

## Alaska Digital Empowerment Capacity Grant Program Application Portal and Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updated April 8, 2025

The Alaska Broadband Office (ABO) will be posting questions that it receives from the public while the Grant Application Portal is open with the newest questions beginning at the top.

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16. If an entity previously had a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) that is no longer active, may the entity use the 15% de minimis rate to calculate indirect charges in the grant application budget?

*Yes, entities that have never had a NICRA, or for which a previous NICRA is expired, may use the 15% de minimis rate to calculate indirect charges in the grant application budget.*

15. Page 9 of the NOFO lists ineligible expenses, including: 3) “generally, deploy broadband infrastructure to connect broadband serviceable locations”. Are the purchases and installation of Starlink devices an eligible expense?

*Section II.C.3.c.vi. of the federal NOFO for the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program provides greater detail on the term “generally” used in the state NOFO for the Alaska Digital Empowerment Capacity Grant Program.*

*“In general, deployment of broadband infrastructure to connect broadband serviceable locations should be accomplished through other programs, including the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program. However, to the extent that installation of broadband infrastructure is necessary to accomplish an eligible program, activity, or intervention (e.g., installing fixed equipment on a building as part of a strategy to promote access to affordable broadband service), additional information will be required to determine the potential for environmental impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. §4321 et seq.) and potential impacts to historic properties under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (54 U.S.C. 300101 et seq.). Additionally, any portion of a State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program award that will be used for an “infrastructure project” (as defined in 2 C.F.R. 184.3) is subject to the Build America, Buy America Act (Pub. L. No. 117-58, §§ 70901-52) and to the regulations promulgated thereunder at 2 C.F.R. part 184). See Section IV.D.4. of this NOFO for additional information concerning the Build America, Buy America requirements for this program. In accordance with section 60506 of the Infrastructure Act, the Federal Communications Commission adopted rules to prevent digital*

*discrimination of access on the basis of income level, race, ethnicity, color, religion, or national origin. 89 Fed. Reg. 4128 (Jan. 22, 2024); 47 U.S.C. 1754.”*

*Generally, the answer is no, installation of LEO infrastructure is not an eligible activity under the Alaska Digital Empowerment Capacity Grant Program. However, if installation is “necessary to accomplish an eligible project, program, or activity”; and the installation meets the requirements of NEPA, NHPA, BABA, and other requirements outlined above, then it may be an allowable component of a broader project submitted for consideration under the grant.*

14. Should all indirect costs, whether based on a NICRA, or on the de minimis rate, be included in the Admin column of the summary page of the Consolidated Budget Template?

*“Administration” is considered to be any work related to managing the grant or complying with grant award conditions. This includes activities like preparing Financial/Progress Reports and Reimbursement Requests to be submitted to the Alaska Broadband Office (ABO); internal tracking of employee time related to grant activities; and preparing for site visits or desk audits conducted by the ABO Grant Administrator. Generally, “Administration” is activities completed to comply with the conditions of the grant agreement. “Administration” **is not** activities associated with running the project or program approved for grant funding. Indirect costs (per a NICRA, or the de minimis rate) should be tied to the category of activity they support. If an applicant identifies \$10,000 in “Administrative” expenses and is using the de minimis indirect rate of 15%, only \$1,500 should be included in the Admin column as indirect relating to administration of the grant.*

13. Within the Consolidated Budget Template should staff wages across multiple years be displayed on a separate line for each individual for each year?

*If the base wage is different each year (due to merit increases, COLAs, etc.) then a separate line item for each individual for each year is the cleanest way to submit the information.*

12. Though there is “no requirement for non-federal cost share, or match” please clarify if any supplemental grant funds that are named from federal sources should or should not be listed.

*The Alaska Broadband Office is unaware of any other federal grant program than can be used as matching funds to this program. If an applicant is receiving other federal grant funds for other Digital Empowerment related activities, they should be reported in the application in the answer to Question 2.3.f. Applications for Other Funding.*

11. If a required subject narrative exceeds the dialog space provided on the Alaska Digital Empowerment Capacity Grant application form, is it acceptable to submit additional pages in MS Word (converted to PDF) and upload with the application form?

*Yes, so long as the additional pages clearly denote the question to which the additional information pertains.*

10. There have been language adjustments on the ABO website. Can the ABO provide more information about this and how the language may pertain to the Capacity Grant? Would the SOA prefer the use of Empowerment vs. Equity?

