



STATE OF IOWA
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
COVER SHEET

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Table with 2 columns: Field Name and Value. Fields include Title Of RFI, RFI No., Agency, State seeks information on, State Issuing Officer (Name, Phone e-Mail and Fax, Mailing Address), TIMETABLE, Event or Action, Date/Time (Central Time), Important Websites, and URL.

## SECTION 1 -- OVERVIEW

### 1.1 Purpose

The Iowa Department of Management, Division of Information Technology (“DOM DoIT”) is issuing this Request for Information to seek input from interested parties on the State’s tentative plans for implementation of the State of Iowa Digital Equity Plan to be expended through the Iowa Digital Equity State Capacity Grant. The federal government has awarded the State a total of \$8,442,129.37 to implement the State of Iowa Digital Equity Plan, with a period of performance for the grants running from 2024 through 2029.

### 1.2 Background Information

The State Digital Equity Capacity Grant is intended to implement the Iowa Digital Equity Plan. This is the first of three expected federal Notices of Funding Opportunity (“NOFOs”) with the \$8.4M award amount of the first NOFO representing approximately 60% of total funding to be made available here. The second NOFO is expected in 2025 at approximately \$2.8M and a third NOFO in 2026 for a final amount at approximately \$2.8M. Final projected numbers are subject to change based on demographics and formula shifts.

The DOM DoIT is seeking information that may help the State to implement the Digital Equity Plan. With the initial tranche of funding, the State intends to focus the available funding on the following programmatic concepts:

**Goal 1 - Wi-Fi Access Program:** DOM DoIT is interested in creating an online tool for Iowans to search for free Wi-Fi access and encourage entities to participate. DOM DoIT seeks help in outlining roles and responsibilities for communities and/or organizations to become a certified participant in a Wi-Fi access program. This includes working with providers to offer discounts in partnerships with Wi-Fi access program participants, obtaining local public Wi-Fi location data from cities, libraries and other partners and publishing that data to a statewide map and application that identifies public Wi-fi locations. Additionally, DOM DoIT is interested in creating push notifications of Wi-Fi locations and/or make accessible as open data to commercial data providers like Apple, Google, Bing and others so locations appear on their mapping platforms. The program would aim to provide a mechanism for public, private and non-governmental organizations to register and certify public Wi-Fi locations. DOM DoIT would also like to work with Iowa artists / designers to create branded signage / window clings to be included in promotional kits for organizations to launch, manage and update their locations. Promotional kits would also include useful information on setting up of device charging stations, recommendations on selecting, installing and replacing Wi-Fi routers and equipment, and addressing cybersecurity related issues.

**Goal 2 - Statewide Service Reliability:** A common theme heard throughout the statewide meetings centered around reliability issues. Iowans may have access to internet but believe the service isn't reliable or performing up to the package to which they subscribe. This project will build out a toolkit to educate consumers related to available broadband internet package labels, equipment setup resources, and speed audit services. DOM DoIT is interested in gathering information on broadband labels and developing useful information material to help Iowans learn about these labels and how to use them. The result of the initiative will create a repository of internet service provider broadband internet package labels and/or links to provider labels and customer service resources for Iowans to easily reference. The toolkit will point Iowans toward resolution in the form of speed tests and submitting challenges to the statewide map if they determine performance is not meeting expectations.

**Goal 3 - Wi-Fi hotspot checkout:** Iowans unable to afford a broadband subscription and those that may not have high speed internet access yet could help alleviate those needs with a Wi-Fi hotspot checkout program. The public libraries in Iowa have a successful history of administering checkout programs to meet the needs of Iowans, but currently only offer a program at approximately 20% of their facilities. The plan states an ambitious goal of 50% of libraries equipped with a hotspot checkout program. DOM DoIT is interested in increasing the number and reach of public library Wi-Fi hotspot checkout programs.

**Goal 4 - Device Refurbishing Program:** As technological devices advance and the demands of society require online activities, Iowans will need to own and operate digital devices to fully participate in society. For some, the cost of acquiring these devices can be a burden. For others, understanding how best to use the devices and troubleshoot problems can be the biggest barrier. From the results of the statewide survey, facilitated sessions, and public meetings, it is clear that Iowans need more devices in the home to meet the needs of the entire household to achieve full participation in society. By working with institutions and businesses to capture a portion of the devices that cycle through their device replacement system, pass them through a certified refurbishing process, and distribute through trusted distribution points, qualifying Iowans can obtain necessary devices.

DOM DoIT is interested in identifying a device refurbisher to set up business in Iowa to launch a refurbishing program. The program will also fund activities to recruit institutions and businesses to be part of the donation program, determine eligibility requirements, meet the needs of individuals, and establish efficient distribution methods for devices. This work will potentially include collaboration with the State's community colleges and libraries.

