

**American Library Assoc (ALA)**  
**Speakers: Michele, James, Larra, Chris, Rochelle**

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>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to Leverage Federal Funds to Advance Digital Equity in Your Community. Just in case you're wondering if you're in the right session. I'm Michelle Frisque and I'll be your moderator and panelist today, along with my colleague Laura Clark, the Deputy Director of Public Library Association, and the American Library Association Public Policy and Advocacy Office. I always stumble over when I say that. And James Neal, also, our panelist a senior program officer. He's from the Office of the library Services from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

So before we get started, we want to ask a few questions of you. We're going to do this lofi, we're just going to have you raise your hands. But we want to find out who's in the room and kind of where you're at with federal funding when it comes to broadband adoption in your community. So the first question I have for you is in what type of library do you work? And so, anybody in an academic library, if so, please raise your hand. Okay, one. A corporate library. Okay. Public? Yep. School, school library? No.

>> JAMES NEIL: Interesting.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Special library. State? One state. Consortia. And is there anybody that I didn't recognize yet that would like to shout out?

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>> SPEAKER: Consultant.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Consultant. Thank you. Okay, great. Next question, I work in a library. That is, if you work in a rural library, please raise your hand. A couple, okay. Suburban. Okay. Urban. Good news. And then international. I can't think. Okay. Did you know that your state is developing a digital equity plan or do you know that your state is, if so, if yes, please raise your hand. So we have a few. Okay. And then I'm assuming the rest are, no. Okay. Great. And then I have participated in some

way in developing my state's digital equity plan or somebody in your organization.

So if yes, please raise your hand. A few. That's probably why you know about it. Okay. No, a lot. Is anybody of, I'm not sure, but you think maybe. There's a few of those? Yes. Okay. And then how high a priority is digital equity for your library? If you have it's high, please raise your hand. Medium? Low? I don't know? How much capacity do you have to focus on digital equity at your library? A lot? A few hands. Mid-range? Nice. A little? And then no capacity at all?

Well, that's good to see. Thanks. We just kind of wanted to feel the room a little bit just to know what we, like how to proceed. And so in today's session, we're going to talk about what is digital equity and how libraries are supporting it. We're going to continue to do some audience polling. We're going to talk about IMLS, digital equity Strategy and Support. We're going to talk about additional federal funding programs that support digital equity and how you may benefit from it. And then how to prepare for the opportunities that are coming out. And then finally, we have a section of Q&A and some activities for you as well.

>> LARA CLARK: [inaudible 00:04:21].

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Sure, I can do that. All right.

>> LARA CLARK: So, the good news, the reason we're all here is that building on pandemic relief programs, the federal government, oh, sorry, is making historic investment through the Infrastructure, investment and Jobs Act and other federal programs. The IIJA highlights the important role that community anchor institutions like libraries play in creating a digitally equitable future for all. And we believe that libraries of all types in academic, in school and in public libraries will be eligible for some of the funding opportunities.

We'll also touch on some opportunities outside of the IIJA. But this is the newest funding in town, and it's quite a lot of funding, 65 billion in our office. We say billion with a B for broadband and digital equity over the coming four to five years. So to create a digitally equitable future, the government is providing funding to build infrastructure, to make high-speed internet affordable and reliable, and provide the resources needed to equitably expand the adoption and use of the internet.

And so we believe that libraries have been at the forefront of digital equity for decades.

So they should also be at the center of this opportunity that we find ourselves in. ALA has advocated directly to federal agencies on this point, and we are working to amplify all of your work and provide resources to help you be visible to key stakeholders. And we hope to hear more from you and the things that you would like to see from ALA and other folks in our time today. The National Digital Inclusion Alliance defines digital equity as a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy.

It's necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services. So we're going to start with just some examples because we know that libraries are doing a lot of this. You may not always call it digital equity. So we wanted to give some examples also of how we see this and the opportunities is for you to start a new program, expand a program with new funding. So the first one is enabling broadband access. And this is an example actually from the E-Rate program.

The Arley Public Library and Carbon Hill City Library in Alabama used E-Rate funding to upgrade their internet connection to high speed. So they have a service area of 350 people looking for the rural folks. I grew up in a town of about 300. And they now have a 100 millibits per second connection, which I'm guessing is probably the fastest connection in their community. Libraries are also enabling internet access beyond the library walls. We've particularly seen this expansion during the pandemic, but this was already started before that.

In this case, the Utah State Library Book Mobiles bring WiFi to the community, and they're piloting a program where residents can use kiosks in the community to expand access as well. Of course, the high internet hotspots for all my public library folks, and actually also for school and academic libraries. WiFi hotspots have been a big part of how we are extending our reach into households. And in this case, San Jose Public Library in California developed two programs one specifically designed for students, if that's an area that you're looking at in terms of specifically serving students and families.

The student hotspots can be checked out for the entire school year. And then other hotspots are available for 90 days. And the

other example here is Boston Public Lending hotspots in Chromebook long term to folks who don't otherwise have access. And this was funded through the Emergency Connectivity Fund, which is another federal program that is pretty much spent at this point, but I think has been a huge enabler for some of these programs.

In addition to hotspots and laptops, libraries are increasingly offering technology rich spaces for learning and exploration, including the Kanawa County Public Library Idea Lab in West Virginia. A very common kind of maker space that we've been seeing more and more in terms of building new skill sets and technologies with 3D printers, laser cutters stop motion cameras, all of that.

Digital literacy is a huge piece of what we do, and I think it's also a huge piece of what is enabled through the Digital Equity Act, both basic and advanced. The Connect Arizona Digital Navigators are a team of library staff from around the state to provide one-on-one phone assistance to help Arizona communities get online. So it's not just in person, it's by phone. They serve as a free tech support hotline for digital learning and information on accessing low cost internet and computer offers.

The New Jersey Library Association's Access Navigator program provides a cohort of skilled trainers that rotate through 12 participating libraries that cover nine counties to provide individualized assistance. So these are two state level programs that provide reach into the local libraries. And then the last example related to digital literacy. The Kansas City Public Library in Missouri provides the tech access program to help patrons learn how to use technology in other tools in their day-to-day lives. And they do this in collaboration with the Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion.

