

State Digital Equity Plan & Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program
Stakeholder Briefing
January 31, 2025
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Meeting Minutes and Transcript

The State Digital Equity Plan (SDEP) and Digital Equity Capacity Grant (DECG) Program Stakeholder Briefing met virtually on Friday, January 31, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. Engagement and Operations Manager Anh Nguyen welcomed attendees and instructed them to introduce themselves in the Zoom Chatbox 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 meeting. ASL interpreters were available throughout the meeting.

Agenda

Ms. Anh Nguyen briefly provided an overview of the SDEP & DECG Program Stakeholder Briefing agenda.

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome & Recap

Deputy Director Scott Adams of the California Department of Technology (CDT) Office of Broadband & Digital Literacy welcomed attendees. He first provided a recap of past Digital Equity Capacity Grant milestones. Mr. Adams then highlighted other broadband and digital equity funding grants, including NTIA digital equity grants, other federal programs, and state grant programs, as well as congratulated the 13 California-serving entities (\$129.8 million) recommended for award of the NTIA Digital Equity Competitive Grant and 6 California tribes (\$12.1 million) that were awarded funding from Round 2 of the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program. Mr. Adams also congratulated the Sierra Telephone Company, Inc. that was awarded \$11.7 million in funding from the USDA 2024 Rural Development Broadband ReConnect Program. Lastly, Deputy Director Adams recapped the purpose of the Digital Equity Capacity Subgrant program.

Discussion

No attendees came off of mute to ask questions, and there were no questions from the Q&A Box.

Agenda Item 2 – Modifications to Subgrant Program Guidelines

Mr. Alex Banh, Principal of Broadband Equity Partnership, began his presentation by covering the background of the subgrant program, including the NTIA's overarching goal supporting the State Digital Equity Plan implementation, ensuring SDEP Goal 2: all Californias have access to affordable broadband and necessary devices as well as SDEP Goal 3: access to training and support to enable digital inclusion. Mr. Banh also provided a recap high level focus of the State Digital Equity Plan, including the covered populations, 7 key activities, and outcome areas. Mr. Banh also provided an overview of the two funding tracks for the draft Digital Equity Capacity Subgrant Design: Track 1 for regional/local ecosystems and Track 2 for targeted statewide ecosystems. Mr. Banh also provided a brief recap of the allowable uses for the Digital Equity Capacity Subgrant. Mr. Banh concluded his presentation by going into detail regarding overall themes received from the public comments on program design. For each main topic, Mr. Banh shared the public comment theme, CDT's response, and status of the update. He also introduced the renaming of the Digital Equity Capacity Subgrant program to California Digital Equity Program (CalDEP).

Discussion

Access & Deployment Advisor Maria Kelly moderated the Discussion sessions, starting with those with their hands raised on Zoom, and then those received via the Q&A and Chat box. The presenters proceeded to address questions.

There were many questions that came in through the Q&A and Chat box, and five meeting attendees raised their hands and came off mute to ask questions:

- Mark Revis, County of Napa
- Amy Cortina, LA DEAL
- Clint Koble, Indian Valley Innovation HUB
- Patrick Messac, #OaklandUndivided
- Kari Gray, Community Tech Network

Agenda Item 3 – CalDEP Technical Assistance Program

Mr. James Spencer, Broadband Administrative Manager at CDT's Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy, provided further information regarding the Digital Equity Capacity Subgrant / CalDEP technical assistance program. He

shared the program components currently under development or in consideration of being developed to support digital equity capacity subgrant applicants. These program components include written resources, webinars and video content, partnership coordination resource webpage, office hours, and Q&A cycles. Mr. Spencer then provided a first look at the CalDEP Landing Page and Partnership Coordination Resource for CalDEP page providing screenshots and an overview of the content found on the pages.

Discussion

Access & Deployment Advisor Maria Kelly moderated the Discussion sessions, starting with those with their hands raised on Zoom, and then those received via the Q&A and Chat box. The presenters proceeded to address questions. There were many questions that came in through the Q&A and Chat box, and three meeting attendees raised their hands and came off mute to ask questions.

- Monique Alvarado, Los Angeles Mission
- Crystal Rawls, CSU Dominguez Hills
- Ronald Suarez, Broadband Institute Foundation

Agenda Item 4 – Timeline & Next Steps

Anh Nguyen, Engagement and Operations Manager at CDT's Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy, previewed a tentative timeline that included key dates for NTIA State DECG Administration, Stakeholder Engagement, Post-Award NTIA State DECG Requirements, Subgrant Application & Award Process, and Subgrant Technical Assistance. Ms. Nguyen then provided stakeholder engagement next steps, which includes public meetings such as the California Broadband Council and Middle Mile Advisory Committee, stakeholder briefings and webinars, Statewide Implementation Group, Outcome Area Communities of Practice, Broadband for All Portal, as well as Broadband for All email updates. The Statewide Digital Equity Planning Group will be changed to the Statewide Implementation Group or SIG. She also shared that the Outcome Area Working Groups will transition to the Outcome Area Communities of Practice to support continued learning, information, collaboration, and coordination of digital equity efforts. Ms. Nguyen concluded her presentation by encouraging attendees to subscribe to the Broadband for All email updates.

Discussion

Access & Deployment Advisor Maria Kelly moderated the Discussion sessions, starting with those with their hands raised on Zoom, and then those received via the Q&A and Chat box. There were many questions that came in through the

Q&A and Chat box, and two meeting attendees raised their hands and came off mute to ask questions.

- Lewis Bean, Insight Public Sector
- Wally Siembab, South Bay Cities Council of Governments

Deputy Director Scott Adams thanked attendees and presenters for joining the briefing meeting. The meeting adjourned at 2:11 p.m.

