okay, great apologies dealing with some technical difficulties on this end. So I think what I was saying is, we're currently in the merit and current review process with the NTIA on our application. We have not yet received funding for the State Capacity Grant Program. June 18th through July 2nd, we issued a Digital Equity Implementation and Capacity Grant Questionnaire to stakeholders and this was really focused on potential lead and sub-grantees. So it was organization-focused, not necessarily, you know, open to the broader public. But the focus of that was the help us increase our understanding of some of the needs and preferences of the ecosystem. On July 24th, the NTIA released another program that, I think, is of interest to all of us and that's their Competitive Grant Program for digital equity, which is separate of the State Capacity Grant something that entities can apply directly to the NTIA for, but it represents another opportunity for either organizations in California or national organizations who are to receive funding to help support activities. And, you know, efforts to support digital inclusion in the State that would align with the

State Digital Equity Plan. July 30th was the second of our stakeholder briefings. And then on August 14th, we issued a Device Program Questionnaire. So, that really brings us to today where we want to, you know, again connect and convene with you all seek, you know, input on where we're going and how we're framing this and ultimately move forward to the next step, so could you advance to the next slide, please? The one thing we wanted to do again is per the you know the way we've been talking about how we were gonna structure the overall capacity grant program to support implementation of the Digital Equity Plan. This is a slide that most people should be familiar with. Obviously the NTIA is the Federal Grant administrator and the granting entity. The Department of Technology is the block grant recipient in the administering entity of the overall grant. Our responsibilities will be grant administration, digital equity plan implementation working with you all to make appropriate updates to the digital equity plan, and to evaluate the efforts that are funded by the Digital Equity Capacity Grant and the way that we have envisioned, you know, partially based on the feedback that we received during the digital equity planning process, and that we articulated in the final digital equity plan is using the $70 million in funding in three buckets. The first is a smaller bucket procuring centralized services like a digital literacy assessment and training platform that could be used by sub-grantees and ecosystem partners to help support the plan. Really looking at the second bucket, which is state agency digital inclusion efforts that would potentially have the capacity to continue to provide digital equity programming at scale specific to covered populations, and then really focusing on the largest amount of funding out of the plan to go to the Digital Equity Capacity Sub-Grant program itself, and that would be developing a sub-grant program for entities and coalitions to implement activities outlined in the State Digital Equity Plan to further refine or develop local and regional digital equity plans, and then to provide capacity grants to conduct things like digital navigation, digital literacy training, etc. Next slide, please. And so again where we're at right now. We had had a conversation in the last stakeholder briefing about the opportunity presented by the NTIA's Competitive Grant Program. We do want to just reinforce this is, you know, another program that can help all of us bring resources to California to support the large need that is not necessarily going to be funded entirely by the State Capacity Grant. You know, just to reiterate you're going to hear from Gladys later. The Competitive Grant is really it's a $750 million dollar pool of funding. NTIA is looking to give grants in the range of $5 to 12 million to eligible entities. There is a minimum 10% non-federal match and a 10% cap on administration and evaluation. Their application portal is open now. Applications are due on the 23rd. NTIA has said they're going to expect to release awards by the winter of 2024. Next slide, please. And so

wanted to update you on the what we've done in between these meetings in the last month, and that is, you know, stakeholder engagement is really, you know, a key value and a key impulse of all of our work. So we've done a number of large group presentations. It's important for us to step outside of our own box, if you will, and meet people where they are so we attended the Northeast Substate California Broadband Consortia Broadband Summit. On the 22nd of this month, we participated in the Bay Area Digital Equity Summit and provided an update on the plan. And then last Friday, participating in the Central Coast Broadband Summit down in Santa Maria. In between, we've done a number of market research and listening sessions, continuing to understand the needs of state agencies, broadband consortias, local governments, community-based organizations and private sector entities. And then as really was called out in the last stakeholder briefing we had last month, given the need to really coordinate and align on the Competitive Grant Program and to ensure that we're signaling where the States need to go with the Capacity Grant Program and really working to try to identify, you know, the perceived gaps and alignment on those competitive grant applications we've met with at least 14 different entities or coalition groups who are developing competitive grant applications in the attempt of fostering alignment. And so, Anh can I ask you, I believe this is the last slide for me. Is that correct?

That's correct.

And we'll move on, Scott. Oh, thanks, Anh, and we'll move on to that next slide, we can do a discussion related to the last four slides. So that kind of a question did for any clarification on the review anything about stakeholder engagement, knowing that we are about to go into depth on some of the device program questionnaires. And then the capacity grant, so program design and competitive grant so would be happy to open up the floor to anyone who has any raised hands, and a good reminder is, if you look at the reactions at the lower toolbar, there's the opportunity to raise your hand. And then for those that are on the phone, star 9.

Okay. I do know there's one question that we did receive from Bruce in the Q&A feature but want to address that question when we get to the Capacity Sub-Grant Program Design, because we may be addressing some of those pieces.

Yeah. I have to answer the question, Bruce, we can read it briefly. Ask, can the capacity grant be utilized to cover the cost of maintenance operations and an Internet service to meet the cost of brought in public housing accounts, requirement of providing free service for five years? You know, it's a question

that's been asked of us, Bruce so thank you for asking it. We're exploring that we've, you know, are really looking at the capacity grant to help support ecosystem capacity across the nation, I think, or not across the nation, across the State and you know looking into it, based on the Digital Equity Capacity Grant NOFO, it does recommend or advise that that infrastructure related costs not be covered out of this and that they be covered by other programs. It's not to say that. We're not looking into it. And we are have heard at least one group that raised the topic, and it suggested to them that that might actually be an interesting you know, concept for a Competitive Grant through the NTIA.

Bruce, I do want to open the floor. If you have any additional follow up and then additionally, Scott, we did receive kind of a coalition question. A region asking if they can apply for a competitive grant as a partner, and then a capacity grant as a sub-grantee?

You know, it's a good question, and one more still working to understand as we analyze both the capacity and competitive grant info, we convene regularly with the NTIA to try to determine that coalitions will be encouraged to apply for both. But what constitutes duplication, Is not clear right now, and so I think you know later on in the conversation you know, Alex Banh may have some additional insights, and I would also suggest that that question be asked of Gladys Palpallatoc from the NTIA.

Great.

And then another question came in about opportunities for coalition building and if there's essentially a public teaming list for organizations interested in partnering for State Digital Equity Plan sub-grants or the NTIA's Competitive Grant Program.

