SC Broadband Advisory Council

Enabling South Carolinians to Thrive in the Global Digital Economy

South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff | October 23, 2024

Agenda

- Welcome and updates
- Program overviews
- Breakout 1
- Breakout 2
- Action Items

Updates

- Weather impacts on broadband development

- Grant updates
    - Awaiting Digital Equity Act Grant Approval
    - BEAD approved, but awaiting funding and Specific Award Conditions

- DOD updates
    - Attended NTIA Conference
    - Creating project plans contingent on funding timelines

Icebreaker – 5 min

- Share among your table

- Name, organization

- What is one thing you have learned about digital opportunity and access since our last meeting?

Downtown Orangeburg Revitalization Efforts

Proposed Initiatives

Digital Equity

| 1. Secure SC | 2. Digital Navigators | 3. Mini-grants | 4. Device Recycling |

BEAD Non-Deployment

| 1. Apprenticeships | 2. Virtual Primary Care |

Pending NTIA Approval

Project Plan - Apprenticeships

- 6-month salary + benefits reimbursement stipend
  - Not to exceed $46,447 per employee, 2 apprentices per organization
- Broadband related position; new employee/position; in SC
- Scoring to ensure distribution across industries, areas served, and covered populations served
- Application opens Jan. 1, 2025, and will close March 15, 2025
  - Approvals and hires MUST be completed by this date, as 6 month period of performance MUST conclude on or before Sept. 15, 2025
- Applications reviewed on a weekly basis
  - Hire can be made as soon as you receive approval, or up to March 15, 2025
- Mid-point and final reporting, including employee and employer survey

Project Plan – Digital Navigators

- 25 stipends of $65,000 to organizations with digital literacy programming, one-year project period

- Must have 1 designated Digital Navigator, who will be part of a cohort

- Cohort will meet with DOD to build learning modules

- Flexibility to use stipend as needed for that specific community/program, as long as organization has a digital navigator providing services as part of program

- Application timeline will run in tandem with Apprenticeships

Breakout Groups

- 3 groups for apprenticeships

- 3 groups for digital navigators

- 15 min to workshop, 20 min to report out, then we will switch!

- We will collect worksheets! Please write down your discussions and do not through away.

Action Items

- Please leave your worksheets
- **We will send out the finalized application packet for your review before pushing live**
- Share DOD/BBAC updates with others in your organization
- Continue encouraging other organizations to sign up for the DOD Newsletter – application info will be shared here!
- **Next meeting: 11am – 2pm, Feb. 12, 2025 @ Piedmont Technical College, Newberry**

Save the date

- **Next meeting:**
- **11am – 2pm, Feb. 12, 2025**
- **Piedmont Technical College, Newberry SC**

Thank you!

Next meeting: Feb. 12, 2025 @ Piedmont Technical College, Newberry

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Apprenticeship Breakout Questions

BBAC Meeting, Oct. 23, 2024

Please review the proposed program overview, and think through where this program will work, not work, or has holes. We appreciate any feedback as we finalize the structure of the program.

1. If the goal of this program is workforce development that will accelerate the deployment of broadband infrastructure, what roles should be eligible for the stipend?
   a. What are additional requirements for the company applying and/or the person being hired?

2. Knowing that this program is federally funded, with the potential associated reporting and compliance requirements, what is the balance between making this program beneficial for the company and meeting program priorities?
   a. Can the position be 100% focused on deployment activities or will it have other duties as assigned?
   b. What reimbursement payment schedule is reasonable in supporting cash flow needs but not creating an administrative burden?

3. What are the reporting metrics needed to indicate success of the program?
   a. How do we measure the impact of the individual hire?
   b. How do we measure the employee's contribution to the organizations mission?

Proposed Apprenticeships Program Overview

Oct. 23, 2024

<u>Description:</u> 6-month salary + benefit reimbursement stipend for broadband related positions. Positions must be full time with 100% of time allocated to broadband, in the state of South Carolina, and be a new employee and/or position. Each stipend is not to exceed $46,447, and an organization can only be approved for a maximum of 2 apprentices.

<u>Allocation:</u> This program is a non-deployment activity under the BEAD Grant. It is pending final approval by NTIA. We will receive Special Award Conditions that must be met.

