

**State Digital Equity Plan & Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program
Stakeholder Briefing
February 26, 2025
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Meeting Minutes and Transcript**

The State Digital Equity Plan (SDEP) and Digital Equity Capacity Grant (DECG) Program Stakeholder Briefing met virtually on Wednesday, February 26, 2025, at 2:00 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. Closed captioning was provided as an option for attendees throughout the meeting.

Agenda

Ms. Anh Nguyen briefly provided an overview of the SDEP & DECG Program Stakeholder Briefing agenda. Deputy Director Scott Adams will share welcome remarks and highlight key milestones of the SDEP and DE Capacity Grant Program thus far. Principal of Broadband Equity Partnership, Shawn Daugherty will present on SDEP & Capacity Grant Program Design & Federal Expectations. Principal of Broadband Equity Partnership Alex Banh will discuss Modifications to the CalDEP Guidelines/Public Comment. And Broadband Administrative Manager James will discuss the CalDEP Technical Assistance Program. Finishing the meeting with the next steps will be presented by Engagement and Operations Manager Anh Nguyen.

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 SDEP and DE Capacity Grant Program milestones since receiving the Planning Grant in 2022. Mr. Adams then closed out his portion of the presentation with an overview of the metrics of engagement that informed the California Digital Equity Program (CalDEP) design, including 8 SDEP

Implementation and Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program Stakeholder Briefings, 2 Surveys and Questionnaires, 124 Market Research Meetings, and 22 Presentations at Stakeholders' Convenings, Conferences, and Summits.

Discussion

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

Agenda Item 2 – SDEP & Capacity Grant Program Design & Federal Expectations

Ms. Shawn Daugherty, Principal of Broadband Equity Partnership, began her presentation with the Focus of the State Digital Equity Plan, recapping the 8 covered populations, 7 key SDEP activities, and the 6 outcome areas. Ms. Daugherty then provided an overview of the SDEP and Capacity Grant Program purpose and principles, including the NTIA's Capacity Grant overarching goal and the SDEP goals and state policy outcomes that will be advanced through the California Digital Equity Program (CalDEP). Ms. Daugherty also provided the State's Digital Equity Capacity Grant Centralized Services and Inclusion Efforts with examples quoted from the SDEP. Ms. Shawn Daugherty concluded her presentation with reviewing the two funding tracks for CalDEP as well as highlighting some allowable uses of 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, but no attendees came off of mute to ask questions.

Agenda Item 3 – Modifications to Subgrant Program Guidelines/Public Comment

Mr. Alex Banh, Principal of Broadband Equity Partnership, began his presentation by going into detail regarding overall themes for Grant Administration and Eligibility, Program Details, and Allowable Costs. For each main theme, Mr. Banh shared a detailed description as well as the status of the modifications to the CalDEP Grant Guidelines by indicating whether the modifications were changed due to public comments or guidance from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

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

- William Cooper, The Becoming Project INC.
- Shelby Arthur, Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast

Agenda Item 4 – 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 being developed to support digital equity capacity subgrant applicants. These program components include written resources, webinars and video content, partnership coordination, office hours, and Q&A cycles. Mr. Spencer then provided a brief overview of the CalDEP Landing Page and Partnership Coordination Resource for CalDEP Page, each has screenshots, QR codes, and an overview of the content found on the pages. Lastly, Mr. James Spencer gave a live demo of the CalDEP Landing Page and Partnership Coordination Resource on the Broadband for All Portal, as well as giving a live demo of the google sheet that will house the information. The Partnership Coordination Resource is a tool that applicants may use to identify other organizations they might wish to partner with on an application. Mr. Spencer also noted that this is completely optional and submitting this information will not affect your chances for application submissions. He highlighted that the form should only be completed by eligible entities that are seeking to be leads or partner with leads on CalDEP application.

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, but no attendees came off of mute to ask questions.

Agenda Item 5 – Timeline & Next Steps

Anh Nguyen, Engagement and Operations Manager at CDT's Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy, began her presentation by providing

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 (SIG), Outcome Area Communities of Practice, Broadband for All Portal, as well as Broadband for All email updates. Ms. Nguyen also shared a few highlights of submissions from stakeholders that were included in the Broadband for All Monthly Email Update and made a Call for Community Spotlight submissions from stakeholders. Ms. Nguyen concluded her presentation with a tentative timeline that included key dates for NTIA State DECG Administration, Stakeholder Engagement, Post-Award NTIA State DECG Requirements, CalDEP Application & Award Process, and CalDEP Technical Assistance.

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, but no attendees came off of mute to ask questions.

Deputy Director Scott Adams thanked attendees and presenters for joining the briefing meeting. The meeting adjourned at 3:03 p.m.