Yeah, that's a great question Cole, and so we will go into I think a little more when Alex, you know, gives an update on where we're leaning on the Capacity Grant Program Design will talk a little bit further about the role that we're thinking coalitions will play on. That, I think, is a, you know part of the process, and the timeline that we'll go over at the end is that we will develop draft guidelines for the subgrant program, Put those out to public comment. And we're thinking that around that period that we could develop a system by which we can capture you know the more insight into who is thinking about being a lead grantee who would prefer to be a sub-grantee. And further, you know, sort of take on the role of matchmaking, particularly as we've heard in the last couple of meetings for those you know, smaller organizations, maybe new entrants who aren't necessarily connected to existing coalitions and build in some sensibility that really, as the funding gets pushed down and plans get

developed and activities are taken that that we all have a shared mission and focus to bring more entities into the equation.

Great pausing just to see if there's any last questions, and pass it back to you, Scott, to introduce our next speaker.

Thanks, Cole. Actually, I'm gonna pass it back to Anh now. And Anh, do you wanna introduce our next speaker, please?

Yes. Let's have the slides up. Next, we have Shawn Daugherty, our Director from the Broadband Equity Partnership to share insights on the Device Program Questionnaire. Shawn?

Thanks, Anh. Thanks, Scott. Nice to see everybody again here today. My name is Shawn Daugherty. I'm a Director with the Broadband Equity partnership and as Scott just mentioned in his opening on August 14th, we did circulate a Device Program Questionnaire, a brief questionnaire really diving a little bit deeper into the needs of the California communities around devices, acknowledging the critical role that devices play in reaching true digital equity. So I'm just going to walk through some of the results and the findings that came out of that questionnaire that really, I think matched a lot of what we learned during the planning process, but we always like to gather more information and engage as much as possible. So if we want to go to the next slide, please. Great. So we heard from about 61 subject matter experts, individuals who either provide or would like to provide devices to the communities that they serve. And we were fortunate to receive responses from organizations that serve all covered populations as identified in the NTIA so we really did get some good coverage of the of the respective covered populations, but which the capacity grants need to focus a lot of their work on. So next slide, please. Great. And as seen here we asked, you know, in one of our first questions, to kind of rank the most useful device that could be provided to covered populations, and, as I think, kind of no surprise of what we're seeing here. Laptops really came out as top as the kind of the first choice preferred by the respondents. And those who answered the questionnaire is it being as laptops being the most useful, really followed by Chromebooks, tablets, and then desktops with monitors. Some others that were mentioned items such as smartphones, acknowledging that not everybody has an Internet connection at home, and so. But really, laptops far and away were the preferred device that was communicated through the questionnaire. Additionally, we asked about most useful accessories, because we know it's more than really just the device itself. Hotspots came up top, closely followed by mouse and keyboards but also acknowledging, you know, screen readers, chargers, laptop carrying bags. There was a whole assortment of

accessories that were that were mentioned. And it's really important that we understand the full spectrum of accessories really needed to for someone to take the full advantage and really fully use utilize the device to make it most useful for them. So that was a really useful question that we were able to get additional answers to. We can move on to the next slide. And then we dove a little bit deeper into some unique needs for certain covered populations. And this is kind of just an overview of who we heard from in terms of the organizations and the covered populations by which they represent. And obviously, as we had known through the planning process, individuals with disabilities. Whether it's screen readers, speech to text, text to speech, needing a device that's more lightweight for austerity, also aging individuals and then individuals with language barriers. Those three covered populations really rose to the top in having the most or having some of the most unique device needs or accessory needs. And so that again allows us to kind of personalize that work and what the devices will do for the community. And next slide, please. And here we asked kind of preferences about new or refurbished devices, and I think and we kind of asked a series of questions to kind of hone a little bit deeper on all of this, you know. Do we have a preference between new or refurbished and clearly, you know, there was no preference in starting on that top left around new or refurbished as long as the needs of the community were met. And that really was the plurality. There, you know, with the green graph, you know again, do you prefer new devices? And again, people strongly agree that yes, they do prefer new devices. And then with, when we're looking at the orange chart. You know. How is it about looking at refurbished devices? And again, most of the people would prefer to distribute refurbished devices. But again, what all of this is telling us is that devices are just important, that they are critical to the community, whether they are new, whether they are refurbished, you know, looking at the cost and availability that devices are just critical to the work that we're all doing, and that makes us feel good that we're on the right path. And then kind of to close some of the findings that we found as part of this questionnaire. We can move on to the last slide. We asked about pricing and pricing is, you know, can be complex. Different devices, whether it's a laptop or tablet, will have a different price point, whether it's new or refurbished, will have a different price point, whether it includes tech support, a warranty, you know, does it again come with any of those accessories? And so again, we had a full range of answers from the respondents here wanting to provide those devices at, you know, low to no cost. The ranges for tablets were kind of in the one in the 150 to 200 to 300 per device, a little bit higher for laptops at $500 to $750. And then again, many people just reiterated the concerns around there's a lot of variables that go into determining what up an appropriate price point is for a

device. And then, when we also looked at kind of some of the baseline software considerations again, which would go into that price point? You know, does it have an Internet browser? Does it come with Microsoft Office already loaded on there? Does it have security software? Again, obviously, there was a lot of need for these softwares to be considered. And again, what would play into what some of those price points were. So again, this was just a brief overview of a lot of the learnings that we had from the Device Questionnaire and I think now we can head into discussion if there's any questions about our findings or any of anybody else from the community, we welcome input.

Great. Thank you, Shawn. Just a note we're moving into the discussion for the Device Program Questionnaire. So if you have a question, please use the raise your hand feature, or the Q&A feature. We'll happily work with you to get your question asked. Ralph, I see that your hand is up first and you can now unmute. Ralph, unmute yourself. I see that you are talking but there we go. Yep.

Okay. Terrific. Will the full findings be posted after today's session?

Yeah, I'll take that. Ralph, this was not a scientific survey. This is a questionnaire was one tool for us to get more information and a better understanding. As we consider, you know, the NTIA has indicated that device distribution could be allowable excuse or allowable use of capacity grant dollars. And so what we were really trying to do is inform the kind of the program design and the draft guidelines that we would then put out for public comment. So we aren't going to be releasing the full results of the questionnaire but there will be additional, you know, opportunity to comment once we post the sub-grant guidelines.

Okay, just real quick. I have an interest in determining where the respondents were located. There's a there's a general description, rural, incarcerated, veterans but I'm interested in the distribution all across California as to where the respondents reside-urban, suburban, rural, north, Central Valley, south, etc.

Got it. And the one thing I would say is that the responses there were 61 responses, and this again was an organization focused survey, not a resident focused survey. And we did ask the question, what residents or members of covered populations did they serve? And included all of the folks that you mentioned, and in Shawn's presentation there's a table that shows by covered population, you know, how many of each of the covered populations do the organizations serve? And so, what I will say is that after this meeting we will post both the recording and the presentation slides. Once they're remediated on the

Broadband for All Portal so that information will be available for you, and we'll send out a note when those are up.

Great.

Thank you, Ralph. Rebecca?

