



Resources for Libraries to Advance Digital Equity: *Federal Funding*

There are multiple federal funding opportunities to support and advance digital equity. Some funding sources are new, some existed before the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), and some are still under discussion. They include IIJA programs, IMLS grants, E-rate, USDA opportunities, and more. These programs have been created to support and advance digital equity, literacy, and inclusion initiatives at the local, state, and national levels.

Libraries of all types are eligible to apply for some programs, while others are limited to specific library types. Here are some funding opportunities libraries can explore to fund their digital equity programs.

New Funding Available Through the IIJA

Signed into law by President Joe Biden on November 15, 2021, IIJA includes a historic investment in advancing digital equity and an opportunity for libraries to leverage and expand their roles in that work. The IIJA includes \$65 billion to support multiple programs to bring broadband connectivity across the country. More information is available at: <https://www.internetforall.gov/programs>.

State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program

Additional information: <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/grant-programs/digital-equity-programs>

Description: Includes a federal investment of \$2.75 billion over five years to promote digital equity, literacy, and inclusion initiatives at the local, state, and national levels.

Timeline:

- States are currently developing their DEA plans to promote digital equity, support digital inclusion activities, and build capacity for broadband adoption for state residents. Plans must be submitted to the NTIA for approval within 270 days of receipt of the planning funds.
- Once the NTIA approves their plans, the states and territories will receive funding based on a formula to implement their digital equity plans. Over the next five years, states will implement digital equity plans.

Who can apply: Libraries of all types will be eligible to apply.

How to apply: Each state will have its own procedure for applying for funds. Check with your state's broadband office or the state library for more information.

Administered by: National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment Grant (BEAD)

Additional information: <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/grant-programs/broadband-equity-access-and-deployment-bead-program>

Description: The BEAD program includes \$42.5 billion to expand high-speed broadband access infrastructure, deployment, and adoption. This is the largest program within the IIJA that the NTIA will be administering. Like the DEA, collaboration with community organizations, like libraries, will be encouraged to achieve this program's goals.

Timeline:

- Like the DEA, states will first receive funds to develop their 5-year action plan and build capacity to support their efforts.
- The FCC is currently updating its broadband availability maps. Once released to the public, states will be informed of the amount they will receive to support their broadband initiatives.
- States will then submit their plan on how to achieve their broadband goals with a priority on providing broadband access to unserved areas (those below 25/3 Mbps) and then underserved areas, followed by community anchor institutions.

Who can apply: Libraries of all types will be eligible to apply.

How to apply: Each state will have its own procedure for applying for funds. Check with your state's broadband office or the state library for more information.

Administered by: National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program

Additional information: <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/grant-programs/enabling-middle-mile-broadband-infrastructure-program>

Description: This program will expand and extend middle-mile infrastructure to reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas to the internet backbone. Community anchors like libraries may benefit from these builds if new infrastructure is built within 1,000 feet of the middle mile infrastructure. This program is allocated \$1 billion to achieve its programmatic goals.

Timeline:

- Applications were due to the NTIA in September 2022.
- NTIA will award funds in March 2022.

- Recipients must complete their infrastructure buildouts no later than 5 years after the date on which amounts from the grant are made available to the eligible entity

Administered by: National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program

Additional information:

<https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/grant-programs/tribal-broadband-connectivity-program>

Description: This program includes \$2 billion for tribal governments to support broadband deployment on tribal lands as well as to support telehealth, distance learning, broadband affordability, and digital inclusion.

Timeline:

- Applications were due to NTIA in September 2022.
- NTIA started awarding grants in October 2022 and will continue to announce awards on a rolling basis.

Administered by: National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) & Outreach Funding

Additional information: <https://www.fcc.gov/acp>

Description: This program includes \$14.2 billion to modify and extend the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program. The ACP was created to help “ensure that households can afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare, and more.”

The majority of the funds support the ACP, which includes a discount of up to \$30 per month for internet service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if the household contributes more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price.

To increase the adoption of this program, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is supporting several outreach programs designed to promote the benefit and increase adoption of the program. Many library types are eligible to apply for the following programs.

ACP Navigator Pilot Program

Additional information: <https://www.fcc.gov/affordable-connectivity-pilot-programs>

Description: This \$5 million pilot program will support up to 20 partners who will work with their community to increase awareness, facilitate enrollment in the Affordable Connectivity Program, and provide assistance with ACP applications.

