

Broadband Coordination Opportunities Redevelopment and Deployment Office of the
American Samoa Department of Commerce

American Samoa Digital Equity Capacity Program Grant Application Guide

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The American Samoa Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program, Eligible entities are invited to apply via the application portal opening January 13, 2025 and closing March 7, 2025 at 11:59 pm SST. All applications must be submitted via the application portal. Applicants will need to create an account and launch an application via the SimpliGov dashboard. Applications submitted by email, paper, or facsimile will not be accepted.

The Digital Equity Capacity Grant aims to fund initiatives that increase access to and improve digital equity for underserved communities. This grant will support projects that address the digital divide by expanding broadband access, improving digital literacy, and fostering the growth of digital skills across American Samoa.

This document provides detailed guidance for organizations interested in applying for the Digital Equity Capacity Grant, including eligibility, types of eligible projects, and the key components of the application.

APPLICATION WINDOW: Opens: January 13, 2025 - March 7, 2025 at 11:59 pm SST

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

American Samoa Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program to award subgrants to the following entities to assist in the implementation of the State Digital Equity Plan of the State, pursue digital inclusion activities in the State consistent with the State Digital Equity Plan of the State, and report to the State regarding the digital inclusion activities of the entity:

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.
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
- c. is not a school.

FUNDING AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Total: \$2,100,100.00

Max Awards: \$100,000.00

COST SHARING OR MATCHING

There is no cost share for this grant opportunity

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

U.S. Territories will be required to expend the grant funds during the 5-year period beginning on the date on which the entity is awarded grant funds.

PROJECT CATEGORIES

The American Samoa Broadband Coordination Office (BCORD) has outlined key project categories to guide initiatives aimed at promoting digital equity and inclusion across the territory. These categories are designed to address critical areas of need and opportunity, from affordable broadband access to cybersecurity. Applicants interested in grant funding are encouraged to review the categories carefully and identify which category aligns best with their proposed projects.

Each category emphasizes specific goals, including expanding broadband affordability, strengthening disaster response capabilities, promoting technology literacy, and enhancing cybersecurity. By aligning their projects with these categories, applicants can contribute to a comprehensive and impactful digital inclusion strategy for all residents of American Samoa.

Applicants should clearly identify the category their project falls into when applying for funding to ensure it meets the priorities and objectives set forth in these guidelines.

1. CATEGORY 1: AFFORDABLE BROADBAND ACCESS

- 1.1. Conduct outreach to all residents of American Samoa to provide details about broadband affordability programs
- 1.2. Coordinate future initiatives addressing affordability to ensure that they are targeted to fill gaps in federal and local support and equitably improve access for covered populations
- 1.3. Coordinate territory-wide data collection efforts to promote digital equity for all American Samoa (all rural) residents including an updated household survey"
- 1.4. Support and promote veteran, minority and/or women-owned local businesses through the use of broadband

2. **CATEGORY 2: RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**

- 2.1. Strengthen disaster response capabilities and community resiliency through broadband for all American Samoa residents.
- 2.2. Identify shared tools for grantees to track outputs and facilitate data analysis to inform future improvements for American Samoa residents.

3. **CATEGORY 3: TECHNOLOGY LITERACY - PROMOTE TECHNOLOGY LITERACY AT ALL LEVELS**

3.1. DEVICE AVAILABILITY AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

- 3.1.1. Support the delivery of outreach and training to covered population about digital literacy
- 3.1.2. Develop and maintain technical support for American Samoa residents to ensure that programs using online processes can be accessed and used broadly.

3.2. DIGITAL SKILLS

- 3.2.1. Cultivate and promote efforts by the private sector and community-based organizations to provide digital literacy skills training and technical support to covered populations.
- 3.2.2. Support the delivery of telehealth through training for healthcare providers; patient; to support on- and off-island referral, care coordination and continuity of care.
- 3.2.3. 3.2.3 IT/ICT Workforce Development Program for qualified IT/ICT staff or personnel

4. **CATEGORY 4: CYBERSECURITY - Enable American Samoa to securely participate in global, national, regional and community information infrastructure**

- 4.1. Cultivate and promote efforts by private sector and community organizations to provide online privacy and cybersecurity training to covered populations
- 4.2. Support alignment of activities with the Territory Cybersecurity Plan
- 4.3. IT/ICT Workforce Development Program for qualified IT/ICT staff or personnel in cybersecurity. For example, training for industry certifications and development of testing centers.

