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Catalyze Results

## Broadband Expansion Programs Overview

- Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment Program (BEAD) - CFDA# 11.035
- Digital Equity Act of 2021 (DEA) - CFDA# 11.032

*updated August 2022*

- Background
- Timeline
- Funding Requirements
- Digital Equity

## BEAD Program Background

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD) funds extensive broadband development where it is needed most.

- Biden Administration approved several broadband expansion programs under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, most relevantly a \$42.45B initiative called Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD).
- The program is administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).
- Major goals include widespread internet access, affordable and robust broadband service, increased digital equity, job creation in the broadband space, and enrichment of education.
  - Specific aim to target unserved and underserved locations.
  - Currently, unserved locations are defined as having <25 Mbps downstream and <3 Mbps upstream. Underserved locations defined as having <100 Mbps downstream and <20 Mbps upstream. *Note: Federal Communications Commission Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel has publicly stated that there is an aim to increase the agency's broadband speed standard from 25Mbps to 100Mbps download and 3Mbps to 20Mbps upload, and create a separate national goal of 1Gbps/500Mbps for the future.*
- Those qualified to receive funding under the BEAD program are known as 'Eligible Entities' and include all US States and most Territories.
  - Each US State, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico are eligible to receive a minimum of \$100,000,000, while American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands can receive a minimum of \$25,000,000.
- Eligible entities must engage with local government, internet service providers (ISPs), community organizations, tribal governments, and more in a collaborative and constructive effort to establish unique, yet essential broadband development.

## BEAD Program Timeline

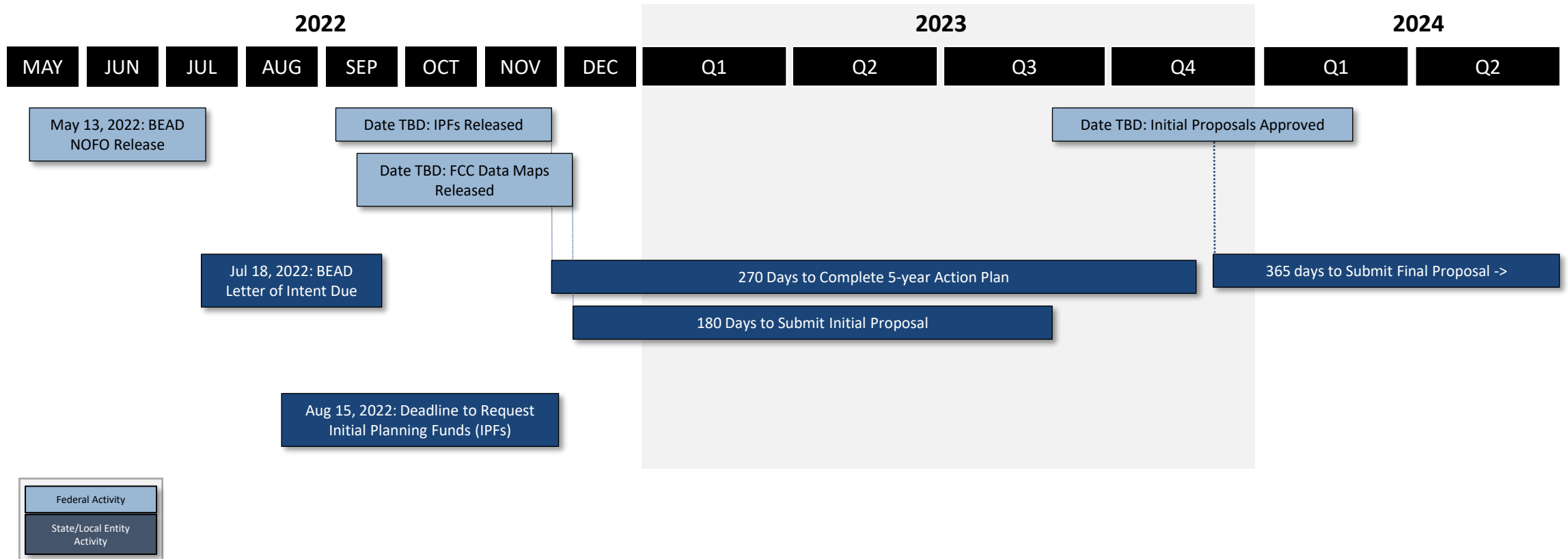
The BEAD NOFO outlines five major deadlines which eligible entities are required to meet during their participation in the broadband expansion program.

