

**State of Illinois Uniform Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)  
Summary Information**

Awarding Agency Name	Commerce And Econ Opp
Agency Contact	Devon Braunstein (devon.braunstein@illinois.gov)
Announcement Type	Initial
Type of Assistance Instrument	Grant
Funding Opportunity Number	FY25-1
Funding Opportunity Title	Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program (IDEC)
CSFA Number	420-35-3522
CSFA Popular Name	IDEC
Anticipated Number of Awards	0
Estimated Total Program Funding	\$13,500,000
Award Range	\$90000 - \$900000
Source of Funding	Federal
Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements	No
Indirect Costs Allowed	Yes
Restrictions on Indirect Costs	No
Posted Date	02/03/2025
Application Date Range	02/03/2025 - 05/08/2025 : 5:00PM
Grant Application Link	Please select the entire address below and paste it into the browser... <a href="https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/3522-2972.html">https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/3522-2972.html</a>
Technical Assistance Session	Offered : Yes Mandatory : No Date : 02/07/2025 : 11:00AM Registration link : <a href="https://registration.extension.illinois.edu/start/illinois-digital-equity-capacity-grants-webinar-series">https://registration.extension.illinois.edu/start/illinois-digital-equity-capacity-grants-webinar-series</a>

# Agency-specific Content for the Notice of Funding Opportunity

## Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant NOFO ID: 3522-2972

For information about grants please visit <https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/granteeresources.html>.

### A. Program Description

#### Notice of Funding Opportunity Intent

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (the “Department” or “DCEO”) is issuing this Notice of Funding Opportunity (“NOFO”) to solicit applications for the Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program (“IDEC” or “Program”), funded through the Digital Equity Capacity Grant allocation to Illinois, authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, Division F, Title III, Public Law 117-58, 135 Stat. 429, 1209 (November 15, 2021) (“Infrastructure Act” or “IIJA”) also known as the (“Digital Equity Act” or “DE Act”).

#### Program Description

The Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program will empower and equip individuals and communities with the skills, resources, and confidence they need to use the internet to fully participate in Illinois’ modern society and economy. Recognizing that achieving digital equity for all people is a matter of social and economic justice, this NOFO seeks to enable any entity that is awarded a grant under this Program to better address systemic barriers to digital equity, resulting in improved outcomes in health, education, economic stability, and quality of life. Whether to build a resume and apply for a job, access healthcare from home, pay bills online, or help family members with homework, access to high speed, affordable and reliable internet -- and the abilities and tools required to use it – is essential for all Illinois households.

IDEC represents one of five implementation strategies outlined in Illinois’ State Digital Equity Plan. The Digital Equity Plan is a roadmap to achieve digital equity: a state where all Illinoisans have the tools and resources they need to use broadband to thrive. IDEC programs must prioritize serving one or more Covered Populations as defined by 47 U.S.C. §1721(8) . Covered Populations are communities with historic barriers to digital access. Covered Populations include:

- Individuals who live in Covered Households (defined as households with income from the most recently completed year of not more than 150% of the Federal Poverty Level);
- Aging individuals, meaning a person who is 60 years or older;
- Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility, and justice-impacted individuals;
- Veterans;
- Individuals with disabilities;
- Individuals with a language barrier, including English learners and those with low levels of literacy;
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group; and
- Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.

IDEC aims to build capacity among local institutions who have existing trusted relationships with Covered Populations. IDEC places an emphasis on sustainability, offering prospective grantees an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to build digital equity initiatives into their larger missions. IDEC will invest in both proven approaches and innovative ideas, support partners with an effective track record for serving their communities, and create efficiencies by encouraging use of existing curriculums and program structures, but allowing for flexibility where needed.

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IDEC was developed following design input from stakeholders statewide, and will continue to operate through an equity lens, prioritizing those most impacted and ensuring they are at the table and weighing on program development.

The Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program will fund the following project types:

<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Requirements</b>
Digital Literacy and Skill Building	Classes, workshops, coaching, or other learning opportunities to help Covered Populations build digital skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs can focus on digital skill building in any area that helps Covered Populations achieve outcomes in the State Digital Equity Plan (health, education, economic development).</li> <li>• Applicants must leverage existing learning curriculums where feasible and appropriate. For applicants proposing to develop a curriculum, applicants should include a rationale.</li> </ul>
Device Distribution	Distribution of devices, including laptops, computers, tablets, or other devices that address barriers faced by Covered Populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals or households who belong to one or more Covered Populations must be prioritized for device distribution. Covered Populations with no device at home (outside of a smart phone) should also be prioritized.</li> <li>• Devices must be available at no cost.</li> <li>• Applicants must describe how they plan to offer tech support along with device (i.e., through office hours, phone line, partnering with a local organization, etc.).</li> <li>• While IDEC will not require grantees to condition device distribution on participating in a digital literacy educational initiative, applicants should offer a training on how to use the device to recipients and include a list of resources with the device, such as digital skills classes and local digital navigators.</li> </ul>
Digital Navigator(s)	Member of a community trained and designated to help Covered Populations enroll in high speed internet service, navigate technology challenges, obtain devices, and find digital skill building opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital Navigator(s) should live in the area they serve and/or be a member of one or more Covered Populations.</li> <li>• Digital Navigator(s) should be based in a host organization who is trusted among and accessible to the target community.</li> <li>• Programs should include an outreach and training plan describing how the Digital Navigator will reach and serve Covered Populations.</li> </ul>
Computer Center	Establish, improve, or expand community spaces with no-cost access to computers and the internet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer centers should provide access to computers, internet connectivity, and support for using computers.</li> <li>• Funding can be used to acquire or update equipment for a computing center, and fund expenses required to manage this space.</li> <li>• Applicants should demonstrate need for computing center in community and</li> </ul>

		demonstrate level of commitment and appropriate skills to manage the computer center over time.
Local Broadband Planning	Resources for communities to create their own roadmaps to expanding broadband connectivity. This includes defining their access goals, assessing market and consumer dynamics, engaging internet providers, and exploring public-private partnerships and funding options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local broadband planning projects, also known as broadband feasibility studies, should aim to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Define a community vision and goals for digital equity, with clear objectives for the feasibility study.</li> <li>○ Identify planned team members and other relevant stakeholders (i.e., community members, institutions, public/private sector).</li> <li>○ Assess demographic, broadband-related need, and current broadband availability/access.</li> <li>○ Conduct data and asset mapping.</li> <li>○ Obtain commitment/support from local government and develop a plan for continuous community engagement and support.</li> <li>○ Study available internet service provider options.</li> <li>○ Establish a clear timeline for progress.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

One application may cover one or more project types.

Funded initiatives must:

- **Focus on Covered Populations:** The project should align with the Digital Equity Plan's goals and objectives, and the priorities of the Covered Populations being served, including subgroups within each Covered Population.
- **Create Long-Lasting and Meaningful Change:** Projects should address the systemic barriers and gaps to digital access, with a consideration for sustainability of initiatives created or expanded through this funding.
- **Have a Measurable Implementation Strategy:** Projects should be based on objectives that are measurable, achievable, sustainable, timebound, and designed to address identified disparities directly and logically.
- **Involve Opportunity for Stakeholder Feedback:** Stakeholders directly affected by the proposed strategies and interventions should have opportunities to provide ongoing feedback regarding the effectiveness of interventions and offers ideas on on-going improvements.

IDEC aims to support programming statewide, with a consideration for geographic diversity and priority for regions and sub-regions with high portions of Covered Populations.

Program History

Recognizing the devastating impact of digital exclusion, the Biden Administration made a commitment that every household in America will have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet, and the resources necessary to realize the Internet’s full potential. Passed on a bipartisan basis in both chambers of Congress, the Digital Equity Act of 2021 provides \$2.75 billion to address digital inclusion and advance digital equity.

The Digital Equity Act creates a carefully structured process to address the core concerns of digital equity and digital inclusion for the members of the Covered Populations. The first step was the creation of

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detailed Digital Equity Plans. NTIA launched the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program (“Planning Grant Program”) on May 13, 2022, awarding \$53.7 million to 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and four U.S. Territories, to develop Digital Equity Plans which identify the barriers to digital adoption for each of the eight Covered Populations identified in the statute.

With this funding, all fifty States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands have for the first time developed Digital Equity Plans designed to identify and tackle the barriers to digital equity faced by the Covered Populations. The Digital Equity Capacity grant awarded to Illinois provides resources to implement this Plan.

