

Ensure State Digital Equity Plans Include Libraries

The federal government is making historic investments in advancing digital equity, literacy, and inclusion for all through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The first step is state planning—including a public comment period before moving toward plan implementation. If libraries are not in the state plans, they are unlikely to receive funding to help ensure all residents have access to broadband, technology, and skills for full participation in the digital economy. Altogether [states received](#) about \$60 million for digital equity planning with an additional \$1.44 BILLION allocated for implementation of the plans over the next five years.

Each state is required to post its plan for public comment for at least 30 days and respond to comments. Get up to speed on key federal funding programs [HERE](#) check to see if your state's plan is available for comment [HERE](#) and read on for information on how to make your voice heard.

Act now

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a digitally equitable future for all. Libraries have the existing physical space, technological infrastructure, staff expertise, resources, and community reputation to advance each state's digital equity goals. Libraries need to speak up and seize the moment so they are included, supported, and funded through their state's digital equity plan. Read the plan, advocate, and highlight the work of libraries in your state.

When plans are submitted to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) for a public comment period, search for "library" or

"libraries" in the document to see when and how libraries are mentioned. Review the references for anything that can be amplified or clarified and references, including listing the Louisiana Library existing statewide partners; describing the role libraries play in broadband adoption, access to digital skills, devices, affordability, and workforce upskilling for students; and direct mention and designation of the State Library as manager for the statewide digital navigator program in public libraries in the implementation plan priorities.

In addition to the overall search, wherever possible we also recommend:

Reviewing the asset inventory, which includes:

- o An inventory of current resources, programs, and strategies that promote digital equity for covered populations.

Question: Are there key library assets that are missing and should be included?

- o A needs assessment that identifies the current baseline and barriers to digital equity, especially those affecting covered populations.

Question: Does the assessment accurately reflect the barriers you see in your community?

Reviewing the Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement section.

Question: Are libraries listed as collaborators and/or stakeholders? Are libraries' roles accurately reflected? What role could your library play if you had additional resources?

Reviewing the Implementation Plan.

Question: Are your programs and services included in the plan? What services could be expanded and what programs could be developed to support covered populations if your library had additional resources?

Encouraging community partners to also comment. Ask them to comment on the plan.