FOCUS OF PROGRAMS AND PERMITTED ACTIVITIES:

These programs must focus on creating the necessary conditions to empower individuals and communities with the technological capacity to fully participate in society and the economy. In examining whether a proposed strategy or intervention furthers the goals of the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program and the American Samoa Digital Equity Plan, grant recipients must consider the following criteria and focal points:

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. Priority should be given to projects with the greatest potential impact, such as targeting Covered Households (i.e.,

low-income individuals) within other Covered Populations. Covered Populations: The term “Covered Populations” means:

1. Individuals who live in covered households;
2. Aging individuals;
3. Incarcerated individuals (as defined by the State or Territory), other than individuals who are incarcerated in a federal correctional facility;
4. Veterans;
5. Individuals with disabilities;
6. Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who—
 - Are English learners; and
 - Have low levels of literacy;
7. Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group; and
8. Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.

Long-lasting and Meaningful Change: Digital Equity Plans are intended to address the systemic barriers and gaps to digital access. Projects/activities should reflect this goal and consider the sustainability of initiatives created through this funding.

Measurable Implementation Strategies: Proposed programs and activities should be based on objectives that are measurable, achievable, sustainable, timebound, and are designed to address identified disparities directly and logically.

Stakeholder Engagement: Stakeholders who are directly affected by the proposed strategies and interventions should be involved to encourage ongoing feedback regarding the effectiveness of the interventions and to seek input on potential solutions and improvements.

The following are examples of potential programs, activities, and interventions States and Territories may consider adopting consistent with the objectives identified for Digital Equity Plans in 47 U.S.C. §1723 (c)(1)(B) and with the purposes of the Digital Equity Act. This list is not considered exhaustive, organizations are encouraged to develop new and innovative strategies.

- **Digital Literacy and Skills Training:** Develop and implement digital literacy and skills programs that provide training and education to members of the Covered Populations on the use of digital tools, accessing online resources, and practicing safe and responsible online behavior, including programs that focus on youth training. The program may address issues such as online safety, prevention of online harassment and abuse (“cyberbullying”), privacy, and digital financial literacy, and may include the development of digital opportunity centers where individuals can access technology, receive training, and receive assistance with digital Tasks.
- **E-Government and Civic Engagement:** Develop digital tools that enable online community engagement and empower individuals to participate in the democratic

process, including digital tools that make it easier for individuals to register to vote and participate in civic activities. Develop online resources for legal assistance, government aid programs, and access to justice services for those in need. Enable access to social services, benefits, and government resources through digital platforms, simplifying processes and reducing barriers, including accessibility for people with disabilities.

- **Device Distribution Programs:** Provide devices such as laptops, smartphones, tablets, or other internet-enabled devices that are both practical and responsive to the digital inclusion needs of the Covered Populations, prioritizing individuals, or groups, with the greatest need. Eligibility criteria should be clearly defined and include appropriate safeguards, such as periodic financial audits and asset management systems. Digital literacy and skills training must be an integral part of any device distribution program to ensure that the beneficiaries receive training on how to use the devices effectively, access online resources, navigate digital platforms, use accessibility features, and employ best practices to protect their personal information and data.
- **Economic Development:** Support digital entrepreneurship, online job training, and remote work opportunities, fostering economic empowerment and reducing disparities. Create and/or promote programs and platforms that offer job training and remote work opportunities, helping members of the Covered Populations secure employment and gain economic self-sufficiency. Engage young people within the Covered Populations in digital economic activities that involve digital skills development that will lead to a constructive path to financial independence, a sense of purpose, and shared responsibility to positively contribute to their communities.
- **Online Access to Health and Mental Wellness Services:** Provide tools that directly help patients and end users within the Covered Populations to access healthcare services online, particularly in remote or underserved areas, to reduce health disparities. Expand mental health crisis training to Covered Population youth through digital channels utilizing interactive and multimedia elements to make the online training more engaging and effective. Promote patient use and adoption of digital health records, access to medical and health services, and improved healthcare coordination. Such programs should focus on the Covered Populations and not health or wellness providers or institutions.
- **Online Accessibility:** Programs to ensure that websites and applications are designed with accessibility in mind, making them usable by individuals with disabilities. In addition, projects that provide improved digital access to emergency communications that enhance the ability of emergency response personnel to provide timely, effective, and life-saving interventions that can ensure the health and safety of individuals with disabilities, particularly those who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, low vision, deafblind, deafdisabled or speech-disabled. To address concerns for individuals with a language barrier, ensure that online services are available in multiple languages, including culturally responsive American Sign Language, to enhance accessibility to education,