The Digital Equity Act of 2021 is closely tied to the broader infrastructure deployment goals of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program. The BEAD Program is an historic \$42.5 billion investment in grants to States and U.S. Territories for broadband planning, deployment, mapping, equity, adoption, and meaningful use projects.

The Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program also builds upon decades of digital equity work in Illinois. Most recently, Illinois has funded more than \$350 million in broadband deployments in unserved and underserved communities statewide, in addition to statewide initiatives such as the Digital Equity Capacity Kickstarter grant program and Regional Engagement for Adoption and Digital Equity (READY) Program.

### Performance Goals and Measures

Illinois Digital Equity Capacity grant recipients are required to incorporate program measurement and evaluation activities as a part of their program design and implementation. These activities must include progress made toward meeting the measurable objectives identified in Illinois’ State Digital Equity Plan. Measurable objectives can be found starting on page 11 of the Digital Equity Plan Appendix (<https://dceo.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/dceo/connectillinois/documents/illinois-state-digital-equity-plan-appendix-only.pdf>).

All projects must collect and report on the following data points, which will be further defined through sub-grantee agreements:

- a. Number of Covered Population(s) served;
- b. Number of people served within each Covered Population;
- c. Total number of people served;
- d. Number of programs implemented by type;
- e. Anecdotal/personal testimony demonstrating the positive impact of the Program;
- f. Quantifiable evidence of progress toward the measurable objectives identified in the Digital Equity Plan;
- g. Impact on the State or Territory’s goals regarding:
  - i. Economic and workforce development outcomes;
  - ii. Educational outcomes;
  - iii. Health outcomes;
  - iv. Civic and social engagement; and
  - v. Delivery of essential services.

Additional project-specific data points to evaluate progress and impact will be identified prior to sub-grantee agreement. Collection of data points will enable Illinois to assess the effectiveness of funded programs, per NTIA requirements.

### Other Information

N/A

## B. Funding Information

This grant program is utilizing NTIA Digital Equity Capacity Grant funds appropriated by the General Assembly. Total amount of funding expected to be awarded through this NOFO is up to \$13,500,000. Awards will range from \$30,000 to \$300,000 on an annual basis, for a three-year term.

Anticipated start date for awards is July 1, 2025. The period of performance is expected to be July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2028, though this is subject to change based on the date the grant agreement is executed.

Allowable costs are determined in accordance with the cost principles identified in 2 C.F.R. Part 200 (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200>), including Subpart E of such regulations and in the grant program's authorizing legislation. In addition, costs must be reasonable, necessary, allocable, and allowable for the proposed project, and conform to generally accepted accounting principles. Grant funds may be used to cover only eligible costs incurred by the recipient during the period of performance, and for allowable costs incurred by the recipient during the grant closeout process.

### Use of Funds:

- To develop and implement digital inclusion activities that benefit covered populations.
- To facilitate the adoption of broadband by covered populations in order to provide educational and employment opportunities to those populations.
- To implement
  - training programs for covered populations that cover basic, advanced, and applied skills;
  - or
  - other workforce development programs.
- To make available equipment, instrumentation, networking capability, hardware and software, or digital network technology for broadband services to covered populations at low or no cost.
- To construct, upgrade, expend, or operate new or existing public access computing centers for covered populations through community anchor institutions.

**The release of this NOFO does not obligate the Department to make an award.**

## C. Eligibility Information

An entity must be registered in the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) Grantee Portal, <https://grants.illinois.gov/portal/>, at the time of grant application. The portal will verify that the entity:

- Has a valid FEIN number (<https://www.irs.gov/individuals/international-taxpayers/taxpayer-identification-numbers-tin#:~:text=You%20can%20use%20the%20IRS%27s,for%20Individual%20Taxpayer%20Identification%20Number>);
- Has a current SAM.gov registration (<https://sam.gov>), SAM.gov registrations must be marked as "public" to allow the GATA Grantee Portal to expedite the review of the federal information;
- Has a valid UEI number (<https://sam.gov>);
- Is not on the Federal Excluded Parties List (verified at <https://sam.gov>);
- Is in Good Standing with the Illinois Secretary of State, as applicable ([https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/business\\_services/corp.html](https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/business_services/corp.html));
- Is not on the Illinois Stop Payment list (verified once entity is registered in GATA Grantee Portal); and
- Is not on the Department of Healthcare and Family Services Provider Sanctions list (<https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/oig/Pages/SanctionsList.aspx>).