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

Transcript

Hi, good morning. Good afternoon. Good afternoon, everyone. Let's wait for a little bit for folks to come in from the waiting room and we'll begin shortly. All right, good afternoon and welcome to the February 26 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. So, in the meantime, please use that chat box to share your name, job title, and affiliated organization. Before we begin a few housekeeping items. Next slide, please. This meeting is being recorded. We will be posting the recording of this meeting slides and transcript to the Broadband for All Portal. We will make sure to link to that very shortly. Presenter, please cue Ricki to advance your slides. And for folks tuning in, select side by side, speaker mode for the best viewing experience when slides are shared, and for best visibility of our ASL interpreters. Closed captioning is

available. You can select CC, Closed caption on the toolbar and select show subtitle. Q&A, please note that there is time allocated at the end of each agenda item for questions, please queue. Please use the Q&A box to type 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. 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. So next slide on agenda. We have a full agenda, as you can see with an opportunity for discussion after each agenda section. We welcome you to turn on your camera and mic to participate during the discussion. So, in a moment CDT's Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy Deputy Director Scott Adams will begin with welcome remarks and highlight key milestone of the SDEP and the capacity grant program. Thus, far. Shawn Daugherty, Principal from Broadband Equity Partnership will share SDEP in Capacity Grant Program Design and Federal Expectations. Next, Alex Banh, Principal from Broadband Equity Partnership will discuss Modifications to the CalDEP Guidelines, Public Comment. OBDL's Broadband Administrative Manager, James Spencer, will discuss the CalDEP 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 our bidirectional discussion. So, at that time, please feel free to turn on your mic and turn on your video. So, let's start. First, I would like to introduce Deputy Director Scott Adams.

Thank you, Anh, and good afternoon, everybody. My name is Scott Adams. I'm the Deputy Director for the Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy at the California Department of Technology. Just wanted to open up and thank you all in joining us, partnering with us in our most recent monthly Stakeholder Briefing regarding Digital Equity Plan Implementation and the design of both the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program and the related subgrant program called the Digital Equity Program. Really want to again extend our gratitude to all of you for being partners in this inclusive and transparent process that we've been conducting over the last many months since our Digital Equity Plan was developed and submitted to the NTIA in late 2023 and approved by the NTIA last year in 2024. Next slide, please, Ricki. So, we wanted to start out, we know that there's a great deal of excitement and interest in moving forward with the launch of the CalDEP program. So, we wanted to recap our journey a little bit that I had initially discussed, it seems like just a short while ago, but in 2022, the Department of Technology on behalf of the State submitted our application and received the 4 million dollars Digital Equity Planning Grant. Really, when we

transition to 2023, that was a joint and collaborative planning and development process to really identify the barriers for the covered populations and collectively develop strategies and key activities that formed the Digital Equity Plan. Wanted to note that, as I mentioned in the second quarter of 2024, the Digital Equity Capacity Grant application was submitted to the NTIA. And really, since the second quarter of 2024, and where we are now in the 1st quarter, there's been extensive stakeholder engagement to and partnership to develop both the SDEP and the in the Grant Program, and I will note that we did receive official notification of our award, which was 70.2 million dollars time last year in the performance period on that grant began on December 1st of 2024. Can we go to the next slide, please, Ricki. So again, just looking at the metrics of engagement, wanted to say that there's always complexities and challenges in engaging in a state as large as California, with as diverse a population it is. But really proud of the joint participation that we've had in the 8 monthly stakeholder briefings, and that, you know, by the directional exchange of ideas we've gained much from your wisdom as we've endeavored to shape a program that positions us to fully implement the Digital Equity Plan while acknowledging the unique needs of our regions and communities. There were also the 2 program design surveys and questionnaires that we sent out to the stakeholders. Wanna note the difference that those questionnaires were not targeting individual residents, and all of that work was done during the planning process. But we're focusing on interested parties and those who would potentially be interested in and leading or partnering on capacity grants. In addition to those 2 things, we've had over 124 market research meetings and listening sessions, and 22 presentations at stakeholder competing's, conferences, and summits. Really, you know, leaning into our values, that yes, we, you know, can develop a planning, and you know, convening process. But it's important to meet other entities where they are, and to speak to their constituencies as well. So with that, I believe that is the end of my presentation. I'd open it up for questions if there are any. But really wanna key up the other speakers to provide updates and would ask that you know, we're gonna try to get to, you know, all questions as best we can and to try to target the questions that were asked based on the nature of the agenda item. So, thank you very much.

Thank you, Scott. I'm not seeing any questions in chat or in the Q&A. And as always, we'll have multiple opportunities to, as Scott mentioned, to follow up with questions as they align with agenda items. So, with that we will move to, I'm going to introduce Shawn Daugherty. Our excuse me, to present on the next section for us today. Thank you, Shawn.