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

Transcript

Let's wait a second for folks to come in, and we'll start shortly. Alright. Good afternoon, and welcome to the January 31st 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 very shortly, so please use the chat box to share your name, job title, and affiliated organization, as more folks are coming in from the waiting room. Before we begin, a few housekeeping items. Next slide, please. As you're aware, this meeting is being recorded, we will be posting the recording of this meeting, the slides and transcripts to the Broadband for All portal. One of our staff will add the link in our chat. Presenters, please cue Amanda to advance your slides. For viewers, please select side by side, speaker mode for the best viewing experience when slides are shared, and for visibility of our ASL interpreters closed. Captioning is available and please select CC, Closed Caption on the bottom toolbar and select "Show Subtitle". Please note that there is time allocated at the end of each agenda item for questions. Please use the Q&A box to type in your questions related to that portion of the agenda, while the presenter is presenting. 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. Please note, we will also temporarily turn off chat while the presenters are speaking, so that no questions are lost in the chat. Chat will be available during the discussion section. Okay, next slide, please. We have a full agenda this afternoon, with an opportunity for discussion after each agenda section listed here. We welcome you to turn on your camera and mic to participate during the discussion. In a moment CDT's Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy Deputy Director Scott Adams will begin with welcoming remarks and highlight key milestones of the DE Capacity Grant Program development, thus far. Next, Alex Banh, Principal from Broadband Equity Partnership will discuss modifications to the DE Capacity Grant Subgrant

Program Guidelines & Public Comment. Next, OBDL's Broadband Administrative Manager, James Spencer, will discuss the Partnership Coordination Resource for the DE Capacity Grant Subgrant Technical Assistance Program. Lastly, as OBDL's Engagement and Operations Manager, I will review the tentative timeline and any next steps. As a reminder, at the end of each presentation OBDL's Access and Deployment Advisor Maria Kelly will facilitate Q&A and a bi-directional discussion. Please feel free to turn on your mic or your video at that time to join us. First, I would like to introduce Deputy Director Scott Adams.

Thank you, Anh and good afternoon partners and stakeholders. It's really a pleasure to be here at our annual monthly update, and I want to just acknowledge our gratitude to each and every one of you and your organizations for the partnership that we've all shared over the last several years during the planning process. And now that we're shifting from planning and nearing to implementation, appreciate just how much all of us bring to the table, and how much our work complements each other. We also want to just take a moment to acknowledge that a significant number of our partners and you know, fellow residents here in California have been impacted by the fires down in Southern California. Our hearts go out to you and much empathy for what you and your communities are going through. Also want to acknowledge that, you know, we appreciate there's some other uncertainty out there and have much empathy, as we all work forward on, you know, achieving digital equity here in California. So, can we go to the next slide please? Wanted to just again use this opportunity kind of level set and recap some of the milestones that happened over the last year. And really, you know, starting on March 29th which was a day, one day after the National Telecommunications and Information Administration approved California's Digital Equity Plan that we all collectively you know, developed together. They released their Notice of Funding Opportunity for the California Digital Equity Capacity Grant. There was May 28th which was the State submitted its sort of administrative application for our statutory allocation of 70.2 million dollars really highlighting that May 29th through October 24th was the NTIA'S review of our application, you know, and curing and merit review process, and then we received notification that we would be receiving our allocation on November 4th and the performance period on the Capacity Grant began on December 24th. Next slide, please. Wanted to also take a moment as can we recap this is to highlight as, you know, we had indicated in the State Digital Equity Plan that we acknowledge that the Digital Equity Capacity Grant is not going to be enough to implement the entire plan. It's a significant amount, but that really it's incumbent upon all of us to seek other sources of funding, be it State or Federal grants, or private sector and philanthropic funding. So as we, you know, talk through the iteration of the

design of the overall Capacity Grant and the subgrant program really want to make sure that folks that we reacknowledge that that the way it's been designed is in the context of the other available funding out there, like the NTIA's Digital Equity Competitive Grant dollars, the NTIA's Native Entity Digital Equity Capacity Grants other Federal programs and other state programs like CPUC's CASF program and the Digital Divide Grant that they have. Next slide, please. Thank you. I think with that I wanted to really commend the hard work of the ecosystem here in California. I'm sure it comes as no surprise to many of you who have contributed to, or part of these partnerships, but in the spirit of seeking additional funding, we wanted to really congratulate the 13 California-serving entities that were recommended to be awarded Digital Equity Competitive Grants from the NTIA. Collectively the amount that was recommended is about 130 million dollars, which is almost twice the amount of the Digital Equity State Capacity Grant. Next slide, please. Thank you. Also, because, you know, we're tracking other funding that is received and coming into the State, we really wanted to acknowledge and congratulate the 6 California Tribal Nations that were awarded almost or over 12 million dollars in the latest round of the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program awards. So, congratulations again, and I think every dollar that comes into the State is going to help implement Broadband for All, and the aims of the Digital Equity Plan. Next slide, please. And again, you know, looking at all other areas, wanted to also highlight that there was an award through the USDA's Rural Development Broadband ReConnect Program and wanted to congratulate this year a telephone company that received an award over 11 million dollars to implement one of their projects. And again, this is, I think, all good news, because historically, California has not necessarily received as much funding from this program. So really, what the last 3 slides were intended to show is just how active and collaborative this ecosystem has been at being able to pull in other sources of funding to support the work of Broadband for All. Next slide, please. So now that we've kind of, you know, the recap of what our milestones were, and how you know collectively, we've all been successful at pulling in additional funds from outside of the State, wanted to just circle back on really, the purpose of the Digital Equity Subgrant Program and the Subgrant Program is designed to fund entities across the state, regional and local, to conduct activities to implement the State Digital Equity Plan. So really the focus to address digital equity barriers at the local, regional and state level, to support development of regional ecosystems and increase capacity to provide digital inclusion funding to trusted community partners and messengers, as was kind of outlined and highlighted during the planning process and in the Digital Equity Plan to endeavor to be equitable and allocate funding across every single county. Given that there are communities and neighborhoods in

every single county across the State, and where, you know, the digital divide is impacting folks and digital inequity is present so needs to be a focus here and then to really encourage the statewide innovation across outcome areas, and covered population focus. Next slide, please. So that's really the basis of my update here, really appreciate you taking the time. Again, as always, to come together in partnership in the spirit of this bi-directional conversation. Love to open it up. If there are any questions on any of the topics that I discussed.