Entities on the Illinois Stop Payment List and/or the Federal Excluded Parties List at time of application submission will not be considered for an award.

An automated email notification to the entity alerts them of “qualified” status or informs how to remediate a negative verification (e.g., not in good standing with the Secretary of State). A federal Debarred and Suspended status cannot be remediated.

Pursuant to the policy of the Illinois Office of the Comptroller, to receive grant funds from the State of Illinois, a grantee must be considered a regarded entity by the IRS for federal income tax purposes. Disregarded entities will not be eligible to receive grant funds.

**1. Eligible Applicants include:**

1. 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.
2. An Indian Tribe, an Alaska Native entity, or a Native Hawaiian organization.
3. A foundation, corporation, institution, or association that is-
  - a. a not-for-profit entity; and
  - b. not a school.
4. A community anchor institution, meaning a public school, a public or multi-family housing authority, a library, a medical or healthcare provider, a community college or other institution of higher education, a State or Territory library agency, and any other nonprofit or governmental community support organization.
5. A local educational agency.
6. An entity that carries out a workforce development program.
7. A partnership between any of the entities described in paragraphs (1) through (6).
8. A partnership between-
  - a. an entity described in any of paragraphs (1) through (6); and
  - b. an entity that the Assistant Secretary, by rule, determines to be in the public interest; and is not a school.

All potential applicants who are characterized as one or more of the entities above are eligible.

The Department complies with all applicable provisions of state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to nondiscrimination, sexual harassment and equal employment opportunity including, but not limited to: The Illinois Human Rights Act (775 ILCS 5/1-101 et seq.), The Public Works Employment Discrimination Act (775 ILCS 10/1 et seq.), The United States Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended) (42 USC 2000a-and 2000H-6), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 794), The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 USC 12101 et seq.), and The Age Discrimination Act (42 USC 6101 et seq.).

**2. Cost Sharing or Matching.**

Matching funds are encouraged but not required for an application to be competitive. Matching funds are not a part of the scoring rubric.

**3. Indirect Cost Rate.**

In order to charge indirect costs to a grant, the applicant organization must have an annually negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA). There are three types of NICRAs:

- a) Federally Negotiated Rate. Organizations that receive direct federal funding, may have an indirect cost rate that was negotiated with the Federal Cognizant Agency. Illinois will accept the federally negotiated rate. The organization must provide a copy of the federally NICRA.

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b) State Negotiated Rate. The organization may negotiate an indirect cost rate with the State of Illinois if they do not have a Federally Negotiated Rate. If an organization has not previously established an indirect cost rate, an indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted through State of Illinois' centralized indirect cost rate system no later than three months after receipt of a Notice of State Award (NOSA). If an organization previously established an indirect cost rate, the organization must annually submit a new indirect cost proposal through CARS within six to nine months after the close of the grantee's fiscal year, depending on the grantee's audit type requirements.

c) De Minimis Rate. An organization may elect a de minimis rate of 15% of modified total direct cost (MTDC). Once established, the De Minimis Rate may be used indefinitely. The State of Illinois must verify the calculation of the MTDC annually in order to accept the De Minimis Rate.

All grantees must complete an indirect cost rate negotiation or elect the De Minimis Rate to claim indirect costs. Indirect costs claimed without a negotiated rate or a De Minimis Rate election on record in the State of Illinois' centralized indirect cost rate system may be subject to disallowance.

Grantees have discretion and can elect to waive payment for indirect costs. Grantees that elect to waive payments for indirect costs cannot be reimbursed for indirect costs. The organization must record an election to "Waive Indirect Costs" into the State of Illinois' centralized indirect cost rate system.

The following State University Facilities & Administration Rate and Base will apply to all State issued awards that contain either Federal pass-through funding or State funding.

**RATE:**

20% Rate for awards or programs administered On-Campus\*  
10% Rate for awards or programs administered Off-Campus\*

**BASE:**

Base approved in the State Universities' current Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)

\*Criteria for utilization of the On/Off campus rate is located within the general terms and conditions of Federal NICRA for each State University. If not clearly defined, State awarding agencies and officers will make final determination based upon the purposes of the grant scope.

