

RCW 43.330.412 Digital equity opportunity program—

Administration—Grant program. The digital equity opportunity program is created to advance broadband adoption and digital equity and inclusion throughout the state. The digital equity opportunity program must be administered by the department. The department may contract for services in order to carry out the department's obligations under this section.

(1) In implementing the digital equity opportunity program the director must, to the extent funds are appropriated for this purpose:

(a) Provide organizational and capacity building support to digital equity programs throughout the state and additional support for the purpose of:

(i) Evaluating the impact and efficacy of activities supported by grants awarded under the covered programs; and

(ii) Developing, cataloging, disseminating, and promoting the exchange of best practices, with respect to and independent of the covered programs, in order to achieve digital equity. After July 1, 2024, no more than 15 percent of funds received by the director for the program may be expended on these functions;

(b) Establish a competitive grant program and provide grants to community technology programs to advance digital equity and digital inclusion by providing:

(i) Training and skill-building opportunities;

(ii) Access to hardware and software, including online service costs such as application and software;

(iii) Internet connectivity;

(iv) Digital media literacy and cybersecurity training;

(v) Assistance in the adoption of information and communication technologies for low-income and underserved populations of the state;

(vi) Development of locally relevant content and delivery of vital services through technology; and

(vii) Technical support;

(c) Collaborate with broadband stakeholders, including broadband action teams across the state, in implementing the program as provided under this subsection; and

(d) For the purposes of this section, include wireless meshed network technology.

(2) Grant applicants must:

(a) Provide evidence that the applicant is a nonprofit entity or a public entity that is working in partnership with a nonprofit entity;

(b) Define the geographic area or population to be served;

(c) Include in the application the results of a needs assessment addressing, in the geographic area or among the population to be served: The impact of inadequacies in technology access or knowledge, barriers faced, and services needed;

(d) Explain in detail the strategy for addressing the needs identified and an implementation plan including objectives, tasks, and benchmarks for the applicant and the role that other organizations will play in assisting the applicant's efforts;

(e) Provide evidence that funds applied for, if received, will be used to provide effective delivery of community technology services in alignment with the goals of this program and to increase the applicant's level of effort beyond the current level; and

(f) Comply with such other requirements as the director establishes.

(3) The digital equity forum shall review grant applications and provide input to the director regarding the prioritization of applications in awarding grants among eligible applicants under the program.

(4) In awarding grants under the digital equity opportunity program created in this section, the director must:

(a) Consider the input provided by the digital equity forum, as provided in subsection (3) of this section, in awarding grants; and

(b) Consider the extent to which the mix of grants awarded would increase in the number of prekindergarten through 12th grade students gaining access to greater levels of digital inclusion as a factor in awarding grants.

(5) The director may use no more than 10 percent of funds received for the digital equity opportunity program to cover administrative expenses.

(6) The director must establish expected program outcomes for each grant recipient and must require grant recipients to provide an annual accounting of program outcomes. [2022 c 265 § 304; 2011 1st sp.s. c 43 § 607; 2009 c 509 § 6; 2008 c 262 § 6. Formerly RCW 43.105.380, 28B.32.010.]

Effective date—2022 c 265 §§ 101, 102, 301-305, and 401: See note following RCW 43.330.530.

Short title—Findings—Intent—2022 c 265: See notes following RCW 43.330.539.

Effective date—Purpose—2011 1st sp.s. c 43: See notes following RCW 43.19.003.

Findings—Intent—Purpose—Effective date—2009 c 509: See notes following RCW 43.330.400.