The last few examples are about using technology first for workforce. In terms of the Queens' public library in New York, providing a course for English, for speakers of other languages or ESOL that help customers build the language skills they need to have a successful career. Participants learn how to create resumes, interview, increase their comfort, communicating at work, communicating better with supervisors and peers and then ultimately completing the ESOL for healthcare course and help connect those students who've completed the course with work in healthcare with reputable home care agencies.

The next one is small business development. I know one of my colleagues here is very familiar with this program in Gwinnett County, Georgia. The New Start Entrepreneurship incubator program helps community members who have served time in jail or prison to create their own businesses. Over six months, the participants are part of a cohort who receive assistance with developing business ideas, learning how to run a successful business, and receiving one-on-one support from successful entrepreneurs.

As part of the digital equity piece, they also receive a laptop and hotspot kit while they're enrolled in the program. And the library is working with SCORE and Small Business, ACE Women's Business Center and Local Business Mentors, which is a theme that you'll hear about from us today. And then I think the last two examples is the University of Nevada and Las Vegas has programs in resources to advance southern Nevada's economic development with targeted outreach to businesses in the community, access to databases, providing patent and trademark resources and services, workshops, consultations and more.

And I think the most significant growth area that we're seeing, I think around digital inclusion and digital equity is in telehealth. In this case, Pima County Public Library recently announced its health connect program, which provides secure and private environments for individuals to connect with their doctors online at the library. They provide the space and technology needed to attend a telehealth session. So altogether, I'm sure that your library is supporting digital equity and a range of ways even if you don't call it that. So we hope that we'll be building on that foundation that already exists in your library as we consider new funding opportunities.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Thank you, Laura. Okay. So based on what you've just seen, I have a question for you. What do you think would be your library's top priority when it came to providing digital equity services at your library? Raise of hands again. So, and you can raise your hand more than once. I'm not going to make you only choose one. So who here is looking to either expand or build out their digital literacy skills programs?

>> LARA CLARK: That's good.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Good. Okay. Workforce development and entrepreneurship. Nice. Okay. Telehealth. Okay. Tech lending. Okay. High speed internet access in the library.

>> LARA CLARK: That's good.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: And then supporting home broadband adoption. So that's providing information to patrons about a certain- People already knew. Great. Another question we have for you, and this is based on one of the examples that we shared earlier. Does your library have access to affordable, reliable, and high speed internet access? So do you have internet that actually is serving the needs of your library patrons today and for tomorrow? And so do you highly agree with that statement? Okay. Somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, because you're just not sure. Slightly disagree and strongly disagree that you feel like you need better, reliable. Great. Okay.

And this is kind of just a call out because we're really kind of curious. You're going to notice a theme that Laura talked about was many of the digital equity programs that she was talking about involved community partnerships. So working wasn't just the library doing it, but other organizations were working with the libraries to provide services. So which organizations are you actively collaborating with in your community to provide digital equity support to your residents? And so do you want to just shout out some examples of people that you're working with? Groups or organizations? Yes.

>> CHRIS: I'm Chris from South Carolina. I'm just State representative Shelby. [inaudible 00:15:05].

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: So one of the audience members just talked about Shelby, which is an organization that represents schools, libraries, and health.

>> LARA CLARK: Yes.

>> FEDERAL FRISQUE: Yes. Okay. I was like, "Am I going to forget one?" Somebody else has rose their hand. Yes.

>> SPEAKER: I was just going to mention schools, colleges, local workforce development.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Great schools, libraries, and local workforce development. Colleges. I can't believe I forgot colleges. Yes. In the back.

>> SPEAKER: Can you use Tech Soup? That gives us a discounted rate on [inaudible 00:15:39].

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Tech Soup was one of the organizations recognized. And plus one to that one. Somebody over here is, yes.

>> SPEAKER: Correctional and [inaudible 00:15:49] working with partners in the Queens.

>> FEDERAL FRISQUE: Great.

>> SPEAKER: I'm sorry, what was the name of it again?

>> SPEAKER: Collection Queens Defenders is one of the Queens public library.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: So organizations that are working on recently released incarcerated folks who are trying to re-enter into communities. Yes.

>> SPEAKER: We have a digital lens in Utah, and Utah communities connect the goals in like state library, academic libraries and organizations around Utah.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Great.

>> SPEAKER: Very cool.

>> FEDERAL FRISQUE: Any other examples that people want to share? Either general or specific, if you're part of a coalition? Yes.

>> SPEAKER: We're just starting to work with some of our senior centers that have, some have more access than we do, so we're learning what they have for their resident, whether it's a residential program or not.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Great.

>> SPEAKER: We were just talking about seniors.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Okay. And then our last question is, is your library actively involved in a larger digital equity ecosystem in your community? So are you part of a coalition or formal group that is working about working self-digital equity issues holistically in your community? If yes, please raise your hand.

>> JAMES NEAL: It's good.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Okay, great. So I imagine many or most of you have already heard of IMLS, but you may not be familiar- I would hope. But you may not be familiar with many of the investments that they're making currently in digital equity. So James is here to talk about some of the supports that they're currently working on when it comes to digital equity.

>> JAMES NEAL: Okay, can you advance the slide please? All right. Good afternoon everyone. My name is James Neal. I'm a Senior Library Program officer in the Office of Library Services at the Institute of Museum and Library Services in Washington, DC, also known as the IMLS. I'm also a librarian by training. I went to the University of Maryland and got a degree back in 2012. I worked for the Prince George's County Memorial Library System in Maryland for two years, starting off as a youth services librarian then I became head of digital services for PGC MLS and I have been at IMLS for about six years.

I do want to talk a little bit about what IMLS is and does, because I think sometimes folks confuse us with the Smithsonian, the Library of Congress, ALA, OCLC and all of the others. So I want us to focus on the federal government, the agency that is primarily responsible for funding libraries, archives, and museums. At IMLS, I cover a number of subject matter areas, including digital equity, digital inclusion, data privacy and security, open educational resources, e-books, and civic and public interest technology.