Thanks, Maria. Thanks, Scott. Hi, everybody! It's so great to see some familiar faces and some new faces joining as well. My name is Shawn Daugherty. I'm a Principal with the Broadband Equity Partnership, and I've been working with California on their digital equity work for some time now. So, for this kind of section of the presentation wanted to just spend a few minutes kind of going back over the broader capacity grant program design, and how it really aligns with the NTIA and their Federal expectations of the program. So, Ricki, can you go to the next slide, please? Great. As many of you will recall, you know, at the as Scott mentioned earlier, or I guess, around March of last year, so about a year ago or so, we had approval of our State Digital Equity Plan, and really a focus of that as required by the NTIA Planning Grant was to, you know, examine the 8 covered populations in our state and take a good look at, you know, digital equity or digital inequities for certain outcome areas and through the stakeholder engagement and the planning process and all of the activities that went into developing the capacity, or I'm sorry, into developing the Digital Equity Plan, we really came up with 7 key activities of ways that we could move forward with promoting digital equity in the State of California. So that you know the 7 are highlighted there in the middle. And Ricki, if you want to go to the next slide, please. And what we're doing right now is really overlaying a lot of those 7 key activities with the expectations set forth in the notice of funding opportunity or the NOFO by the NTIA released, you know, last year the Capacity Grant NOFO required or said that the States must look at these 4, you know, overarching focuses, you know, states in implementing their Digital Equity Plans must focus on covered populations. I think you'll see that as a broad focus in the, in all the work that we're doing in implementing the capacity grant, especially along the subgrant program states must look at long, lasting and meaningful change, looking at sustainability, really systemic barriers. And that's how you know, we're looking into that goal or requirement by the NTIA. States must work towards measurable implementable --implementation strategies. Are they achievable? What we're suggesting, you know, can we measure that? Can we see an impact. And then, lastly, stakeholder engagement, States must continue to engage with stakeholders clearly what we're doing here, and we intend to do much more of. And all of this is, you know, again tying back to the broader SDEP goals as aligned or outlined in the Broadband for all Action Plan, really focusing on goal 2 and 3 there of, you know, making sure that all Californians have access to affordable broadband and the necessary devices, as well as all Californians, can, access training and support to enable digital inclusion. So, we're really, you know, looking at the requirements of the NOFO, how we have to implement the SDEP as a requirement of that as well as these kind of 4 overarching requirements of focus on covered population, meaningful

change, measurable strategies and stakeholder engagement. And you can go to the next slide, please, Ricki and that's where we came up kind of with this overall capacity grant structure. I know many of you on the call have seen this before. Right, NTIA is our granting administrator. CDT is the receiving or the administering entity on the state level, and these are kind of the 3 broad categories by which, you know, work is looking to be conducted. Right, centralized services, state agency, digital inclusion efforts and you know, CalDEP, our sub grant program. You can go to the next slide, Ricki. So, I want to spend a moment here on kind of on centralized services kind of go going through each one of those boxes on the previous slide. You know, as noted in the SDEP, California, in implementing its capacity grant will look at these 3 different ways of undergoing centralized services. The State will develop resources that can be utilized by all Californians. I think some good examples of these that we've actually already done and are available are like the Low-Cost Offer Finder, the Digital Equity Services Finder, the Funding Tracker. I believe, links to all of those resources are going to be added in the chat. So those are our types of centralized services or centralized resources that the State, you know, can develop and expand upon those also in terms of centralized services. That we're looking to possibly procure utilizing, you know, the state's bulk purchasing power. Possibly a digital literacy training platform, you know, as mentioned. in the SDEP. And then also curate, you know, the State could look at other digital inclusion practitioners and what they're developing and really provide, you know, thinking about distributing those tools and resources to throughout the State. So really developing, procuring, and curating are the 3 means by which we're really looking at centralized services. Next slide, Ricki. Great. And then, with regards to the State agency digital inclusion efforts, you know. This is again pulled right from the SDEP that the State will continue to improve and expand on the myriad of digital inclusion programs and services offered by the State. You know this and also I think it's important to point out that many of these efforts will complement local and regional efforts and not be duplicative of them. So, you know, the State is still exploring these. But again, this is something that we have we've called out in the SDEP as a means to implement the capacity grant. And then you can go forward one more again, Ricki, and so thank you. Right. And now we're here at this familiar slide that everybody has seen kind of the 3rd box on that pyramid chart was really the subgrant program. I know we've been meeting for many months on program design. Many of you have participated in questionnaires and the public comment process that that ended just a little bit ago, really, like leading into the Track1 and Track2 Track1 is really focused on local and regional ecosystems with an allocation for a geographic barrier or a boundary and really focusing on planning plus

capacity. So again planning, leading into that sustainability and thinking about making long, lasting and meaningful change, and then Track2 is really targeted at statewide ecosystems, thinking about those outcome areas and those covered again requirements of the NTIA NOFO. And then on the last slide again, we're just highlighting some of the allowable uses of this subgrant program, right? Developing plans providing digital navigation services digital skills, training, device, distribution. All of these items are allowable uses within the subgrant program and as part of the NTIA NOFO. So again, that's just kind of a round out of the capacity grant and its program design aligning with kind of the Federal expectations. And I think that's it for me.

Thank you, Shawn, appreciate that. So, let's move into the discussion portion as always, please feel free to ideally drop your questions in the Q&A. But you can also use the raise your hand feature, and I'll call on you, or also put your questions in chat. So, we'd like looking for any questions on the Capacity Grant Program Design and any Federal Expectations. This is a great opportunity to ask those questions. And again, if you're still thinking about it, it can pop up later. Ricky, could you? Sophie, I see your question. We're we will make this; we're going to put this entire PowerPoint up on our portal. So, we won't be able to go back to the last slide right at this time, but we will put, we will be sure to make sure you get a copy of this PowerPoint. Thank you, Sophie. We do have a question, Shawn, regarding the SDEP goals, goal one seems to defer to all BB for all and Bead funding and we've been told, I'm reading this verbatim, that the funding may not be enough to reach all of the priorities. Is there a backup plan or other approach to ensuring Californians have broadband at home schools, libraries, and businesses. Sort of that question where you know, we've sort of addressed several times.

