

DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY EQUITY RECOGNITION (DOER) PROGRAM

Broadband connectivity is essential in our modern world, but it is not available to everyone. Without it, millions of Americans are getting left behind – unable to find and apply for jobs; stay in touch with loved ones; participate in community-building activities and civic government; start and run businesses; and pursue educational opportunities and connections to healthcare. It is clear that our long-standing digital divide has morphed into a monstrous new COVID-19 divide. For those who find themselves on the wrong side of a growing internet inequality, the lack of digital connectivity threatens individual dignity, educational progress, economic opportunity, and the core fabric of our shared democratic culture as Americans.

The Digital Opportunity Equity Recognition (DOER) Program, created by FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks, calls attention to organizations, institutions, companies and individuals who, through their actions, have made meaningful and measurable progress in eliminating internet inequality by helping to make quality affordable broadband service available to unserved or underserved communities.

The DOER Program will recognize projects that go above and beyond to address the unique connectivity needs of individuals and communities by promoting digital inclusion and expanding the availability of high-quality, affordable broadband access.

"The future has arrived — it's just not evenly distributed."

-WILLIAM GIBSON

Individuals and groups could be recognized for supporting efforts that result in service becoming newly available or affordable to a community, or through the use of broadband services to increase opportunities for communities to receive essential services or engage with our democracy. Service providers could be recognized for their direct efforts to extend high-quality connections beyond current service areas to reach unserved or underserved communities, or efforts to make existing service available at price levels that are affordable to price-sensitive communities for whom the cost of service has, to date, limited access.

DOER Program Criteria

Recognized recipients will have created innovative approaches that achieve demonstrable, quantifiable results in accomplishing some or all of the items below.

- Leading or supporting efforts to make new high-speed broadband service available to a definable geography or community (e.g., a town, neighborhood or village, croplands, housing development or group of multiple tenant buildings) where service was previously unavailable.
- Leading or supporting efforts to make affordable service available where it was previously not “affordable” in reference to average or prevalent income levels within a community.
- Partnering with local government or local/regional community organizations to provide access to broadband in a community that otherwise lacked access.
- Leading or supporting efforts specifically designed to use access to broadband to improve healthcare, education, public safety, and other essential services, or participate in civil society.

About Commissioner Geoffrey Starks

Geoffrey Starks believes that communications technology has the potential to be one of the most powerful forces on Earth for promoting equality and opportunity. To unlock that potential, however, all Americans must have access. From combatting internet inequality to advocating for diversity in employment, entrepreneurship, and media ownership, Commissioner Starks fights for policies designed to ensure that modern communications technology empowers every American. Before he was appointed Commissioner, Starks helped lead the FCC’s Enforcement Bureau, handling a wide variety of complex investigations. Prior to that at the Department of Justice, he served as a senior advisor to the Deputy Attorney General on a variety of domestic and international law enforcement matters, and received the Attorney General Award for Exceptional Service—the highest award a DOJ employee can receive.