Today I'm here to talk to you about digital equity and digital inclusion. IMLS, again, is the primary source for federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. At IMLS we fund libraries specifically in two different ways. We have our grants to states office, which gives money to our state libraries across the United States. And we also have the part that I work in or the division that I work in, which is discretionary, meaning these are competitive grants that people are able to apply to their two major programs, the Laura Bush 21st Century program and the NLG are the National Leadership Grants Program.

The Laura Bush 21st Century program is focused on training for libraries and librarians and NLG. The National leadership grants are based on project-based service, resource development, prototyping, and the like. We also are just not concerned with the contiguous United States. We include Alaska and Hawaii as well as the freely associated states, which are, I have them here, federated states of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and



the Republic of the Marshall Islands. We are also concerned with the territories, which are American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the US Virgin Islands. And we also include Puerto Rico amongst our constituency.

We have what is known as a petite federal agency, meaning that our staff, it's a literal term but our staff is about 70 to 80 people at any one time. But to give you an idea of the dollar amounts that IMLS deals in, I'm going to give you some numbers from fiscal year 21, we awarded in our grants to states program about 170 million to our state libraries. For public libraries archives across the United States, we awarded about 32 million and for museums, 42 million.

Next slide please. So long before the pandemic and long before the CARES Act, and long before the American Rescue Plan, and long before the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or the I IJA, IJA, as some people like to call it, IMLS and libraries across the nation have been working to try to find ways to bridge what is known as the digital divide and the roles that libraries play in digital inclusion, and digital equity is of increasing importance as the pandemic brought full relief to.

And I'm very interested in the ways that the pandemic impacted libraries. I'm sure you all are as well and perhaps we will have your own stories to tell and share once we are fit done here presenting. I want to talk a little bit about some of the projects that IMLS has recently funded that we've consider some of our hallmarks of digital inclusion and digital equity. In 2017, with the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, we created what is known as the Digital Inclusion Pilot Project.

So basically these were three state libraries and two museums that were led by members of their community who were involved in digital inclusion and digital equity work. Next slide, please. In 2019, IMLS sought to find a way to assist rural and small libraries to achieve some form of being able to apply for federal grants. And there were three tracks in this program. The program was called Accelerating Promising Practices in Libraries.

There were three tracks, one for school libraries, one for community memory and archives, and one for digital inclusion. We had a first cohort of about 10 libraries that participated in this program, and then about four, I think that participated in the second round. Well, both cohorts were impacted by the pandemic. But one of the features of this program was it was

based on a cohort model with being led by a mentor organization, in this case for the digital inclusion work that was led by our colleagues at the Kansas City Public Library. But we had a great deal of impact on these small and rural libraries who were given the confidence to be able to apply for an IMLS grant and also have the experience of implementing that grant.

Next slide, please. So in 2018, IMLS was able to fund with the State Library of North Carolina in an area that's very near and dear to my heart. When I was working as a youth services librarian at Prince George's, I saw families that would huddle around computers and would hang out to the wee hours of the night and just into the library closed because they were doing homework together. And I asked myself, "Why don't these people just use their computers at home? What's going on? Why are they always here using these?" I was very naive at that time, but I figured it out.

They didn't have access to the internet at home, or they didn't have devices. So the homework gap is an area that we're really interested in doing more funding in, and would love to be able to talk to folks about that later on as well. Next slide, please. So perhaps one of the greatest things that we did in the pandemic was to fund the Salt Lake City Public Library in a program that kind of set the model for digital navigator programs across the United States.

And this was done in conjunction with the Urban Libraries Council as well as NDIA, the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. And it has had tremendous success, and I do believe that the work continues, but I will also give you a little bit of insight into the applications we just received from fiscal year 23. There were back load of Digital Navigator programs applying to IMLS this year. So we know that this model is impactful, has legs, and I'm very interested in seeing how the future unfolds for digital navigators.

Next slide, please. And finally, or one of the next to last there's the Gigabit Toolkit Project, which is run by an independent library consultant whose name is Carson Block. Some of you may have known him, some you may have worked with Carson, but Carson has developed a toolkit that is basically used for libraries to manage their cyber infrastructure, most specifically related to broadband access and other aspects of IT.

Next slide, please. I'd like to talk about an innovative project that we were able to fund during the pandemic with the New York Public Library using citizen broadband radio spectrum technology. So this is basically using the spectrum of an FCC regulated technology that's been around forever. I had to CD radio when I was a kid. I'm dating myself. But the New York Public Library has developed some use of loaning devices as well as WiFi hotspots and using signals from antennas that are on top of certain branches in certain neighborhoods throughout the boroughs.

I went to New York about five or six months ago and was able to visit the Mott Haven branch up in the Bronx. And then the Suit park branch in the Lower East Side, went up on the rooftop of each library, saw the equipment, talked to the librarians who were doing it, and it was amazing to talk to some library users who were so grateful for free internet. Now, one of the things that we found, even in the digital navigators program and with the CBRS project that when you say free WiFi, a free internet to folks, even if you're the library, folks are like, "Hmm" because there's privacy issues. There's also issues of surveillance.

But given the fact that libraries are so trustworthy and have the reputation of being a trusted institution, it takes a little bit of work to do the real outreach of meeting people where they are perhaps hosting events in the library and telling them more. Next slide, please. So the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library also received some money during the Chairs Act for what's known as Wisp technology. This is internet service provision through wireless means that increases the internet access in a certain neighborhood. This is an ongoing project that's currently underway.

So we've had a number of successes at IMLS through the pandemic before the pandemic, and we're looking for the future. And I'll be talking a little bit about that later on. Thank you. And I did want to before we end, or before I end on this note, I want to thank Michelle and Laura for allowing me to participate. They both have been extremely helpful to me throughout the most recent years during the pandemic of trying to figure out what's going on in digital inclusion and digital equity. Thank you.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Well, thank you James. Thank you for your rundown on some great projects. These are some that I've been following since they've come out. And so I like that you highlighted many of my favorites. And thank you two for being

such a great partner in this. So okay, we've kind of done like, I think the previous... Yes.