Alright. Can you hear me? Okay. Yep. Awesome. Thank you. Rebecca Kauma, Director of Digital Equity for the County of Los Angeles. Thank you guys for sharing the results. This is very helpful, and I'm glad to hear that you guys did get a lot of great insight and opinions as well. I just wanted to reiterate here on record just some of our key considerations that you guys should also take into consideration when you guys are looking at these devices. I would say the most important thing is making sure that we're not having one type of device that meets the needs of all of our covered populations. We have found that many of our partners have mentioned that they would prefer not to utilize Chromebooks, because Chromebooks are not able to meet the diverse needs that are required to do some of the activities that our communities would like to do. In addition to that, we've also heard that tablets with detachable keyboards, are not favorable as well, especially for our older adult communities. And then one other thing as well as you guys are considering how large of a scale you want to do with these devices. And this is stuff that I've already communicated to your team, last week, I would say, is just considering the price point. Devices are extremely pricey. And even for us, we're currently working on our Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program and devices alone do take up a significant portion of the budget and we understand that there is a certain allocation that will be allowed for sub-granting. So we just want to make sure that along with devices, that there's still funding remaining to be able to support other digital inclusion activities such as broadband adoptions and perhaps maybe providing subsidies for that digital literacy training. Digital navigation skills as well. And last, but not least, something for you guys to also take into consideration, and this is something that we've been having in conversations with our partner Human I-T, is understanding the difference between devices that are refurbished and also the ones that are new. So we found that in some cases that a refurbished device that is considered a business class is actually a lot more higher quality than perhaps a new device that's not a business class. So I would say, just understanding what types of devices that you guys are purchasing and supplying, and all of the key aspects that go into that, because, although some may not prefer a refurbished device, that might actually be a better option than a new one, because they're coming from entities that were utilizing them as part of a business purpose and stuff like that, and obviously understanding the life cycle as well as part of that device. We have found that Chromebooks have a

shorter life cycle so making sure that you guys are choosing devices that have a sustainable lifespan. Thank you so much.

Yeah, thanks. Rebecca. Wanna really appreciate your comments. I did just want to kind of respond to those and do a clarification that really, at the last stakeholder briefing, there was a hardy kind of unscripted conversation about the role that devices would play in the Digital Equity Plan implementation and we wanted to be thoughtful, acknowledging that some recipients of State Capacity Grants may want to utilize Capacity Grant dollars to do targeted device distribution. And so the nature of us asking the question wasn't necessarily that we were going to go and procure a number of devices. It was more of how could we include in the sub-grant guidelines of consideration of like baseline requirements? For if sub-grantees were going to do that, and that was the nature of our inquiry. I would note that as Shawn kind of shared, and you pointed out that the cost of devices is not insignificant, and the variability of need for each of the covered populations is enormous, like, there's not one device that fits all. And so you know, kind of related to both the sub-grant program design and the coordinated meetings we've been having with the various folks who are letting us know how they're framing competitive grant applications. We do think that a gap here in California is, you know, given we've only received about 60% of the allocation for capacity grants that was called out in the Digital Equity Act that there's not going to be a whole lot from the capacity grant program to go towards advice devices, and that that gap is a real opportunity, particularly for coalitions or applicant groups that are going after competitive grant dollars, to seek funding to make up that gap and to develop kind of bespoke and nimble device distribution groups based on they're you know what they're thinking. So just wanted to thank you and hope that adds a little more clarification.

Great. Thank you, Scott. And then, Stuart, you can unmute now.

Yes, I had a question about the which my understanding is literally tens of thousands of iPads that were distributed across California through an AT&T plan all of those iPads, the AT&T data service expired. So we have thousands of devices that are already out there. Is there any hope of maybe re engaging with some service plans for those devices that are already distributed to the communities?

We're looking into that. We're here's the thing I would say. If you could send us the information about the specific program you're talking about, I'm not sure I'm exactly familiar with that volume of devices that are out there but I think this kind of dovetails, to the to the past conversation or the past question about

the CASF adoption account and how capacity grants we're looking at, you know, all potential ways that we could leverage the capacity grant dollars.

I mean my county alone got 1,750 iPads that were distributed. You know, with the AT&T plan that I think ended up lasting about a year and a half. That's why I say tens of thousands, because if my county got close to 2,000 like I don't know what, and I'm pretty sure it came from like health or aging, or something like that. It was supposed to the iPads went to people like 60, 65, or older, or something like that. That's a lot of iPads been distributed so.

Yeah, and I'm aware. I thought the number associated with the Department of Aging's program was closer to 4,000. Not maybe it's higher ranges you were talking about, but it's.

I mean, if my county got 1,750, I'm 1 out of X counties in California. So.

Got it.

Thanks.

Thank you.

Thank you. And that was our last question. We have one Q&A but Stuart came on and asked the question. So with that I would like to introduce Alex Banh of Broadband Equity Partnership take us through the capacity sub-grant program design. Alex?

But thanks, Cole. Hey, everyone. Next slide, please. Yeah, so with the Capacity Sub-Grant Program Design, just wanted to start with two pieces of context that are informing the design of the program. This first piece of context here is the framework for how success will be defined and measured when it comes to the State's capacity Grant implementation. This framework comes from the State Digital Equity Plan, or the SDEP, which outlines three goals for digital equity covering broadband availability, broadband and device affordability and training and support to enable digital inclusion. So also grant funded activities will be mapped to each of these goals, and as well as the target in the step, and have accompanying KPIs to measure their outputs as well as their outcomes. So just taking a look at some of the examples of activities that we have here. And you know, just also clarifying that these are just examples. It's not a comprehensive list. We first have local digital equity planning which will impact it could impact all goals. And the success of this activity could be measured by KPIs, such as the number of regional and local digital equity plans produced, the number of local digital equity assets mapped, as well as number of digital equity survey responses collected and some of the outcome