Who can apply: Examples of eligible entities include but are not limited to, state and local institutions of higher learning, state and community libraries, and Tribal schools and libraries

How to apply: The window to apply will open in November 2022. Public Notice DA 22-1076, <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-provides-additional-information-concerning-acp-pilot-programs>, provides guidance to assist applicants who may want to apply for the pilot program. More information will be released when the application launches.

Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant

Additional information: <https://www.fcc.gov/fcc-establishes-affordable-connectivity-outreach-grant-program>

Description: This program of approximately \$60 million will support eligible partners, including libraries, in increasing awareness of the ACP to raise awareness about the nation's largest ever broadband affordability effort, the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP).

Timeline ACP Navigator Pilot Program and Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant:

- Low-income households may apply for funding at <https://www.affordableconnectivity.gov>
- Applications to apply for the ACP Navigator Pilot Program will open in November 2022.
- The Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant to support eligible partners, including libraries, in increasing awareness of the ACP in their community will be announced in Fall 2022.
- ALA will update this page when more information is available.

Administered by: USAC for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Additional New Funding Sources

Capital Projects Fund

Additional information:

https://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/advleg/tools/Coronavirus%20Capital%20Projects%20Fund_ALA.pdf

Description: Also known as the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund, it provides \$10 billion in available funding for eligible states, territories, and tribal communities to ensure individuals' access to high-quality broadband, the implementation of broadband infrastructure improvements, and the enhancement of the overall quality of education, work, and telehealth as a direct response to the ongoing public health emergency.

All Capital Projects must meet the following three criteria:

(I) invests in capital assets designed to directly enable work, education, and health monitoring;

(2) designed to address a critical need that resulted from or was made apparent or exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health emergency; and

(3) designed to address a critical need of the community to be served by it.

Examples of eligible library projects might include funding for internet device lending, digital literacy courses, or infrastructure modernization for increased broadband services.

Timeline:

- Eligible government entities should have already applied for funding.
- All funds must be expended by December 31, 2026.
- Projects must reach substantial completion before December 31, 2026.

How Libraries Can Benefit: Libraries, through or in coordination with their state library association or state library agency, should reach out to their state’s governor to suggest how libraries could be included in the state’s grant plan. In addition, Tribal libraries can reach out to their Tribal governments.

Administered by: U.S Department of the Treasury

Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program

Additional information: <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/grant-programs/connecting-minority-communities-pilot-program>

Description: This \$268 million grant program to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) “for the purchase of broadband internet access service and eligible equipment or to hire and train information technology personnel.”

Timeline:

- The application window closed on December 1, 2021
- Additional awards will be announced on a rolling basis as they go through NTIA's review process.

Administered by: National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

State & Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Additional information: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>

Description: This \$350 billion program funds state, local, and Tribal governments to support their response to and recovery from the COVID-19 public health emergency. A complete list of eligible uses can be found on the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds webpage.

Timeline:

- Eligible government entities should have received their second and final tranching of funds in the summer of 2022.

- The funds must be fully obligated by December 31, 2024, and spent by December 31, 2026.

How Libraries Can Benefit: Funds can be used to make necessary investments to expand affordable access to broadband internet for organizations, including libraries.

Administered by: U.S Department of the Treasury

Community Connect Grant

Additional information: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/telecommunications-programs/community-connect-grants>

Description: This program provides financial assistance to eligible applicants that will provide broadband service in rural, economically challenged communities where service does not exist.

Timeline:

- The application window usually opens in the fall.

Administered by: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Established Funding Sources

Over the last two years, a plethora of new digital equity funding programs have become available but there also are established programs available that may be able to support your library's digital equity needs.

E-Rate

Additional information:

- USAC E-rate web page <https://www.usac.org/e-rate/>
- ALA E-rate and Universal Service <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/erate>
- State E-rate Coordinators <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/e-rate-state-coordinators>

Description: A federal program that makes telecommunications and information services more affordable for eligible schools and public and tribal libraries. Public and tribal libraries and schools can apply for the funding yearly, and it provides discounts on telecommunications services, internet access, Wi-Fi equipment, and related costs like internal cabling.