>> ANDY: I'm Andy from New Zealand that I'm interested in what goes on so I can take the ideas back home. But the problem in our country is to get access to clients like that it's hours and hours work and it's complicated and you feel like you jump through the rules. And sometimes you don't even know if you're saying the right thing, even when you have the best of intent. What's the experience? You almost slipped in a comment there about that practitioner's thing. We make it easier, a small libraries to apply. [crosstalk 00:28:41].

>> JAMES NEAL: We're going to be approaching this subject a little later on because one of the things at IMLS that we do try to do and in working with our federal partners is to make it as easy as possible. But federal government is a bureaucracy, and I'm not going to lie. I'm often just as frustrated as applicants are with how hard it is to check off this box and jump over this hoop and circle around that burning ringing of fire where they exist. But Laura and Michelle and I will definitely be talking about that issue. I'm glad to know that you're here from [inaudible 00:29:14].

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: And I also say put your thinking caps on about that topic, because that is also a question that we're going to have for you. And it's a conversation we want to have with this group on how we might be able to work with you to help make some of these opportunities easier for libraries. So this is a learning, we're sharing with you, but we're also hoping, I think in the second half that you're going to share with us as well so we can learn more. So before we do that, let's talk about some of the federal funding opportunities available. And I get to talk about the Digital Equity Act. So let me get where we're there.

The Digital Equity Act is one that the libraries of all kinds will most likely benefit from most. It will be administered by the National Telecommunication and Information Administration, which I'm so glad we can just call it NTIA. It includes three funding streams. The first funding stream includes 60 million for state digital equity planning grants, which require each state to develop a digital equity plan. States have designated an entity, often, but not always, the state broadband office to receive the funds and develop the plan.

The designated administering entity has one year to gather input and develop plans to promote digital equity, support digital inclusion activities, and build capacity for broadband adoption of their state residents. Most states have already received their funds in the late fall, so the clock is ticking. Plans must be submitted to the NTIA for approval. So right now, this planning process is currently going on in almost every state. The Digital Equity Act promotes digital inclusion and to spur greater adoption of broadband among covered populations and communities who have been disproportionately impacted by digital inequity.

Many of these populations are key groups that we work with regularly whether you work in a public library, a school library, or a college university or community college library, these populations include households that have incomes that are less than 150% of the poverty level individuals with language barriers, including English language and low literacy, members of racial and ethnic minority groups, individuals with disabilities residents who primarily live in rural areas, veterans, incarcerated individuals. And those are age 60 and above.

States are building their plans now. And it must include how the state will build broadband infrastructure that is affordable, reliable, and high speed, how they're going to facilitate the adoption of HighSpeed internet in the underserved and unserved communities, how they're going to implement and support digital literacy skills training, including information literacy and digital literacy and workforce development, make equipment, software and support to access the high speed internet services that are now becoming available through these funding programs. And it's also available to support telehealth initiatives and libraries and other community anchor programs. States must engage community partners in this planning process that includes everybody in this room. So once the Digital Equity Act-

>> SPEAKER: I got a question.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Oh, yes.

>> SPEAKER: How is that defined? You must do that. Is the application rejected if they can't document that they have done that?

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: That's a good question.

>> LARRA CLARK: We are very fortunate to have a member of the NTIA in the room with us. So we've invited her to join us to answer questions as she will.

>> MARY: So one of our states are required to the outreach engagement number of partners that they're expected to communicate with and what's really key that engagement outreach. So just saying we get you are doing this and we will not push it [crosstalk 00:33:12].

>> JAMES NEAL: Thank you Mary.

>> MARY: All our partners we get to implement there how to achieve this [inaudible 00:33:15]

>> JAMES NEAL: There you go. Thank you.

>> ROCHELLE: States will have to document their outreach and engagement to us in a number of ways. First for outreach, they will have to list everybody they reached out to. And for engagement, they're going to have to just say how they did engagement, whether that's interviews, listening sessions focus groups tours, however they're defining it, we want to know and we'll be privy to that engagement process as well.

At the end of the plan drafting portion, the last 60 days are going to be devoted to a public comment process where they'll have 30 days that the plans will be posted for public viewing and comments will be accepted. Then they have 30 days to respond to those comments and we will see that. So if for some reason there is a big problem in the public comment process that they do not respond to, we will work that out with the state.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Thank you.

>> JAMES NEAL: Thank you. Rochelle, do you mind giving your name or?

>> ROCHELLE: Oh, yes. Apologies I wasn't-

>> LARRA CLARK: Right as I bring you on today.

>> ROCHELLE: So my name is Rochelle Crady. I've been with the NTIA since August 1st. I have a background in research with libraries and that's why I'm attending this conference this weekend. I'm on the technical assistance team and my focus is

primarily on the digital equity grant program. So my role is to figure out what the needs are and how we can help fit those needs for both communities in general, the state broadband offices and our federal program officers.

>> LARRA CLARK: That was part of the reason for the question as well about where all of you are at is to get a sense of some of that.

>> SPEAKER: I just want to ask, like in the fall, the FCC coverage maps came out.

>> LARRA CLARK: Wait that will be next. That will be next.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: That'll be next. Good job. Two minutes.

>> JAMES NEAL: It's a hot topic.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: That is a hot topic. Broadband mapping. So we talked about the planning once the plans are in place and they're approved. The next step is the state digital equity capacity grant. And that's a \$1.44 billion program that will be spread out across the states based on a formula that is on the NTI website, if you would like to see it. And this money will be distributed to both the states and territories and states have five years to implement their digital equity plan once it's actually approved by the NTIA.