indicators, you know, tying the success to greater outcomes, such as health, education, and economic development could include number of coalitions established number of outcome area partners. You know, partnerships formed as well as number of philanthropic and private sector partnerships formed. So that's local digital equity planning another example. Activity is digital navigation. This for the sake of this framework. In this example, it's mapped to goal number 2, which is all Californians, having access to affordable broadband and necessary devices. You know, through digital navigators work and helping folks enroll in programs and understand the available resources that are out there. So this would help with the target. That's in the plan of reducing the percentage of California households who cite cost as the reason for not adopting Internet and some KPIs for digital navigation could include the number of needs. Assessments completed, number of covered population individuals who are enrolled in low cost offers and subsidies, as well as a number of cover population individuals who are connected to affordable devices. And as far as the outcomes right, we can take a look at the number of individuals who are referred to additional services, such as telehealth or job search assistance, online education as well as essential services. The last example activity is digital literacy training programs. This is mapped to goal number 3, which is all Californians having access to training and support to enable digital inclusion. The target in the plan is to expand a number of California residents, especially the covered populations who receive digital literacy, cyber security or digital skills, training, and some example- KPIs are, you know, like number of individuals, trained, number of modules completed and number of cover populations trained in language and some example indicators are number of vocational certifications earned, number of job applications assisted and you know, any percent improvement that we can see as far as skill improvement. So that's the framework for defining success that's guiding, you know, design of the program. Next slide, please. Great. So the next piece of context is around the overall digital equity funding environment, both in California as well as across the country. So we need to be mindful of these other grant opportunities and understand what they will and will not fund, and what their priorities are, so we can ensure that the capacity subgrants are complementing, you know the other investments and not duplicating. You know, other investments in digital equity. So you know, just laid out on this slide are some of the major available. you know, grant programs that are out there right now. First is the CPUC's CASF Broadband adoption program. This is a program that's going to see a significant increase in funding in available funding between this year and next year. So it's growing from $20 million to $36 million next year, and it provides grant sizes of under a $100,000 to, you know, potentially more than $4 million dollars. You know, depending on the proposal.

And this could fund digital literacy programs as well as broadband access programs and call centers. The eligible entities include local governments, senior centers, schools, libraries, nonprofits and community-based organizations. And it could fund programs at both statewide and local levels. Next is the NTIAs digital equity competitive grant, you know, that Scott already mentioned, and you know we have Gladys here to, you know, discuss more later on. This is going to provide at least the $750 million dollar or funding you know, for projects across the country. That would include a $37.5 million-dollar native set aside. The NTIA is expecting grant sizes to be between the $5-to-12-million-dollar range, although they say folks can request funding outside of this range with justification. This would fund digital inclusion and broadband adoption activities for cover populations and yeah, fund many of the same types of eligible entities as CPUC CASF and you know, it would fund national, statewide, regional and local programs. The third funding opportunity is around the NTIA digital equity capacity grant, and specifically, the native entities set aside. That was included in that NOFO so this will provide $45.3 million dollars in this tranche to native entities, including Indian tribes, Alaska native entities and native Hawaiian organizations. These grants are expected to be between the $500,000 and $2,000,000 range and we focus on both digital equity planning. And, you know, supporting native entities and carrying out digital inclusion activities. And yeah, the last funding opportunity is, you know, what we're here to discuss today. This is California's capacity grant allocation of $70.2 million dollars in this tranche and you know, really, the focus of these funds would be to implement the State's digital equity plan or Sep, that would include local digital equity planning as well as broadband adoption, digital navigation skills, training and other activities. And you know, again, many of those same or similar eligible entities, including local and state governments, tribes, nonprofits, community anchor institutions, local educational agencies, workforce programs, those partnerships. And this would fund both statewide or local programs. Right, next slide. Yeah, so with those two pieces of context in mind, here is the draft sub-grant design. In this design, there will be two funding tracks that will focus on digital equity ecosystem development at the regional, local and targeted statewide levels. So Track 1 will focus on regional and local ecosystem development within this design. Within this design a formula allocation of funding would be calculated for each county geographic, boundary, and we would encourage one lead entity within each county area to apply for funding and represent a coalition of interested partners in that area. These would be planning and capacity grants to fund the development of regional or local digital equity plans to identify local priorities and also fund the implementation of activities right again at the local level that are responsive to you know the local communities needs and assets as

well as you know, be in alignment with the State Digital Equity Plan, local capacity would also be aided by the statewide centralized services that we're planning. So regarding Track 1, some of the eligible entities the eligible licenses would be the same, you know, as what we saw in the last slide, but you know we are looking for to have both like lead subgrantees. These would be eligible entities within the county geographic boundary that could be the primary sub-grantee and these would also allow for multi county join applications under one lead subgrantee, if they have, you know, reach and experience and presence within multiple counties. And they could also give out. And we encourage them to give out a second tier of sub grants. That would be you know, additional funding that would be subsequently allocated to other implementation. Partners like CBOs or community centers to support implementation. And then we have Track 2. This would focus on targeted statewide digital equity ecosystem development and innovation programs for outcome areas like health education workforce development or for specific cover populations that may benefit from more coordination at the statewide level rather than at just the local and regional levels. So eligible entities for this track would be nonprofits and digital inclusion providers with outcome area cover population and statewide reach, and as well as tribes and tribal consortia and associations. Next slide, please. Yeah. So I just want to dive a little bit deeper into Track 1 more specifically, you know, for the formula allocations that I mentioned. You know, we're considering two options for the formula to decide the county geographic boundary allocations. So one option is the formula defined in the Digital Equity Act. You know, specified by Congress for NTIA to use to decide how much every State's going to get for their planning and capacity grants. Under this formula 50% of a State's allocation would be based on the size of their total population. 25% would be based on the size of their total cover populations, and 25% would be based on their comparative lack of broadband availability and adoption when compared to other States, and under this formula every State has also ensured a minimum allocation of 0.5% of the total funding pool to ensure that every state, no matter, you know how small, has a minimum amount to, you know, get started with planning and implementation. So that's the Digital Equity Act formula. The formula in gray is an alternative formula that was developed and informed by public input like the prior briefings as well as the questionnaire that went out in July. You know, the biggest change with this formula is to room total populations from the equation and make 75% of an allocation, you know, for a county geographic boundary based on the size of their total cover population. So you know the total number of members of cover populations within that county geographic boundary. The kind of reasoning behind that is that these grants are really meant to benefit the covered populations. So, you

know, wanted to increase the weight of that, and, you know, not have total population within the formula, and that was again based on public input, and questionnaire results. But yeah, some of the other pieces are the same, having 25% of a county boundaries, geographic boundaries, allocation based on the comparative lack of Broadband availability and adoption, as well as a .5% minimum allocation for every county geographic boundary. And I think that's my last slide.

That is great, thank you so much, Alex, and so we will now move to the discussion portion on the capacity sub-grant program design. Well, if you'd like to ask a question again, you can raise, use the raise your hand function, the Zoom bar, or ask in the Q&A. Okay. So, Scott there's a question in the Q&A feature about if there's a plan for California to roll out a program similar to the Affordable Connectivity Program, specifically for rural areas where they have very limited Internet service providers. That their families report a cost as number one barrier to connect connectivity.

Yeah, I think there's a lot of folks within the state at different levels that are looking at, you know, how to make up for the absence of the ACP. But at present I don't have much to share about the you know where things are just, there's a lot of things for discussion. I would note that it the ACP was a $14 billion dollar program that was nationwide. And here in California we had almost 3 million applicants, and it's no easy feat to make up for the loss of that program. But it's something that obviously was critical, you know, tool for broadband for all and it was something that was included in the draft of the digital equity plan and we further had to modify. Just, I think all of us, as we look at making use of these funds that you know, affordability is an essential, you know, barrier to adoption. And we're all gonna have to be creative and how we overcome that for the folks you know who most need support so great.