Thank you. Scott. There, we don't have any questions in chat right now. But I can wait a moment, if anybody has a question about our sort of where we started and where we're gonna go. But we always remember that there's time throughout this meeting to ask your questions. So, I don't see anything, Scott, so I think we can go ahead and move ahead, and next we'll have Alex Banh, Principal at Broadband Equity Partnership covering the modifications of the subgrant program based on public comment. Thanks, Alex.

Thanks, Maria. Next slide, please. Yeah, so as Maria mentioned, I'll be covering the modifications to the subgrant program. And first, just to set the stage we want to start with some background on the subgrant program, you know, as which, as Scott mentioned, is funded through CDC State Digital Equity Capacity Grant from the NTIA. So NTIA's overarching goal for this grant program is for these funds to help states implement their State Digital Equity Plans or SDEPs. And in addition to implementing the SDEPs, NTIA requires states to focus on 4 things in deciding, you know, what projects or activities these grants will fund. So, the first thing is all Capacity Grant funded programs must focus on the 8 covered populations that are defined in the act. Next, programs must have measurable implementation strategies. So, all programs should align with the State's measurable objectives and goals. All programs should produce long-lasting, sustainable, and meaningful change and be guided by ongoing stakeholder engagement. So with that framing in mind, you know, the subgrant program is really designed to advance, you know, the goals in the California State Digital Equity Plan and in particular the subgrants will help California achieve Goals 2 and 3 from the plan, which focus on ensuring all Californians have access to affordable broadband and necessary devices and ensuring all Californians can access training and support to enable digital inclusion. These grants will also help the State achieve its policy outcomes, you know, through the achievement of these goals. Before we move on, I just want to note that Goal 1 in the Digital Equity Plan, which focuses on the availability of high-performance broadband will be addressed through other Broadband for All investments and the Federally funded BEAD program. So, you know, the Capacity Grant and the Subgrant program is really designed to focus on Goals 2 and 3. Next slide, please. So, as a

refresher, here's a deeper dive and a recap of what's in the California State Digital Equity Plan. On the left, we see the 8 Covered Populations here that are defined in the Digital Equity Act. So, these are the groups that the State must focus on and through the SDEP process, you know, the State had to understand their barriers and needs when it comes to digital equity and develop activities to address those needs. So, the 8 Covered Populations are individuals living in covered households. So, these are households at or below 150% of the Federal poverty line. Next, are aging individuals, incarcerated individuals, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals with language barriers, members of racial or ethnic minority groups and individuals who reside primarily in rural areas. So those are the groups and the cover populations that you know by statute, according to the Digital Equity Act and the NTIA CDT and the State has to focus on. Next, are the key activities that are outlined in the SDEP. As far as you know, what the State will do to achieve goals and address the needs and barriers that are found. So these are the 7 key activities and we can see that the subgrant program is really designed to advance and implement key activity number 4. So having a Digital Equity Capacity Subgrant program that could fund a variety of entities to implement digital equity and digital inclusion programs in their communities. And then we also see that other aspects of the Capacity Grant will help advance other key activities, such as Activity Number 5 funding state managed digital inclusion programs and activity number 6, developing digital inclusion tools and best practices that you know, everybody stakeholders across the State could use. And finally, the SDEP also focuses on 6 outcome areas. So, you know, in defining measurable objectives like, you know, the State's objective to close the device gap, or, you know, increase digital skills, you know, or cover populations. The State also wants to make sure that these objectives are connected to outcomes in areas like education, health, digital literacy and inclusion, essential services, accessibility, civic engagement, workforce and economic development and tribal collaboration. So, making sure that all digital equity goals and objectives can connect to some of these greater policy outcome areas. Next slide, please. Yeah, so with that background in mind, you know, let's take a look at the design of the Subgrant program that we've laid out in the draft grant guidelines. So, the Subgrant program is really designed to focus on regional local and targeted statewide ecosystem development through 2 funding tracks. Track 1 focuses on regional and local ecosystem development. It provides a formula funding allocation per county geographic boundary, and you know, within these counties CDT encourages one lead applicant, you know, per geographic area. Subgrants in this track will provide funding for the development or refinement of regional local Digital Equity Plans. And you know, once these plans are finalized, these grants can also be used as

funding for local entities to have the capacity to implement activities and projects, you know, as outlined in their plans. So, this local capacity is also meant to be aided by centralized services, such as like a statewide digital literacy platform that the State will provide, and in this track eligible entities can serve as lead subgrantees for their county or multi-county region. And the idea is that, you know, that lead subgrantee is going to coordinate administration of the subgrant for that entire geographic area that would include planning partnership, development and coordination and implementation, you know, across the entire region, and across, you know, all the different partners. And along with, this they can make second tier subgrants to other implementation partners in their area, you know, to assist with carrying out programs and projects as defined in their plans. And these second tier subgrantees could include local community-based organizations or other nonprofits. So that's Track 1. Track 2 provides subgrants for the development of statewide ecosystems and innovation that would target a specific outcome area. You know, so the ones that we saw before outcome areas like education, health, workforce development or for a specific covered population. So, in this track, nonprofits and digital inclusion providers with the statewide reach for that outcome area or cover population should apply as well as tribes and tribal consortia and associations. So, yeah, this is the design of the program, and you know, as we saw before, this design is really meant to address the goals of the SDEP, as well as the requirements and focal points, as specified by the NTIA for the Capacity Grant. Next slide, please. So here are some Allowable Uses of the Subgrants. They could be used to develop local Digital Equity Plans. They could also be used for broadband adoption campaigns, digital navigation services and programs, digital literacy and skills, training, targeted device distribution as well as technology or digital skills related workforce development training and apprenticeships. Next slide, please. So lastly, we just wanted to walk through the remaining public comments that we haven't covered in previous briefings, and you know the status of each one. So just as a reminder, in September and October we had a Public Comment process, where we, you know, collected comments on the draft grant guidelines, and in previous briefings we walked through the status of different themes and categories of public comments. So, you know, this is the last batch of comments that, you know, we wanted to address today. So, the first comment theme is around the subgrant name. So just an update for everyone, the subgrant program will be officially named the California Digital Equity Program or CalDEP for short. So you'll start seeing that in our communications and materials around the subgrants. Another comment we received was, or you know, theme of comments we received was around how many awards CDT plans to make for a county as a geographic area, and you