In addition, there's also the digital equity competitive grant program, which is \$1.25 billion. And this is a competitive grant that'll be actually at the national level, not at the state level. This \$1.25 billion program is for eligible entities including libraries to promote digital inclusion and spur greater broadband adoption among covered populations. Just like the state granting process, it's working on training programs that cover basic and advanced digital skills, workforce development programs, free or low cost equipment, providing to covered populations, constructing, upgrading, or expanding public access computing centers. And that kind of support as well as telehealth.

The competitive grant program will be administered at the federal level, as I stated, and a detailed notice of funding opportunity with details on how exactly this program is going to work won't be issued for about another year. So we'll keep you up to date on when we learn more. So we'll let you know. So stay tuned for any updates. And just to kind of give you a brief kind

of outline on how this kind of process looks, I just threw in this graphic, what I said verbally, you can kind of see it in a timeline fashion for those of you who are more of a visual learner like I am. Now I'm going to hand it off to Laura to talk about BEAD.

>> LARRA CLARK: The broadband and also the map for Chris. In addition to the Digital Equity Act, there's also the bead program. And this is a larger program. It's \$42.5 billion and it's focused on expanding high speed broadband access, infrastructure deployment and adoption. Like the DEA if this is wasn't clear, both of these programs right now are all being managed at the state level. So it's not an individual, my public library can do something tomorrow. It's all at the state level and they're all in planning at the moment for both of these federal programs.

The priority for funding in the BEAD program is unserved and underserved areas, meaning those with no broadband access and or no reliable access to download speeds of 25 megabits per second and uploads of three megabits per second and also and/or latency less than or equal to a 100 milliseconds, so really looking at the quality of the access as well as the speed. Underserved is those that are a hundred megabits per second download or 20 megabits upload. And after that, community anchor institutions under one gigabit per second are eligible for funding. So there's these priority tiers within the BEAD program.

And to Chris's question, the Federal Communications Commission is currently updating its broadband availability maps. This map will be used to determine the unserved and underserved areas and also determine the amount of funding that will go to each state to support their broadband initiatives. The first draft of this map was released last year with the challenge process just completing. And actually ALA has been working with Shelby, the School's Health and Library Broadband Coalition to fund research that will be released next week.

So on Wednesday we're going to release a new report documenting concerns with the map and the negative impact we see for libraries to benefit from this infrastructure funding if we are not on the map, literally on the map. Because the next map will be released in June with the allocated funding to follow in the fall. States will then be submitting plans to achieve their broadband goals with the priority on providing broadband access.



NTIA strongly encourages collaboration with community organizations like libraries to ensure these newly connected communities can build the digital skills they need to benefit from this new access. So there's a close correlation between this infrastructure funding and the Digital Equity Act funding. The two plans are separate, but they must compliment and talk to each other. So there's an additional engagement between this infrastructure funding and the digital equity funding.

If you are in a rural and/or under connected community, your area is most likely to benefit from this BEAD investment. There's a separate program as well, specifically geared to improving broadband on tribal lands. To switch gears a bit, there's another IIJA program to support home broadband for low income consumers. This is a program for which libraries do not apply, but libraries can have a really significant role in increasing awareness and boosting program enrollment. How many of you have heard of the ACP?

Yes, good, good. So I won't read the slide. It's really intended to make it possible for low income households to afford access to the internet. And it's also funded through this in a program that's run through the FCC. Many libraries are promoting this programming. Many of you may be promoting this program to your community through webinars or workshops, the benefit on their website and social media channels, and providing digital navigators who can help residents sign up for the program. And the Public Library Association is developing a new online training right now in our digital learn platform, [digitallearn.org](http://digitallearn.org) to support libraries and patrons in this work. And that should be available in the next couple of months.

>> SPEAKER: So let me ask you for this, if you wanted to give the public information on how to get that, is there a website that have that.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Yes, and I don't know if it's on these slides, Pat, but there is the FCC, if you were to search FCC an affordable connectivity program, they actually have a promotional toolkit that's quite good. And the digital learn resources will kind of walk people through the program because as we've just discussed with government programs, it's not always so easy.

>> JAMES NEAL: There's another question.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Oh, sorry. Yes.

>> SPEAKER: Is there any mandate on JCP funding?

>> SPEAKER: You know, when the money runs out, right? That's for those of you who were participating in the Emergency Connectivity Fund program, people were using it. They had a couple of funding waves. As you may know, there's some conversation, will this money run out? And I think it's possible. I don't think it's coming like tomorrow, but I think there is a question, will it still be fully funded a year from now or two years from now? So there's not an end, the end date may be five years actually. That's the nature of most of these programs. But I think there's a worry that people may, the program may run out of funds before that because it's being used, which is what we want.

So on the next slide, it's a little bit more about the program and its eligibility just in terms of the folks that have eligibility for this program. If you're receiving Pell Grants, if you're in the school lunch program, if you are in the tribal specific program or TANF for food stamps. So if you're in any of these programs, you're already eligible, which is I think a nice aspect of this, that you don't have to go through a separate approval process. If you're in one of these federal programs, you're already eligible.

Next slide. And here's more funding, right? I think the major thing I want to say about this is that you likely have benefited from some of this funding in including the money that went through IMLS, the state library agencies, through CARES and the American Rescue Plan. But other funds went to states and localities. And while the funding has been allocated from the federal government to states and localities, not all of the states and localities have spent that money yet.

So I really encourage you if you have a digital equity project that you are shovel ready, you know what that program looks like that you should reach out to somebody at your local community level and find out if they've spent all of these money because they have a few years to spend the money. What we are hearing from people is that funding is still available from these pandemic funds. But the federal government has allocated the dollar, so it's now sitting with states and localities. So just bear in mind that there's funding available through these programs. You just have to kind of ask about it.

And lastly, similar to IMLS, a program everybody hopefully knows about is the E-Rate program. This federal program has historically been the greatest source of funding for libraries. Outside of IMLS and ALA's been a leading voice for libraries in this program. And we are currently advocating for funding to support cybersecurity measures through the program. So if that's something that you're interested in, I'd love to talk to you because we could use your amplification in that docket. We know this is a significant concern for libraries and schools, and it will make new funding available for this, for cybersecurity, and we're cautiously optimistic it will be successful in this advocacy. So I'm going to turn it over to James.