I'll take that one.

Ok thanks.

Yeah, Maria, the, so the objective one was addressed, not just by Bead, but the, you know, pre-existing investments in the California Advanced Service Fund, the infrastructure investments that were really framed in Senate Bill 156, with the Middle Mile Broadband Initiative and the associated Last Mile Programs administered by the CPUC and the Bead funds actually are on top of that. It's another bite of the apple and another, you know, funding pool to get to the aims. I think any questions regarding Bead and its ability to reach, you know, the absolute, you know, audiences we'll defer those to the Public Utilities Commission, who is the administering entity for that program here in California.

And we've addressed this question in the last couple of briefings. But we're going to need to address it one more time, Scott, please, the question regarding sort of the potential cuts to programming from the Federal Administration.

Got it. It's a pretty broad question. I mean, what we can speak to is the, you know, capacity grant funding and similar to what we said at our last meeting, we received the Grant award agreement at the end of last year. It's a signed obligation of those funds to California. We can't speculate on what may or may not happen. It's too early. We're aware that there's a lot of uncertainty out there. We're keeping our heads down and continuing with the work that needs to be done. And we'll definitely, you know, keep folks posted if new developments occur.

And tracking on what I'm seeing, our final question at this point in time is and we this is a one that's come up a couple times as well. What happens to funding if some counties don't apply for their allocations?

Yeah, thanks for that question. It's a really good one. So, I think the thing that we want to make sure to clarify is that, given the short timeframe for the nature of this grant program, we've developed the CalDEP program to have really Track 1 is what John was talking about. That's the bulk of the grants will be for regional and local coalitions, and we've allocated funds to county geographic areas. What we would hope is that each allocation is applied for and awarded. What we have built into the program is the ability for an entity and a coalition to come in and do a joint application for multiple county allocations. Given that, you know different areas or different states of capacity there. So ideally, we'd like to do everything we can to work with the ecosystem to see that all county allocations are applied for and awarded in the first RFA. But, as we mentioned in our last meeting, if there is a situation where some county allocations are not applied for and awarded in the first round, we will do a second round. It will obviously have a shorter grant period. But as we had shared at our last briefing, only entities that are in the areas of those county allocations that have not been applied for will be able to apply for those funds in the second round. And we think that's the most equitable way to do this.

Thank you, Scott. I am seeing a couple questions pop up that are going to be answered as we move through this presentation, and we will track some of these, and if they do not get answered we'll make sure to swoop them up at the end. But I think we're ready to. I think we've answered the questions for this section and if we could move on to and thank you for that. Alex Banh, also a Principal with Broadband Equity Partnership. He'll walk partnership. He'll walk us through the next portion of this presentation.

Alright, thanks, Maria. So, as Maria mentioned in this section, I'll be presenting on some remaining modifications and updates that we're making to the CalDEP grant guidelines as a result of guidance or direction from the NTIA, so the Federal agency administering this grant program or based on public comment. We are also providing clarification on certain items that were in the draft grant guidelines. But where having more detailed information, would be helpful for potential applicants. Next slide, please. Yeah, so first, we have items related to grant administration and eligibility. All 3 of these updates were made as the result of guidance and clarification from the NTIA. So, on the first item on advance payments, we received confirmation from NTIA that dispersal of Federal funds is dependent on the completion and documentation of allowable activities. Therefore, this means that we can only have reimbursement-based payments, and that we cannot issue payments in advance, unfortunately. On the second item, we received confirmation from NTIA that all lead applicants and second tier subgrantees must meet all eligibility requirements. So, these include belonging to one of the statutorily defined eligible entity categories, having an active, unique entity, identification number, or UEI, assigned by SAM.gov. And having an employer identification number or EIN assigned by the IRS. On the last item only federally, recognized tribes are eligible for funding through the Indian tribe or native entity category. However, NTIA clarified that State recognized tribes may be eligible for funding if they belong to one of the other eligible entity categories, such as being a not-for-profit entity, being a community anchor, institution or an entity that carries out a workforce development program. Next slide. Here we have some items related to various program details on the first item, the period of performance, we wanted to clarify that the maximum end date for subgrants period of performance is August 31st, 2029, so about 4 and a half years from now. However, as we mentioned before, in response to public comment, we are making it so that subgrantees can propose their own timelines within this maximum. So, you know, if they want to propose a 2 and a half year, or a 3-year period of performance, you know where they'll be completing all their activities, that is an option. We also have some clarifications related to Track 1 and the regional and local digital equity planning efforts. So, first, we want to specify that you know, these regional and local digital equity plans don't need to start from scratch and should be built upon California's State Digital Equity Plan or SDEP as the foundation. So, when it comes to identifying barriers locally, these regional and local plans should identify barriers using the SDEP barriers as a baseline. And when it comes to developing an implementation strategy or activities, we want to make sure that these activities also align with the measurable goals and objectives from the SDEP and the overall SDEP strategy, you know, as a strategy

