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American Samoa, Guam, the commonwealth of Northern Mariana Island, and the U.S. Virgin Islands' Digital Equity Plan Accepted

The Office of the Governor is proud to announce that the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has accepted American Samoa's Digital Equity Plan. Alongside plans from Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, this acceptance marks a significant step forward in bridging the digital divide within U.S. territories.

The Digital Equity Act, a pivotal component of the Internet for All initiative and President Biden's Investing in America Agenda, allocates \$2.75 billion to establish three grant programs aimed at promoting digital equity and inclusion. The objective of the program is to ensure that all individuals and communities possess the skills, technology, and capacity necessary to fully benefit from the digital economy.

Each territory, including American Samoa, received \$150,000 from the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program to formulate plans addressing disparities in digital access, skills, and affordability. With NTIA's acceptance of digital equity plans from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories, the pathway to implementation is now clear.

On March 29, 2024, NTIA initiated the \$1.44 billion Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program. Under this program, states and territories can apply for funding from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to begin implementing their approved digital equity plans. Additionally, NTIA will soon launch the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program, providing funds to various entities, including political subdivisions of states, native entities, nonprofits, community anchor institutions, local educational agencies, workforce development organizations, and territories.

Governor Lemanu P.S. Mauga expressed his gratitude, stating, “This milestone demonstrates our commitment to closing the digital divide and ensuring our people have access to the tools and skills necessary to thrive in the digital age. This plan, shaped by the dedication of our local stakeholders and federal partners, promises to foster growth, drive innovation, and enhance the quality of life for everyone in our community. Thank you to everyone involved for helping us take this crucial step towards a more connected and prosperous future.”

American Samoa Director of Commerce Ms. Petti Matila added, “We are glad to learn that our Digital Equity plan has been approved. We are grateful to our stakeholders and those in our community who contributed to this effort. We look forward to the implementation phase, as there is a great deal of work to be done to ensure our people have the necessary tools and skills needed to leverage the power of and opportunities created by broadband and the internet. Fa’afetai tele lava!”

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