

**AGENDA**  
Eau Claire County  
Broadband Committee  
Thursday, August 17, 2023  
4:00 P.M.

**Location:** Eau Claire County Courthouse 721 Oxford Ave., Room #3312, Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54703

\*Event link below can be used to connect to meeting and interact (by the chair) from computer or through the WebEx Meeting smartphone app.

**Join WebEx Meeting:** <https://eauclairecounty.webex.com> Meeting ID: 2595 636 4555  
Password: xnT5eYnPF63

\*Meeting audio can be listened to using this Audio conference dial in information.

**Audio conference:** 1-415-655-0001 Access Code: 25956364555##

*A majority of the county board may be in attendance at this meeting, however, only members of the committee may take action on an agenda item.*

**For those wishing to make public comments, you must email Rod Eslinger at [rod.eslinger@eauclairecounty.gov](mailto:rod.eslinger@eauclairecounty.gov) at least 60 minutes prior to the meeting to the start of the meeting.**

\*Please mute personal devices upon entry.

1. Call to order and confirmation of meeting notice.
2. Roll Call
3. Public Comment (limit to 3 minutes per person)
4. Review/Approval of June 22, 2023, Committee Meeting Minutes – **Discussion - Action**
5. Internet Service Provider (ISP) Updates – **Discussion**
6. Fairchild Fiber Grant Project – **Update**
7. BEAD Local Planning Project - **Update**
8. Collective Impact Report – **Discussion - Action**
9. Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program – **Discussion - Action**
10. United Way Digital Equity & Inclusion Update – Amber Scharenbroch – **Discussion**
11. Next Steps and future meetings – **Discussion - Action**
  - a. Future Meeting date: September 21, 2023
12. Adjourn

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## MEETING MINUTES

Eau Claire County  
Broadband Committee  
Thursday, June 22, 2023  
4:00 P.M.

Courthouse – Room #3312  
721 Oxford Avenue – Eau Claire, WI

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Members Present: Todd Meyer, Don Mowry, Tim Laubach, Tom Lange, Mark Zuber, Collin Pomplun, Rozanne Traczek, Monica Obrycki.

Staff Present: Rodney J. Eslinger, Director of Planning and Development, Greg Dachel, Director of Information Systems, Dave Hayden, Broadband Consultant.

Others Present: Amber Scharenbroch, Mike Hill, Jeff Emery, DeAnna Westphal

1. Call to order and confirmation of meeting notice.

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m. and the meeting notice was confirmed.

2. Roll Call – Members present are noted above. A quorum was present.
3. Public Comment (limit to 3 minutes per person) – None
4. Review/Approval of April 20, 2023, Committee Meeting Minutes – **Discussion/Action**

The committee reviewed the meeting minutes of April 20, 2023. Mark Zuber motioned to approve the minutes with Tom Lange seconding the motion; motion carried on a voice vote with all in favor of approving the April 20, 2023 committee minutes as presented.

5. Internet Service Provider (ISP) Updates – **Discussion**

Jeff Emery with 24/7 Telecom updated the committee regarding the Town of Union project. He indicated that the previous projects take rate was 75% to 80% in the Towns of Brunswick and Drammen.

Mike Hill from Charter/Spectrum did not give an update.

DeAnna Westphal with Home Tech Innovation (Mosaic Communications) has expanded into the Chippewa Falls/Eau Claire markets offering full fiber options. They have had past relationships supporting recovery efforts with the tornado in Barron County.

No other internet service providers (ISPs) were present.

6. Town of Union Release of 5- % ARPA Match Funds – **Discussion - Funds**

Clerk Eslinger provide a brief update on the Town of Brunswick request for County’s ARPA Match Funds.

Mark Zuber motioned to approve the Town of Union Brunswick release of 50% ARPA Funds (\$137,000) as requested with Tom Lange seconding the motion; motion carried on a voice vote with all in favor of the motion.

7. Spectrum/Charter ARPA Fund Request (Town of Clear Creek) – **Discussion – Action**

Mike Hill representing Spectrum/Charter, clarified the request for the committee. He said Spectrum is willing to extend fiber to 8 locations in the Town of Clear as these properties are outside of the RDOF area and Tri County Communication has no plans to serve them.

Mark Zuber motioned to approve the Spectrum/Charter request for ARPA Funds (\$11,115) to extend fiber to 8 locations in the Town of Clear with Don Mowry seconding the motion; motion carried on a voice vote with all in favor of the motion.

8. BEAD Local Planning Project – Update:

Clerk Eslinger and Dave Hayden gave an update of the BEAD project. No action taken.

9. WISER (Wisconsin Internet Self Report) - **Discussion**

Clear Eslinger gave an update on the WISER survey and process. The survey will be used to gather data for broadband access, affordability and adoption. The survey is being offered by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin – Wisconsin Broadband Office, who partnered with Boston Consulting Group. He handed out WISER flyers to several high traffic departments within Government Center and asked the committee to take the flyer and distribute them across the county. The survey runs through July 14<sup>th</sup>. No action taken.

10. United Way Update – Amber Scharenbroch – **Discussion**

Amber Scharenbroch, Community Impact Director with United Way indicated that the United Way was awarded a \$10,000 from the Pablo Foundation that will help funding devices in the community. She continues to have community conversations to identify support funds. It was noted the Eau Claire YMCA and the Senior Centers could host fairs.

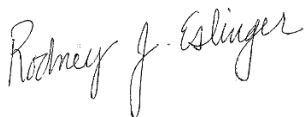
11. Next Steps and future meetings

- a. August 17, 2023

12. Adjourn

Adjourn Action: Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 5:23 p.m.

Respectively submitted by,



Rodney J. Eslinger  
Broadband Committee Clerk  
Director of Planning and Development



# COLLECTIVE IMPACT REPORT

July 2022 - June 2023



THE CENTER FOR DIGITAL EQUITY is a collaboration  
of public, private, and resident partners  
housed at Queens University of Charlotte



## CENTER FOR DIGITAL EQUITY COLLECTIVE IMPACT REPORT

# CONTENT



### CELEBRATION

Happy recipients at an after-school program with the Learning Help Centers of Charlotte.



**MISSION STATEMENT** The Center for Digital Equity's (CDE) mission is to make Mecklenburg County the most digitally equitable community in America.



**VISION** The Center for Digital Equity is the backbone organization for a collective impact strategy bringing together residents, and public and private sector partners to co-create solutions allowing every resident the opportunity to thrive in our modern culture.