for the entire state. For multi-county applications, we wanted to clarify that even if you know, an application is proposing to serve multiple counties, they should submit a local Digital Equity Plan for each county in their partnership. And finally, if a county or region has a pre-existing regional or local Digital Equity Plan that meets all minimum requirements, these subgrantees can opt to proceed with their implementation activities without doing a planning effort first. So that's Track 1, for Track 2 clarification we wanted to clarify that Track 2 subgrantees must focus on one targeted cover population or one outcome area. So, in their application, they should select, you know, either one cover population or one outcome area and not multiple. We also wanted to clarify that Track 2 subgrantees must include a plan to support, coordinate, and share best practices with their Track 1 counterparts and participate in communities of practice established by CDT. Finally, we have some clarifications related to partnership roles on an application. So, you know, we are specifying a difference between, you know, who's considered a partner versus who's considered a supportive stakeholder. So, partners are entities that will participate in collaborate on or contribute to activities proposed by the lead applicant and partners can receive funding, and if they do, they'll be considered second tier subgrantees. But partners don't necessarily need to receive funding, so a partner can say that, you know, they're not receiving funding, but they are participating in the local planning effort. Or you know, they're offering, you know, the use of their space or their center to host events or workshops. So, partners should submit a letter of intent that that shows, you know, their intent to participate in the in the application and you know what types of support they'll be providing. Another category are the supportive stakeholders. So, these are entities that express general support or endorsement for the application, without committing to or intending to, you know, participate in or contribute to the applications. Activities so supportive stakeholders should submit a letter of support that just, you know, signals their general support or endorsement for this application. And when it's clarified that all applications must contain at least one letter of intent or letter of support. Showing, you know, the support of this application from either the local, the regional, or the statewide ecosystems Next slide, please. Yeah, so the last slide are around allowable costs. So, in response to a number of public comments we received, we are clarifying that coalition building activities in support of digital equity, planning may be eligible costs for the CalDEP. However, CalDEP funding should be prioritized for implementation of activities to achieve the SDEP measurable objectives. Next, we have clarifications around contractors. We wanted to clarify that all contractors, you know, that are contracted through a lead applicant or a subgrantee must be selected through a competitive process,

and that could happen either before or after the award. So, you know, in one scenario a lead applicant can propose specific contractors on their application if they have existing agreements with that contractor, and that contractor was selected as the result of a competitive process. For travel, we wanted to clarify that only in state travel for programmatic purposes are permitted. So, this could include, you know, for a Track 2 subgrantee, if they wanted to travel from one part of the State to another, you know, to organize a workshop or host an event. Those are some of the allowable travel expenses for devices and broadband subsidies. We wanted to clarify that device distribution should be paired with broadband adoption, assistance and digital literacy training and broadband subsidies should be paired with digital literacy training. So, these should not be standalone type programs or services they should be accompanied by, you know, some of these other supports. Next, we have a couple of funding prohibitions that are coming from NTIA. So CalDEP funding cannot be used for certain website upgrades or accessibility projects that are otherwise required by law. Cannot be used for also cannot be used for generating profit or fees above actual cost, supporting or opposing collective bargaining, or any lobbying and political activities. And finally, in the draft, grant guidelines we talked about how broadband infrastructure projects are going to be funded by other broadband for all investments and Bead investments, and that you know the focus of the CalDEP program is more on the other aspects of digital equity. So, in our you know, updated CalDEP Grant guidelines, we are clarifying that construction and infrastructure projects are not prohibited uses of CalDEP funding our prohibited uses of California, sorry. That's it, we can go to the next slide.

Thank you, Alex.

We have a lot of questions. So, let's see if we can get through these in a... we'll work on getting through these in a very thoughtful manner, and, William Cooper, you have your hand raised, and you have a question in chat. If you'd like to unmute yourself and ask your question, that would be great.

Yes, thank you, and thank you, Alex, for your presentation. My question was about the beginning of your presentation, and the reimbursement status that is being enacted inside of this grant. I'm William Cooper, I'm the executive director at the Becoming Project in Calapatra, your definition on top of it being a covered community, on that definition, is also a disinvested community. My question is about partnerships. Since the State's Grant funds are in a reimbursement basis and an organization like mine inside of this community couldn't financially pony up a large amount of money to do a program for 3 or 4 years, is the Broadband Equity Partnership going to be partnering with organizations on their own? And if I go out and find my own partner

organization to upfront the funds that it cost to do this program, do they have to be the lead applicant?

Scott, do you want to take this one?

Yeah, thank you, Mr. Cooper, for your answer. I think we acknowledge the challenges for potentially smaller organizations to apply for this grant. And the reason that we designed the program the way that we did is to chunk out the funds by like a county allocation region and encourage one lead applicant that could handle and has experience in managing State and Federal grants. And then to address a sensitivity that we heard during the planning process, there would be a small portion of the CalDEP Grant would go to planning and coalition building and identifying the appropriate partners, and trusted or credible messenger organizations to conduct the activities with the grant, but allow flexibility for the lead grantee to do second tier grants to smaller, more appropriate organizations in that community. And so that's kind of the way that we structured the program, hoping to foster alignment and collaboration at the regional and county level, and then in terms of the reimbursement we have endeavored to kind of work through that. But in our conversations with you know the NTIA, there are constraints around doing it. So that's why we had to take that route.

