West Virginia
Digital Equity Pilot Program Application

Section I: Introduction

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 provides a historic $65 billion investment to expand internet access and use throughout the United States. Four federal agencies are leading the nation's Internet for All initiative with programs to support high-speed internet planning, data development, infrastructure, and adoption. These agencies include: the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the Department of the Treasury, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The federal agencies have consolidated funding programs under the national Internet for All initiative.

NTIA will administer two major programs under this initiative – the $42.5 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, and the $2.75 billion Digital Equity Act (DE) programs. The Digital Equity Act includes $60 million for a State Planning Program, $1.44 billion for a State Capacity Program, and $1.25 billion for a Competitive Grant Program.

NTIA has awarded initial planning funds to the West Virginia Department of Economic Development, Office of Broadband as follows:

Program	Amount	Date of Award	Due Date
BEAD Planning Grant	$5,000,000	November 14, 2022	August 2023
Digital Equity Planning Grant	$728,065	September 30, 2022	October 2023

NTIA will also administer the $1 billion for Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program. The Federal Communications Commission will administer the $14 billion Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP).

Internet for All West Virginia

Building upon the national Internet for All initiative, the West Virginia Office of Broadband has created Internet for All West Virginia. Through Internet for All West Virginia, the WV Office of Broadband and the WV Broadband Enhancement Council will join with residents, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and numerous partners to develop West Virginia's Digital Equity Plan and BEAD Five-Year Action Plan as directed by the NTIA. The Internet for All West Virginia initiative is designed to achieve digital equity throughout the Mountain State and to ensure that all communities have access to broadband connectivity. Engagement with covered populations, unserved, and underserved locations, as well as community anchor institutions is an essential part of the planning process.

For more information, visit
Internetforallwv.wv.gov
broadband.wv.gov

West Virginia's Core Planning Team

The WV Office of Broadband has partnered with key agencies and groups to solidify a Core Planning Team to facilitate stakeholder engagement and develop the West Virginia Digital Equity and BEAD plans. The Core Planning Team includes the West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council, Tilson Technology Management (Tilson), West Virginia University's Startup WV (Startup WV), and Marshall University's Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER).

West Virginia's Key Partners

In addition to the Core Planning Team, West Virginia's 11 Regional Planning and Development Councils (RPDCs) are key partners with direct connections to West Virginia communities. The RPDCs work directly with counties, municipalities, and critical stakeholders throughout West Virginia. Their role will be **critical** to the goals of the Digital Equity and BEAD programs.

Additional Digital Equity and BEAD Partners include:

- WV Community and Technical College System
- WV Department of Education
- WV Economic Development Council
- WV Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs
- Regional Optical Communications
- The Thrasher Group

The Core Planning Team is reaching out to state, regional, and local groups to continuously grow this list of partners.

West Virginia's Digital Equity Steering Committee

In addition to the Core Planning team, West Virginia has established a Digital Equity Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will provide direction and assistance, leveraging their expertise in public outreach and organizing throughout the Digital Equity planning process. Digital Equity Steering Committee members include representatives from:

- AARP West Virginia
- Generation West Virginia
- West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council
- West Virginia Library Commission

Section II: Program Details

Digital Equity Planning

West Virginia's Digital Equity Planning team is dedicated to planning, expanding, funding, and building access to reliable and affordable high-speed internet in West Virginia. Digital Equity means enabling all individuals and communities to have access to, and the ability to use, information technology (including Internet access) to fully participate in society, the economy, and to perform civic duties.

Under the Digital Equity Planning process, the WV Office of Broadband and its partners will draft a plan to achieve digital equity in West Virginia. This plan will ensure that everyone in the state has access to affordable high-speed internet, affordable or free devices to use the internet, and the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to take full advantage of everything the internet offers. Additional details are available in the Digital Equity Notice of Funding Opportunity.