- **July 18, 2022:** Eligible entities must submit a 'letter of intent' to the NTIA expressing interest in participating in the program.
  - All eligible entities have already expressed interest and joined the initiative.
- **August 15, 2022:** The deadline for participating entities to request **Initial Planning Funds (IPFs)**.
  - States and territories can respectively request up to \$5,000,000 or \$1,250,000 of their total allocations up front to be utilized for things like research, data collection, publications, outreach, employee training, and more.
- **270 Days After Receiving IPFs:** After receiving their IPFs each state/territory has 270 days to complete a **5-year action plan**.
  - This action plan comprehensively outlines goals and priorities for implementation of reliable and affordable high-speed internet.
- **180 Days After Notice of Available Amounts:** Once NTIA publishes FCC maps detailing unserved and underserved areas, entities will be informed of their total funding allocation. Entities will then have 180 days to submit an operational plan in the form of their **Initial Proposal**.
  - **Challenge Process:** Local government units, nonprofit organizations, or broadband companies can challenge portions of the initial proposal, such as whether certain regions are unserved/underserved.
  - Upon approval of the initial proposal by the NTIA, >20% of funds will be made available for usage.
- **Final Proposal:** Eligible entities are to conduct and complete a competitive subgrantee selection process while continuing local coordination to establish and submit their final proposal within a year of Initial Proposal approval.
  - Upon final proposal approval the remainder of funding (usually 80%) is made available for usage.
  - **Subgrantee Selection Process:** Selecting ISPs to carry out broadband development.

*IPF = Initial Planning Funds; NOFO = Notice of Funding Opportunity*

*NTIA BEAD NOFO Executive Summary, BroadbandUSA: Office of Public Affairs, 2021.*  
<https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/BEAD%20NOFO.pdf>

# Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) – Key Dates



*IPF = Initial Planning Funds; NOFO = Notice of Funding Opportunity*

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## BEAD Program Funding Requirements

Eligible entities have flexibility in how they choose to dedicate their allocations, yet certain requirements must be followed by each recipient of funding.

- Funding recipients must first address direct broadband deployment to ensure coverage for unserved and underserved locations. With remaining funds, entities can work to strengthen digital equity with additional spending.
- **Deployment Uses:** Building actual broadband service networks.
  - Examples include facilities to house networks, telecommunications equipment, network software upgrades, internet and Wi-Fi in eligible multi-family buildings, personnel/staffing costs, cybersecurity professional training, and more.
- **Non-Deployment Uses:** Strengthening community anchor institutions (schools, libraries, community centers, etc.) and digital equity.
  - Examples include enhancing cybersecurity, privacy, digital literacy, coding and computer science education, and implementing multi-lingual outreach, subsidies for broadband subscriptions, sign-up assistance, prisoner education, and much more.
- Each eligible entity, its subgrantee, or entity jointly with their subgrantee is required to provide at least a 25% funding match of total project costs.
- Eligible entities must distribute funds in an equitable and nondiscriminatory manner and ensure all subgrantees do the same, as consistent with the Infrastructure Act which makes the funding available.
  - Engagement must include tribal areas, rural areas, suburban areas, and urban areas. Each tribe and political subdivision is entitled to submit their own plans and comments.