Code of Federal Regulations / Title 2 - Grants and Agreements / Vol. 1 / 2014-01-01191

#### **4. Freedom of Information Act/Confidential Information.**

Applications and accompanying materials are subject to disclosure in response to requests received under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140/1 et seq.). Information that could be proprietary, privileged, or confidential commercial or financial information should be clearly identified as such in the application materials. The Department will maintain the confidentiality of that information only to the extent permitted by law.

#### **5. Other, if applicable.**

Wave 1 applicants who submit their application by March 3, 5 PM CST will be reviewed by program staff to determine if all required documents have been submitted. Applicants that submit an incomplete application will be notified via email of the missing documentation and will have the opportunity to resubmit a completed application package prior to the NOFO closure date. Applications received after March 3, 2025, 5 pm CST will NOT be reviewed in advance, but will



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be reviewed upon closure of the NOFO Wave 1 as part of the standard Merit Review Process outlined in Section E. Application Review Information.

Applications received after March 20, 2025, 5 pm CST will be evaluated as part of Wave 2, so long as they submit by May 8, 2025, 5 pm CST. Wave 2 applicants who submit their application by April 18, 5 PM CST will be reviewed by program staff to determine if all required documents have been submitted. Applicants that submit an incomplete application will be notified via email of the missing documentation and will have the opportunity to resubmit a completed application package prior to the NOFO closure date. Applications received after April 18, 2025, 5 pm CST will NOT be reviewed in advance, but will be reviewed upon closure of the NOFO Wave 2 as part of the standard Merit Review Process outlined in Section E. Application Review Information.

Applicants may submit multiple applications for this opportunity. Each application will be considered a different project application for this opportunity.

### D. Application and Submission Information

#### 1. Address to Request Application Package.

Grant application forms are available at the web link provided in the “Grant Application Link” field of this announcement or by contacting the Program Manager:

Tim Laffey  
Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity  
1011 South Second  
Springfield, IL 62704  
Tele: 217 782 7500  
Email: [broadband@illinois.gov](mailto:broadband@illinois.gov)

#### 2. Content and Form of Application Submission.

A standard application package must be submitted to and reviewed by DCEO. Each package must contain the following items:

- Uniform Grant Application in fillable PDF format. Signature page must be printed, signed, scanned and submitted with application.
- Uniform Budget utilizing the template provided by DCEO for this project. The entire budget with all worksheets included even if the worksheets are not relevant to the grant opportunity must be submitted with the application materials. Signature page must be printed, signed, scanned and submitted with application.
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure
- Mandatory Disclosures

This Notice of Funding Opportunity also requires the **submission of the following other programmatic specific items as part of the program application:**

- Application Template
- Cover Letter- described in the Application Template; a cover letter should include a clear introduction of your organization, a brief overview of the project you're proposing, why your project aligns with the funding agency's mission, a concise explanation of the need for funding, your project's objectives and impact, while also highlighting any relevant qualifications and expertise that make your application stand out.
- W9
- Evidence of community support, if available

Please note there is a maximum upload of 10 documents in the web form that you submit the application, so combining files may be necessary.

**3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM).**

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal or State awarding agency that is exempt from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal or State awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:

- (i) Be registered in SAM. To establish a SAM registration, go to [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) and/or utilize this instructional link: [www.grants.illinois.gov](http://www.grants.illinois.gov) Resource Links tab. SAM.gov registrations must be “public.”
- (ii) Provide a valid UEI number in the GATA Grantee Portal registration.
- (iii) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal, Federal pass-through or State award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal or State awarding agency. The Department will not make a Federal pass-through or State award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Department is ready to make a Federal pass-through or State award, the Department may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal pass-through or State award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal pass-through or State award to another applicant.

**4. Submission Dates and Times.**

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until available funds are depleted and reviewed in 2 waves. Applications for this opportunity must be submitted by 5:00PM CST on Thursday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025 for Wave 1 and by 5:00PM CST on Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025 for Wave 2.

Application materials must be submitted to the Department via electronic form at <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/52461e5cd3c74b5bb0d28e72d4aad54c>

The Department is under no obligation to review applications that do not comply with the above requirements. Failure to meet the application deadline may result in the Department returning application without review or may preclude the Department from making the award.

**5. Intergovernmental Review, if applicable.**

N/A

**6. Funding Restrictions.**

This opportunity does not allow reimbursement of pre-award costs. Other restrictions can be found in Sections A., B., and C.