Thank you, Scott. Next I want to ask Shirley. You're welcome to unmute.

Hi Cole. Hi, Anh, it's so good to see you guys, thanks so much for holding this briefing. This has been super helpful just to understand, like what CDT is thinking about for the sub grant design and everything, I know I've been like sharing a lot of details with some of our partners so this is super helpful. I had a couple of questions about just like, I know we're still waiting to hear from NTIA, and just the approval of it. But is there like a tentative timeline for like, when this application portal is going to be open for like people who want to apply for the sub capacity grants?

Yeah. Hi, Shirley, thank you. It's always good to see you. And for you know, thanks to ITUP for its contributions to the statewide effort. The we'll go over the

timeline and you know some of the key milestones later. There are some dependencies on our ability to move forward. You know, which are pending actual receipt of the award and receiving official, you know, funding authority to do that. you'll see in our timeline later that we are envisioning developing the draft guidelines that kind of follow the framework that Alex just explained, going out for public comment. to seek further refinements or suggestions in sometime around late September, October, and ideally, we'd like to have a request for applications out sometime you know, in the last quarter of this year. And then there would be, you know, the application period, the review period, and hope to get the funds out and well, not hope would definitely want to get all the funding out in 2025. But there's some steps that need to happen for we can really nail down exact dates.

Absolutely. Thank you so much for clarifying. I look forward to hearing more about the timelines upcoming. I did have one more question. It was just about how you have the Track 1 formula considerations. Is there a difference for Track 2? I know that Alex you had put up there's Track 1 for regional and local ecosystems and Track 2 is for targeted statewide ecosystems is there...are you... is the CDT team still like developing what Track 2 formula considerations are going to be, or are they the same?

We're thinking about it, but we have a pretty clear idea on Track 2. Again, I think that, you know, the one slide that Alex showed where we're considering capacity grant funding in the context of the other four programs when we look at gaps right? You know the final digital equity plan made really no equivocations. That it's an ambitious plan that we've all developed together. But there's not nearly enough funding, and that we need to see all sources of other federal funding through the competitive grants, state funding and really work with our philanthropic and private sector partners to achieve the aims. But what we do see is, as Alex noted. There are. We are thinking that there are some specific covered populations and some specific outcome areas like education and health access and workforce development where some catalytic grants to continue to help build that ecosystem are you know, really critical. And so probably less of a form formulate framework and more is just, you know, a percentage amount of the total funding and kind of putting a size range on the grants based on what kind of applications come back in.

Thanks so much, Scott.

Yeah.

Thank you, Shirley and Scott and Alex. Consider we're kind of having conversations or questions related to the formula. There's a question in the Q&A

about clarification whether there's an opportunity to weigh in on the decision of a for your awareness or information.

Well, right now, I hope that folks are clear that we've committed to having a public and open and sort of, you know, deliberative process with you all to kind of work through the evolution of our thinking. And the last time that you know, we came out, and we put the questionnaire out. We asked the question, should we just use the same formula that the NTIA used, you know, to determine the State allocation and apply that to kind of a you know, as another geographic unit and as we shared at the last stakeholder briefing. There was a plurality of folks. And Alex, you can kind of help clarify this for me that there was a preference at least through the 94 potential organizations that applied for this, that another lens to look through would be to kind of take out total covered population focus on the total members of covered populations within a region to still use the relative, you know, availability and adoption numbers. But to build in a minimum for those rural counties who might need a baseline amount of support. So, Alex, do you have anything to add or clarify on that?

No, that's right. The there was a very strong preference in the questionnaire results for considering a, you know, geographic areas, total number of cover population members as well as their, you know, relative lack of broadband availability and adoption in in the allocation. So very strong preference for those two. Not a lot of preference or not a lot of support, for we're considering total population. So what we got from that was, you know, folks really want us to focus on allocating based on need, right? How many? Where are the cover populations in California? And where are the areas with biggest gaps when it comes to broadband, you know availability and adoption.

Great. Thank you, Alex. Thank you, Scott. Noting two raised hands, Rebecca?

Alright. Rebecca Kauma, Director of Digital Equity County of Los Angeles. I just want to clarify a couple of things just to make sure I have this correctly in my notes. So, per your guys' process here, you'll be allocating every single county geographic region with a certain allocation of Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program funding is that correct?

A slight modification. We are developing draft program guidelines that will be proposed, based on the feedback that we've heard from stakeholders, and through our various engagements and questionnaires and we will put those to public comment so that folks can comment on potential revisions. But it is, yes, highly likely that that draft guidelines that folks will be formally asked to comment on will have some type of formulaic allocation of funding by a

geographic unit that more than likely based on the feedback will be at the county level.

Okay, thank you. And then another clarifying question in terms of primary slash lead applicant and I'll use authorized representative, because that's what NTIA is using for the digital equity competitive Grant program, what type of organization would you hope to serve as that primary applicant to mobilize a group of partners, to submit back to you like - what eligible entity would that be?

I think we would definitely one that would be within the eligible entities of the NOFO I think there's we're fairly agnostic. I think the appeal to how we've established this proposed framework is that it would allow for you know, for the uniqueness of the regional and local ecosystems to you know, build coalitions and determine amongst themselves who was the what organization had the most capacity to take the lead, while also building in the flexibility to sub grant out to those other unique folks. So, I think it's a good question, Rebecca, but, you know, I think, you know, we're envisioning a system where, you know, and even an application process where to the extent folks would like our input, we can give that, but that, you know, it leads a lot of ability for locals to develop their own applications and plans together.

Okay? And then in terms of if that's the approach that you guys are taking with the expectation be that there would be one application submitted per county, geographic area?

Well, so I think that as Alex mentioned in the slide and as we, you know, many of you have known before the digital equity planning process. And as we learned there's not a one size fits all for everybody. What we were really looking at first is how do we distinguish the uniqueness of the capacity grant program and have how we invest dollars complement the other available programs? And that was around, you know the regional local planning capacity building ecosystem building and knowing that a lot of folks are already, you know, fairly along the way they're only allocating a small portion of that, so that the lion's share of the capacity grant dollars could go to sub granting and actually funding trusted messenger groups to do the much needed digital navigation and other things that being said, you know, we acknowledge that California has a unique ecosystem where there are already, you know, there's a legacy of multi-county collaboration and so we wanted to build flexibility where there could be one applicant per county, but potentially, if a number of counties wanted to go in together, a line around one, you know, lead applicant, and

kind of, you know, leverage the, you know, economies of scale and efficiencies that the program would be nimble enough to respond and allow that.