Thank you, Scott, and I'm just going to start at the stop the top and work my way down and watch. A question has come up regarding, will the California Connect Core be considered a centralized service or a subgrant NOFO.

Yeah, thanks, Maria. One of we had addressed that topic in one of our previous stakeholder briefings there was some initially, the Digital Equity Plan, named the subgrant program, the California Connect Core subgrant program and it was intended to be a program, not an entity, that would fund, you know capacity grants. And so, one of the comments that came out of the public comment process was a little bit of confusion about that, so to alleviate the confusion around the California Connect or naming convention of the subgrant program, we simplified the naming of the program to be the California Digital Equity Program. So, the Digital Equity Program is intended to capitalize on the multitude of entities across the State that are already doing digital navigation services and to provide grants to coalitions, to fund those folks in their community who can carry those up.

Thank you, Scott. There's a question, a clarifying question around who's eligible to receive funding. Is it, and maybe, Shelby, if you want to come and provide, I'm not sure if I understand supportive stakeholders, around regarding eligible to receive funding or only partners. If you could clarify, that would be super helpful.

Yes, happy to. In Alex's slide, it said that there are partners and supportive stakeholders, and it was, I think, clarifying what type of supportive document they could give, and he specified that partners could receive funding or not receive funding, but didn't mention anything about supportive stakeholders. So, I just wanted a little clarification around that if they're also eligible for sub to receive some of the tier 2 grants or.

Yeah, the second-tier subgrants. Yeah, I would say, if a supportive stakeholder wants to receive funding, in that case they would be, you know, contributing and in and participating in that lead application and that subgrant. So, in that case they would be considered a partner instead of a supportive stakeholder. We just wanted to give an option, you know, for certain entities that may not be ready to participate and commit to. you know, joining an effort like this to just express their endorsement and their support for the application. So that's just like an additional option. But if you have an entity that wants to receive a second-tier subgrant, or wants to help out, then they should be listed as a partner.

Thank you, Shelby and thank you Alex. Following along the same lines and watching time as well, there's a couple of questions around pricing and cost, if we could ask those here, or should we wait till the next section? We could ask them here, Alex, there's a couple of questions. I'm going to lump these 2 together, are car rentals allowable and are, is the device cap still at 700? Or I'm assuming that's for computer devices. Yep.

Yeah, so our rentals, I think it depends. You know, we've heard through the planning process that you know, in some communities they want to have like mobile computer labs to do trainings in places where there's not sufficient infrastructure for a computer lab. And in those situations, you know, we are allowing the lease of vehicles in order to serve as computer labs. I think if there's in-state travel expenses, if you know a Track 2 subgrantee needs to travel to a place and then rent a car to get to a workshop. I think those would be reasonable, but it would depend on the situation and how, you know those costs are explained and justified.

Thank you, Alex, and we're going to take one more question. And so again, we'll keep moving through these as we go down. A question on if there's, how will the county level applications be scored? If there's multiple applications per county.

Yeah, we discussed this at a prior briefing, but based on public comment, we are comparing counties to each other. So, if you have a, you know, if you have different applications for proposing to serve the same county, we have a scoring rubric, and we have an example of scoring rubric in the draft grant

guidelines, where we'll be looking at different elements of the application to pick the strongest application for that county.

And just the second piece of that question that was tied into car rentals. Are we still at capacity at 700, allowable for computers?

We have 2 different device caps for computers. We have one that's for take home devices, that is, at 400, and then the one for computers inside a computer lab setting is at 750.

Thank you for that clarification, Alex. Okay, and we'll like, I said, we'll continue to track these questions as we continue to move forward. We'll move to the next section, where some of these may be answered, or at least we can help frame up the questions. James Spencer of our team will be providing an update on the technical assistance.

Yes, thank you, Maria. So, hi and good afternoon! Today, I'll provide updates on our CalDEP Technical Assistance Program. Next slide, please. So, as a reminder, these are some of the planned resources we have communicated out and we'll provide additional information on each component as it becomes available. I do want to share some important TA updates. So, we are currently developing written resources such as application guidance and checklists and a 1 pager where you can find key program information. We are creating pre-recorded video content to assist applicants with budget development and Track1 vs. Track2 selection and application development considerations. We do have office hours scheduled, and Q&A Cycles are being considered. However, the dates on those are still TBD -with more information to come. Since the last stakeholder briefing, CDT launched the CalDEP landing page and the CalDEP Partner Coordination Resource, which was communicated through the January thank you email. Next slide, please. And so, these are screenshots of the CalDEP landing page, and we've also included a QR code which can take you to this page. Some of the key components, as you can see here of the landing page, include a brief program overview, applicant eligibility, different funding tracks available, get ready resources and then links to all other additional resources. Next slide, please. And so here, these are screenshots of the partner coordination resource, we've also included the QR code which will take you to this page. Our partnership coordination resource is a tool applicants may use to identify potential partner organizations. They might want to partnership, they might want to partner with on an application. Participation is completely optional and submitting information to the partnership coordination page and the contents of the information submitted will have no effect on the application. I will also highlight that the form should only be completed by eligible entities,