**7. Other Submission Requirements.**

Documents stored in Google Docs or other cloud-based servers are not allowed.

Applicants may confirm receipt of the application and documents by contacting the program contact listed in this NOFO.

## E. Application Review Information

### 1. Criteria.

Applications will be reviewed on a competitive basis. Each proposal will be scored on a 100-point scale (or on a percentage scale). Cost sharing / fund-matching is not considered in application evaluation. The Department shall consider the following criteria when evaluating the application submittal:

**Community Need and Service of Covered Populations (25 points):** The level of demonstrated need for improved broadband access, adoption, and/or use, and focus on serving one or more Covered Populations.

*Breakdown:*

- 10 points: Portion of Covered Population(s) in the target community.
- 15 points: Level of need in target community, as evidenced by connectivity levels, device ownership rate, digital skills level, educational attainment, poverty rate, participation in benefits programs, or other community and economic data.

**Capacity of the Eligible Applicant (20 points):** The level of commitment and appropriate skills of the lead organization to manage the project(s), particularly experience in similar digital equity programming, initiatives, or activities OR demonstrated knowledge of and experience serving Covered Population(s).

*Breakdown:*

- 10 points: Breadth and depth of experience managing a comparable digital equity initiative OR experience serving Covered Population(s) through other comparable community programming.
- 10 points: Alignment of proposed initiative to organizational mission and long term goals.

**Quality of the Proposal, including Alignment to State Digital Equity Plan (30 points):** The level of specificity and clarity in the applicant's implementation plan, outreach to and service of Covered Populations, and alignment to specific State Digital Equity Plan goals and outcomes.

*Breakdown:*

- 10 points: Specificity and clarity of implementation plan, including project milestones, timeline, staffing, metrics collection, and program evaluation.
- 10 points: Quality of Covered Population outreach, accessibility, and engagement plan to ensure utilization of services.
- 10 points: Alignment to State Digital Equity Plan goals and outcomes, with specific plans to promote one or more of the following measurable objectives:
  - Availability and affordability of access to broadband technology;
  - Online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services;
  - Digital literacy;
  - Awareness of online privacy and cybersecurity;
  - The availability and affordability of consumer devices and technical support for those devices.

**Support from the Community (10 points):** The level of demonstrated support from community stakeholders. Community support may be demonstrated through: letters of support; committed resources (i.e., space, funding); evidence of community-based planning, program design or input; or other meaningful showcase of support.

*Breakdown:*

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- 5 points: Diversity (or breadth) of community support provided.
- 5 points: Quality (or depth) of community support provided.

**Budget (10 points):** Reasonable and viable use of funding that aligns with project priorities and evidence of need. If staff salary is included, demonstrate equity in compensation.

*Breakdown:*

- 5 points: For feasible use of funds, meaning that the budget is clear, realistic and covers expenses for activities that lead to outcomes in proposed plan.
- 5 points: For equitable use of funds, meaning that the budget considers the needs of people working in this program and people who are served by this program, and allocates resources to address disparities while fairly compensating and fully supporting people doing the work.

**Plan for Sustainability (5 points):** The plan for program sustainability following the grant's period of performance.

*Breakdown:*

- 5 points: Clear and feasible plan for how the initiative may continue following the period of performance.

## 2. Review and Selection Process.

Applications will be graded using the Merit Review Process and scored on the criteria specified in Section E.1. The Department will designate an Evaluation Committee to grade each application received for this funding opportunity. The final score of each Committee member will be calculated and an average of all scores will be the final applicant score. Grants will be awarded in order from highest score to lowest score until funding is exhausted, with a priority for geographic diversity and ensuring service across all Covered Populations. Applications will be reviewed against others in their economic development region. A scoring threshold will be established per economic development regions to determine funded applications. There will be two application deadlines: Wave 1 and Wave 2. Applications that are not selected in Wave 1 will carry over to Wave 2 for evaluation.

IDEC aims to support programming statewide, with a consideration for geographic diversity and priority for regions and sub-regions with high portions of Covered Populations.

The Merit Based Review process is subject to appeal. However, competitive grant appeals are limited to the evaluation process. Evaluation scores may not be protested. Only the evaluation process is subject to appeal. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Department within 14 calendar days after the date that the grant award notice has been published. The written appeal shall include the name and address of the appealing party, the identification of the grant and a statement of reasons for the appeal. To file an appeal, applicants must submit the appeal in writing and in accordance with the Merit-Based Application Review Appeals Process listed on the Grant Opportunities page of the DCEO website:  
<https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/meritappreview.html>.