know, seeing if we could make multiple awards for the county, for a given county. So we are clarifying that CDT, will not award more than one subgrant per county in Track 1. And you know, as a reminder, applicants can also apply and be awarded for a multi-county regional application. And as another reminder, you know, just because we're only awarding one subgrant per county right, we want to emphasize that the lead subgrantee in that county can and should be coordinating with partners across the county, across communities, across municipalities, to develop their regional or local plans and activities. And, you know, as appropriate make second tier subgrantees, you know to specific community-based organizations or local entities. So, you know, that is definitely part of the design and something that we want to encourage. Another public comment theme was around timeline of finalizing partnerships and second tier subgrantees. So, you know, these comments were, you know, coming from previous experience with recent Digital Equity Grant programs where applicants were required to list all second tier subgrantees or partners, you know, at the time of application, and it just created a huge rush and a lot of stress. So, you know, one thing we're clarifying is that with this program, lead applicants, you know, if they have partners and second tier subgrantees already identified if they can list those in the application, but they can also finalize those partners and second tier subgrantees after award. So just along with the design of the program, you know, we really want lead applicants and lead subgrantees to have time to develop their regional and local Digital Equity Plans, and through that planning process they can then identify who should receive their second tier subgrantees. So, no need to have all that identified at the time of application. We also received comments around second tier subgrantee requirements and eligibility, and these comments were asking if you know there could be any flexibility for second tier subgrantees to maybe not have to meet all the eligibility requirements as defined by the NTIA. So, you know one thing that we had to circle back with NTIA and see you know what the rules are here and unfortunately, we did get guidance that you know, per Federal rules all subgrantee eligibility requirements have to apply to subgrantees, no matter what tier they are. So even if they're a second tier subgrantee, they still need to have things like a unique entity identification number or UEI from state and gov and they also need to belong to one of the eligible entity categories. So that's something that you know will be clarified in the final grant guidelines. We received comments on track one's funding formula suggesting different variables to include or different data sources to include. So, in reviewing the various comments, the decision is that we want to stick as close to the formula that was specified in the Digital Equity Act, and that the NTIA used to allocate funding to States. And then we also wanted to stick to some of the changes that

we agreed on, you know, based on prior stakeholder engagement, like the questionnaire that was released last summer around, like which elements of the Digital Equity Act formula, you know, should we emphasize. So, we're not making any updates to the variables or the steps. So, we are still going to focus on cover populations as well as look at relative lack of broadband availability and adoption in deciding the formula allocations to each county. But we are adopting one of the public comment suggestions which was to use the most recent American Community Survey or ACS data on lack of broadband adoption, you know, for that particular step. And the reason why we decided to adopt this is, you know, we thought that it made a lot of sense to, you know to take a look at the most recent data we have on broadband adoption gaps in the county in determining how we're gonna allocate funds. And you know that way we also ensure that funds are aligned with the plans and the data that folks will be using to develop those plans. So, the latest ACS 5-year data set was released, you know, for the year ending in 2023 back in December. And we are planning to incorporate that and updating the allocations, you know, based on that data for that one particular step. We received comments on how the State is going to reallocate unused funds. So, let's say no applications were received for a particular county, and funds are, you know, no one applied for those funds for that allocation? So, you know, in consulting with NTIA, and in looking at the design of the program, and you know, as Scott mentioned, wanting to make sure that we have are able to fund capacity and ecosystems in every single county across California. The decision is that any unused funds will be allocated in subsequent RFA rounds as needed. So, if counties don't apply in the upcoming RFA round, we're planning to open a new round so that they could reapply so that they could apply, and, you know, conduct necessary outreach and promotion in order for applications to be submitted. We received comments related to the administrative cost cap that was in the draft grant guidelines. So, you know, it was stated at 3% on administrative costs in the draft grant guidelines and comments, you know, said that for many subgrantees it would just be very difficult to administer this subgrant, you know, and stay under that cap. So again, in consulting with NTIA and Federal rules, we are removing that administrative cap and instead are adopting the Federal indirect cost policy for indirect costs so that subgrantees, if they have a NICRA, they can use that for their indirect. If they don't have a NICRA, they can use the de minimis rate of 15% of modified total direct cost which aligns with the latest Federal guidance. We received comments on the payments and invoice schedule for subgrantees in the draft, it was a quarterly reimbursement process, and you know, comments asked, if we could look at allowing for reimbursements more frequently than that. Unfortunately, due to administrative process constraints

and you know, looking at how funds are going to flow from the State to Federal, from State and Federal levels. You know, we have, we decided to keep the reimbursement process and an invoice schedule as quarterly just because there's just too many constraints to try to do reimbursements and payments more frequently than quarterly. The last batch of comments that we received that we want to address here are around the advanced payments and comments, asking if we could go up to 25% of sub grant and make that available as an advanced payment in line with some recent State laws. So, this one is still under consideration. We want to make sure that whatever policy change we make here is in alignment with Federal rules and guidance as well as State laws. So, we'll have to, you know, provide an update later on that final decision. That's still under consideration. Next slide. I think that's it for my updates, and happy to open it up to discussion.

Thank you, Alex. We'll now move into the discussion portion of the modifications around the grant guidelines. If you could raise your hand, and then I can acknowledge you and ask you to unmute and come on camera. If you'd like to ask a question specifically, Alex is available. Again, always remember that if a question comes up later and we want to go back to Alex, we can. Mark Remis, if you'd like to unmute yourself and ask your question. That'd be great.