Okay, no, I really appreciate that clarification. And I would say that gives us some practical examples of how we can mobilize here in Los Angeles County. The only thing I would like to raise just for your team's consideration, and I do want to mention the fact that I do appreciate the equity lens that you guys have taken to this approach, and really making sure that there's intentionality, I would say the challenging thing that we're experiencing right now is obviously the timeline. So many of us are working on the digital equity competitive Grant program. And, for example, LA County is the lead applicant, so literally, this application, as you already know, closes on the 23rd of next month. So that means that we would have to quickly shift gears and start preparing for this application. And we've seen just by engaging with our amazing partners already that it takes time to get a lot of documents, like many of our local government entities, need to go to city council to get approval in order for them to participate. So I would only recommend that you guys do consider, perhaps maybe having the application window extend beyond the holidays and also into the New Year, because the amount of work that is being put on the lead applicant, It's a lot, and I don't know if organizations that perhaps aren't serving in that role right now, as part of the competitive application, know how time consuming it is to lead a multiple organization, multiple partner, application it, It requires a lot. And for me, I'm doing it as a 1-woman team, and trying to do the best that I can to serve our partners here in Los Angeles County. But it is a lot, and whatever flexibility that you can provide to those that are serving in that role would be greatly appreciated. And I would say the most immediate thing would be the timeline, because we're already seeing a lot of setbacks in terms of, you know, approvals that are coming in, especially with the letters of commitments that require documentation. So, any flexibility that you and your team can give to those that need to serve in that role, I think, would be greatly appreciated. Thank you so much.

Yeah. Thank you, Rebecca. I think we do acknowledge that the complexity that is presented with all of these like really critical Digital Equity act programs, and how the timelines and the somewhat overlapping nature of them don't allow for, you know, the ideal amount of time. But I do want to say that that's why we've been really thoughtful and have continued to meet with and had multiple meetings, in some cases with at least 14 of what we know are the competitive grant applicants to try to and coordinate and align efforts, and one of the reasons we felt it was important to, you know, talk a little bit more about what? How we were leaning on presenting a program design out to the

ecosystem and not waiting for public comment in late September, but actually doing it now so that folks could take that in consideration and how they're planning. So you know, based on that, we're committed to continue to do whatever we can to make it work. And we also understand that these are really ambitious programs, that we're all, you know and, in some ways, dealing with short notice and you know, limited funding, trying to make the best of it right.

Thank you, Rebecca. Thank you, Scott. Wally?

Yeah. Hi, everyone. I want to. Yeah, I got a couple of questions but one I want to reinforce what Rebecca just, said I. I work with Rebecca all the time in Los Angeles County. I'm the Research Director for the South Bay Cities Council of Governments, and we're joint powers authority for 15 cities, and not making this happen over the holidays is a great idea. I would really, Rebecca works very hard, and she's terrific, and I would hope that she could get some time over the holidays with her family as the rest of us could. So there's just to reinforce all that. The questions I have is that we received a ladder grant to do a digital equity plan, basically. And so the question is, I'm going to have a digital equity plan that is a shadow of the state digital. It'll be a sub-regional digital equity plan with the same categories, vision, and all that kind of stuff. And so one question is, does that, I guess we did it on the basis of the fact that it would align us for I don't know how to put it exactly, but special consideration when it came time to apply for this, for the capacity grants that we, in fact, are have our own digital equity plan, based on extensive outreach and plant, you know, 14 months of planning with our own stakeholders and so forth, so that's 1. The second is that it looks like we're coming up with a different model of an ecosystem. From what I've heard so far. We agree that entry level training and devices and so forth, are really important at the individual level. But we also are finding that, and our ecosystem has to also include higher end stuff, and I think that's the experiment I'm really interested in is what happens if we go into a disadvantaged community with a with an anchor that's prepared to do not only the entry level things, but especially if we're looking at workforce development which we are - we're working with the Workforce Investment Board in the South Bay Higher level stuff - so that we would, you know, when you talk about broadband at home, what we found is a lot of our households have broadband, but it's crummy, and it's expensive. And so there's of course, you know, there's best available. There's business class, and there's carrier class. So what we're talking about having everyone have access to a carrier class situation in which we're not talking about refurbished or low level, new. But how about how about new business class? At the same time we're looking at higher end kinds of software like today, if you're talking about digital equity, and you're

talking about the workforce you have to be talking about AI and text to video and text to image and we need at least one, if not two or three of those in the 15 cities which I know there's not enough money to do, but we can at least do a demonstration. That is what our plan suggests is a more robust ecosystem takes people individually from the from the base all the way up to a shared access to carrier class service with and we're talking about computers. But what about 3D printing? I've got an organization, has, they have a group of people who develop plans for a business plan for 3D printing. And if we're really talking about digital equity feeding into economic equity, we really have to build up and do this offer shared opportunities to do so much more to get into the economy, to start businesses and to have so anyway, what is what is your reaction to those two points?

So thank you, Wally. Appreciate the question. So on the first one, the if I think I understood you, you were saying like how would the capacity grant program interact with a coalition of entities who had already received funds to develop a regional digital equity plan that already aligns to the State plan and the way we're thinking about that is, is just building in the language that the that the Grant would consider developing or refining a plan that conforms to the State plan and based on your comment, and knowing that different regions are in different places that we could potentially build in a process where if an entity or coalition within a geographic area, you know, could furnish a plan that shows it's aligned with the digital equity plan that they could be given credit for that and just move straight to the capacity portion. So we're thinking about how to do a scenario like that. So that's a response to your first question. I believe.

It is.

And then in response to your, to the second piece of your I think sharing, and also your question is, we do acknowledge that there needs to be more than just, well, not more than just that, digital inclusion is about ensuring the three main goals of the, you know, broadband for all and the digital equity plan. It's, you know, access to high performance broadband for all Californians that it's access to affordable Internet and devices, and that it's access to you know, digital literacy and skills training to enable digital inclusion that, like digital inclusion, is, you know the path and the thing that we have the most control over. But that that our plan is more aspirational than making sure everyone has service and device and training. It's like, it's really, what do we empower next? Right? And that's what plays into the to the outcomes that we're required to be accountable for around education and workforce development, you know, access to healthcare. So that's why we developed the second track or we're proposing a second track to do that statewide ecosystem building and

innovation and kind of thinking about the what's next, and seeing how, you know we can plan for that. So that's you know, that's my kind of response with a caveat that we've had $70 million dollars in the first tranche. We have potentially two additional tranches and we've got the competitive grants and potentially ongoing California Advanced Service fund funding. And so, the other piece that we've been sharing in our conversations with the different competitive grant applicants. Is that you know, it's going to be an incredibly competitive national field. It's shaping up to be incredibly competitive here in California. So, calling out those gaps and the gaps that we see are the lack of an ACP subsidy. That's a gap, the gap in overall funding to fund, you know, the significant cost of devices and the multiplicity of needs for devices, and that you can't just have a one size fits all. But there's also the innovation and the workforce development. And I think that those are things that would be nicely, you, you know, we can see nice applications coming in for the track, 2 which are on cover populations and outcome areas, and that while there's still time that those would be things that competitive brand applicants would, you know, consider building into their applications, to address those, so I hope I answered your question. I wish I could be shorter with my answers. But you know that's my best response.