employment, healthcare, housing, essential services, civic engagement, and critical life-saving interventions.

ASSURANCES

As part of the grant application process, applicants will be required to provide the following assurances:

1. ****Non-Discrimination****: Ensure that all activities funded under the grant are carried out without discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, or age.
2. ****Data Collection and Reporting****: Applicants must agree to submit data and reports on the project's progress as requested by the funding agency.
3. ****Sustainability****: Applicants must commit to maintaining the project and its outcomes once the grant period ends.
4. ****Compliance with Federal Laws****: Applicants must comply with all applicable federal laws, including regulations governing the use of federal funds and reporting requirements.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

How to submit your application:

All interested applicants will need to create a SimpliGov account. Link will be provided via our website during the launch of the Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program.

1. The Application portal/dashboard can be accessed at our website at broadband.as.gov.
2. Create a login account: Complete the online application form and upload required documents (project narrative, budget breakdown, project action plan etc.).
3. Ensure that all sections are fully addressed and that the required documents are attached.
4. Submit your application by March 3, 2025 at 11:59 pm SST.

All applications must be submitted via the application portal. Applicants will need to create an account and launch an application via the SimpliGov dashboard. Applications submitted by email, paper, or facsimile will not be accepted.

****Submission Deadline:**** March 3, 2025 at 11:59 pm SST

For questions or assistance during the application process, please contact Gloryana Akapo at gloryana.akapo@doc.as.gov or call 633-5155 ext. 1109.

GRANT NARRATIVE COMPONENTS:

Below are the key narrative sections of the grant application. All applications should address the following components: (see the Grant Application for Reference for a list of all questions)

1. Executive Summary
 - a. Provide a succinct overview of the project, including the goals, target audience, and expected outcomes. Include the name of the applicant, a brief description of the organization, and the primary objectives of the proposed project. (max 2500 characters)

2. Project Narrative
 - a. Detail the project's purpose and impact. Explain how the project will address digital equity in the targeted communities and describe how the project aligns with the goals of the Digital Equity Capacity Grant.
 - b. Include specific needs or challenges the project aims to address, the target population, and the expected short- and long-term outcomes.

3. Budget Breakdown
 - a. Provide a detailed budget outlining how the grant funds will be used. This should include a breakdown of expenses, such as personnel, materials, equipment, travel, and other direct costs.
 - b. Justify each item and demonstrate a clear need for the funding.

4. Project Action Plan and Calendar
 - a. Include a clear timeline for the project, outlining each major milestone and deliverable.
 - b. Provide start and end dates for each phase of the project, including key activities such as hiring staff, purchasing equipment, or conducting training sessions.
 - c. Highlight any anticipated challenges and the proposed solutions.

CONCLUSION

The Digital Equity Capacity Grant provides a critical opportunity to support initiatives that help bridge the digital divide in underserved communities. By increasing access to broadband, improving digital skills, and addressing gaps in technology infrastructure, the grant aims to ensure that all individuals have the tools they need to participate fully in the digital economy.

We encourage all eligible applicants to submit a thoughtful and comprehensive proposal. We look forward to receiving your applications and working together to advance digital equity nationwide.