Hi! Can you hear me?

Can you hear me?

Yes.

Good. When can we expect a final document of the guidelines?

Yeah, I'll take that, Alex. Hi, everybody, as Alex mentioned, there's been some significant back and forth. I mean, this is a program that's funded by Federal dollars that has to conform to 2 CFR. Which is the, you know, kind of the guidelines on granting. And then we have to conform those to state policies. And so, there's some remaining items that we're working on. You'll see the draft guidelines when we launch the request for application period. Sometime in the 3rd or in the 1st quarter of this year.

Thanks, Mark and Scott. Any other questions specifically to the subgrant program guidelines in response to public comment? All right, we do have one question in the Q&A Scott, that asks if the capacity grant funds are at risk with the change of the administration, and how much of the funding has been received by the State?

Yeah, thanks for the question. You know, we can't really speculate on the impact to the funds right now. We know there's a lot of uncertainty that's out there, and we empathize with ensure you know, some of the concerns that folks have. We're just going to keep our heads down and move forward as planned, until we are informed otherwise.

Thank you. Scott.

Waiting a few seconds more.

There's a question regarding when the next RFA, will be. But I believe you just answered the question when the 1st RFA will be released. So, I'm not sure is that in relationship to the slide around round 2, Amy, if you could clarify, that would be great. Amy Hamblin, and then Amy Cortina we'll go to you. Oh, no! The second RFA. I don't think we have an answer to that question.

I can, so I can take the first one. We want it 1st things first, right? We wanna do the first request for application. And it's our hope and our effort that it's fully subscribed, and that every county geographic allocation is applied for and awarded either in single county, you know, coalition application, or a multi-regional county application. So, you know, given it's you know, the State grant is a 5-year grant, and these sub grants will end up to be about a maximum 3-year, 10-month grant, if everything goes out you know, by I think late summer. So, I think that's the way that I would answer the question. So, we'll cross the bridge when we get there, if we have to do another request for application period. But I think, is Alex mentioned in his comment, what we would want to do then is, take a look and see, you know, what were the constraints around the county allocations that weren't either applied for and awarded and do some pre-outreach and potentially pre-technical assistance, to make sure that entities or coalition in those counties were prepared to actually apply for and receive the funds in a second round.

Thank you, Scott, and then, Amy Cortina, we'll go to you, please.

Just a clarifying question about one of the changes as a result of the public comments. So, Alex, you said that the previous requirement to have a cap of 3% for admin for indirect expense is now an organization, can choose a de minimis? So like, if my organization already has a de minimis with the Department of Labor we do not need to have a negotiated indirect is that I just want to make sure, because we put in an application in December but we know this takes 6 months for a negotiation to go through, and with this administration could probably be longer. So, I just want to make sure we don't need to rely on that to be negotiated. We can just take the de minimis if we have to. Is that right?

Yeah, if you don't have a finalized NICRA, you can take the de minimis, which is 15% of.

Yeah.

Modify, total direct cost.

Awesome. Thank you.

Thank you, Amy. Clint, we'll go to you next. You have your hand raised. If you could please unmute and ask your question.

Thank you. Yes, Clint Coley, from Plumas County. This question is for you, Alex. I really appreciate, you know, the announcement that there'll be one subgrant per county, you know, for the Digital Equity Plan. My question is, since CDT canceled the rural routes for Plumas County, what should our strategy be trying to get involved in this and moving forward?

Hi, I'm Scott Adams here with the Department of Technology. I'll take that. I think the question that you're asking is related to the Middle Mile, and we empathize, and we know that like within Broadband for All, there are many different, you know, programs that are helping us achieve digital equity. We can take that question back to the Middle Mile Broadband Initiative team and have them reach out, you know, to you and connect with them. We understand that, you know, there may be some areas where you know, just the availability of infrastructure may prevent utilizing or maximizing to the fullest the digital equity subgrant dollars to do the non-infrastructure related activities.

Yeah. Plumas County being a Presidential declared disaster county because of the Dixie Fire in 2021 had lots of its infrastructure destroyed. So, it's really difficult for our recovery not to have that infrastructure replaced or installed.

Thank you, Clint.

Thanks, Clint. We'll will, you know, either loop back with you online and make sure that we connect you either to the Middle Mile Broadband Initiative team or the Public Utilities Commission team.

Thank you.

Alex and Scott, I'm gonna try to combine 2 comments from the chat and they both have to do with allocations by counties potential allocations. When or where can we see the determined allocations per county? Not the percent of the 70.1 million.

Yeah, I'll take that. Thank you for the question. We are like, I said, we're finalizing. We wanted to come back first here to the stakeholders to respond to the request to take a look at the allocation. You know, as Alex shared that we've got the, you know, we have added the or updated the ACS data, to the 2023 it will be a slight modification to the percentages, but very modest. And you know, probably anticipate will show the actual dollar amounts when we release the RFA later on this quarter.

Thank you, Scott, and a follow up question again, a combination of a couple. The question about what has CDT or Broadband Digital Literacy received so far of the allocation? And has it received the entire 70.1 million? Or is that a drawdown process?

CDT received on November 4th notification of our award for the full 70.2 1 million dollars, as you know, obligated to the State and we, in order for us to access that, that's a drawdown process. So, we haven't received any funds or made any drawdowns on those ones.

Thank you, Scott. Patrick, I see you have your hand raised if you'd like to unmute yourself, please. Oh. Patrick says he's not allowed to unmute. There you are.