**HISTORY** The Center for Digital Equity is an evolution of two key community initiatives, Digital Charlotte and the Charlotte Digital Inclusion Alliance, and is housed at Queens University of Charlotte.

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# Executive Summary

**A**s we all know, the pandemic highlighted the need for communities worldwide to strive for a more digitally equitable society. But unfortunately, the lack of internet access and adoption, a working device, and basic computer literacy skills place our residents at a disadvantage and prevent them from thriving in our modern culture.

## WHERE WE STARTED

The Center for Digital Equity (CDE), is the result of merging the existing digital equity work at Queens University of Charlotte, known as Digital Charlotte with a border community effort known as the Charlotte Digital Inclusion Alliance.

Since 2015, a coalition of interested parties began convening monthly to advance digital equity work. In 2017 this coalition produced North Carolina's first community-based digital equity playbook. The playbook highlighted existing opportunities and brought to light the opportunities digital equity provides. Supported by an endowment from the Knight Foundation, the CDE has been actively working to advance digital equity in our community for over six years.

Even with all that effort, we know there is more work to be done and in a more coordinated fashion. Housed at Queens, the CDE is a backbone organization for a collective impact strategy focused on making Mecklenburg County the most digitally equitable community in America. The CDE brings together residents, and public and private-sector partners to co-create solutions aimed at this goal.

The CDE is guided by a community council of residents and the aforementioned partners who are organized across five workstreams:

1. Policy, Advocacy, and Ecosystem Development
2. Data, Research, and Program Measurement
3. Device and Connectivity
4. Digital Literacy and Skilling
5. Digital Navigation and Technical Support

An advisory board of public and private-sector leaders helps ensure alignment across our community's anchor institutions.

## WHERE WE ARE NOW

This year, the CDE was named the lead partner for the digital divide priority focus area for the Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative (MREI). Established to advance Charlotte to the forefront of American cities working to achieve racial equity, the MREI seeks to produce equitable access, opportunities, and outcomes for Charlotte's communities of color. Digital equity is a cornerstone of this work. The MREI has connected \$20 million in private sector-funding to develop the CDE's delivery of digital inclusion resources to the community.

With historic federal investments in digital equity taking shape, there is no better time to reorganize, galvanize, and engage our community of partners. With this collective impact approach, the end goal is as important as how we get to it. Our growing team and Community Council are committed to engaging every facet of this work with an eye toward diversity, equity and inclusion.

Becoming the most digitally equitable community in America is within reach!

### IMPACT REPORT SECTION LEGEND

- Co-created Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
- Impact Stories



**COLLABORATION**

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris and N.C. Governor Roy Cooper, FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel speak with CDE Team and community member about the Affordable Connectivity Program.

**DEVICE AND CONNECTIVITY**

# PAVING THE PATH TO CONNECTIVITY

## **KPI:** Supporting Internet adoption for at least 10,000 households

Internet Service Provider (ISP) adoption is the foundation of digital connectivity. Our distribution events helped generate a three percent increase in internet service adoption countywide. One of our major goals was to support internet adoption for 10,000 Mecklenburg County households. We exceeded this goal, raising awareness for the program among 13,000 residents.

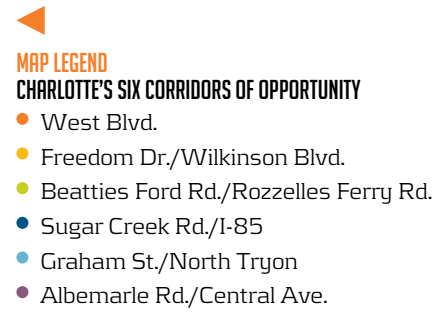
Through the Your Home Your Internet grant with INLIVIAN (formerly the Charlotte Housing Authority), we were given access to Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), a platform that administers the ACP and enables us to view the backend of ACP enrollment. This insight has proven

invaluable and has helped us develop new strategies to improve the quality and usefulness of the information we collect. We have implemented follow-up phone calls after distribution events to determine if residents completed the application and to offer assistance with any challenges they might face. Demographic information regarding age, race/ethnicity, and gender identity is also collected to help pinpoint any trends that could further impede the adoption process.

Trusted partners like Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, E2D, and Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) collaborated with the CDE to further raise awareness for the program. The

CDE also partnered with national non-profit, EducationSuperHighway to increase awareness of the ACP throughout Mecklenburg County and to train Digital Navigators and other partner organizations. These efforts will be carried out in close collaboration with the communities the CDE serves, with a particular focus on Charlotte's six Corridors of Opportunity:

- Graham Street / North Tryon
- Sugar Creek Road / I-85
- Albemarle Road / Central Avenue
- Beatties Ford Road / Rozzelles Ferry Road
- West Boulevard
- Freedom Drive / Wilkinson Boulevard



Federal census data shines a light on the digital landscape of Charlotte, revealing the peaks and valleys of connectivity. The most connected areas of the community boast connection rates of 91 percent. But that rate falls below 80 percent for residents of most of the corridors — and even lower than the city-wide average of 85 percent. This is why our partnership with the City of Charlotte is so vital. Specifically, our Digital Navigators' holistic approach to supporting programs like Access Charlotte helps bring digital connectivity and all its benefits to thousands of Charlotte households.

# THEIR OWN DEVICES

## KPI: Supporting the distribution of 20,000 laptops

Collectively our partners, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and E2D, distributed over 27,000 laptops between July 2022 and June 2023 exceeding our initial goal of 20,000 devices. In addition to providing laptops, these distribution events showcased the CDE's Digital Navigator service.

Real-time support and access to vital resources, empowered residents to maximize the potential of their new devices. This holistic approach to serving the community is vital to our mission.

**Charlotte Mecklenburg Library received funding from the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) to purchase and distribute 20,000 laptops.**





**INCLUSIVE**  
CDE team members provide Charlotte residents in-person support.

#### IMPACT STORY

# LEVELING THE DIGITAL PLAYING FIELD

## Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Connects the Community with Free Laptops

**T**he Center for Digital Equity has played an integral role in developing and fulfilling like-minded partnership missions. Two collaborative efforts include the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and E2D—a non-profit organization providing residents with low and no-cost laptops.

Emery Ortiz, chief strategy and innovation officer with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, and Pat Millen, co-founder and president of E2D, understand the importance of digital equity and have been working diligently to address the community's need for functional devices.