Timeline:

- The next E-rate service date runs July 1, 2023-June 30, 2023.
- The application process for recurring services opens in January 2023.
- Refer to the USAC Applicant Process instructions <https://www.usac.org/e-rate/applicant-process/> for more details.

Who can apply: Eligible K-12 schools, public libraries, and tribal libraries. A full list of eligible entities can be found on the USAC website, <https://www.usac.org/e-rate/applicant-process/before-you-begin/school-and-library-eligibility/>.

Administered by: USAC for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

Through its various grant programs, IMLS has funded many programs supporting and advancing digital equity, including supporting a digital navigator program. Listed below are grants that have been used to fund digital equity projects. For a complete list of available grants, see the Grants Programs page at <https://www.ims.gov/grants/grant-programs>.

Grants to States Program

Additional information: <https://www.ims.gov/grants/grant-programs/grants-states>

Description: It is a formula grant program that distributes more than \$160 million among the State Library Administrative Agencies (SLAAs). States use the funds to support the purpose and priorities outlined in the Library Services and Technology Act. SLAAs may use the funds to support statewide initiatives and services. They may also distribute the funds through competitive subawards to, or cooperative agreements with, public, academic, research, school, or special libraries or consortia (for-profit and federal libraries are not eligible).

Who can apply: It depends on the award or cooperative agreement. Check your state's SLAA to identify if your library is eligible for future opportunities.

Timeline: Check with your state's SLAA to identify funding opportunities.

National Leadership Grants for Libraries Program (NLG-L)

Additional information: <https://www.ims.gov/grants/available/national-leadership-grants-libraries>

Description: The NLG-L supports projects that address critical needs of the library and archives fields and have the potential to advance practice in these professions to strengthen library and archival services for the American public. Successful proposals will generate results such as new models, new tools, research findings, services, practices, and/or alliances that can be widely used, adapted, scaled, or replicated to extend and leverage the benefits of federal investment. A recent NLG-L award was used to develop the Digital Navigators program at Salt Lake City Public Library as well as a toolkit.

Who can apply: Libraries of all types will be eligible to apply. Check the NLG-L website for eligibility criteria.

Timeline: The application window is in the fall.

Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program (LB21)

Additional information: <https://www.ims.gov/grants/available/laura-bush-21st-century-librarian-program>

Description: Supports the development of a diverse workforce of librarians and archivists to meet the information needs of their communities by enhancing the training and professional

development of library and archives professionals; developing faculty and information leaders; and recruiting, educating, and retaining the next generation of library and archives professionals. A recent LB2I award was used to create the Toward Gigabit Libraries Toolkit.

Who can apply: Libraries of all types will be eligible to apply. Check the NLG-L website for eligibility criteria.

Timeline: The application window is in the fall.

Native American Library Services: Basic Grants

Additional information: <https://www.ims.gov/grants/available/native-american-library-services-basic-grants>

Description: This program is designed to assist Native American tribes in improving core library services for their communities. More information about the program can be found on the IMLS website.

Who can apply: Federally recognized tribes are eligible to apply. Check the grant website for specific eligibility criteria.

Timeline: The application window is in March.

U.S. Department of Education

The U.S. Department of Education provides multiple funding opportunities. More information is available at <https://www2.ed.gov/fund/grants-apply.html?src=pn>, but there are two grants that libraries might want to investigate further.

Innovative Approaches to Literacy Program (IAL)

Additional information: <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovapproaches-literacy/index.html>

Description: This program supports high-quality programs designed to develop and improve literacy skills for children and students from birth through 12th grade in high-need local educational agencies (high-need LEAs) and schools. Examples include childhood literacy activities and book distribution efforts.

How Libraries Can Benefit: Applicants must coordinate with school libraries to develop project proposals.

Timeline: The application window is usually in May.

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)

Additional information: <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html>

Description: Created to support programs that “increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.”

Who can apply: See the eligibility requirements for more information, <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/eligibility.html>.

Timeline: The application window is usually in June.

Investigate Local Opportunities

In addition to the opportunities listed above, libraries should also explore local opportunities at the state and county levels to identify additional funds to support your work. Examples include:

- County or City Government Grants
- Community Development Block Grants
- Workforce Investment & Opportunity Act
- Philanthropy