Well, Scott, next time I can be longer with my question. Maybe that will help.

Yeah, maybe that's it. I think it's such a great question. You needed a great answer. Thanks.

Great. Thank you, Wally. I do know, first of all, you have your hands up. I want to make sure that we have enough time for our Federal Broadband Program Officer to have opportunity to discuss competitive grants. So, Scott, I think I'm going to introduce Gladys who is our Federal Program Officer at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and then circle back to any remaining questions after your timeline and wrap up so, Gladys, would you like to share about the Competitive Grant?

Thank you. Thanks, Cole. Sorry, Krystal, about cutting you off there, but hopefully we'll get your questions next. But really great conversation. I appreciate being included in this forum. As always, CDT has done a fantastic job at culling everything down and getting a response from folks. So also, great responses. A lot of this is something you probably all have heard. I've been making the circuit around the State and talking to lots of folks. But I'll get into it, and then we can get into specific questions. I am limited in my response. Let me give that caveat first I am limited in my response to the publicly available

information, Kari, I see smiling. That is that is a wealth of knowledge, also a little bit of an informational overload. So that's what I'm here for is to answer some of those general questions that I can give to folks. So let me start. I'm Gladys Palpallatoc. I'm from NTIA. I am the Federal Program Officer or one of the Federal Program Officers for California, working primarily with CDT on their administration of the digital equity piece of the puzzle for NTIA and so I'll get into it. I'll be talking today primarily about the Competitive Grant opportunities, as you all know already, that it's been referenced today. The first two programs are have been done or are in the in the middle of being finished. The planning grants the first two years that you all, or many of you, took part in throughout the State of California, where CDT solicited and got a lot of feedback in terms of shaping what the digital equity plan was going to took like. And then the capacity grants, which are the, as Scott already mentioned, are the dollars that are equated to implementing the State Digital Equity Plan or the SDEP. And now today, or about 3-4 weeks ago now July 25th the Competitive Grant Program opened up, and the NOFO, the Notice of Funding Opportunity was released. As a result of the first capacity grants from Nevada, and I want to say Louisiana were awarded, and that triggered the opening of the competitive grant NOFOs. And so it's the third and final program of the Digital Equity Act. That is part of the Infrastructure Act dollars. The competitive grants are $1.2 billion dollars nationally, 5% of which or $37.5 million dollars, are set aside for native entities, Alex mentioned those are native Hawaiian entities, Alaska, Alaska native folks, and I'm missing a third one, and then a 1% set aside as well for Territories or $7.5 million dollars. Deadlines are September 23rd for eligible entities, and then October 22nd for the Territories. They are, as already has been said, $5 to 12 million dollar grant, grants that are anticipated so you can see that demonstrates these are large grants. And you can make an argument or a an argument for either less than that, or over or above that, beyond the $12 million. But you do have to make that argument, and it's not a guarantee that it will be allowed. So maybe staying in the kind of the sweet spot would be a safer bet. For Territories, the grants are anticipated to be between $1 million and $2.5 million dollars, so a little less for Territories. It does not preclude other Territories to be a part of the $5 to 12 million dollar grant efforts. Partnerships and collaborations, as many of you are part of are highly, highly, strongly encouraged for these competitive grants. They are for digital. They are very similar to the capacity grants in that they are for digital inclusion activities, including adoption types of efforts training, both at the basic digital literal literacy level as well as workforce training so I think that was touched upon today. They are also for device and networking hardware and software, costs and public access and computing centers for covered population. So those are

just examples of the kinds of activities that are allowable in the competitive Grant program. There is, I think, again, as also been mentioned, a 10% match requirement as a minimum. The more match that up an eligible entity can gather, you get a little bump in the scoring criteria, and you'll see that in in that scoring criteria, in the set of points. These grants are meant to really for organizations because of the how arduous they are. They're meant for organizations that have a little bit or a lot of bit experience with Federal grants. There's a lot of requirements so the capacity of that lead organization has to be pretty fairly significant. There are, you know, the Federal Grant requirements, such as the two CFR 200 uniform administration requirements. There are cost principles to be followed and audit requirements for Federal awards. So, it's not, as I think, somebody else said, for the light for the lighthearted and so you want to make sure there is a lead organization that has that capacity and experience would make it better in pre with previous Federal grants. It's not a requirement, but it's just something to think about as you're considering the competitive grants and considering partnerships to become a part of. It is a 4-year period of performance with an additional year of program evaluation requirements so that's, you know, a total of 5 years of period of performance. There is a grant portal that opened, and in mid-August, I think a week and a half ago. And so that's a part of some that's something that you can kind of also start looking at and seeing, you know, if it gives you an idea of the kind of requirements the grantee the NTIA is looking for, and if you are in the position to fulfill those requirements or not, or find become part of a partnership that can. Applicants must also have a sam.gov and a UEI ID to participate in these grants. And it is not just the lead organization. It is the lead as well as any sub-grantees that that may be part of that effort. So those are both things that as a CBO most have sam.gov you, a smaller CBO might not have so those are one of those things that you want to get started now, if you're really considering these. I'm going to put in the chat just the overall information link where folks can go to find out the nitty gritty about these grants as well as the digital equity digitalequity@NTIA.gov email, where you can send your additional questions that might not be answered today. They can answer much more in depth. Also, highly recommend looking at the FAQs. Even if you have looked at them before, because there it has been updated as of the end of last week so there's more information there that wasn't that has been refreshed, that you may not have seen so lots of questions from folks. That's it.

Yep. Go ahead, Gladys, wrap up the last thing you were going to say.

I was just going to say, that's it for my presentation, and happy to answer your questions.

Great and Gladys, I do want to acknowledge and share appreciation. There are questions, but I also want to acknowledge we have two minutes left of our scheduled time so I'm going have Scott come up, talk timeline, and then reserve 5 to 10 extra minutes at the tail end to do both timeline and competitive questions.

Sounds good.

Great. Thank you so much. So, Scott, do you want to share a timeline and wrap this up, and then we can come back for some final questions?