*To better reflect the purpose of the in-state Alaska grant program the name has been changed to the Alaska Digital Empowerment Capacity Grant Program. The title of the program has been changed on the ABO website. All grant program documents have been revised to reflect the name change and the new versions were uploaded to the ABO website and the grant portal on Monday, March 17, 2025. The only content change within the documents is in the NOFO and is the addition of the definition of “Digital Empowerment” for the purposes of this program.*

*References to the federal State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program and the Alaska Digital Equity Plan remain unchanged.*

9. It has been reported that Texas has put a pause on their Capacity Grant funding. Do you think Alaska will do the same?

*At this time, the Alaska Broadband Office is not planning to change the application deadline for the grant program.*

8. Why do the project narratives in the DCRA Grants portal appear to differ from the application form provided on the ABO website?

*There is guidance on how to submit the Alaska Digital Empowerment Capacity Grant application and required appendices available on the ABO website here:*

[\*DCRA Grants Guidance Document -Alaska Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program Application Process.pdf\*](#)

[\*DCRA Grants Alaska Digital Equity Capacity Grant Application Process Tutorial v.2 on Vimeo\*](#)

7. Does a grantee need to go through an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Subject Research (HSR)? Can an existing or upcoming IRB approval be used?

*Generally, the cost and amount of time required to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of Human Subjects Research (HSR) would put potential subgrantees in a position where the timing requirements for project performance could not be met. This is why the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) requires applicants to submit HSR activity limited to that which is considered exempt. The exceptions identified in the NOFO include HSR for which IRB approval has already been obtained, or HSR for which IRB approval is currently underway. The ABO will also accept proposed HSR for which the applicant has access to an internal IRB approval process.*

*It is important to note that HSR activity, of any kind, that includes incarcerated individuals, children, or individuals with developmental disabilities is not subject to exemption and requires IRB approval.*

6. It has been reported that the Infrastructure and Jobs Act has been rescinded. How will this impact funding?

*The Alaska Broadband Office has received no notice from the National Telecommunication and Information Administration regarding potential impacts to the funding for the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program.*

5. Are State of Alaska entities required to have an active business license to register and apply for the Alaska Digital Equity Capacity Grant?

*State entities, such as state agencies, departments, or divisions, typically do not need a business license to apply for or receive state grants. These entities operate under the authority of the state and are not considered independent businesses. See, generally, Alaska Statutes 43.70.010 – 43.70.120.*

4. How detailed does information need to be for “Timeline, Milestones and Tasks”, “Strength of Project Plan”, “Comprehensive Nature of Project” and “Project Sustainability”?

*Answers to these questions within the application need to be detailed enough to justify the validity of the project being submitted for consideration. The term “detailed” should not be construed with “length” or “wordiness” of an answer. There is no expected length of an answer. However, answers need to provide enough detail to address the requirements or points outlined in the narrative summary provided with each question.*

3. Are federally recognized tribes required to have a business license to be eligible?

*Yes. Federally recognized tribes are required to have a business license to be eligible for a grant. The Statute on business licenses does not carve out an exception for federally recognized tribes. See, generally, Alaska Statutes 43.70.010 – 43.70.120.*

2. Does the waiver of sovereign immunity apply solely to the award amount?

*No. The waiver of sovereign immunity is not limited to the award amount, but it is limited to a violation/breach of the grant agreement. For example, if a tribe violated the grant agreement and the state incurred damages higher than the award amount, the state could pursue those damages against the tribe, even the amount above the grant award amount.*

1. The State Digital Equity Plan references the Affordable Connectivity Program. Given that Congress did not fund this program this summer, are alternate programs available in the state?

*No, there are no federal or state programs replacing the Affordable Connectivity Program. The Alaska Digital Empowerment Capacity Grant Program may be used to fund affordability programs on a limited basis. Please reference Section 17.ii of the Alaska Digital Empowerment Capacity Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity:*

*“As required by NTIA, the total amount of sub-awardee grant funds which may be used to fund subsidies for the provision of broadband services through affordable broadband programs is capped at 10% of Alaska’s total allocation, or \$563,176.96. To ensure this number is not exceeded, costs associated with Affordable Broadband Programs must be calculated on the Summary Tab of Appendix D – Consolidated Grant Program Budget Form.”*