>> JAMES NEAL: Thank you, Laura. I'm going to talk a little bit about something that I've been interested in fairly recently, and that's the concept of strategic foresight. This is a methodology of trying to not predict the future, but be prepared for the future. One of the things that I found really interesting about the pandemic is that it seemingly came out of nowhere and libraries definitely did not seem prepared. I want to be able to try to anticipate what might be next so that we will be prepared.

And I went back and I watched a bunch of interviews with George W. Bush and Obama, and they both mentioned frequently fear of airborne flu-like pandemic diseases. So I was like, they were warning us, but we obviously know how things unfolded. Next slide please. So at IMLS, one of the things that I do in my job is try to involve myself with more inter-agency collaboration and partnerships. One of the things that I participate in is known as the American Broadband Initiative. I started at IMLS October 31st, 2016.

At the end, was coming to the end of the Obama era. In the next few weeks our world was upended with a change of administrations and a new election. So under the Trump administration, the Broadband Opportunity Council became the American Broadband Initiative. It's been a great group. This is all of the federal agencies that are working with broadband issues, broadband access, as well as digital inclusion and digital equity work.

We meet once a month, sometimes twice a month, depending on what's going on in the federal government. And it's been a very informative way to kind of find out what's going on at each agency. For example I'll say this, IMLS is very small compared to labor commerce FCC even, and others. But everyone is always asking how can we work with libraries? So there are lots of

other federal agencies who really would love to find ways in which to partner and work with libraries. The Department of Labor is interested in workforce development. The FCC has sound a memorandum of understanding with the IMLS recently regarding how we can streamline or what resources we can provide to libraries and schools to make it easier to apply for E-Rate.

Also recently, tribal libraries are now eligible for E-Rate monies. So there's work in that area. If you are interested in viewing what the federal government is doing towards broadband access, there is a website called Broadband USA. I highly recommend it. It's very well designed, it's very resourceful. It has all of the agencies that are working in broadband, and you can even tick off the checks box for libraries and find out what libraries are eligible for.

Next slide, please. I talked about strategic foresight. I'm paying attention to a lot of signals and things that are coming from the news, research on the internet, social media. I read a lot, I read a lot of newspapers, I read a lot of books. But I'm looking at a number of different areas that are centered around technology, but include wealth distribution, education infrastructure, government, geopolitics, economy, public health, demographics, environment, as well as media and telecommunications.

One of the things I think I really would like to see libraries focus on right now is asking themselves the following questions. How can libraries rethink the ways we talk about digital inclusion, access and equity to build a stronger unified vocabulary language and voice? How can libraries better harness data to map local digital inclusion needs? So that goes to the FCC broadband maps. There's a lot of local mapping that's going on as well that's probably a little bit more accurate than our federal partners. I realized this is being recorded and yes I will say that.

So what are the most important community and national partners to help libraries achieve meaningful progress with digital leadership? So who are the people outside of the library who could be potential partners on a national stage to assist in this area? I think of one organization known as the National Skills Coalition. They're doing some really interesting work with digital literacy and digital skills training.

So if there's anything that you take away from James Neal from the IMLS today is that the IMLS believes that the standard

issues of digital inclusion and a digital equity of access, adoption, affordability and availability are always going to be important. But for libraries, perhaps the most important thing is to be sure that your staff members are adequately trained and have the digital literacy skills to be able to assist members of your community and be aware of the digital inclusion and digital equity issues for your community so that you might meet them.

And I do want to close on this. And the reason I'm saying that is that- thank you. Digital literacy and skill development are a cradle to grave issues. And one of the ethos, a part of the ethos of being a librarian and being a libraries, part of the strategic plan at IMLS is the concept of lifelong learning. And in the 21st century, you have to be able to learn, relearn, unlearn, and learn all the time. You cannot become complacent. So one of the things I think is extremely important is the development of digital literacy and skills training because it's a cradle grave issue and will change over time. Thank you so much.

>> LARRA CLARK: Okay, I'm going to do some headlines here so that we can get to the Q&A because we want to hear from you and make sure that we address any of those questions. So I think we've been clear, on our website, sorry, this slide refers to an outline of some of the funding opportunities we've talked about, as well as some detail and links to information on some of the other federal programs that are available.

Next slide. Okay. So the major thing that we want everybody to know is that all 50 states are currently working on their plans. This is where most of the action is taking place at the state level, and it's early enough in the process that we can individually and collectively work to amplify and leverage the work of libraries to advance national goals. So the first step we recommend is really reviewing and documenting your library's digital equity assets and exploring gaps in your service that could be addressed with new funding and collaboration.

Your inventory will likely include your internet works stations, WiFi, digital literacy or technology support may include one-on-one or group training and other free resources and how you might be promoting low cost broadband adoption as well as thinking about community usage of these resources. Going back to the covered populations, what do you know about the folks that are seniors, formerly incarcerated, people with disabilities? What is their use? Where are they and how might you reach them more successfully? Thankfully, NTIA has developed some great

resources to help states and their stakeholders in this work in terms of thinking about asset mapping and needs assessment.

And fortunately, this work doesn't just prepare you for the federal funding that we've been talking about, but also other private and public funding opportunities at your local or state level. The digital equity needs assessment identifies the baseline from which states and territories are working and the barriers to digital equity, whether that's affordability devices, digital skills, technical support, et cetera. These baseline measures will inform the plan objectives and implementation strategies. So if you've done a digital equity needs assessment recently, I think you want to share that with the folks at your state level as part of their overall planning. And if you haven't done one, there are great resources to help you do that and to participate in this work at the state level.

>> MICHELE FRISQUE: So I think Laura did a really good job of talking about, you need to inventory your internal resources and what your gaps are in your opportunities but you also need to be doing this at the community level. And as we notice here, there is a tool that NTIA has put together to help you actually do that assessment within your community. It's very easy and straightforward, not too long or overwhelming. And so I really recommend that you take a look at it if this is something that you've never done in your community before.