#### WHO IS DOING THE WORK?

The Library currently allows residents to borrow hotspots and Google Chromebooks, but they wanted to do more. Joining forces with E2D and the CDE was the first step.

Millen started E2D in 2013 when his 12-year-old daughter, Franny began voicing concerns about student access. Now, the organization has served over 30,000 families and provided resources at 167 schools in Charlotte Mecklenburg County.

#### SOLVING THE PROBLEM

There are many reasons why people need devices with employment, healthcare, education, and digital literacy being the biggest. Ortiz explains how these four areas impact residents.

“So many jobs moved to either all remote or at least partial remote options, and if you do not have devices and knowledge on how to navigate that field it can limit your opportunities.”

Community laptop distribution has been an effective way to provide devices to residents who need them.

Additionally, Ortiz observed how the pandemic exposed the need for digital equity, “After COVID, almost everything transitioned online. Whether or not it was a predominately online industry before, like banking. Everything took a hard shift,” she said. “The school system also had to migrate to online learning. Students without devices at home fell behind in their curriculums”.

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Library has long recognized the need for digital equity Ortiz explained. “What the library has always aimed to do is increase the amount of opportunities that anyone can have in the community regardless of socioeconomic background. Regardless of where in the city you live, The Library just really wants to make those opportunities available.”

E2D has adopted a similar, all-inclusive approach. “We do pretty good marketing of our products. One hundred percent of the people that are getting a computer from us are by definition low income,” Millen said. However, he feels it’s essential to meet residents where they are. “We used to go directly to area high schools and market to school-age families (in Charlotte Mecklenburg County). Now we don’t care. If you have a need, we want to fulfill it.”

Beyond the obvious need for devices, Millen feels everyone should have access to information. “People having the ability to seek information on their terms is very important.”

### FULLFILLING THE NEED

While the library was awarded an \$8 million grant from the MeckTech Computer Program, the funds only covered the cost of devices. The CDE stepped in and provided additional funding to help with implementation, supplies, and volunteers on distribution days. From September 2022 to June 2023, the library distributed 20,000 devices. The 11 distribution days were held at Avidxchange – a central location for residents between Uptown Charlotte and the North End area.

Recipients were required to be at least 18 and show proof of residency in Mecklenburg County. The CDE was on site to help residents sign up for The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), a federal program providing free or discounted internet.

Ortiz said the program has been overwhelmingly positive for residents. “We have received so much positive feedback from laptop recipients. So many of them were senior citizens without experience owning technology.”

E2D’s partnership with the CDE has helped streamline their efforts. “When we paired people with computers, we also tried to get them access to digital skilling, but as time moved on the CDE became more engaged and took over most of this aspect.”

### THE FUTURE OF THE DEVICE DIVIDE

As the mission continues, thoughts about the future of technology and resident needs are at the forefront of the CML and E2D’s plans. “There is no finish line,” Ortiz said. “It is always progressing and constantly advancing.”

Ortiz said CML will continue to champion the community’s need for digital skilling. “The public library system hopes to be a strong digital literacy component for all. Since we have 21 locations and a dedicated workforce, we want to help teach and get people comfortable with technology.”

She credits collaborations for success, “With the great work the CDE is doing, and our great corporate partners in Charlotte, funding and opportunities for refurbishing devices will be plentiful.”

Millen is on the other end of the spectrum. “There will be no need for E2D in a few years because everyone will have access to a fully functioning computer.” Like Ortiz, Millen credits the diligent work of his organization and CDE’s collective mission. Because of partnerships like these, digital equity is within reach.

**“So many jobs moved to either all remote or at least partial remote options, and if you do not have devices and knowledge on how to navigate that field it can limit your opportunities.” — Emery Ortiz**

## INNOVATION

Community Council member leads ideation session at TechRising Summit 2023.

## DIGITAL NAVIGATION AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

# THE JOURNEY OF 1,000 STEPS BEGINS — WITH A MAP

## KPI: Development of the Journey Map

The pathway to digital inclusion is anything but straight and obstacle free. Visualizing the desired end result at the beginning can help manage issues as they arise. This proactive approach to problem solving has led to an exciting new project — the creation of a journey map. A journey map is a user experience (UX) document that details, or maps, the necessary steps toward accomplishing a goal.

We created a special task force from our Community Council to work on this project. The Community Council is a

mix of residents and partners dedicated to our mission, and we are proud of this alliance. The task force includes: Byron McClendon from Ernst & Young, Renee Carter from PerScholas, Kimberly Edmonds, William McNeely from DoGreater, Chantez Neymoss of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and CDE Program Directors Ameera Bratholomew and Amy Crippen.

Led by Barings Head of Client Experience Strategy Enablement, Sarah Dudley, the team has already begun work on this audacious task. Ernst & Young spearheaded the development of eight personas or fictional target users who mimic the needs and desires of the true target audience. These personas will be

used to understand the consumer better and will help inform design decisions throughout the project. We are currently seeking a UX designer to develop the first version of an interactive, web-based version of the journey map and expect this task to be completed by the second quarter of fiscal year 2023-2024.

This is a shining example of the level of commitment our corporate partners have for our shared goal of making Charlotte the most digitally equitable community in the nation.



# THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

## KPI: Developing SLA and OLA between key service partners

Having clearly defined, public-facing agreements with our partners is essential to maximizing favorable outcomes for our constituents and meeting or exceeding the goals we set. We have made progress in defining our Service-Level Agreements (SLA), which govern how the CDE engages with community members and individuals. Transparency and trustworthiness are crucial in our dealings with the community, and responsiveness

to our customer base is key. We aim to respond to anyone who contacts us within 48 hours, setting expectations for caring and accessibility from the start. Consumer-friendly automation and a trackable ticketing system are also under consideration.

An Operating-Level Agreement (OLA) sets expectations for business partnerships. Certain parameters

outline the existing alliance between CDE and the City of Charlotte. We are now working to create the same level of expectations and agreements with Spectrum, a third party, to our agreement with the City. The City currently funds two Digital Navigators dedicated to city initiatives – most notably, Access Charlotte, a program that provides no-cost internet service for a certain number of properties.







**TRUST**

A Digital Navigator guides a Charlotte Resident through the Affordable Connectivity Program application.