West Virginia must submit its Digital Equity Plan to NTIA no later than one year after receipt of funds. The State will provide at least 30 days for public comment and will consider all public comments prior to final plan submission to NTIA. States that fail to complete a Digital Equity Plan cannot compete for Digital Equity Implementation funds. Digital Equity Plans must include:

a. Statewide vision for digital equity
b. A digital equity framework and scorecard
c. Plans for digital literacy innovation programs
d. Proposed technology-related apprenticeship or other workforce opportunities
e. Integration with the State's Economic Development Strategy, educational and health outcomes, and civic and social engagement
f. Action steps to implement the Digital Equity Plan that contains all requirements set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Digital Equity Deliverables

Digital Equity Planning Grant deliverables will include: (1) a printed Digital Equity Plan, with an electronic version hosted on the Internet for All WV website; (2) an open access, interactive online dashboard and downloadable map displaying the data collected to inform the measurable objectives, and (3) a Digital Equity asset inventory and community resource library. West Virginia's Regional Planning and Development Councils, nonprofit organizations, and key stakeholders provide an essential connection to each area of the State. Working together, the planning teams will ensure that all West Virginians are represented in the Digital Equity and BEAD planning process.

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Digital Equity Timeline
   a. West Virginia must submit its Digital Equity Plan to NTIA no later than 1 year after receipt of planning funds (October 1, 2023).
   b. The Application for State Capacity Grants open. (Early 2024).
   c. State Capacity Grants are awarded. Competitive Grant Program is launched within one month of State Capacity Grant Awards (Summer 2024).
   d. 5-Year State Capacity Implementation. Competitive Grant Application process and 4-Year Implementation (2024 - 2026+).

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Planning

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program provides $42.45 billion to expand high-speed internet access by funding planning, infrastructure deployment, mapping, equity, and adoption activities in all 50 states, Washington D.C., and U.S. Territories. BEAD prioritizes unserved locations that have no Internet access or that have service under 25/3 Mbps. Key requirements are outlined in the BEAD Notice of Funding Opportunity. West Virginia has received $5 million in initial planning funds, which will support the development of a Five-Year Action Plan. The Five-Year Action Plan will establish the State's goals and priorities and serve as a comprehensive needs assessment that will inform infrastructure expansion strategies.

All BEAD planning activities will feature coordination with the Digital Equity Program, with a special focus on collaborative community engagement. Building upon recent planning initiatives and working collaboratively with community partners, the West Virginia Office of Broadband intends to invest BEAD planning funds in the following six activities:
   a. Increasing the Capacity of the WV Office of Broadband to improve connectivity in West Virginia
   b. Identifying Unserved, Underserved, and Underrepresented Communities in West Virginia
   c. Conducting Community Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement in West Virginia
   d. Meeting Local Coordination Requirements through effective partnerships in West Virginia
   e. Providing Technical Assistance to Communities in West Virginia
   f. Developing Strategies for Universal Broadband Coverage in West Virginia

BEAD Timeline

   a. West Virginia must submit its BEAD Five-Year Action Plans to NTIA no later than 270 days after receipt of planning funds. (Fall 2023)
   b. Initial Proposals due 180 days after new FCC DATA broadband maps and funding amounts issues, based upon formula. (Late 2023)
   c. Final Proposals must be submitted to NTIA no later than 365 days after the approval of the Initial Proposal. (2024)
   d. Final Funding: Four-Year Implementation. (2024 - 2026+)

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Section III: Eligible Applicants, Eligible Activities, and Alignment

1. **Purpose:** The Digital Equity Pilot Program is designed to help assess the current state of high-speed internet availability in West Virginia and support digital inclusion activities.

2. **Funds Available**: A total of $25,000 is available for this program at this time.

3. **Grant Amounts:** Applicants may apply for grants of $2,500 or $5,000.

4. **Eligible Applicants:** Eligible applicants include units of local government, libraries, community and economic development agencies, educational institutions and programs, and nonprofit organizations. Units of local government, and non-profit organizations.