And the other thing I want to say is stay informed. I mean, this is a lot of money, but it's being released quickly and the broadband offices are building their capacity, aka like actually hiring staff at the same time that they're actually trying to build these plans. And so they're trying to keep people informed, but I have a feeling that sometimes they might not be able to communicate as well as they hoped. So make sure that you find out who is writing your digital equity plan, follow their website.

And I would also say follow the ALA website so that you can, and there's links, there's QR codes across the room so that you can actually stay abreast of what's happening so that you can then advocate and amplify your assets with your community, for yourself, as well as also share that with your community members so that they too can amplify the work that they're doing with the state broadband office as well. And so, the other one, I don't think we really need to say a lot about upskilling staff cause I think James did a really good job, but we wanted to reiterate it here just so that you remember that it is really

important if we're going to start building and supporting the digital skills of our community, we need to make sure that we have a plan in place and we do assessments to understand what the skills are that exist in our libraries themselves, and how we're going to continue to stay abreast of and hopefully a little bit ahead of the curve when it comes to our community needs.

>> JAMES NEAL: Thanks Michelle.

>> LARRA CLARK: I'm going to skip the piece because we've talked about home broadband adoption and just focus on the unserved and underserved. I believe we have an opportunity to really focus on those in our schools' campuses and communities who've been historically underserved and remain unconnected, which is a step beyond our usual commitment to provide no fee access to everyone.

It demand greater knowledge of gaps and targeted outreach often with partners that might range from senior centers to refugee organizations. And fortunately, the IIJA resources are intended to help us do this more difficult and time intensive work in our communities. We know that we're reaching folks, but we're not necessarily always able to get them that last mile, if you will, if we think about home internet adoption and the funds are really intended to help us do a better job in that area.

Next slide. And this is the last thing before we open up for questions. Every state is different. I was thinking about this when we were talking about the barriers to federal programs that one of the benefits of having it involved at the state level really does allow to get rid of some of those federal government guidelines. Obviously, the states are following the federal government process, but for the local libraries and the people in their states, I think the RFP process and the engagement as the states begin to roll out their programs are going to be more accessible than if you were applying directly to the FCC or the NTIA.

So I believe it will be easier for you to engage at this state level. But every state is going to be different, which is why I wish I could tell you what it looks like in Ohio versus West Virginia versus Texas, but they're building these programs as Michelle said. So we're going to continue to evolve and update the information that we share and that we work with our partners like NDIA and Shelby.

Library are well placed, for instance, to hold community meetings as part of this process and to provide intake from community residents. So I think we have a natural ear on some of these issues that we can offer as part of this process. Not only will you be helping solve a problem that state broadband leaders need to demonstrate in terms of engagement, but you will also increase the visibility of your library and its services.

And one specific thing that Rochelle and I have talked a little bit about is that one specific requirement of this engagement includes hearing from people with direct lived experience of digital inequity and knowledge of the barriers limiting access. And as the leading public internet access point, library staff are engaged with these folks all the time. So you may be able to speak to what you are seeing and hearing and you may be able to invite your patrons who have these barriers to speak directly is part of these community engagements.

So I think it's incredible that they included this in the guidelines. And I think it's also hard to do, right? Like if you're in the state broadband office, you don't necessarily know about the person that's coming into the library every week because they don't have access and what are the reasons why they don't have access? And I think libraries can help solve that problem and serve the people who are in their library every day in a deeper way.

>> JAMES NEAL: Say before we go to Q&A. I wanted to say one thing that I forgot to say in my presentation or my part of the presentation that alludes to the question from the gentleman from New Zealand. IMLS has a dedicated staff of program officers, all of whom are very willing and able to talk to anyone from libraries who are interested in anything. So if you're interested in talking to a program officer, I bought a bunch of business cards, but on our website, my colleagues at IMLS are also listed with their phone numbers and their email addresses. We are far too deep in spreadsheets and calendars and emails. I would love to talk to libraries and librarians and that is one way that you can learn a little bit more about federal grant making is developing a relationship with a program officer. It's extremely important. Thanks.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Thanks. So you're going to notice this QR code. There are QR codes in the doors as you leave. And this is to a report that ALA developed called Leverage Libraries to Achieve Digital Equity for all. Information that we talked about today is in this report. This QR code will also take you to a



list of resources. That list is updated regularly. More resources are actually going to be added to it in the next few weeks. So we encourage you to please check back regularly to make sure that you're staying informed and up to date on the latest news when it comes to libraries and the IJIA.

And so with that I would like to open it up for Q&A, microphone is over there. So just step up, ask your questions, and I'll repeat them and we will start doing that. And if you have thoughts that you want to leave with us, I left sticky notes here on the tables so you can also just feel free to leave us questions or thoughts and we will take them and use them to inform our work moving forward. Please go ahead.

>> SPEAKER: Yes. I'm curious on best approaches library to make sure they're not duplicating global efforts.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: That's a great question and I think that's where that mapping comes in.

>> LARRA CLARK: Are you going to say it again?

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Oh, I'm sorry thank you, I will say it again. So one of the questions was how do we make sure that we're not duplicating efforts with other community partners? And I think doing that community assessment that we were talking about on the NTIA has a really great tool on their website. And it's called the NTIA Asset Mapping Guide. And what it is, it's a guide that actually helps you determine what are the assets in your community, what are your opportunities, where are your gaps?

And then you can use this to identify like who's best to serve X needs. So not everybody's doing X and nobody's doing Y or Z. And so I really suggest, you look at this tool or there's some others out there, but start having these community conversations now so that you're prepared when the time comes and the funding is out there that you can say, "Look, we've been coordinating together and this is how we think it'll best fit our community's needs." Do you want to?

>> LARRA CLARK: Well, I was just going to say, one of the things that we've heard from some of the state folks is those kinds of coalitions or collaborative efforts are more likely to be funded. So it also makes you more of a higher priority for funding and when you can show public-private, when you can show

that kind of collaborative effort to address these issues. So it's a really good idea.

