

DIGITAL EQUITY OVERVIEW AND TALKING POINTS

Digital Equity Planning Grant

The state's recent Digital Equity Planning Grant award comes from the bipartisan infrastructure bill, known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), with oversight by the National Telecommunications and Information Agency (NTIA). The **\$567,884.90** planning grant will be used to create a comprehensive digital equity plan.

DIGITAL EQUITY WORKING GROUP

Composed of partner organizations representing unserved or underserved populations in Alaska, their role is to gather input from communities to better understand barriers Alaskans face when trying to access high-speed internet and to hear their ideas for solutions.

We are building three things:

1. A printed Digital Equity Plan, with an electronic version hosted on the State of Alaska's website.
2. An open access, interactive online dashboard and downloadable map displaying the data collected to inform the measurable objectives.
3. A community resource library.

The Planning process will include three primary components:

1. Community outreach and stakeholder engagement.
2. Data collection, analysis, and visualization.
3. Holistic integration with the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan.

The Rasmuson Foundation's goal is to assist the State of Alaska in:

- Providing all Alaskans access to high-speed, reliable broadband.
- Ensuring that access is affordable.
- Employing an equitable and transparent process.
- Engaging communities.
- Building a strong governance structure that ensures programmatic goals and benefits are realized.

• The Rasmuson Foundation will administer the Digital Equity Planning Grant and complete the DE plan in collaboration with the Alaska State Broadband Office and other strategic partners. The Foundation is providing up to \$3 million in foundation funds through the end of the year to supplement broadband infrastructure deployment and digital equity activities and may provide additional support to the state as issues are identified during the digital equity planning process.

• 100% of the State's \$567,800 Digital Equity Planning Grant will be used toward outreach planning activities and support and grants to Tribal, municipal, and non-profit organizations representing covered populations. No Digital Equity Planning Grant funds will be used for staff salaries, overhead, or indirect costs. The state's DE plan will become part of Alaska's larger 5-Year Broadband plan (funded by the BEAD planning program).



Connect AK

The DE will complement and reflect goals within the state's Economic Development Plan, Tribal plans and other state and local plans.

Key Messages

- The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) defines digital equity as “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.”
- Alaska currently ranks 42nd among states for internet coverage, speed and availability, and 49th among all states for people with access to 100Mbps broadband.
- More than 75% of Alaskan residents are not able to purchase broadband in Alaska at an affordable price (<\$60/mo).
- According to the U.S. Census, nearly one in five Alaskans don’t use the internet, and nearly 30% of Alaskans don’t use a PC or tablet.
- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or IIJA, supported by Alaska’s Congressional Delegation and signed by President Biden, provides \$2.75 billion to expand broadband access and promote digital equity and inclusion, among other things.

The DE grant focuses on the NTIA’s “covered” populations:

- Low-income individuals (at or below 150% of the poverty level)
- Individuals aged 60 or older
- Incarcerated individuals, other than those incarcerated in a Federal facility
- Veterans
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with a language barrier
- Members of a racial or ethnic minority group
- Rural individuals

82% percent of Alaskans are considered to be part of one or more of these populations, and Alaska’s digital equity plan will be developed to serve all of them.

Alaska is using the \$567,800 Digital Equity Planning Grant to create and vet a five-year plan to close the state’s digital equity gap.

Upon the successful completion of the planning process, expected in mid 2023, Alaska will be eligible to receive subsequent funding to implement the plan.

The state’s digital equity plan will establish a statewide vision for digital equity, create a digital equity framework and scorecard, develop plans for digital literacy innovation programs, and propose workforce opportunities and technology-related apprenticeships.

Alaska’s digital equity plan will be developed concurrently with the state’s Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) plan (also funded by the NTIA). The state’s DE plan will be incorporated in its 5-year BEAD plan.