<u>Timeline:</u> Application will open Jan 1, 2024. Applications will be reviewed weekly by the Digital Opportunity Department and awarded on a rolling basis. Organizations can receive "initial" approval without having filled the position, but will not begin receiving funding until the hire has been made. Application will close March 1, 2025, and all apprenticeships must be awarded. All hires MUST be made and apprentices must begin work by March 15, 2025. Mid-point reports will be submitted approx. 3 months after project start date, but beginning no earlier than March 30, 2025. Apprenticeships must be concluded and final reports submitted by Sept. 15, 2025.

<u>Eligible Positions:</u> Broadband infrastructure deployment related roles, including: Foreman; Lineman; Drop Technician; Fiber splicers; Railway (flaggers); GIS/Data Specialist; Permitting; other relevant (compelling) positions.

The DOD will raise awareness for the program in Nov. - Dec. 2024 ahead of program launch, through meetings and correspondence with ISPs, the BBAC, 811, DOT, utility companies, rail companies, and others.

<u>Scoring:</u> Metrics will be centered around: Location of work (rural preference); number of existing employees; existence of onboarding/training program; number of people served; covered populations served; necessity for position; and other metrics. Scoring will reflect an emphasis on spread across industry, region, and covered population served.

<u>Reporting:</u> Reporting will require: number of people served; location of people served; covered populations served; paystubs; and other metrics.

There will also be a mid-point and end point employee and employer survey that must be completed. Questions will address the result of having the position, and future plans for the position.

Digital Navigator Breakout Questions

BBAC Meeting, Oct. 23, 2024

Please review the proposed program overview, and think through where this program will work, not work, or has holes. We appreciate any feedback as we finalize the structure of the program.

1. What skillset is required to be a Digital Navigator? Should there also be requirements surrounding how services are provided?

2. Digital Navigators need to be trusted members of the community, as they are potentially accessing sensitive or personal information. What stipulations need to be in place to ensure the program is safe?
   a. Are background checks needed? Just for the designated Digital Navigator, or for any additional employees/volunteers providing services?
   b. Create a code of ethics that Digital Navigators must agree to.

3. Although stipends can be used for various elements of programmatic support, there will be a requirement for certain services to be provides. The designated Digital Navigator can be solely responsible for delivery of services, or ensure service delivery by others. What is a realistic deliverable for an organization receiving the stipend (ex. 20 hours of Digital Navigator services a week, or 100 people served each month)?

Proposed Digital Navigator Program Overview

Oct. 23, 2024

<u>Description:</u> Stipend program to create a cohort of Digital Navigators in South Carolina.

The program will provide 25 stipends of $65,000 to organizations with digital navigators and digital literacy programming. Each recipient needs to have one designated digital navigator who is responsible for ensuring certain services are provided and attending cohort meetings hosted by the Digital Opportunity Department. Cohorts will help to build online learning modules for Digital Navigator training (Phase II of the Digital Navigator initiative). Organizations can use the stipends as they see fit, as long as it is in the deployment of digital literacy programs, there is a designated Digital Navigator, and the organization is providing the necessary services. By allowing communities to figure out what stipend use works for them in different program structures, we learn what works best for future development.

<u>Allocation:</u> This program is an activity under the Digital Equity Act Capacity Grant. It is pending final approval by NTIA.

<u>Timeline:</u> Application will open Jan 1, 2025. Applications will be reviewed weekly by the Digital Opportunity Department and awarded on a rolling basis. Application will close March 1, 2025, and programs must begin work by March 15, 2025. The project period is one year. Regular reporting will be required.

<u>Necessary skills:</u> A Digital Navigator should have knowledge and be able to train others on: general phone, computer, and tablet navigation; use of Wi-Fi and cellular data; basis of navigating the web; basics of email; basics of Microsoft Office and Google Drive suites; telehealth portals; online banking basics; online bill pay; virtual school, online further education, and parent portal monitoring; social media basics; professional development (resumes, online job boards, virtual interviews); safety on internet, social media, and with devices (hardware and software); identifying reputable sources and finding trusted resources; identifying and preventing misinformation and scams; and other skills.

Qualification and services needed may vary depending on program structure, but these skills set a baseline to be considered a Digital Navigator.