DIGITAL NAVIGATION AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

# THE TICKET TO EQUITY

## KPI: Outreach to increase digital navigator ticket volume

Digital Navigators help community members navigate the pathways to digital inclusion. They assist with tasks like signing up for affordable home internet service, purchasing affordable devices, addressing basic connectivity issues and learning new digital skills. Our staff of Digital Navigators was on hand at many events to assist recipients and to create awareness for our Digital Navigator program. Since the fall of 2022, we have ensured the presence of Digital Navigators at all in-person events. E2D has also utilized Digital Navigators at their distribution events.

In 2022 our Digital Navigators responded to 614 tickets for various service requests. Remarkably, ticket volume

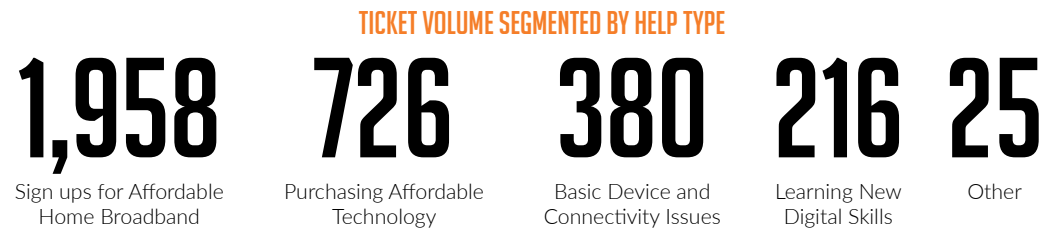
increased to 3,050 tickets in 2023. The largest spikes in activity centered around our grassroots collaboration with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). In April 2023, students took flyers advertising the program home with their report cards. As a result, we were able to help more than 400 eligible families access high-speed internet service through the ACP. About 71,000 CMS students' families were automatically eligible for the program. Over 40 percent of those served were Spanish-speaking households.

Partners like CMS help increase visibility and awareness for the CDE and create an organic swell in demand for our services. These relationships are our most valuable

asset. Continuing to leverage this exposure to expand our influence will be critical to our ongoing success.

Digital Navigators are our feet on the ground, our community agents who represent CDE in the community and help grow awareness for our mission. We knew bolstering our corps of Digital Navigators would be essential to continuing this positive trajectory, and we committed to expanding personnel in this area. Starting with two, part-time Digital Navigators, we hired two more who are funded by our contract with The City of Charlotte. These individuals will focus on city initiatives and the ACP through third-party partner Spectrum.

## CDE DIGITAL NAVIGATOR FY23 NUMBERS



We now have four, full-time Digital Navigators (including the Access Charlotte Digital Navigators), one part-time Digital Navigator manager, and three part-time Digital Navigators from City Startup Labs’ entrepreneurship program, for a total of eight Digital Navigators.

The Your Home Your Internet grant with INLIVIAN will allow the CDE to recruit five additional part-time Digital Navigators. The success of the CMS campaign generated an uptick in service requests which are managed by the Digital Navigators from City Startup Labs.

On June 18, 2022, the CDE and its Community Council activated the first phase of our corridor innovation

campaigns in collaboration with the North End Community Coalition (NECC). This was the first in a series of county-wide resident engagement events. These events were designed to bring available resources directly to residents while also creating engagement opportunities for residents to co-create additional solutions.

At this time, we also implemented the Voice of the Citizen Survey sent to those served by CDE within the year. However, the federal government’s Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (IIJA) allocated significant funding for digital equity initiatives. One of the components of this legislation involved the creation of a

state-level digital equity plan. As a result, North Carolina created its own survey. To avoid duplicating efforts, CDE created a new survey to assess the efficacy of the services we provided to our customers. Issued at the close of every single ticket handled by our Digital Navigators, feedback at this granular level is needed to improve our everyday interactions with those we serve.





PERSONALIZED  
Digital navigation services  
tailored to resident needs

# COMMUNITY IMPACT WITH PROVEN RESULTS

## IMPACT STORY

### Charlotte Resident Receives Laptop for Career Advancement

**W**hile it may seem that every home has access to digital devices, many residents still lack this valuable resource. This void poses socioeconomic challenges for Charlotte-area residents related to employment, education, and healthcare.

Charlotte resident and mother of three, Tamika Okelly, shares how receiving a laptop through The Center For Digital Equity's community efforts and partnerships has advanced her professional development.

#### RECOGNIZING THE NEED

The most effective way to advance your career is through education, and many educational classes are now remote. Okelly wanted to take a few Microsoft Office courses offered by Goodwill, but she had one big problem. "The need was I could not afford to purchase one (a laptop). At the time, I couldn't afford to buy one from Goodwill for a couple of hundred dollars," Okelly said.

Although she is no stranger to computers, she knew she needed a refresh. "I was in the IT field when I went to college, but life happened, and I hadn't touched a computer or remembered anything," said Okelly. "I just wanted to get back to working with computers. It was important to take Office suite because things have changed."

#### CONNECTING TO RESOURCES

Earlier this year, Okelly began researching ways to get a laptop. She had previously used her local library's computer lab but needed something more accessible and permanent. During a Google search for affordable laptops, she found the Center for Digital Equity. Okelly said she requested a device and was contacted by Jarvis Miller, a Digital Navigator Manager with the CDE. Miller has been in his role for a year. "The Digital Navigator Service includes assisting community members in receiving affordable home internet service and affordable internet-capable devices," he explained.

In addition to these services, devices are free of charge. Digital coaching and technical support are also provided.

After a brief screening for income, address, and need, Okelly received a laptop in about a month. Since receiving her computer in April, she has completed her online courses and landed a job as data entry specialist. The CDE also noted her special request for a touchscreen device due to her struggles with arthritis.

#### LOOKING AHEAD

Residents need to know these resources are available because there are benefits to having your very own device. Okelly explained why this is important. "A few times I have been to the public library and used the computer. You reserve it, and there is a time limit because another person has booked it. With your own device, You can be on there for ten minutes or ten hours."

Although digital life moves fast, Okelly feels confident with where she is today. Sharing her thoughts on the future, she said, "Technology will be the standard."

She already has plans to continue her digital education, "In August, I am going to take another Excel class so I can get certification through Microsoft at the mastery level." She advises anyone needing a device to contact the CDE, "They would not regret it."

Miller believes the advancement of technology will help level the playing field. "The need for digital literacy classes will increase. Students must have computers, and technology is used throughout the classroom," he said. "Young adults are getting the training needed to use devices properly."