seeking to be leads or partner with leads on CalDEP application. The partnership coordination resource is not to be used as a list or a sign up for grant seeking. So Anh, can you please bring up a bring up the landing page for a quick demo. Thank you. And so, here's our CalDEP landing page. Make sure you bookmark and save the page, as this is where our final grant guidelines and RFA will be found once it's released. The link to apply for CalDEP funding will also be housed here. As you navigate this page you will see highlighted, we have highlighted the key components starting with program overview. As you continue to scroll down, you'll next see eligible applicant section, which is helpful, helpful for determining program eligibility. Next is the funding track description section that provides an overview of different funding tracks, targeting, targeting both local and statewide ecosystems. Further down the page are the get ready resources. Here we have identified tips for potential applicants to prepare for the upcoming opportunity. Below that is more information and a link to a partnership coordination resource which we'll discuss more shortly. Lastly, you will find the Additional Resources section which currently reflects a link to the State Digital Equity Plan and will be updated as additional resources are identified and screen. Anh, please scroll up to the top. Thank you. So here I will highlight the left side of the page, which includes quick access, navigation to page resources as well as the link to the partnership coordination page. Thank you. So, this is the partnership coordination landing page. Do make sure to bookmark and save this page for quick access. Again, I do want to highlight that the form should only be completed by eligible entities looking to be leads or partner with leads on a CalDEP application. We currently have around 10 entities that completed the form, and if you would like to see, or review the data, there is a link there at the top of the page which can be found right there. As you scroll down you will see various fields to be completed with mandatory fields identified with an asterisk. Excuse me.

First, you will enter your eligible organization name. Next, you will select your partnership preference, whether it be lead, partner, or both. Your next step is to select funding track, interest or preference with options for track1 track2 or both. There is also a handy link directly below this section which directs you to the funding track and description section of the CalDEP landing page. There will be various drop-down funding Track specific activities and outcomes to select. Depending on what selection you make here. Next, you will select the counties you are currently operating in, or are interested in, with an option to select all 58 counties. You are now close to submission. Make sure to add your organization's email address and option to add your organization's phone number. The final steps include clicking the acknowledgement checkbox and reading the State Information Practices Act language which can be found using the drop-down

function of the section. Once your form is submitted, you will see, receive an email confirmation. Anh is going to scroll back up to the top where you can find the link to all the submitted data. So, this spreadsheet is accessed as a read only, however, the data can be sorted following instructions in Row 2. After you follow those instructions, columns can now be filtered for easy analysis and partner identification based on user choices. Perfect. And that's it for my update. Happy to open up for discussion.

Thank you, James. First to kick us off to start, there's 1 question that sort of segways with this that came in earlier, and it was from Liliana regarding the DEEM Tool and some of this ties into some of this work. So, Scott, Liliana's question was: "when will the DEEM Tool be ready?"

Got it. Thanks. Well, I want to clarify that when we're talking about the DEEM Tool, the digital DEEM stands for Digital Equity Ecosystem Mapping Tool and the CDT, our office developed this tool in partnership with Broadband Equity Partnership during the planning session, and the first iteration of that tool was intended to help expand and develop the State's asset inventory, which was a specific requirement of the NTIA in order for this State to develop a digital equity plan. We have taken the source material from the first DEEM Tool and with input from a lot of stakeholders here on this meeting with their input it created an initial version of our digital equity resource finder. And again, this is material that was mostly volunteered by organizations during the planning process there was some desktop research, and some other information added. It's the first iteration we envision launching the Digital Equity Ecosystem Mapping Tool sort of a 2.0 version, sometime closer to the date of the award and to adjust that to be more reflective of digital equity plan implementation, and what partners and subgrantees and residents will need. And, per a lot of our previous conversations here, the next iteration of the DEEM Tool, we will, you know, like we did during the planning process create, you know, a first draft version and then submit that to stakeholders for review and input, and particularly with the focus on subgrantees to make sure that it captures and includes those information fields that'll be most relevant to folks working to implement the digital equity plan and residents potentially looking for services. So, it's a little bit of a long answer, but it's still to come and, as we've said, and, you know the previous stakeholder briefings, we are really going to be looking to you all to help us, you know iterate and shape the next version of DEEM to be reflective of what's needed moving forward.

Thank you. Thanks, Scott and James. The question is, "how often will that partnership coordination page be updated out? How often will the excel spreadsheet be updated?"

Yeah, thank you. That's a great question. So, when we do receive the submissions, my team, we review the data that is submitted, we make sure that it's applicable to our program, and so, we make sure that we clean it all up, and so that that averages about 24 – 48hr. So, as soon as you do make a submission, it may not be immediately viewable on the spreadsheet, but, like I said within 24-48hrs we'll have that populated with that new information.