Thanks! Thanks for the updates, and excited to see the way that some of the feedback sitting incorporated into the guidelines. 2 questions. One is like many folks on the call who may be involved in a competitive grant that was received, we're thrilled 120 plus million dollars, which is almost twice as much as the Capacity Grant program super crucial, and we are all, during a lot of uncertainty right now. All of our attempts to reach out to the Federal Government specifically NIST the National Institute of Science and Technology, which is responsible for issuing our CD450s, which obligates the funds. which is a crucial step to ensuring that we get the funding. We're not getting any response. So, my 1st question is, what steps, if any, can CDT or the Governor's office take, or someone take, to help get us a response with some urgency from NIST regarding the Competitive Grant CD450s. And then my second question is related to this notion of like percentage versus dollar amounts and appreciate that with the new ACS data, it might change the percentages which would change the dollar amounts. But another huge part of the allocation is the percentage of money that goes to counties versus the percentage of money for statewide projects or state activities. So my second question would be are there any changes in the guidelines to the split between the counties which I think, is currently at like 54% of the funding and the state getting 46 is, I know that there's been some push to try to increase the size of the pot for counties, so is there any

feedback on the commentary on allocating more monies to the counties as opposed to state activities? Thanks.

Thanks Patrick. Like, I said, we empathize with the uncertainty that's out there associated with you know, just across the board when it relates to Federal grants and loans. We're monitoring the situation and being as vigilant as we can. At the moment, I don't have a great answer for you, in terms of how you know either us or any other instrument of the State could intervene with NIST given that that's like, particularly on the competitive grants, is a grant direct to applicants. But please know that we know how important it is, and as soon as we get, you know, any new information or any ideas that shows where we can help, we will do that. The second question that you asked about and I think this really relates to, you know, the allocations for the county geographic allocations going from percent to dollars, you know, as we're looking at how we're administering the grant, we're looking at the state agency, you know, digital inclusion programs and seeing what we can or cannot fund. So, we want to have some flexibility for those to move around the percentages. So right now, what you see in the in the draft guidelines which really you know, reflects a no less than amount for the allocation and we're looking at ways to increase it. That's, gonna you know, be informed on market research and what other kind of programs we can establish with the state agencies and, you know, what they come in.

Thank you, Scott. Kari, would you like to ask your question now and unmute?

Okay, yes. Let's talk about those state agency allocations. Do the State agencies have to apply or accept the allocation? Or are you just going to assign them their allocation? And do they have to have a plan for their allocation before their allocation is assigned? And what happens if they don't accept their allocation. You know who I'm talking about.

No, I don't. It's an interesting question. I would say this, Kari, that throughout the Digital Equity Planning process, and the Digital Equity Plan, it was very clear that both there was a role for State agency digital inclusion programs to play. There were some that were identified during the planning process, and some that were identified afterward, and that we've been very clear about the buckets that there would be a bucket of centralized services or tools and resources that could be universally either developed, curated, procured to support the work of the of the subgrantees, not be prescriptive, but to support the work of the subgrantees, and then some of the funds would be maintained by the State where they could have a, you know where there was a state agency that had a direct connection to providing services to a specific covered population. And there was like an economic plus efficiency, you know kind of combination that

we could make significant progress on both on the outcomes associated with. yeah, both the measurable objectives and the outcomes associated with the plan. And so, we've done extensive, you know, market research and negotiations with very a lot of different, I don't want to say negotiations, but market research and discussions with different state agencies right now. And at present, we've probably only focused on 2 that are relatively small amount and we're still trying to see if we can make it work. But those, you know are, you know, things that would be you know, partnerships, you know, between CDT and other State agencies that would be under the auspices of you know the small amount of the funds that the State would be receiving to actually do work associated with the Digital Equity Plan.

Thank you, Scott. Thank you for the question. There is a... for the sake of time, and I will clarify, Wally - there's a couple of engagements on your question. If that if this, if Scott did not just answer your question right now, can you just repost it, and we'll answer it in the next round of discussion, but for the sake of keeping us on track, I'd like to introduce James Spencer, our Broadband Administrative Manager, as and he's going to cover the Assistance Program and Partnership Coordination Resource.

Thank you, Maria. Hi, and good afternoon. Today I'll provide updates on the CalDEP Technical Assistance Program. Next slide, please. So, as a reminder, these are some of the plan resources we have communicated out, and we will provide more information or additional information on each component as it becomes available. Next slide, please. And so here we're, we're currently developing the landing page for the California Digital Equity Program, and we will build it out as more information becomes available. Some plan components of the landing page include a brief program overview, applicant eligibility, the different funding tracks available, get ready resources and links to any additional resources. Next slide, please. So, in response to public comments and other stakeholder input, we're also developing a Partner Coordination Resource. The coordination resource will be a tool for potential applicants and other interested parties to identify partners and discuss what a collaboration effort might look like. So, in addition to providing basic contact information, participating organizations will be able to identify their partnership preferences, funding tracks and activities in county or counties plan to serve. Participation will be completely optional, and submitting information to the partnership coordination page, and the contents of the information submitted will have no effect on an application. We are in the last stages of quality assurance verification for the landing page and Partnership Coordination Resource, with

plans to launch soon. Once published, the pages will be open for public view. That is my update, and happy to open up for discussion.

Thank you, James. I'll wait and see if anybody raises their hands or has any questions on this section. There are no new questions in chat yet and again we will have some time at the end for additional questions if something comes up. Oh, Monique Alvarado, if you'd like to answer. Ask your question, please unmute and ask your question.

Hi, I wanted to understand if we're opening up a Partnership Collaboration Resource, approximately how much time will be given for people to look for partnerships, because it seems like there's a very much like a wide, level regional focus in these grants. So how long, how much time will people be given access to that platform ahead of the RFP to work on those collaboratives?

Thank you for the question. We intend to launch it as soon as possible, and I think there's a very high likelihood that given some of the outstanding issues we've got to resolve, you know, between State and Federal guidelines on the on the sub grant program that I'll probably not be launched until sometime in mid-March. And so, we would expect that the partner collaboration resource would be up for at least a month prior to the RFA and then during the entire RFA process. And so, really, we know that there was a call for folks to want to have a way to connect with one another and to know who else was applying for applications, you know, or interested in applying to lead or support in certain areas. And so, like James said, the team really tried to say like, "how could we put something together" hat it's not, you know, required or prescriptive, but it's a way that folks can kind of, you know, raise their hands and say, like, this is, this is what we're interested in - this is what we're doing, and a way for folks to find each other if they don't already, you know, know each other or aware of each other, and to potentially collaborate on a on a bigger, you know, application.