>> SPEAKER: So I'm wondering where, if anywhere, anything, the satellite broadband is in the spectrum of all this, because I think with our clients, the dream is what libraries have done over the last five, 10 years with mobile WiFi hotspots could be duplicated in some way as satellite broadband in rural areas where WiFi hotspots don't work.

>> JAMES NEAL: I can address that issue, if you don't mind.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: Go ahead.

>> JAMES NEAL: There's a gentleman who runs an organization known as the Gigabit Libraries out in California named Don Means. Don has been an IMLS awardee. And he's very interested in satellite technology, in particular how libraries can use it for internet provision. I've done a little bit of research. I used to live in New Mexico out in Albuquerque, and there is development on some Navajo Nation land. The technology seems to be working in places that have wide open spaces as you can well imagine, and not in urban areas.

The brand that you're probably thinking about in particular run by a certain gentleman from South Africa who recently acquired a social media company, whose name I will not utter. His organization, their product has had a lot of challenges including literally falling from the sky. And then there've been issues with latency and then the actual performance of the signal is just not that strong. But I do think it's the technology to watch. I know that Amazon is also making investment in the area. I think there is just called Kiper or Cooper, something like that. But it's definitely something the libraries should keep an eye on, but probably not make too big of an investment in.

>> LARA CLARK: Thank you.

>> JAMES NEAL: Thank you.

>> SPEAKER: This is partly a personal story. I was complaining to my local internet provider and wanted to get expanded service or that sort of thing. And he said, "Oh, well you're in an underserved neighborhood." And that was fine, but we went on, and this is an AT&T guy and he said, "You have to write your legislators," you have to have to have to make sure

that they know that that even though you have internet, you don't have as much access as you should and you have to write back."

And so then this leads me to all the wonderful stuff that you've been talking about today. But we need to encourage people to respond. We need to encourage people after you've done the programs to make sure that they send feedback to their electeds because we're never going to get this again if they don't hear from the people that have been impacted. And my name is Deborah Doyle and I'm with United for Libraries.

>> JAMES NEAL: Thank you.

>> LARA CLARK: All people, what the impact of the investment.

>> SPEAKER: The funding.

>> LARA CLARK: I'm sure Rochelle would agree with that. Other questions? Yes, Chris.

>> CHRIS: I've been knee deep in this for about the past six months with. I know I'm harping on this, but for the FCC coverage maps, did you say that they're going to be releasing a new version of those coverage maps? My understanding was that originally the coverage maps that were based on the advertised speeds, is that correct? My concerns, or at least the conservative Shelby is they're vastly overstated, but I think they're based on advertised speeds.

And the other part, and I don't know the technical part, but the FCC maps sit on top of the underlying fabric and we contracted with a consultant who randomly chose 10 states and only 58% of the public libraries were accurately identified as anchor institutions. So that has a huge impact for public libraries. So there's so many concerns about just where they are right now. And so I'll be anxious to see what that looks like.

>> LARRA CLARK: Yes, I think we're talking about some of the same thing in terms of the fabric. The research that will be released on Wednesday is actually talking about libraries on the fabric and how they're classified which will be used to determine the bead funding. So it is really important and it's going to take some advocacy to get us where we need to be.

>> JAMES NEAL: I'd just like to add to that, Chris, I'm glad to know that you're associated with Shelby, the School's Health

Library Broadband Coalition. For those of you who are not familiar with that organization, it's on par with the National Digital Inclusion Alliance of providing really strong guidance and support for these efforts. But Shelby in particular has been focused on the issues related to the FCC broadband mapping. And I would urge you if you can, to try to attend the Shelby Conference, which is held annually, usually in Crystal City, Virginia RDC. But it took every year that I've gone, the four times that I've gone, the number of librarians there has increased. And I'm always happy to be at Shelby.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: And I invited - oh yeah.

>> SPEAKER: We did submit a letter to Congress to have E-Rate included with the security. And we had 22 representatives and senator that signed the letter.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: It's fantastic.

>> JAMES NEAL: Good, good.

>> SPEAKER: [inaudible 01:08:09].

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: It's fantastic.

>> LARRA CLARK: We're hoping they get all sorted because we know the need is significant and I asked Rochelle if she'd like to add anything that we might have missed or anything that's burning a hole on her desk. So go ahead.

>> ROCHELLE: Thank you so much. So I don't think you missed anything. But just if you go to our internetforall.gov site and click on our map, you can click on a state and view more details and it will tell you the name of the federal program officer who's working at NTIA for that state and their email address. It'll also have the state broadband office whether it's the director or the point of contact, it varies by state.

But there will be a way to contact the state broadband office on that map. And we want you to reach out to these folks. We don't want you to wait for them to reach out to you. We want you to be as proactive as possible. And also I have business cards and I'm happy to be a point of contact for anyone with any questions for NTIA or if I don't know the answer to your question, I will find the right person. Thank you so much.

>> JAMES NEAL: Great job.

>> LARRA CLARK: Anything else, Questions, comments? We will be here. If there's anything that you want to talk one-on-one, you can find us on the ALA webpage. Thank you so much for being here with us. I know we tried to cover a lot. I hope we were able to answer questions that you might have brought to this meeting and also help you think about your next steps because I think we have a moment to engage right now and to think about what we want, what do we have, what do we need, and how can we be part of in each of our states moving the ball forward. So I'm excited about this program and I'm looking forward to sharing more information. So thank you for being here with all of us and we invite you to reach out anytime and thank you to Michelle and James for being wonderful partners in this work.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you guys.

>> LARRA CLARK: And were you going to say, like if folks want to leave notes for us, you're welcome to do so.

>> MICHELLE FRISQUE: And I'll say, there's some questions that we've been burning trying to figure out and thinking about and munging on, I like to use the word munging. And so they're listed here on these two tables or they're on the wall. And so if you want to take a look at some of the questions that we have, that we're trying to get feedback and understand more, feel free to look at them and shoot us an email or leave a sticky note with an idea or just write on the thing. Just search some feedbacks to help us with our future planning to better support libraries. Thanks.