

A photograph of three young women in a collaborative setting, smiling and looking at a laptop screen. The woman in the center is wearing a light blue denim shirt over a white t-shirt. The woman on the right is wearing glasses and a white top. The woman on the left is partially visible, looking towards the laptop. The background is a white brick wall and a wooden door. The image has a dark overlay.

# Digital Equity Application Workbook

**Local Infrastructure Hub**

HR&A

## Introduction

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**Welcome to the Digital Equity Act Bootcamp! We are excited to support small and medium sized cities in applying for funding to advance digital equity in their communities.**

The Digital Equity Act created two programs that could potentially offer funding for local government programs:

### 1. Digital Equity Competitive

**Grant Program:** Grants made by the NTIA directly to a variety of eligible entities, including municipal and county governments and nonprofits, to support efforts to achieve digital equity, promote digital inclusion activities, and spur greater adoption of broadband among covered populations.

### 2. State Digital Equity Capacity

**Grant Program:** Grants made by the NTIA to States to promote the achievement of digital equity, support digital inclusion activities, and build capacity for efforts by States relating to the adoption of broadband by residents. After receiving their Capacity Grants, States may make subgrants to entities including municipal and county governments to help implement the State's Digital Equity Plan and related digital inclusion activities. While it is up to each State to design their subgrant programs, we expect many States to offer subgrants for programs such as digital navigation, digital literacy training, device distribution, and affordable broadband program outreach and enrollment.

While we don't yet know what will be included in the final versions of NTIA's Competitive Grant applications or each State's Capacity Grant subgrant applications, our review of the Digital Equity Act and previous NTIA grant programs identified four key sections for any application:

- 1. Project Needs:** Demonstrating the need for the project, focusing on the specific digital equity needs of covered populations.
- 2. Project Purpose:** Describing what the project plans to achieve, the populations it will serve, and the geographic areas it will cover.
- 3. Applicant Capacity:** Describing key project personnel, partners, and informal collaborators to demonstrate capacity to implement the project.
- 4. Project Budget and Narrative:** Explaining how the grant funds will be used.

This Bootcamp's modules are designed to guide you to develop a potential project and complete each of these four sections for a successful application.

## Definitions

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### Digital Equity:

The condition in which individuals and communities have the information technology capacity that is needed for full participation in the society and economy of the United States.

### Digital Inclusion:

The activities that are necessary to ensure that all individuals in the United States have access to, and the use of, affordable information and communication technologies, such as:

1. Reliable fixed and wireless broadband internet service
2. Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user
3. Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration
4. Access to digital literacy training
5. Quality technical support
6. Basic awareness of measures to ensure online privacy and cybersecurity

### Digital Literacy:

The skills associated with using technology to enable users to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information.

### Covered Populations:

The Digital Equity Act identified eight priority demographic groups. Those are:

1. Individuals living in households earning at or below 150% of the poverty line
2. Aging individuals
3. Incarcerated individuals (other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility)
4. Veterans
5. Individuals with disabilities
6. Individuals with a language barrier (including those who are English learners or have low levels of literacy)
7. Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
8. Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area

### Application Section 1: Project Needs

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This section demonstrates the need for the project, especially the specific digital equity needs of covered populations.

Your response to the **Project Needs** section should include:

- 1. A description of the digital equity needs, challenges, or barriers faced by members of covered populations in your community that your project plans to serve.
- 2. A summary of quantitative and qualitative data as evidence of these needs. Consider administrative datasets (such as FCC or American Community Survey), survey data, or data from focus groups, workshops, interviews, or other forms of community engagement.
- 3. A description of how your project is designed specifically to address these needs.

## **Application Section 1: Project Needs**

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### **Project Needs:**

### Application Section 2: Project Purpose

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Also known as Project Justification or Project Narrative, this section provides an overview of what the project plans to achieve, the activities to be implemented, the populations served, and geographic areas covered. This section should also include the metrics that will be used to evaluate success. These should be defined both in terms of outputs (e.g. # of trainings delivered) and outcomes (e.g. improvement in employment and earnings).

Your response to the **Project Purpose** section should include:

- 1. The primary goals your project plans to achieve, both in terms of digital equity and other outcomes (such as in economic or workforce development, health, or education).
- 2. The number of community members the project plans to serve. Of this number, specify the percentage of community members who belong to each covered population.
- 3. The geographic areas covered and a description of why these areas were selected.
- 4. The grant-funded activities that will be carried out by the project.
- 5. The metrics which will be used to evaluate project success.

## **Application Section 2: Project Purpose**

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**Project Purpose:**

### Application Section 3: Applicant Capacity

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This section demonstrates your capacity to implement the project by describing your key personnel, partners, and informal collaborators.

Consider engaging the following entities as partners or collaborators:

- Public libraries
- School districts
- Community colleges
- Organizations serving or representing covered populations
- Related initiatives that received ARP or CARES Act funding in your community

Your response to the **Applicant Capacity** section should include:

1. A description of the key personnel assigned to the project, their roles, and qualifications.
2. A list of funded partners and unfunded informal collaborators on the project, their roles, and qualifications.
3. A summary of the Applicant Team's experience in digital equity, experience serving the specified covered populations, and past track record of success with similar projects.
4. A summary of existing resources, programs, or other assets that can complement the proposed grant-funded activities.



## **Application Section 3: Applicant Capacity**

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### **Applicant Capacity:**

### Application Section 4: Project Budget and Narrative

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This section outlines how grant funds will be used across specified categories and provides justification for the proposed expenses.

Your response to the **Project Budget and Narrative** section should include:

- 1. **A spreadsheet** to detail itemized expenses in each of the federal SF-424A categories:
  - a. Personnel
  - b. Fringe Benefits
  - c. Travel
  - d. Equipment
  - e. Supplies
  - f. Contractual
  - g. Other
  - h. Indirect
- 2. An explanation of the necessity and basis of all proposed expenses, including a description of how expenses are tied to each grant-funded activity.
- 3. An explanation of other funding sources to support the project, including any project match.

**Application Section 4:** Project Budget and Narrative

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**Project Budget Narrative:**