However, Miller feels accessing digital solutions will be difficult for some. "Access to the internet and devices will decrease because living costs are growing drastically," he said. "Families are barely able to afford mortgages and utilities, so it will be problematic to afford devices that must be replaced every other year."

Access to digital resources, Miller says, is a must, "From education to communicating with friends, just about everything is digital now. Because so much is done online everyone must have access, affordability, and skills development to function in our society adequately."

This level of transparency and accountability is one of our core values. Collective impact. Collective accountability.

# MINING THE DATA AND MINDING THE GAPS

## KPI: Corralling current data and identifying areas for improvement

Measuring our progress is critical. We collaborated with the City of Charlotte to initiate a system to corral the data as it relates to our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The first iteration of this effort was an ArcGIS story map. This interactive, web-based document tells the story of our progress through data via an interactive, digital interface. Information will be updated every six months.

We have also revised our data collection process to work in tandem with customer management solution tool, HubSpot. This effort will allow us to transfer what we have learned about our customers' needs into action items crafted to address them. We are also working with a private vendor to create an interactive dashboard which will be fed by data from the story map.

These efforts will help us determine where gaps in service exist. For example, many residents do not have access to reliable transportation, so establishing additional locations for digital literacy classes along Charlotte's public transportation routes could be helpful. The interplay between the map and dashboard could help pinpoint other issues making our services more accessible to our customers.

During the last quarter of fiscal year 2023, we began collecting digital equity data across the ecosystem with four key partners: Per Scholas, E2D, The Library and Goodwill. During this pilot venture, we vetted the efforts of these partners against the needs of the community in an attempt to identify service gaps or to highlight progress. The reports generated will be readily accessible to any interested party. This level of transparency and accountability is one of our core values. Collective impact. Collective accountability.

We will also implement a data management/governance process, which will clearly define guidelines for partners sharing data with CDE. Every month partners will submit a form with attention given to potentially sensitive issues like sharing data publicly and identifying preferred methods of data sharing and transfer.





**LISTENING**  
Hearing directly from residents helps inform the strategy.



**CO-CREATE**

Public and private-sector partners create the next iteration of digital equity at the TechRising Summit 2023.

**DIGITAL LITERACY AND SKILLING**

# BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

## **KPI:** Increase use of Northstar for baseline assessment

Northstar Digital Literacy is a learning management system developed to help individuals learn and assess computer skills they need to work, learn and fully participate in today's fast-paced, tech-based society. Consisting of online, self-paced modules on various digital literacy topics, anyone can take an assessment for free.

We wanted to utilize this tool in our community and to increase usage among consumers. Proudly, we exceeded this goal increasing usage by 145 percent among organizations affiliated with our partners. We also added seven new partner organizations including: Renaissance West Community Initiative,

Freedom Communities, Camino, Center for Community Transitions, Beatties Ford Road Vocational Trade Center, Care Ring, First Mt Calvary Baptist Church.

The Camino Center will play an integral role in increasing digital literacy among Mecklenburg County's Latino population. Currently, there is a pending request for funding to help purchase devices for the center.

Three of the seven new organizations are already reporting data around the use of Northstar. Most notably, we trained Charlotte Rescue Mission staff to use Northstar, which enabled them to host learning and informational

sessions and to provide open hours for interested parties to ask questions. Participants are granted access to work on the assessments of their choice at home using self-paced modules. Ideally, we'd like to establish Northstar as a baseline. Its utilization of basic assessment modules is the perfect entry point for our customers.

# PLOTTING THE COURSE

**KPI:** Develop version one of a digital literacy journey map

We will create a journey map to underscore the importance of digital literacy. We have created three personas and are currently seeking a User Experience (UX) designer to create an interactive dashboard by the first quarter of the next fiscal year. The journey map will create an image of the process of working with CDE from start to finish. For example, if a customer with no computer experience wants to learn how to code, the journey map would create an image — from start to finish — of all the steps and resources within the ecosystem they needed to help them reach their goal. It could look something like this:

1. **CONNECT:** Customer receives a device at a CDE-sponsored event
2. **LEARN:** A Digital Navigator helps the customer locate and a computer literacy course at the Library
3. **FOCUS:** Customer takes a coding class at Per Scholas
4. **IMPLEMENT:** Customer starts an internship with a local organization



## COMMUNITY

Community Council partners bring thought leadership.

# FROM LEARNING TO LEVERAGING

**KPI:** Hours of digital literacy sessions

A functional device is a powerful tool, and an essential one along the path to digital equity.

Yet, without basic digital literacy skills, its full potential can never be realized. Through partner-sponsored events, we helped 8,294 individuals take advantage of digital literacy sessions across the CDE ecosystem. Partners like the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library,

Per Scholas, and Goodwill also hosted Northstar sessions. Additionally, through its DigiLit program, The Library offered basic skills and workplace classes.





**EQUITY**

CDE staff leverages resources at hand to provide a meaningful experience.

## IMPACT STORY

# DIGITAL LITERACY IN THE CLASSROOM

## A Fresh Start: Center For Digital Equity Provides Support to Charlotte Rescue Mission

Charlotte Rescue Mission (CRM), is a non-profit focused on substance abuse recovery for men and women. Some of the mission's goals include helping residents find employment or return to school. Through a recent partnership with Charlotte Works and the Center for Digital Equity, CRM has implemented a digital literacy program designed to help residents learn vital skills to aid them on the road to recovery.

These collaborative efforts have benefited residents who come to CRM seeking a new beginning. "They come in and say, 'I have this problem and want to change,'" said Resource Room Manager Terry Wilder.

### MEETING RESIDENTS WHERE THEY ARE

The digital literacy program began before Wilder joined CRM in January, but she understands how important this additional resource is to the people they serve. "My part is to get them ready to go out in the world in different areas, including digital literacy."

Although residents range in age from 18 to 70, the need for digital literacy is a common issue. For most residents this deficit is due to a lack of exposure. "Even if they are young, they might have been in a house with drug addiction. Once addiction kicks in, that is all they care about at that moment," Wilder explained.

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

CRM operates a four-and-a-half-month program to help residents get back on their feet. The last month of the program is dedicated to the digital literacy program. Some areas covered include: social media footprints, telehealth, understanding online classes, and Microsoft Word and Excel.