Thank you, Scott. And I'm going to apologize in advance. I'm not totally sure how to say your name appropriately but, "Kawena Kawena." Please correct me.

It's Krystal. I'm using my partner Kawena's link. And honestly, I didn't notice it until you said something, so no worries.

Yeah, okay.

Krystal Rawls, friend to the community. So, I've been in these meetings before. I want to elevate Wally's question. I didn't understand the answer, and I understand the challenges that we're all experiencing right now. But to your best attempt please be clear. The central services, how do we participate? And

we've asked in several meetings, and we've been told we'll get an answer the next meeting, or the next meeting. We would like to know as a community - how do we participate in the central services?

Hi, thank you for that, Dr. Rawls. Good to see you. And so, I am looking at Wally's question, so we may want to answer that separately, because I'm not sure that that was what his question was about. The centralized services are things that we've called out in the State Digital Equity Plan that were recommended by the public. So, a digital literacy, you know, assessment and training platform, a workforce development hub that could support folks. Those are the 2 things that we're looking at. And like we've said, we've established we've actually done a lot of market research that we've shared with folks and given that those are procurements, or potential would be procurements, please note that when there is an appropriate time for us to come together and seek feedback and input from the ecosystem on how we can, you know, further, refine or modify our thinking, or how we design those things, we will do that. It just hasn't been, you know in the order of operations the time to focus on that. So, we're not trying to hold that off and we actually are really eager to hear more from the stakeholders on how we could design or modify, you know, any centralized services beyond the 2 that are mentioned in the plan. And other things like the low-cost offer finder that we offer on the Broadband for All Portal or expanding on the Digital Equity Resource Finder that was that the beta was developed out of the DEEM Tool. So, we've just been really prioritizing other things like working with y'all to try to refine the subgrant program so we can get that out as soon as possible.

Thank you, Scott. Let's jump to Ronald. If you'd like to unmute and ask your question, please. I'm looking, there you are.

Yeah, I couldn't unmute at first. I had to click okay in the middle, and I'm a quadriplegic so my finger is slow. We are moving to Alameda, where I'm in Michigan, in Ann Arbor, but we are moving to Alameda in a week and opening an office there. So, I wanted to know about the CalDEP partners, and how I can find out more about it? Especially being a quadriplegic, I do everything digitally and we have a digital platform cooperative. It's a learning management system and a meeting place and a marketplace and I'm looking to partner with people in California. We're already partnered with the broadband toolkit.com out of San Francisco and so how can I get more information about the CalDEP partners? The website is not launching yet, because our platform everything is licensed as community commons, creative commons, that is. And we are looking to make our platform available, we're incorporating deep seek AI, which is free, open source.

Thank you. Mr. Torres, I believe you said you're moving here soon, so welcome in advance. Our team will drop our contact information and the in the chat. They'll also share a link to the Broadband for All Portal, which is really this central kind of storefront for most of what we're doing. The partner resource that James was speaking of, and his team is gonna launch, we'll share that link live once, we'll share that link once it goes live, and it'll more likely be in the next 5 to 7 days. And it will go out in a thank you message, likely to the folks on this call, or in this meeting.

Thanks.

Thank you, Scott. For the sake of time, and we have one more Q&A, so we can answer final questions in just a couple of minutes. I'd like to introduce Anh Nguyen, who's gonna share with us about the timeline and next steps, and that may answer some of your questions, but if not, we will have a couple of minutes for final questions at the end.

Thanks, Maria, and thanks everyone. Next slide, please. Thank you. What you'll see here is our SDEP in the Capacity Grant program implementation. Just to draw your attention to the 5 rows, and I'll not go in detail on each of them. But up to Q1 of 2025 was our administrative process as well as stakeholder engagement that we've done to collaborate on the design of the program that we've reported on so far and just some tentative Q2 Q3, in which we will continue to engage with stakeholders. Row 4 you see, this is familiar to last time, indicating that the period of performance started on December 1st of 2024, and thus we are currently in that phase. Row 4 subgrant application and award process - our 60-day RFA, 90-day review app, 30-day award is still consistent, and, as Scott mentioned before, the RFA is tentative to launch this quarter of 2025. And then, Amy, I know you asked about the TA timeline. I'm referring back to what Scott and James mentioned earlier, our 1st few TA resources will be launching very shortly. So, within 5 to 7 days, with the partner coordination resource, and then more soon after that. So please be on the lookout, we will communicate through the thank you emails as well as our email updates. So next slide, please. And just one note, the timeline is subject to change pending Federal guidelines. So please bear with us, and we will be transparent, accurate of what we share in each stakeholder briefing. And then here some of you are familiar with a few of our engagement opportunities, but to reemphasize our commitment is to our values is to be transparent, to be equitable as well as accessible with our information. At the same time, we want to be accurate with the information we share with you. And so, as you know, we have our quarterly public meetings, including the California Broadband Council and the Middle Advisory Committee meetings. In addition to that, we have created the

stakeholder briefings and webinars like this to increase our bi-directional engagement. And being able to take your questions, being able to converse and have this dialogue that we've been having. So, we hope to continue doing this in 2025 and some of the other for you're very familiar with the Statewide Implementation Group, the Outcome Area Communities of Practice strategies that we've done in the SDEP planning process, now going into the implementation phase. And as you've seen before in the chat, our Broadband for All Portal is constantly being reviewed and updated to make sure that our information and that you get the information and the updates. And lastly, if you haven't subscribed already, please do so on the broadband or email to get the Broadband for All email monthly update where it covers not only digital equity implementation process, but all of our Broadband for All programs and initiatives as well. So, thank you for that. I give back the mic to Maria to answer any questions, to facilitate other questions.