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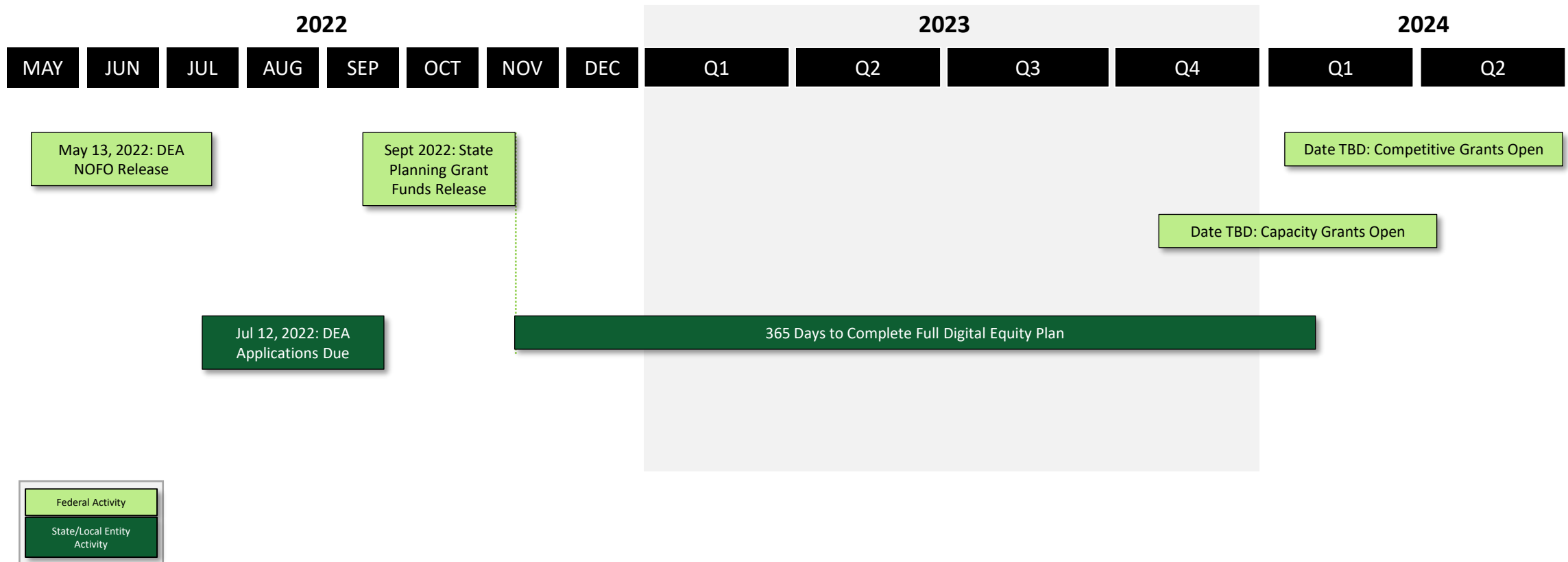
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## Digital Equity: BEAD and Digital Equity Act (DEA)

A major goal of the BEAD program is to close the digital divide by engaging and empowering historically marginalized groups, while creating equity of internet access for all Americans; this is also supported by the Digital Equity Act.

- The Digital Divide has had a particularly acute affect in communities of color, Tribal nations, and lower-income regions, spanning both rural and urban areas. Internet connectivity, in addition to proper equipment, skills, and financial resources are essential in working towards its eradication.
- The BEAD program requires digital equity planning, yet primarily focuses on the deployment of physical broadband network service to areas where it is absent or insufficient.
  - After broadband service is sufficiently provided, remaining BEAD funding can be dedicated to nondeployment uses which strengthen digital equity.
- Meanwhile, the NTIA also encourages concurrent participation in the **Digital Equity Act of 2021 (DEA)**, which provides an additional \$2.75 Billion specifically aimed towards advancing digital inclusion.
- US states, territories, and tribal organizations are all eligible for funding under the Digital Equity Act.
- The DEA creates two programs—the **State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program** and the **Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program**.
  - The State Capacity Grant Program consists of a planning stage and an execution stage. The first \$60,000,000 in funding is distributed to entities to plan and develop their digital equity programs starting in September 2022. Beginning in early 2024, \$1.44 Billion will be distributed to entities to enact their plans.
  - The Competitive Grant Program will begin taking applications later in 2024, presenting an additional \$1.25 Billion in available funding.
- Eligibility for funding under the Digital Equity Act requires successful completion of a comprehensive **Digital Equity Plan**.
  - This plan satisfies the digital equity requirement of the '5-year action plan' under the BEAD program.

# Digital Equity Act (DEA) – Key Dates and Timeline



**NOFO** = Notice of Funding Opportunity

NTIA DEA NOFO Executive Summary, BroadbandUSA: Office of Public Affairs, 2021.  
<https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/DE%20PLANNING%20GRANT%20NOFO.pdf>



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