Each resident must pass 15 different areas to complete the program. They also receive a laptop from E2D, a non-profit organization that provides digital devices to Charlotte-area residents who need them.

Although the digital literacy program is only for residents, Wilder took her support efforts to the next level by completing the course herself. She happily shares her recent experience with two residents. "I had two ladies that shine out in my head. They knew nothing about

computers, and one student couldn't even understand how a mouse works. She could operate it when she was done."

So far, Wilder has had about 50 women go through the mandatory program — and each of them completed the course.

### A SECOND CHANCE

When thinking about the residents' future, Wilder is hopeful their alliance with the CDE will continue to help. "I like the opportunity the students have for digital literacy classes. It's awesome because some have been on the streets for years."

Wilder said these resources give residents the kind of confidence that comes from knowing you have educated yourself. "There are people out there that may try and knock them down because they know they are in recovery. Just because of that fact, it's just another thing that builds their confidence."



**INTEGRITY**

FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks, N.C. Governor Roy Cooper, Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles and partners work to serve our community.

**POLICY, ADVOCACY, AND ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT**

# A PLAN OF ACTION

## **KPI:** Developing a policy and advocacy agenda

Initially designed to fund highway and transit projects, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was amended to provide funding for broadband access in November 2021. Enacted by the 117th United States Congress, the IIJA is part of the foundation of the CDE's development of a policy and advocacy agenda. We reviewed federal and state-funding requirements to ensure that our plan fully considered the nine populations identified and supported by the IIJA. We developed a listening session format to replicate a policy agenda process and to aid us in

establishing a sustainable tool for setting priorities each year. We are developing, documenting and implementing this process to ultimately draft a robust policy and advocacy agenda.

An effective policy and advocacy agenda hinges on receiving feedback from each of the nine covered IIJA populations. Since we don't have ready access to these groups, we partnered with organizations that serve these communities. These organizations form the Digital Equity Champion Cohort and represent their populations at

listening sessions as part of a six-month, contractual collaborative process. In return, each organization receives a stipend from CDE, which covers the time/travel of individuals coming to meetings, and also funds efforts to replicate events or surveys tailored for their populations. It also covers whatever resources the organization might need to plan and execute events, surveys, etc.

# PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY

## **KPI:** Supporting Recruitment and Onboarding of new partners/residents

Any resident of Mecklenburg County committed to helping make this the most digitally equitable community in America can be a resident partner as outlined by our Community Council charter. We recognize the power in working closely with those we serve and met our goal of installing 25 resident partners out of 59 overall partners.

Official partners must submit a partnership agreement. At the start of 2022 we created a governance document to manage these agreements.

Residential and organizational partners have different agreements to manage their disparate needs and the transfer of information with CDE. Community Council meetings are open to anyone, but only those who submit a partnership agreement can vote on items and influence ecosystem objectives.

## CDE FY23 PRESS

PIECES OF COVERAGE

37

ESTIMATED VIEWS\*

138K

AUDIENCE\*

53M

# BETTER COMMUNICATION. BETTER RELATIONSHIPS.

## **KPI:** Supporting Communication efforts related to CDE primary activity

We implemented a calendar of events and created event categories for any partner, organization, or community member to add their events and receive a level of support from CDE. For example, if a local church is hosting a digital literacy class, they can add it to the calendar and receive Digital Navigator support for the event. This public-facing calendar fosters a two-way stream of communication between CDE, our

partners and the community. We also began distributing a monthly newsletter. Previously, we would provide an agenda before each community council meeting. Based on feedback and requests for additional information, we expanded the agenda into a newsletter. Topics covered ranged from onboarding of new employees, CDE events, to state and federal updates.

Growing our volunteer corps was also an important part of our community outreach efforts. Within the past year, we increased the number of volunteers from 154 to 319. Advisory Board Member, Ernst & Young, helped in this effort by providing a large number of volunteers for many of the CDE's events.



#### TRANSPARENCY

TechRising Summit helps inform best practices.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

# FUELING PROGRESS

## Pushing the needle toward digital equity takes a collective effort.

We work with community partners every day to deliver solutions that help individuals compete and thrive in today's fast-paced, tech-driven society. But our contributions aren't always obvious. Often, we are the engine that powers the efforts of our community partners, humming quietly under the hood, funding initiatives and sponsoring events — driving home all the things that make it happen.

#### Addressed staffing needs to improve our ability to serve the community

- Hired two full-time Digital Navigators
- Hired one part-time Digital Navigator manager

#### Developed a marketing campaign publicly announcing CDE, including a logo revamp.

- Generated general interest and awareness for the CDE and Digital Navigators by sharing the brand story and the stories of partners, residents, and the Community Council
- Initiated a logo revamp to showcase the new brand identity.

#### Initiated an organization-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy to ensure our organizational culture, policies and practices were reflected.

Some early findings include:

- Drafted our organizational values to guide the development of our culture and work
- Promoted data disaggregation in our collection and interpretation to inform our work
- Emphasized learning with respect to cultural competency among

organizational leadership, staff and Community Council leadership

#### Appointed an official advisory board and are in the last stages of establishing governance.

*The members of the advisory board are:*

Reenie Askew  
 Leslie Johnson  
 Brad B. Wallace  
 Blair Stanford  
 Rob Phocas  
 Charles Thomas  
 Rich Majerus  
 Zachary White  
 Candace Salmon-Hosey  
 Andrew Bowen  
 Kenneth Kennedy  
 Emery Ortiz  
 Terik Tidwell  
 Crawford Pounds  
 Michael E. Giles  
 Pat Millen  
 Amy Huffman

#### Created baseline governance for the Community Council, putting a charter in place and establishing partnership agreements.