## 3. Anticipated Announcement and State Award Dates, if applicable.

After the application period is closed, the Department will conduct a merit based review of eligible applications. Successful applicants will receive a Notice of State Award (NOSA) to initiate the grant agreement phase. During this phase, you will be contacted by a grant manager to develop a grant agreement, which can be a months long process depending on complexity, cooperation, and conformity with all applicable federal and state laws.

The Department reserves the right to issue a reduced award, or not to issue any award.

## F. Award Administration Information

### 1. State Award Notices.

The Notice of State Award (NOSA) will specify the funding terms and specific conditions resulting from the pre-award risk assessments and the merit-based review process. The NOSA must be accepted in the GATA Portal by an authorized representative of the grantee organization. The NOSA is not an authorization to begin performance or incur costs.

### 2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.

**Subrecipients and Subcontractors:** Agreement(s) and budget(s) with subrecipients and subcontractors must be pre-approved by and on file with DCEO. Agreements can be submitted to DCEO when available. Subcontractors and subrecipients are subject to all applicable provisions of the Agreement(s) executed between DCEO and the grantee. The successful applicant shall retain sole responsibility for the performance of its subrecipient(s) and/or subcontractor(s).

**Grant Uniform Requirements:** The Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (30 ILCS 708/1 *et seq.*) (and its related administrative rules, 44 Ill. Admin. Code Part 7000), was enacted to increase the accountability and transparency in the use of grant funds from whatever source and to reduce administrative burdens on both State agencies and grantees by adopting federal guidance and regulations applicable to those grant funds; specifically, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200).

**Procurement:** Grantees will be required to adhere to methods of procurement per the Procurement Standards (2 CFR 200.317 – 2 CFR 200.327).

**Other administrative and national policy requirements:** Applicants are eligible for multi-year grants if the renewals are conditioned on a comprehensive evaluation of the awardee's fiscal, administrative, and programmatic compliance during the preceding grant term.

### **Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions for NTIA Digital Equity Capacity Grant Sub-Recipients**

#### Build America, Buy America Act Domestic Content Preference Requirements

Pursuant to the Build America, Buy America Act (BABA) (Pub. L. No. 117-58, §§ 70901-52) and regulations promulgated thereunder at 2 C.F.R. part 184, recipients of an award of federal financial assistance from the Department of Commerce are hereby notified that none of the funds provided under such award may be used for an "infrastructure project" (as defined in 2 C.F.R. 184.3) unless:

- a. all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States--this means all manufacturing processes, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings, occurred in the United States;
- b. all manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States—this means the manufactured product was manufactured in the United States; and the cost of the components of the manufactured product that are mined, produced, or manufactured in the United States is greater than fifty-five (55) percent of the total cost of all

components of the manufactured product, unless another standard for determining the minimum amount of domestic content of the manufactured product has been established under applicable law or regulation; and

c. all construction materials are manufactured in the United States—this means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the United States.

The Buy America preference only applies to articles, materials, and supplies that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to an infrastructure project. As such, it does not apply to tools, equipment, and supplies, such as temporary scaffolding, brought to the construction site and removed at or before the completion of the infrastructure project. Nor does a Buy America preference apply to equipment and furnishings, such as movable chairs, desks, and portable computer equipment, that are used at or within the finished infrastructure project but are not an integral part of the structure or permanently affixed to the infrastructure project.

To help federal agencies and recipients meet BABA requirements, the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) National Network™ of the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) provides a service to connect stakeholders, including recipients, to U.S. manufacturers that have relevant production capabilities and capacities to help fulfill current market and supply chain needs. Recipients considering requesting a BABA nonavailability waiver are strongly encouraged to contact the NIST/MEP for assistance with supplier scouting services prior to seeking a BABA nonavailability waiver. Further information on the NIST/MEP supplier scouting services is available at: <https://www.nist.gov/mep/supplier-scouting>.