5. **Eligible Activities:** To address West Virginia's internet service gaps and its digital divide, funds will be used to support innovative programs that support, promote, and enhance digital equity in West Virginia. Applications under this announcement will be competitively evaluated on the following criteria:

   a. The degree to which the project will increase economic development in an underserved or unserved area will receive higher priority.
   b. Projects that demonstrate adequate capacity to administer the project will receive higher priority.
   c. Projects that demonstrate detailed and measurable outcomes will receive higher priority.
   d. Projects that demonstrate a high degree of demand from end users for the project services will receive higher priority.

6. **Alignment with the Digital Equity Act:** Applicants are encouraged to align proposed projects with the requirements of the Digital Equity Notice of Funding Opportunity and West Virginia's Digital Equity Plan Proposal.

7. Proposed projects should support one or more of the following Digital Equity Plan requirements:
   a. Statewide vision for digital equity
   b. A digital equity framework and scorecard
   c. Plans for digital literacy innovation programs
   d. Proposed technology-related apprenticeship or other workforce opportunities
   e. Integration with the State's Economic Development Strategy, educational and health outcomes, and civic and social engagement
   f. Action steps to implement the Digital Equity Plan that contains all requirements set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

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8. Proposed projects should focus on communities with the greatest digital equity and access needs. While it is important to engage with as many stakeholders as possible, the NTIA has outlined requirements for engagement with eight covered populations.

    a. Special attention must be given to target NTIA's list of covered populations, which include:
- a. Individuals who live in Covered households, meaning those earning at or below 150% of the federal poverty line
- b. Aging populations
- c. Incarcerated Individuals (excluding Federal correctional facilities)
- d. Individuals with disabilities
- e. Veterans
- f. Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area–meaning all West Virginia residents other than those living in Charleston, Huntington, Parkersburg, Morgantown, and Wheeling
- g. Populations with a language barrier, including English language learners and low literacy populations
- h. Members of a racial or ethnic minority group.

    b. Projects should also focus on barriers to Digital Equity and Adoption. This may include:
1. Economic insecurity
2. Lack of access to broadband internet
3. Lack of digital literacy skills
4. Lack of internet enabled devices
5. Poor quality of internet service
6. Other

  c. Projects should also help determine priorities for investment. This may include:

1. Communities, neighborhoods, or constituent groups
2. Facilities or programs already providing digital inclusion activities
3. Facilities or programs wishing to expand or create digital inclusion activities
4. Other

9. Applicants should work to ensure that residents, businesses, and organizations have an opportunity to participate. Local stakeholders may include, but not limited to:
1. Community anchor institutions, including, but not limited to:
   - I. Public Libraries
   - II. Schools
   - III. Health Care Facilities
   - IV. Cultural Organizations
   - V. Community Foundations
   - VI. Local Nonprofit Organizations
2. Advocacy Groups

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3. Regional, County, and Local Leaders

10. Provide the West Virginia Office of Broadband with program results and outcomes:
    a. Report outcomes in the form of a two-to-three-page report to include:
        1. Number of Participants
        2. Services Provided
        3. Covered Populations Served
        4. Key Takeaways

    b. Assist in gathering and assimilating broadband planning initiatives and digital inclusion resources, including relevant partner organizations and existing digital equity programs, for the State Digital Equity Asset Inventory.

c. Promote the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). A core goal of the Digital Equity and BEAD programs is universal access and adoption of high-speed internet in West Virginia. Through the ACP, eligible households can receive a monthly $30 discount on their internet service bill, and up to $100 toward an eligible device.