Yeah, absolutely Cole. So folks, I we wish the timeline would be a little bit easier. But where we are right now is close to the middle there. We're, August 26th, we're anticipating somewhere on or about August 28th that we received the award from the NTIA. We've been trying to do as much advanced planning as we can, which you see in the gray block box below the May 6th through October 31st that's the stakeholder engagement, the market research, the program design. We do want to reiterate that we're targeting, and I saw this question in the in the chat, not the plan, but the draft guidelines for the capacity subgrant program. When we're targeting a public comment period late-September through October and moving forward with that moving back up to the timeline boxes on the on the top. The NTIA Native Entity Digital Equity Capacity Grants open on the 25th we're looking at winter 2024, publishing the sub-grant program. Which is the request for application. Once we've completed the public comment process on February 7th there's another box there where the NTIA Native Entity Grant closes. We're really endeavoring to get subgrants out as soon as we can in 2025 and there are some dependencies. But the May 25th or May 2025, is an important date there, because once we receive the award NTIA has given us, well, not NTIA, it's NTIA and the statute, we have 9 months to determine all of the different projects, grants, contracts that we are going to fund with that 5-year period of time. So, we really appreciate the comments about how this is a really expedited, accelerated timeline with a lot of complexity. As we try to manage that from our perspective, we'll try to minimize it from the ecosystem perspective. Just know it's a It's a lot of moving parts and pieces. So, we can go ahead and drop the timeline and cool and per your framework, take any other questions that folks wanted to ask.

Great. Thank you, Scott and, Gladys, if you have a chance to come back on camera and audio. Perfect. We have a question from Patrick about the Competitive Grant. Kind of two parts so I'll read the first one. Can the State broadband funding like CASF adoption account count towards the 10% match for the competitive grant?

Yes, it can. What can't be commingled are Federal funds.

Great. Simple answer, perfect! And then Patrick, do you? Want to I see you came on camera. Do you want to ask your second question? I'm sorry, Patrick. Let me. Okay.

Yeah, thank you so much for the session. Scott and Gladys really appreciate your insights on the NTIA Competitive Grant. Like so many, we are charging ahead to try to get that application in by the 23rd. One question that comes up is around the funding model for the Competitive Grant, and I couldn't find it in the NOFO. Is it a reimbursement model, or is funding provided upfront?

You know, somebody just asked me that, and I sent them to the email address because I am not sure it is typically a Federal. This. These Federal funds have typically been both in the planning grant and also the capacity grant comp. reimbursement based. But somebody also asked is there an upfront? Is it going to be loaded upfront for startup kind of costs? And I didn't know the answer to that. And I don't know that it's in the NOFO. So I sent them to please submit it to the digitalequity@NTIA.gov emails for cause I think that's the question that'll be asked by others.

Thank you, Patrick. I'm going to do two more, Gladys, for Competitive Grant, and then ask a couple more capacity. So, it's a kind of a continuing on the match question, can we meet the income match by donating a portion of our indirect? So, their NICRA is about 20% they want to charge 10% and donate the other. And so, I know that might be a complex question. They might need to follow up with you on.

Yeah, you probably do cause the NICRA will be asked as part of the budget form and so that that calculation is already there. I don't know if you can use it as part of match in the Capacity Grants. That was not the case. Well, there was no match requirement, but also yeah. So maybe another one that might want to submit.

Great and maybe that you can put your email or the correct location for that question via email into the chat. And so actually, two questions. These are great. This is one's pretty into easy. Can sub recipients further sub-grant and/or subcontract funds?

There is nothing precluding people from doing that. It's not something that we recommend, because it gets kind of complicated from. I don't know that I that was something we asked as FPOs in our training. And so, it again, it's not precluded. It's not disallowed. However, everything rolls up to the administrating entity. So, you can see how that you know, it's like making a copy of a copy the

multiplicity movie, but it gets it can get kind of sketchy after if you keep doing that. Yeah.

And then last one kind of looks like a guidance question. So, grant allocation suggests $5-12 million and that smaller entities can apply for less. And so the question is, is it worth applying if we are a much smaller local entity?

Again, the nothing is precluding you from doing that. These are it. These are Federal funds are not easy. And so for smaller organizations, it is having come from a smaller organization that had a statewide reach. It was a slog to administer a Federal grant. And so even once you're into it, it really is a lot of work that typically smaller organizations just don't have the capacity or bandwidth to do or it really saps a lot of energy from staff.

Great.

Nothing precludes you from not doing, participating or applying but we sit, and you know that's the other thing I should have said in my in my spiel. Is that we I we encourage you to get a hold of CDT and share so that you can get feedback from what they have learned about others who are applying.

Great. Thank you so much, Gladys.

Welcome!

And just acknowledging time. Scott, I'm going to bridge the gap. Actually, there's a question about if an entity submits a competitive grant application as a lead, would they also be able to apply it as a lead for the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant?

Got it. And, Gladys, I'm wondering. Do you have any insight into that?

So that's the commingling that I was talking about. That isn't allowed. If it is distinct enough in in the efforts. So, if you're doing a Capacity Grant with the State. Those are Federal dollars, and then you apply for competitive grants. You can do that. You can do that as long as it is not going towards the same project. You cannot double dip on Federal funds. So, if you've got something going on in San Francisco, and then something else going on in LA, that's probably allowable. It will still be up for review, but it has to be clearly demonstrated that it is not going to commingle those funds. Federal funds.

Great. Thank you, Gladys. And then, Scott, I'm going to ask one final question. Acknowledging we're about 8 min. over is if CDT can share some guidelines or considerations for coalitions of counties and broadband

ecosystems, as they identify what entity will make sense to be the lead applicant for the state digital capacity program?

Yeah, cool thanks for asking that question. I think we're happy to, you know, have, you know, meetings or listening sessions to discuss this. I you know we want to be careful is to like, you know, being prescriptive, and, you know, identifying this situation which person is the best. I think that the hope is that the ecosystem will be able to determine who the best lead applicant will be. We would love suggestions on how we could provide guidance through Q&A's, etc. I think the one thing we don't want to do is appear to be heavy handed and saying, you know, you can or can't do this. I think we want to be open to, you know, eligible entities getting together and determining, you know, on their own what's best for their region and their, you know, communities too.

Great. Thank you, Scott. I guess we have one last question that we can cover. It's do we have a will the State capacity grant program include the ability to partially reimburse for time and cost of organizing and applying?

You know, we're going to have to take that down and come back with that. And if Alex Banh can check me on this, I would imagine that our draft guidelines will include some kind of language that responds to that question.

Yeah.

Those are questions for now, Scott. So, if you want to wrap this up and thank you all.

Cool. Why don't you wrap it up for us? Just I you know. Thank you. Everybody. Like, I said. It's a real honor and a privilege to continue to be able to work with you all on our shared mission of digital equity here in California. And we know your time is valuable. We'll get the presentation, the meeting notes the recording up and out as soon as we can please bear with us. There is a remediation process. We really appreciate all of your input on program design and really appreciate and encourage coordination and alignment on the competitive grant process. And just thank you!