# FY2023 FINANCIALS

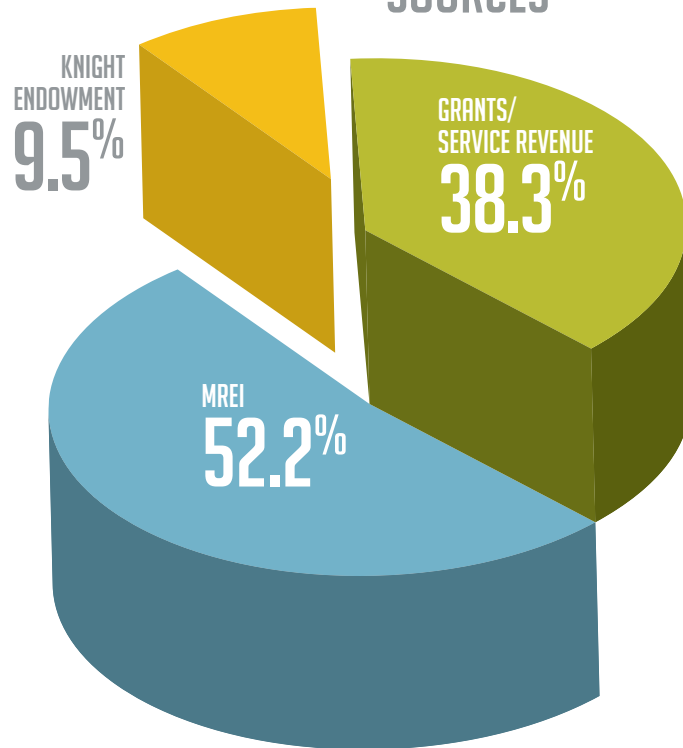
The Knight Foundation endowment, the CDE's original funding source, supports the basics of the organization's structure including staff development and personnel expenses for leadership.

**In FY2023 grants/service revenue includes the following:**

- The North Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Office to design, develop, and deploy **digital health literacy** in coal-impacted counties
- The City of Charlotte to support the Access Charlotte program through **Digital Navigator** service including the funding of two full-time digital navigators. The City was the first to invest in the development of one of the nation's first countywide digital navigator programs with the CDE (under previous organization name).
- CharlotteWorks to support an ongoing **digital literacy** collaboration with Charlotte Rescue Mission. Approximately \$30,000 of this funding was utilized to purchase devices for participants through our partner E2D.
- North End Community Coalition to support a year of connectivity for devices and **digital literacy** sessions funded by Knight Foundation.
- Your Home Your Internet federal grant through INLIVIAN to support

a campaign around the Affordable **Connectivity** Program through the Digital Navigator service including the funding of five part-time digital navigators to be onboarded in FY2024.

## CDE FUNDING SOURCES



**Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative (MREI)**

FY2023 was the first year the CDE received MREI funding. This funding allowed CDE as the lead agency of the initiative's digital equity pillar, to develop and implement foundational components that will continue to support the scaling of a sustainable digital equity framework. Nearly half of this year's funding was allocated to community-driven initiatives (referred to as corridor innovation



## HIGHLIGHTS OF CORRIDOR INNOVATION FUNDING FOR FY2023

MeckTech	33%
Policy work ( <i>consultant, organization stipends/other incentives</i> )	19%
Community Council Technical upskilling around broadband and digital equity ( <i>ILSR in progress to be completed FY2024</i> )	11%
Batteries for E2D laptops	8%
Data management	7%
Digital Literacy Collaborations	4%

funding). Approximately 75 percent of that portion of the investment was utilized through the CDE's Community Council.

Ideas that aligned with the Key Performance Indicators and created opportunities across the ecosystem were co-created and funded. Initiatives supported with this part of the investment include the Library's MeckTech (laptop distribution) program, a community-centric plan to inform policy and advocacy agenda development processes, batteries for approximately 800 E2D laptops, and various "train the trainer" digital literacy collaborations.

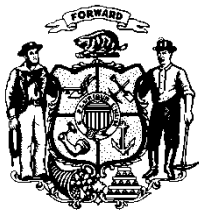
The rest of the funding ensured the organization's structure could support the

execution of the co-created initiatives. This included the addition of four full-time and five part-time team members. In addition, operational support items like HubSpot (customer management system used for communications and Digital Navigator service), community engagement materials, PR and marketing vendors, and staff development comprised about nine percent of MREI's total FY2023 investment.

### Future revenue sources

Through IJJA and North Carolina's state-sponsored digital equity efforts, there are several upcoming opportunities for funding. Promising opportunities include: a possible \$500,000 from the

NC Division of Aging, and competitive grants and funding to support the implementation of the state's digital equity plan. Although many of the exact dollar amounts are unknown, part of our FY2024 planning includes creating a funding strategy with a field expert that will help us successfully approach some of the competitive opportunities as well as identify possibilities for more permanent and sustainable funding sources.



# Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Rebecca Cameron Valcq, Chairperson  
 Tyler Huebner, Commissioner  
 Summer Strand, Commissioner

4822 Madison Yards Way  
 P.O. Box 7854  
 Madison, WI 53707-7854

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin  
 RECEIVED: 8/14/2023 11:56:21 AM

August 14, 2023

To: Persons Interested in the Broadband Grant Programs

Re: Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure  
 Grant Program

5-CPF-2023

Announcement Opening the Grant Cycle

The Public Service Commission (Commission) is pleased to announce that it is now accepting applications for Capital Projects Fund (CPF) Broadband Infrastructure Program, which will make available \$42 million for deployment of broadband infrastructure in areas lacking access to wireline service of 100 Megabits per second (Mbps) download and 20 Mbps upload. Application instructions are now available on the [Capital Projects Broadband Infrastructure webpage](#).

Funding is derived from the U.S. Department of Treasury's Capital Projects Fund and is subject to different program guidance and compliance and reporting requirements than previous broadband grant rounds. The COVID-19 public health emergency highlighted shortcomings in U.S. infrastructure and revealed the importance of access to high-quality internet for work, education, and health monitoring. The Program will prioritize funding to serve communities that were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to be at higher risk for future disaster due to lack of access to critical services such as broadband. CPF Infrastructure Grants will also prioritize affordability for customers.

CPF Infrastructure Grants will be evaluated by a screening panel and staff using a scoring rubric included in the grant instructions. Scoring is developed consistent with the priority criteria laid out in federal guidance. Commissioners are not bound by the scoring criteria or resulting merit list, which will be for advisory purposes only. The Commissioners, as the finder of fact and decision makers, are charged with evaluating all available information and applying any relevant statutory and federal criteria to reach well-reasoned decisions.

Beginning with this grant round, applicants are **required** to submit broadband serviceable location fabric (BSLF) data for each eligible location in their proposed project. BSLF data is available through licensing with CostQuest Associates. The site to request a Tier D license is: <https://apps.costquest.com/NTIArequest/>. The email address to request support is [ifasupport@costquest.com](mailto:ifasupport@costquest.com). **Prospective applicants should submit the request for a license at least 45 days (September 23) in advance of the application due date.**

Applicants are required to submit applications using the [PSC Grants System](#). Detailed instructions on submitting an application are available as part of the [Application Instructions](#).

