New Funding from the Digital Equity Act
What it means for immigrants & English Learners

CVIIC webinar
Karina Paredes-Arzola
Amanda Bergson-Shilcock
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We are in a moment of exciting opportunity.
New federal legislation will invest millions in Californians’ digital inclusion
Immigrant advocates can start now to ensure investment reaches all communities, including the Central Valley.
Today’s conversation

• Who we are
• What the Digital Equity Act is
• What it means for the Central Valley
• Where would you like to go next?
About National Skills Coalition

Vision
➢ Jobs that require skills training are the backbone of our economy.
➢ National Skills Coalition fights for a national commitment to inclusive, high-quality skills training so that more people have access to a better life, and more local businesses see sustained growth.

Impact
➢ Since 2000, through expert analysis and technical assistance, broad-based organizing, targeted advocacy, and cutting-edge communications, NSC has changed hundreds of state and federal skills policies that have changed thousands of lives and grown local businesses and economies.

**We do not accept public funds and will NOT be competing for DEA money**
NSC’s networks

NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION

Every worker. Every industry. A strong economy.

National Network

State Network

Business Leaders
About Skills for CA

Skills for CA is statewide network of organizations advancing workforce development policies that remove systemic barriers and promote an inclusive economy for all Californians.

Equity
Provide education, skills training, and upward mobility for all Californians with a special focus on creating more opportunities for people who have been structurally disconnected from economic opportunity so that everyone can thrive in the workforce.

Pathways to Good Jobs
Create skills training pathways to jobs that pay family supporting wages, provide for worker advancement, and give workers the stability, predictability, and support necessary to take care of family needs.

Systems Innovation
Seed and spread new collaborative innovations among workforce development stakeholders that lead more businesses to inclusive growth and more Californians to obtaining the skills and credentials needed in the labor market today and in the future.
About Skills for CA

➢ Skills for CA 2022 Policy Priorities

➢ 2022 Skills for CA Summit
  o Watch the recordings at skillsforcasummit.org

➢ Join the SFCA network!
  o Subscribe to our mailing list at skillsforca.org
Let’s dig into the Digital Equity Act

➢ $2.75 billion nationwide (over five years), administered by the US Commerce Dept’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

➢ Provides funding for states, localities, nonprofits and others to provide a range of digital inclusion services (help with broadband access, digital devices, and digital skills, etc.)

➢ English learners, rural residents, and people of color are among the “covered populations” that states must specifically address under the law

➢ Read the full legislative text
Digital Equity Act Funding Timeline

➢ **July 2022:** State applications to federal Commerce Dept/NTIA are due for first, small ($60M nationwide) state Digital Equity *planning grants*

➢ **Summer 2022:** States begin 12-month Digital Equity *planning process*

➢ **Summer 2023:** NTIA releases NOFO for $1.44 billion in *formula funds* to states (“Digital Equity Capacity Grants”)

➢ **Summer/Fall 2023:** NOFO for $1.25 billion in *competitive grants* to states and other eligible entities (“Digital Equity Competitive Grants”)
How can you start to prepare?
1. Engage with state leaders

- Governors must identify the agency that will be the “administering entity” overseeing their Digital Equity Plan (*Spring 2022*)

- Make sure immigrants’ and English learners’ voices are heard during your state’s Digital Equity Planning process (*Summer 2022-Summer 2023*)

- You’ll also be able to weigh in during a mandatory 30-day public comment period before your State Plan is submitted to the NTIA
2. Familiarize yourself with key terms in the Digital Equity Act

- Covered populations
- Eligible entities
- Eligible activities
Who are “covered populations”? 
Many covered populations overlap with immigrants and refugees

- Individuals in a household with *income below 150 percent of poverty* level
- *Aging* individuals
- *Incarcerated* individuals (other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility)
- *Veterans*
- Individuals with *disabilities*
- Individuals with a language barrier, *including individuals who are English learners;* and have *low levels of literacy;
- Individuals who are members of a *racial or ethnic minority* group; and
- Individuals who primarily reside in a *rural* area
What types of organizations will be "eligible entities" for grants?
There are two opportunities for organizations to be eligible for funding

➢ We don’t know yet how California will redistribute its formula funding to the local level (e.g. via Request for Proposals or other process). We also don’t know yet exactly which types of organizations will be eligible. We do know that state funding will need to follow the general roadmap outlined by the state in its Digital Equity Plan.

➢ We do know which organizations will be eligible to apply directly to the federal government for competitive grants.
Many Central Valley organizations will fall under an eligible entity category for federal competitive grants:

- 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
- An Indian Tribe, an Alaska Native entity, or a Native Hawaiian organization
- A foundation, corporation, institution, or association that is a *not-for-profit entity* and not a school
- A *community anchor institution*
- A *local educational agency*
- An entity that carries out a workforce development program
- A partnership between any of the preceding entities
- A partnership between any of the preceding entities and an entity that the Assistant Secretary determines to be in the public interest; and is not a school. (*Cannot be or have been an administering entity under the Capacity Grant Program [formula funding]*)
What types of services can be provided with DEA funding?
The Digital Equity Act defines key terms

➢ **DIGITAL INCLUSION** (A) means the activities that are necessary to ensure that all individuals in the United States have access to, and the use of, affordable information and communication technologies, such as: (i) reliable fixed and wireless broadband internet service; (ii) internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user; and (iii) applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration; and (B) includes—(i) **obtaining access to digital literacy training**; (ii) the provision of quality technical support; and (iii) obtaining basic awareness of measures to ensure online privacy and cybersecurity.

➢ **DIGITAL LITERACY** means the skills associated with using technology to enable users to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information.
Entities receiving federal **competitive grants** must engage in at least **one** of these activities:

- (i) To develop and implement digital inclusion activities that benefit covered populations.
- (ii) To facilitate the adoption of broadband by covered populations in order to provide educational and employment opportunities to those populations.
- (iii) To implement, consistent with the purposes of this title—(I) **training programs for covered populations that cover basic, advanced, and applied skills**; or (II) **other workforce development programs**.
- (iv) To make available equipment, instrumentation, networking capability, hardware and software, or digital network technology for broadband services to covered populations at low or no cost.
- (v) To construct, upgrade, expend, or operate new or existing public access computing centers for covered populations through community anchor institutions.
- (vi) To undertake any other project and activity that the Assistant Secretary finds to be consistent with the purposes for which the Program is established.
Ready to get started?
What are you wondering about?

➢ **We want to hear from you!** What are the implications for the Central Valley?
What can you do next?

- **Sign on** to NSC’s 5 Principles for Digital Equity
- Reach out to officials at the California Department of Technology regarding upcoming **State Digital Equity Planning**.
- Learn more about [North Carolina’s local digital equity plans](#)
- Learn more about [Hawaii’s digital readiness state survey](#)
NSC digital skills publications

- **Applying a Racial Equity Lens to Digital Literacy** (6-page fact sheet with digital skills statistics by race/ethnicity)
- **Implementing the New Digital Equity Act** fact sheet
- Digital skills fact sheets by industry:
  - Manufacturing
  - Retail & hospitality
  - Health & social work
  - Construction, transportation & storage
This report highlights strategies and public policies that can help small and mid-sized businesses upskill their workers.

It is based on interviews with workforce and business leaders conducted during the pandemic.

Visit our Future of Work webpage to see more NSC publications on digital skills.
Contact information

Karina Paredes-Arzola
State Network Manager
karinapa@nationalskillscoalition.org

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock
Senior Fellow
215-285-2860 (mobile)
amandabs@nationalskillscoalition.org