Digital Equity Act Grants

INTRODUCTION

The Digital Equity Act Competitive Grant Program supports local government efforts to achieve digital equity and promote digital inclusion and broader access to internet. The program seeks to address the divide between those who have internet access and those who do not, a divide that hinders an equitable economy. These projects might include expanded access to internet and digital network technology for broadband services, training programs for workforce development programs, and/or necessary upgrades to public access computing centers.

GRANT APPLICATION BOOTCAMP GOALS

- Provide clear, actionable, and user-centered information on funding opportunities available to all local governments as part of the IIJA
- Raise cities' ambition for how they can leverage funds to deliver a big impact for their residents, specifically in relation to racial wealth equity, climate, and other important policy areas
- Provide focused support to resource-constrained communities to help them submit competitive applications and win more federal funds
- Elevate the collective efforts of local governments, philanthropic and civic sectors in their efforts to leverage federal infrastructure dollars for high-impact, outcomes-driven efforts

BOOTCAMP MODULES

Module 1, Orientation and Grant Overview: Cities are introduced to the Digital Equity Act and the funding programs that it created, as well as digital equity concepts, trends and challenges in the US. Cities also receive an overview of the bootcamp content and structure.
Link to Peer Learning Session:

Module 2, Application 101: Cities understand the key components of an expected digital equity grant application, based on previous NTIA applications and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law requirements. Cities will learn how to 1) prioritize equity, climate, and workforce development, and 2) leverage federal and state priorities throughout their applications.
Link to Peer Learning Session:

Module 3, Deep Dive: Device Programs: Cities are exposed to example programs related to device access, tech support, and maintenance and learn about program partnerships and best practices. If available, cities will explore examples of digital equity programs at the city level.
Link to Peer Learning Session:

Module 4, Deep Dive: Digital Skills & Digital Navigators Programs: Cities learn about example programs related to building digital skills and digital navigator cohorts and learn about program partnerships and best practices.If available, cities will explore examples of winning applications in digital equity context.
Link to Peer Learning Session:

Module 5, Incorporating Data: Cities gain familiarity with data collection tools and analysis methods for understanding barriers to digital equity in their community. They will use the NTIA tool to analyze federal data to identify "covered populations" as defined by the Digital Equity Act and will explore how to relate data findings with NTIA's requirements.
Link to Peer Learning Session:

Module 6, Engaging the Community: Cities learn the roles of different players in the digital equity ecosystem. Cities will (1) develop community engagement strategies to ensure that community perspectives on digital access and literacy are incorporated into potential applications, (2) draft an asset map of their community, and (3) explore the importance of partnerships and coalitions in digital equity work.
Link to Peer Learning Session:

Module 7, Funding Cycle and Budgeting: Cities understand the Digital Equity program funding cycle, analyze the funding formula and matching requirements, and develop a draft project budget (for each fiscal year in which the applicant will expend the grant, a budget for the activities that will be funded), reviewing NTIA budget narrative templates (if available). The Module will also explore how applicants can supplement a potential award through other available funds.
Link to Peer Learning Session:

Module 7, Planning for Grant Applications & Capacity Building: Cities identify best practices for developing a compelling grant narrative and how to demonstrate capability of carrying out the project in a competent manner and in compliance with all applicable laws. Cities understand the next steps in positioning themselves competitively for digital equity grant application opportunities, and review their work on the application workbook. Cities will explore relevant upcoming opportunities for grant funding or state engagement, developing a strategy for long-term capacity building leveraging their application experience.
Link to Peer Learning Session:

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN EACH SESSION?

Mayor: Participates in selective modules to spearhead goals and advocacy, review the impact story of draft applications, and implement long-term capacity-building measures
Grant Lead: Participates in all modules and is the primary point of contact for each participating city team
Community Engagement Lead: Participates in selective modules to help design community engagement strategies
Finance Lead: Participates in budget and capital stacks module

BOOTCAMP MEETING STRUCTURE

Peer Learning Sessions (Webinars): Interactive sessions featuring subject matter experts on the policy and grant approach; followed by smaller sessions for peer discussions.
Coaching Sessions: Smaller sessions that continue to build on specific application questions identified in the peer learning session.
Office Hours (Consultant Meetings): Support in the form of designated time slots with our Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and your team to address specific questions about your grant application.

SUPPORT DURING THIS BOOTCAMP

Navigator Team: Our Navigator is available to help answer the following kinds of questions:

- Bootcamp timelines
- Bootcamp schedules
- Participation expectations

Our Navigator team for this grant can be reached at: atreay@nlc.org.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY

A political subdivision, agency, or instrumentality of a State, including an agency of a State that is responsible for administering or supervising adult education and literacy activities, or for providing public housing, in the State; An Indian Tribe, an Alaska Native entity, or a Native Hawaiian organization; A foundation, corporation, institution, or association that is (A) a not-for-profit entity; and (B) not a school; A community anchor institution; A local educational agency; An entity that carries out a workforce development program; A partnership between any of the entities described in the preceding list; A partnership between — (A) an entity described in any of the preceding list and (B) an entity that — (i) the Assistant Secretary, by rule, determines to be in the public interest; and (ii) is not a school.

HELPFUL LINKS

Link to Federal Website: https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/funding-programs/digital-equity-act-programs

PREPARING FOR THE BOOTCAMP

- Create an account at login.gov if you do not already have one.
- Register at SAM.gov or update registration to obtain a DUNS number.
  - Note: It can take almost a month after an applicant submits the SAM (System for Award Management) registration before the registration is active in the system. Please keep this in mind and create your account as early as possible.
  - Note: Existing SAM.gov registrants should check annually to confirm that their registration is active. Please ensure that your city's name, address, and EIN are up to date.
    - Getting started with your UEI:
      1. Sign in to SAM.gov.
      2. Go to Workspace (top right corner).
      3. Locate the Entity Management widget to find your UEI.
      4. Once you have the UEI, validate your entity's legal business name and physical address under Profile.