#### BABA Waivers

When necessary, recipients may apply for, and the Department may grant, a waiver from these requirements. The Department will provide the recipient with information on the process for requesting a waiver from these requirements. When the Department has made a determination that one of the following exceptions applies, the awarding official may waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference in any case in which the Department determines that:

- i. applying the domestic content procurement preference would be inconsistent with the public interest;
- ii. the types of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities or of a satisfactory quality; or
- iii. the inclusion of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials produced in the United States will increase the cost of the overall project by more than twenty-five (25) percent.

A request to waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference must be in writing. NTIA will provide instructions on the format, contents, and supporting materials required or any waiver request. Waiver requests are subject to public comment periods of no less than fifteen (15) calendar days and must be reviewed by the Made in America Office of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

There may be instances where an award qualifies, in whole or in part, for an existing waiver described at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/build-america-buy-america>.

#### Domestic Preference for Procurements

Pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.322, as appropriate and to the extent consistent with law, a nonfederal entity should, to the greatest extent practicable under a federal award, provide a preference for the purchase, acquisition, or use of goods, products, or materials produced in the United States (including, but not limited to, iron, aluminum, steel, cement, and other manufactured products). The requirements of this Section must be included in all subawards, including all contracts and purchase orders for work or products pursuant to this program.

Contracting with Small and Minority Businesses, Women's Business Enterprises, and Labor Surplus Area Firms

Pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.321, a non-federal entity must take all necessary affirmative steps (as described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.321) to assure that minority businesses, women's business enterprises, and labor surplus area firms are used when possible.

Cybersecurity Best Practices

Recipients and subrecipients must ensure that the planning, design, and project oversight phases of the programs and activities funded through the Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program are consistent with current industry best practices for cybersecurity, such as the NIST Cybersecurity Framework<sup>29</sup> and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Cybersecurity Performance Goals (CPGs).<sup>30</sup> These performance goals provide a baseline set of cybersecurity practices that are broadly applicable, with known risk-reduction value. NTIA reserves the right to review a recipient's cybersecurity framework and recipients must review the cybersecurity framework of its subrecipients.

**3. Reporting.**

**Periodic Performance Report (PPR) and Periodic Financial Report (PFR)**

Grantees funded through this NOFO are required to submit in the format required by the Grantor, at least on a quarterly basis, the PPR and PFR electronically to their assigned grant manager. The first of such reports shall cover the first three months after the award begins. Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.328, Periodic Financial Reports shall be submitted no later than 30 calendar days following the period covered by the report. Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.329, Periodic Performance Reports shall be submitted no later than 30 calendar days following the period covered by the report. Any additional reporting requirements will be disclosed in the NOSA. Grantees are required within 45 calendar days following the end of the period of performance to submit a final closeout report in the format required by the Grantor (See 2 CFR 200.344).

**Monitoring**

Grantees funded through this NOFO are subject to fiscal and programmatic monitoring visits by the Department in accordance with 2 CFR 200.337. They must have an open-door policy allowing periodic visits by Department monitors to evaluate the progress of the project and provide documentation upon request of the monitor. Program staff will also maintain contact with participants and monitor progress and performance of the contracts. The Department may modify grants based on performance.

**Audit**

Grantees shall be subject to Illinois' statewide Audit Report Review requirements. Terms of the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 (31 USC 7501-7507), Subpart F of 2 CFR Part 200, and the audit rules set forth under the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act Admin Rules shall apply (See 44 IL Admin Code 7000.90).

**Electronic Reporting**

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Grantees funded through this NOFO must complete electronic reports on a quarterly basis. Metrics from reports will be used to evaluate grantee progress, and contribute to a statewide evaluation of progress toward goals outlined in the State Digital Equity Plan.

### G. State Awarding Agency Contact(s)

Grant Help Desk  
Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity  
Email: [CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov](mailto:CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov)

### H. Other Information, if applicable

The Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program is a new program, funded through the Digital Equity Capacity Grant to implement the State Digital Equity Plan. The Department may release additional Notices of Funding Opportunity under the Digital Equity Capacity Grant for related programs.

#### Resources:

- Illinois Office of Broadband Digital Equity Act website (<https://dceo.illinois.gov/connectillinois/digital-equity-act.html>), which includes:
  - State Digital Equity Plan and appendix
  - Webinar recordings and slides
  - Digital equity resources, such as curriculums and program design tips

State government is not obligated to make any State award as a result of the announcement.

Applicants may email [broadband@illinois.gov](mailto:broadband@illinois.gov) with questions about this opportunity.