Yeah, Maria, I'd like to just add something to, because really the partnership coordination resources something that James and the broader team really was listening to. You know, the call from the stakeholder ecosystem about the need to support ecosystem building to support partnership around applications and potentially to allow for maybe newer or smaller entities in certain, you know, counties or regions that haven't historically felt connected to the process, to find and see who in different areas is looking to lead and to really declare their desire to partner with those leads and to be a part of applications or be a part of coalitions moving forward. So, I think a call to action that we would have here for folks is really, if your organization is planning on being a lead to, to just go and fill out your information there, I think. What we're hoping this will do is eliminate competition and super, you know, spur collaboration where folks can really align behind one lead entity and then kind of develop a plan that builds in the flexibility subgrant out to other partners to help support the work. So just really appreciative of James and his team for developing that tool and would encourage folks to use it to the extent that you know you want to see and communicate with others. I think it's also important on the, you know any multi county applications for Track1 or the Track2 applications for folks to be pretty specific about what their plans and intentions are around them.

Thank you, Scott, and thank you, James. We're going to head into the final section of this presentation, acknowledging there's a couple unanswered sort of, we haven't answered your question specifically. Carolina, we did drop the link in chat to the Broadband for All Portal. You can find our information there. Wally we'll be answering your question here shortly regarding the NOFO release date. And with that we'll pass it over to Anh, and then we'll answer any other follow-up questions as we head into the end. Thank you.

Thanks, Maria, I appreciate it. Next slide, please. Just a few things to highlight and to be consistent with our values, the past couple of years in terms of being very accessible, equitable, and transparent to our process, we wanted to highlight a few stakeholder engagement opportunities in 2025 for you all to take note of. We have the quarterly public meetings, such as the California Broadband Council in the Middle Advisory Committee. The upcoming one is in April, and it will be listed not only in our broadband email update, but also our

broadband portal. So, take a look there and we'll continue to have stakeholder briefings and webinars similar to this. The Statewide Implementation Group, also previous SIG, the outcome area communities of practice, the Broadband for All Portal that we've been looking at the live demo and the broadband for all email monthly update. We'll make sure if you haven't subscribed already, we'll make sure to add that link in the chat and next slide, please. And then just a quick call for submissions on community spotlight for those who are receiving our monthly email update already, you'll notice that we have added the community spotlight section top of our email updates. And that's actually in response to stakeholders requesting to see more of community work in our email updates. So just a few screenshot here. And I know the text is probably too small on this slide. But great work if you would like to congratulate with all the great collaboration and partnerships happening in the community. So, I'll make sure to link where you can submit submissions in our chat. But for sake of time let's go to the next slide. And here's a quick glance at our tentative timeline. Where we are today is middle a little bit past mid Q1 of 2025, very close to the RFA launch. But drawing your attention as well to row 3, that all subgrant procurements and contract must be completed within our 9 months award date, which Scott mentioned earlier started on December of 2024. So, we are working within that timeline. The RFA is still consistent as before. It will be open for 60 days, with review of applications, 90 days and awards in the last 30 days. So shortly, hope, very soon webinars and office hours and Q&A session, as James has mentioned, will also start shortly this this quarter. So yeah, just want to highlight that and the SIG and community of practice will be towards the end of Q2 or Q3. Keep an eye out, and we'll welcome you to join those as well. Back to you, Maria and Scott.

Thank you. And we have, there's, we have time for one more question. And its kind of it's... I apologize. The RFA launch. Well, we actually have 2, sorry. The RFA launch date was just provided in that timeline towards the end of Q1, I believe, Anh that's what the timeline shows is towards the end of March. So that, I thought that we answered the question about advance payment. But that's sort of our wrap up question if we can't answer it now, feel free to always email us. And we can always follow up on any of these questions. But that's the last live question that we have, Scott.

I'm sorry, Maria, can you repeat that.

Apologies. Yes, sort of - "will there be an allowable advance payment for this Grant?" - and I thought we'd addressed that. But maybe we didn't catch that question.

Yeah, we'd address that, and we'll provide it in the slides that, based on our conversations with NTIA and the way that the grant works at the lead grantee level, we're not able to do advance payment.

Thank you, Scott. And then there's a question, but regarding requirements, but that some of this will come up in our RFA documents that we'll be launching here shortly and as well as some of the guidelines that are available on our website. And we did drop that link in chat where you can find some of this information. And with that we'll pass it back to you, Scott.

Well, thank you very much, team. I really want to give a shout out to the folks at the office of Broadband and Digital Literacy and Broadband Equity Partnership for your hard work and pulling together the information and engaging with folks and really analyzing the information to be as sensitive and responsive as we can, and it goes without saying that we want to extend our deep gratitude and appreciation for all of the, you know, stakeholders who, you know, regardless of where in the process you've jumped in, whether you've been doing the work for 10 years, or we're actively involved in the development of the Digital Equity Plan, or, you know, maybe just now, you know, checking in and really, you know, interested in participating in a in a joint or partnership application for the sub grant program. We appreciate you and your desire and willingness to align and collaborate with us on the regional and local efforts. And we're just really looking forward to get moving on this program and continuing to implement the Digital Equity Plan that we all work to put together. So, thank you very much and have a wonderful, you know, rest of your day and best wishes to you until we see you next.