I can try to answer. Thank you. And acknowledging that time, if you're able to stay with us, please do. We just have one more question right now on queue. But this meeting is being recorded, and you can view the end of it at another time. Lewis, if you would like to open your mic and ask your question, please.

Hi, everyone. My question was for James. I was just wondering how the, what kind of partnerships specifically, you're gonna be highlighting? So, we're an IT reseller, we're very closely partnered with Apple, Apple's on the call with us, too. We're just wondering if that's the kind of level of partnership you're looking for. Or could you be a little more specific about what's gonna be advertised on your, under your website?

I'll take this one. James. So, Mr. Bean. I'm wondering so would, James had shared was the Partnership Coordination Resource that we've developed for specifically to connect people so that they could find each other. You know, prior to and during the request for application period for the subgrant program, and the subgrant program is encouraging one lead entity per each county to develop like a coalition of partners. And to go in and apply for the money, which would then fund a very small portion for planning. If there's not a plan for that area to develop a plan that aligns with the State Digital Equity Plan and then allows the flexibility to subgrant the remainder out to second tier subgrantees. And so, when you know what we're hearing from folks is, if there are, particularly over the life of this, is that there have been you know a concern about how can smaller, maybe new entrants to this find some of the bigger folks who are developing applications and get connected with them. That's really the goal of the Partner Collaboration Resource. And so, you know, when you look at the nature of what these grants will fund, which is planning plus

capacity. And the capacity is really around broadband adoption, digital navigation, digital literacy training, targeted device, distribution and workforce development, I would think that your entity might want to identify yourself, as you know, a potential partner in the device distribution or workforce development category, if you know there's a component where you're refurbishing computers and teaching folks to do that. So, I think that that would be the focus of the Partner Collaboration Resource. And then, additionally, we've got another tool that we've developed that would kind of be like a developed centralized service where, you know, to create a statewide appendix or search engine where both organizations and individuals could find you know, digital inclusion service providers, you know, in their areas, in their cities and their towns. So, there's 2 different things, but I think you were talking about the Partner Collaboration Resource, and I hope I answered your question.

You did so that is a goal of part of what will be done through that website, then?

Yeah, I mean, we're, I think we were responding what we heard there was a need for. And we hope we hit the mark and created a space where people could find each other if they needed us to facilitate that.

Appreciate that. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you, Scott, and for our final question, Wally, I see it in chat. Is that the same question that you have your hand raised for, and if not, could you please, it'll be our last question. Thank you.

Yes. Thanks. Well, it's more or less I since the State is keeping, you know, substantial portion of the NTIA grant to develop, to develop centralized services. You know, look, for example, I've read in in the earlier documentation that there was something, it's a cadre of people who are digital navigators forget the exact name unless I know what that program is and how many they're going to be, and how my subregion would apply to use them, I don't know whether to put that kind of thing in my grant application myself. And then this this sort of corollary to that is, how do you know what you're planning for the State agency to produce is actually what the rest of us need. Unless we see your plan and can combat on it and say, "Wow, nobody really needs the digital navigators", as my example. I'm just saying, it's a lot of money, and I want to see how it's being used, and so I don't have to apply for the same stuff.

Got it. Thanks. And I can appreciate that, you know. Mr. Siembab, in the Digital Equity Plan, I thought we mentioned that that when we're talking there's centralized services and there's State agency management programs. And so centralized services are just tools and resources that would be incumbent upon us on administrator of a grant to use our, you know, either convening or procurement, or purchasing power to make things easier to address the needs of the subgrantees. This is something that was called out in the planning process. So centralized services are, you know, were called out very specifically in the Digital Equity Plan, a digital literacy assessment and training platform, a workforce development hub, the annual online and mobile friendly digital equity survey digital equity, ecosystem mapping tool, and there's some other things that we would develop. The State agency digital inclusion services are like, I said, we've been doing market research and working with folks to see, you know what if any state agencies have programs that conform to the needs of them, you know, addressing the measurable objectives and the outcomes in the plan. We're looking at 2 of those and combined, it's a relatively small amount of the Digital Equity Planning. And further, I think to answer the question about percentages is, we had said from the get-go, and this is why we ascribed a percentage in the draft guidelines as a no less than is the NTIA allows states on grants of this size to expend some portion of the funds on maintaining and updating the Digital Equity Plan on administration, on evaluation and one other category. And we're committed to being as frugal with our administration as possible, so we can put as much of the funds in the program as possible. And so, part of what we're doing now is just working with the budget and trying to see what works and what fits mostly to our goal. But we appreciate that you know the feedback that we're receiving from the ecosystem about maximizing as much funding as possible to go to local and regional and to clarifying as much as possible where centralized services can be used to support the ecosystem partners, without getting too much into it. I think the State managed digital inclusion programs that we're looking at now probably would be more dependent on partnership with the subgrantee coalitions, then the subgrantee coalitions would be potentially on the ones that we're considering. And as soon as we figure out, if those are possible, we'll share more information with the ecosystem here.

Thank you, everyone for your questions and your participation, and I'll pass it back to Scott to close us out this afternoon.

Thank you. Maria. I just wanted to say that we are grateful and humbled for your partnership. We hope we are, the progress that we're making and how we're engaging and sharing information is, you know, living up to the promise and the

bar that we're setting for ourselves, and that the ecosystem and ask us to do. We're eager to hear where we can do better. And we want to acknowledge that there is, you know, some uncertainty at this timeframe, and we share that uncertainty, and we're committed to continuing to move forward on this work together. Want to thank you again for all of your feedback and input. For those of you who are new to this briefing, wanted to let you know that there's a QR code here where you can sign up for our Broadband for All monthly email update. We've got our Broadband for All Portal website URL right there, and the digital equity staff inbox is also on the screen. And so, if there's any follow-on questions that we didn't answer any, you know, requests for meetings or listening sessions, please reach out to that inbox and we'll get back to you. But just appreciate your time and your partnership and wish you and your families really a good weekend and a good month until we next see you.