**Goal 5 – Digital Skills Curriculum and Platform, Digital Navigator network:** Digital skills vary widely among Iowans based on a variety of factors. However, the demands put on Iowans learning new and improving existing skills increase each year. From using an app to pay for your parking spot to scanning a QR code to pull up a menu at lunch, Iowans interact with technology in everyday life in addition to the demands for participation in more lofty endeavors like

workforce training and telehealth. Understanding how lowans at various stages in life with different challenges to their success can improve their digital skills and building a program to fit those needs will help lift all lowans to have the ability to fully participate in society. DOM DoIT seeks to engage digital skills instructors who are currently providing training to develop a comprehensive curriculum that covers levels of abilities from basic device usage to using the internet to protecting oneself from cyber threats that may arise while using various software, platforms, and online services. DOM DoIT would like to determine a platform that allows covered populations statewide access to the curriculum. Additionally, the program would aim to conduct community outreach and training on utilizing the curriculum to service agencies and training partners such as libraries and community centers. The program would then create digital skills learning modules based on the statewide curriculum and work to expand modules offered in a growing number of languages, including ASL. Additionally, the program would develop a digital ability assessment tool to ensure that virtual participants are guided to the modules they need based on their current digital skills. DOM DoIT is interested in developing and hosting Digital Skills (Goal 5) and Cybersecurity modules (Goal 7) for long term use and training for lowans.

Many individuals benefit from a person that can help teach and guide them through these challenges. The Digital Navigator model is gaining steam throughout the country with documented success. The Digital Navigator concept garnered significant support throughout the planning process and is an integral piece of plan implementation. DOM DoIT is interested in working with interested entities to place a small number of Digital Navigators (4-6) throughout the state to work in communities of need. DOM DoIT will also evaluate existing programs to leverage and increase the total number of navigators available to assist lowans with a digital skills certification or badge system.

**Reducing Recidivism with Increased Digital Skills for Incarcerated Individuals:** As Incarcerated Individuals are released back into society, those equipped with the skills necessary to navigate the digital world to find housing and seek employment are more likely to successfully reenter and become productive members of the economy. Much of the digital device stock in correctional institutions is at or past the end of life, making digital skills training difficult. Additionally, many facilities have a bottleneck in the number of machines available for learning, limiting the time for Incarcerated Individuals to take training courses. These devices are located in computer labs and similar education-based facilities inside of institutions, allowing IT professionals to provide curated experiences that meet security standards.

DOM DoIT is interested in updating obsolete devices and expanding the number of digital devices available in facilitated computer lab and education-based settings to alleviate bottlenecks to increase the number of educational training opportunities available to incarcerated individuals. DOM DoIT sees a potential long-term tie-in with the Device Refurbishment goal stated above.

**Community Planning:** The digital equity space in Iowa has not had any kind of formalized operations prior to the Digital Equity Plan. Because of that, the community needs to take advantage of the State’s convening power in implementing a Coordinating Council and associated task force / work groups to build out the scaffolding of the community for future work. An annual check-in and celebration of progress in coordination with existing broadband events can help further build on this community progress. DOM DoIT is interested in hosting annual gatherings (5 total) to help facilitate community planning.

**Data Collection and Monitoring:** With the investments in a new program area, it is vital to gather and analyze data in real time to understand what programs are working and what programs need to pivot to better serve Iowans. To continue building on the foundational data of the statewide survey, monitoring information will need to be collected and analyzed regularly, building to the second statewide survey to take place at the end of the performance period. This project will help DOM DoIT better understand Iowans in this space and better execute the goals and objectives established in the State Digital Equity Plan. DOM DoIT is interested in collecting ongoing data, conducting focus groups, and conducting a follow up statewide survey near the end of the performance period.

### 1.3 Response Instructions

The Agency requests that responses adhere to the following instructions:

- 1.3.1 RFI responses should address the questions listed in Section 2 of this RFI. Respondents may reference user manuals or web pages as long as an electronic copy or weblink is provided and no sign-on or registration is required to access the referenced materials.
- 1.3.2 Communication and responses shall be submitted **via [IMPACS](#)** to the Issuing Officer listed in Section 1.4 below.
- 1.3.3 Respondents shall provide a signed transmittal letter on company letterhead that includes the company and the main contact’s information such as name, title, telephone, and email.
- 1.3.4 Responses that include budgetary cost shall be submitted by general price ranges with their cost information, where applicable, to be used for reference only. No formal quotations shall be received or awarded in the RFI process.

**Any references to cost in the attachments or following sections are intended to be requests for an informal estimate of costs.**

### 1.4 Communication

For information regarding this notice and throughout this process, interested entities

shall contact only the issuing officer below.

Jeff Berckes  
Department of Management, Division of IT  
200 E. Grand Ave., Ste. 200  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
[jeff.berckes@dom.iowa.gov](mailto:jeff.berckes@dom.iowa.gov)

**1.5 Requests for Information Responses**

Responses to this RFI must be received no later than 4:00 p.m., Central Standard Time, on September 13, 2024, by the issuing officer at the email account listed in Section 1.4 above.

