



**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
AMERICAN SAMOA GOVERNMENT**

May 27, 2022

**GENERAL MEMORANDUM NO. 070 – 22**

To: Secretary of Samoan Affairs, CEOs, Presidents and Executive Directors of Authorities, Directors, Agency and Office Heads

From: Acting Chief of Staff

Subject: Broadband Core Working Group

On May 16, 2022 the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) launched the program to fund Broadband infrastructure as part of President Biden’s initiative around helping close the digital divide and ensure that all Americans have access to reliable, high speed, and affordable broadband. The program builds upon the funding for broadband deployment provided in the American Rescue Plan (ARPA), the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, the FCC’s Universal Service program, and USDA’s Rural Utilities Service broadband program.

The NTIA funding is based on the following three (3) areas that directly benefit American Samoa:

1. Broadband Equity, Access, & Deployment (BEAD) Program: Appropriates \$42.45 billion
2. Digital Equity Act Programs: Dedicates \$2.75 billion
3. Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program: Allocates \$1 billion

A summary of these grant programs is attached to this memo.

To ensure that American Samoa maximizes its potential for obtaining funding from NTIA grant programs, we must assemble a working group that will focus efforts on securing funding that will help meet President Biden’s objectives while enhancing and developing our local economy and infrastructure. The **Broadband Core Working Group (BCWG)** will ensure our efforts are successful. The stakes are high and the funding requirements will require focused efforts and leveraging of core experience resources to ensure we have a cohesive, single approach for American Samoa from a broadband funding strategy and go-forward approach.

The following individuals have been identified from across ASG whose relevant expertise is necessary in initiating The Broadband Core Working Group:

- Keith Gebauer, Executive Director – ARPA Oversight Office
- Lisa Tuatoo, Director – ODAPM
- Michael McDonald, Deputy Director – Department of Commerce
- Andrew Berquist, IT Manager – Department of Treasury
- Barney Sene, IT Consultant – Governor’s Office

- Fa’amasino Galoia, IT Manager – Governor’s Office
- Fiafia Sunia, Communications Manager – Governor’s Office
- Grace Tulafono, IT Manager – ASCC
- Ray Tulafono, IT Manager – LBJ
- Isikeli Ongosia, IT Manager - ASPA

The Broadband Working Group will concentrate on (a) a core “initial” strategy in securing funding for specific areas on or before June 30, 2022; (b) develop a strategic roadmap of specific areas/projects to focus resources (both internal and external) during the planning, proposal and submission period, (c) ensure grant proposals are technically sound, robust, complete and has a competitive edge against proposals submitted by States and other Territories. The starting point will be to leverage the Broadband Strategy document that was recently issued by the DOC earlier this year. Many of the aforementioned individuals were part of this working group that provided feedback and helped develop this document.

There are critical submission dates and deadlines approaching in July for American Samoa to continue to be in the NTIA funding queue, and to receive initial “planning” funds. Approximately \$25M (minimum) is allocated to American Samoa of which, \$1.25M are specifically allocated for planning. This is just one example of initial funding for “planning” purposes. The BCWG will need to dedicate a minimum of 2-3 hours per week to develop strategies and initiate planning discussions.

Most of the planning and strategy discussions will and are based on data which we will need to pull from various sources such as DOC, ASPA, ASTCA and others as they pertain to GIS and demographics. Further discussions on how we move to GIS “physical address numbers” will also need to be actioned with and by DOC and others to make sure all broadband data submitted or utilized by ASTCA, ASPA, BlueSky and other agencies reference the same physical address (and GIS latitude/longitude) for both individual homes, businesses and government offices. This will ensure all submitted data to the Federal Government is consistent and accurate. These details will be discussed further during the first BCWG meeting on **Thursday, June 2, 2022 at 11:00am**. Zoom link will be emailed to each member.

This is a monumental opportunity for American Samoa to transform itself and implement a Broadband strategy and funding approach that will bring American Samoa to par or above other states such as California, Texas and Hawaii. We have an extraordinary amount of work and task ahead of us. We have to move fast and we have to get this right the first time.

I look to all department heads and directors to support this working group and other sub-groups that may be established as part of this initiative.



Jason Mitchell  
Acting Chief of Staff