Relevant Links

West Virginia Office of Broadband Website: https://broadband.wv.gov/
Internet for All West Virginia Website: https://internetforallwv.wv.gov/
Internet for All National Website: https://www.internet4all.gov/
West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council: https://broadband.wv.gov/
FCC National Broadband Map: https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/home
FCC Affordable Connectivity Program Information: https://www.fcc.gov/acp
National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA): https://www.digitalinclusion.org/

For more information, visit
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WEST VIRGINIA DIGITAL EQUITY PILOT PROGRAM
APPLICATION FOR FUNDING
Return to WVDED by June 15, 2023

Organization Legal Name:

Project Title:

Project Purpose: *Please write a underline-one-sentence statement describing the purpose of the proposed project.*

Organization UEI Number:

Organization Address:

Organization Phone:

Organization Email:

Point of Contact Name:

Point of Contact Phone:

Point of Contact Email:

Counties Covered:

Congressional District(s):

Digital Equity Pilot Program Application Amount:

- $2,500

- $5,000

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Digital Equity Goal: Proposed projects should support one or more of the following Digital Equity Plan requirements *(check all that apply)*

- Statewide vision for digital equity
- A digital equity framework and scorecard
- Plans for digital literacy innovation programs
- Proposed technology-related apprenticeship or other workforce opportunities
- Integration with the State's Economic Development Strategy, educational and health outcomes, and civic and social engagement
- Action steps to implement the Digital Equity Plan that contains all requirements set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Covered Population to be Served: *(check all that apply)*

- Individuals who live in Covered households, meaning those earning at or below 150% of the federal poverty line
- Aging populations
- Incarcerated Individuals
- Individuals with disabilities
- Veterans
- Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area–meaning all West Virginia residents other than those living in Charleston, Huntington, Parkersburg, Morgantown, and Wheeling
- Populations with a language barrier, including English language learners and low literacy populations
- Members of a racial or ethnic minority group.

Project Description: Describe major activities to be conducted. (Maximum 1-2 paragraphs)

Strategic Rationale: (Maximum 1 paragraph)

a. Identify the problems and/or opportunities the project will address
b. Describe project benefits likely to result from the project (positive impact on digital skills within a covered population)
c. Describe how the project supports West Virginia's Digital Equity Plan
d. Describe the impact of this funding on the organization's ability to provide, expand or improve services

Collaborative Partnerships: (Maximum 1 paragraph)

a. Identify any local, regional and/or state partnerships that the project will leverage and support.

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Project Sustainability and Capacity: (Maximum 1 paragraph)
   a. Describe capacity to undertake the proposed activity by describing previous experience with similar activities.
   b. Explain how the project will be sustainable if/when grant funds are no longer available.

Impact Measures and Outcomes: Identify quantifiable output and outcome measures. Applicants should describe the project outcomes in detailed and measurable terms. At a minimum, the following outcomes must be provided:

   a. Number of individuals that will be provided with improved or new broadband service.
   b. Number of households that will be provided with improved or new broadband service.
   c. Number of community anchor institutions that will be served, such school, healthcare facility, library or other community facility.

These measures must be absolute numbers or counts (not percentages). Applicants may also use the number of new devices provided as a result of the project, including, but not limited to, new wi-fi hotspots, a new method of community outreach, new site of services, or new equipment used to provide service.

Required Attachments (Check box to indicate that document is attached). Applications will not be processed without required attachments.

- Attach Organization's West Virginia Articles of Incorporation
- Attach Active Vendor Registration
- Attach SAM.gov Registration
- **Attach Proposed Budget Form**

Subaward Agreement Notification
Upon approval of the award, a subaward agreement will be executed for receipt of federal funding under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. No funds associated with this project may be expended prior to the full execution of this grant agreement and written authorization from the WVDED.

Procurement Standards
When procuring property and services under a Federal award, a state must follow the same policies and procedures it uses for procurements from its non-Federal funds. The state will comply with §200.322 Procurement of recovered *materials* and ensure that every purchase order or other contract includes any clauses required by section §200.326 Contract provisions. All other non-Federal entities, including subrecipients of a state, will follow §200.318 General procurement standards through 200.326 Contract provisions.

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Signature and Certification

Executive Director Print Name:_____

Executive Director Signature:_____

Date:_____

Application Deadline and Instructions
Return completed application to WV Office of Broadband staff via email on or before **June 15, 2023.**

WV Office of Broadband Contact Information

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Kelly Workman, Director: kelly.a.workman@wv.gov

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