**1.6 Right to Duplicate**

Respondent agrees that the Agency may duplicate its response information for the purpose of facilitating the review or responding to requests for public records. The Respondent consents to such duplication by submitting a response and warrants that such duplication will not violate the rights of any third party. The Agency will have the right to use ideas (or adaptations of ideas) presented in the response in development of a future procurement.

**1.7 Review of RFI Responses**

Responses to this RFI will be reviewed by Agency staff.

**1.8 Gratuities**

The laws of Iowa provide that it is a felony to offer, promise, or give anything of value or benefit to a state employee with the intent to influence that employee's acts, opinion, judgment, or exercise of discretion with respect to that employee's duties. Evidence of violation of this statute will be turned over to the proper prosecuting attorney.

**1.9 Costs to Vendors**

The costs of preparation and delivery of the response to this RFI are the Respondent's sole responsibility.

**1.10 Response Property of the State**

All responses become the property of the State of Iowa and shall not be returned to the Respondent. At the conclusion of the project, the content of the responses will be placed in the public domain and open to inspection by interested parties. Do not include confidential or proprietary information as part of your RFI submission.

**1.11 Source of Information Used in Addition to Responses**

The Agency reserves the right to contact vendors after the submission of responses for the purpose of clarification and to ensure mutual understanding. Such contact does not obligate the State to any future commitment with vendors.

**1.12 State's Obligations**

Issuance of this RFI in no way constitutes a commitment by the State to award any contract(s) or conduct business with any Respondent.

**1.13 Public Records and Requests for Confidentiality**

The release of information by the Agency to the public is subject to Iowa Code Chapter 22 and other applicable provisions of law relating to the release of records in the possession of a State agency. Respondents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these provisions prior to submitting a response. All information submitted by a Respondent may be treated as public information by the Agency unless the Respondent properly requests that information be treated as confidential at the time of submitting. If a request is received by the state to view information identified as confidential by a Respondent, the Agency shall notify the Respondent of the request. It shall be the Respondent's sole responsibility to defend the claim of confidentiality in an appropriate legal venue. The Agency will withhold release of the subject information until the matter is settled.

Any requests for confidential treatment of information must be included in a cover letter with the Respondent's submittal and must enumerate the specific grounds in Iowa Code Chapter 22 or other legal reasons that support treatment of the material as confidential and must indicate why disclosure is not in the best interests of the public. The request must also include the name, address and telephone number of the person authorized by the Respondent to respond to any inquiries concerning the confidential status of the materials.

Any documents submitted that contain confidential information must be marked on the outside as containing confidential information, and each page upon which confidential information appears must be marked as containing confidential information. The confidential information must be clearly identifiable to the reader wherever it appears.

All copies of the submission, as well as the original, must be marked in this manner. In addition to marking the material as confidential material where it appears, the Respondent must submit one copy of the RFI information from which the confidential information has been excised. The confidential material must be excised in such a way as to allow the public to determine the general nature of the material removed and to retain as much of the document as possible. These pages must be submitted with the cover letter and will be made available for public inspection.

The Respondent's failure to request in the RFI confidential treatment of material pursuant to this Section and the relevant laws and administrative rules will be deemed by the Agency as a waiver of any right to confidentiality that the Respondent may have had.

## **SECTION 2 -- RFI RESPONSES**

### **2.1 Vendor Information**

**2.1.1** Provide the name and principal place of your business.

**2.1.2** Provide the name, address, email address, and telephone number of the vendor representative to contact regarding all matters concerning this RFI.

### **2.2 General Questions**

**2.2.1.** What processes, resources, and timelines should DOM DoIT consider in pursuing programs described in Section 1.2 (answer any of the below)

- a. Goal 1 – Wi-Fi Access Program
- b. Goal 2 – Statewide Service Reliability
- c. Goal 3 – Wi-Fi Hotspot Checkout Program
- d. Goal 4 – Device Refurbishing Program
- e. Goal 5 – Digital Skills Curriculum and Platform, Digital Navigator Network
- f. Reducing Recidivism with Increased Digital Skills for Incarcerated Individuals
- g. Community Planning
- h. Data Collection and Monitoring

**2.2.2.** What do vendors need from DOM DoIT in order to successfully deliver program objectives in accordance with federal Digital Equity Act requirements?

**2.2.3.** What are the “cost drivers” that affect State Agencies when developing programs and projects as described in Section 1.2, and do you have ideas to keep those cost drivers from adversely impacting the Agency's goals?

**2.2.4.** What are key priorities for successfully delivering results within the programs and projects as described in Section 1.2?

### **2.4 Citizen Support**

Describe support services that can be delivered as part of any of the program and projects as described in Section 1.2.

**2.5 Costs**

Describe any anticipated costs for services and payment structure, including any up-front, one-time costs, implementation costs, and recurring maintenance and support costs in accordance with the requirements of the Digital Equity Capacity Grant that you would need to provide services in relation to the stated Agency goals. If there are additional considerations available from your solution associated with one the goals that you believe would be beneficial to the Agency, please provide them in your submission.