Docket 5-CPF-2023  
Page

An [online map](#) is available to show areas eligible for funding due to the lack of access to 100/20 wireline service, and areas prioritized due to COVID impacts.

A schedule for the grant round is listed below. Applications will be accepted until 1:30 p.m. on November 7, 2023, after which the Grant System will close and be unable to accept further applications. The Commission strictly enforces the filing deadline for submitting applications and late applications will not be accepted.


### Schedule of Events

DATE	EVENT
Aug. 14, 2023	Date of issue of the application instructions
Oct. 2, 2023	Last day to submit questions and requests for clarification
Nov. 6, 2023	Last day to request Grant System assistance
<b>Nov. 7, 2023, 1:30 PM CT</b>	Applications due in Grants System
Nov. 30, 2023, 1:30 PM CT	Objections to grant application are due
Dec. 14, 2023, 1:30 PM CT	Responses to objections are due

A series of webinars are being held for interested applicants. A [Capital Projects Application Overview Webinar](#) will be held on September 8 at 11:00 a.m. and a [How to Map Your Capital Project Webinar](#) will be held on September 14 at 1:00 p.m.

Applicants are encouraged to start the application process early to identify questions or familiarize themselves with Grants System, application questions, BSLF licensing, or geospatial data requirements. If you require assistance, please contact [PSCCapitalProjectsFund@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCCapitalProjectsFund@wisconsin.gov) before the deadlines above. Further, it is recommended you submit your application well in advance of the deadline.

Sincerely,



Joe Fontaine  
Administrator  
Division of Digital Access, Consumer and Environmental Affairs

JF:TK:AK:RT:MM:kle DL:01959916

# Public Service Commission of Wisconsin



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin  
RECEIVED: 8/14/2023 11:56:21 AM

## Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure Program

### *Application Instructions*

**Docket 5-CPF-2023**

**Application Deadline  
November 7, 2023  
1:30 P.M.**

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## Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program Overview

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) is seeking applications [for Capital Projects Fund \(CPF\) Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program](#). CPF Broadband Infrastructure Grants will provide up to \$42 million in grant funding during Fiscal Year 2024 to eligible applicants.

Eligible applicants include public and private entities that meet the Capital Projects Fund eligibility requirements set forth in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, PL 117-2 (March 11, 2021), amending Title VI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 802(c)(1)(D) (“ARPA”) and the Capital Projects Fund guidance (U.S. Department of the Treasury, (September 2021), Guidance for the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund for States, Territories and Freely Associated States).

The COVID-19 public health emergency highlighted shortcomings in U.S. infrastructure and revealed the importance of access to high-quality internet for work, education, and health monitoring. In response, the American Rescue Plan provided \$10 billion to the Capital Projects Fund for states, territories, and Tribes to cover the costs of critical capital projects like broadband infrastructure.

CPF Broadband Infrastructure Grants seek to address the critical gaps in infrastructure access that affected vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Program will prioritize funding towards communities that were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to be at higher risk for future disaster due to lack of access to critical services such as broadband. Eligible applicants must demonstrate that the proposed communities to be served have critical needs related to work, education, and health monitoring and that their proposed broadband infrastructure project would address these needs. A detailed description of eligibility and priority criteria can be found in the “Evaluation of Applications” section.

**The Application is due November 7, 2023 at 1:30 pm C.T. Applicants are strongly encouraged to complete and submit the application ahead of the deadline.**

*Beginning with this grant round, applicants are required to submit broadband serviceable location fabric (BSLF) data for each eligible location in their proposed project. If an applicant lacks access to BSLF data, a license agreement will be available from CostQuest Associates. The site to request a Tier D license is: <https://apps.costquest.com/NTIArequest/>. The email address to request support is [ifasupport@costquest.com](mailto:ifasupport@costquest.com). The applicant should submit the application for the license at least 45 days in advance of the application due date.*

### **Anticipated Funds Available**

This grant round will make available funds from the Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure Grants set forth in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, PL 117-2 (March 11, 2021), amending Title VI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 802(c)(1)(D) (“ARPA”), and the Capital Projects Fund guidance (U.S. Department of the Treasury, (September 2021), Guidance for the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund for States, Territories and Freely Associated States).



A final determination of the funds awarded will be made by the Commission in a written order, after discussion in an open meeting. Up to \$42 million will be available for Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure Grants in this grant round.

### **Procuring and Contracting Agency**

This request for applications is issued by the Commission, which is the sole point of contact for the State of Wisconsin during the selection process. The person responsible for managing the grant application process is Rory Tikalsky, Broadband Expansion Manager.

The grant awards resulting from this application process will be administered by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. The grant administrator is Alyssa Kenney, Bureau Director, Bureau of Broadband, Digital, and Telecommunications Access.

### **Definitions**

The following definitions are used throughout this document and the online application.

Agency or Commission means the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin.

Applicant means an individual or organization submitting an application in response to this request for grant applications.

Broadband Service for the purpose of Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure is service that meets the following criteria:

- Is a wireline or fixed wireless service that reliably provides two-way data transmission with speeds of at least 100 Megabits per second (Mbps) for download transmission and 100 Mbps for upload transmission.
- For locations where a symmetrical 100/100 Mbps service is not feasible, Broadband Service may include service that reliably provide speeds of at least 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload and is scalable to 100 Mbps download and 100 Mbps upload.
- Broadband Service does not include a commercial mobile radio (cellular) service or internet service from a satellite connection.

Cooperative means an entity incorporated under Chapter 185 of Wisconsin Statutes.

Enforceable Funding Commitment for the purpose of this grant application means a location that has been awarded state or federal funding to build or improve infrastructure to provide a wireline connection that reliably delivers at least 100 Mbps of download speed and 20 Mbps of upload speed. A likely depiction of Enforceable Funding Commitments is available in the “Infrastructure Support In Progress” layer of the [CPF Complex Map](#).

Grantee or Recipient means an entity that has entered into a Grant Agreement with the Commission.

Location means a structure where Broadband Service could be installed (i.e., a [Broadband Serviceable Location](#) (BSL)) as represented in the [National Broadband Map](#). A location that is

not in the [Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric](#) is a Location if a fabric challenge is pending with the Federal Communications Commission or the applicant provides evidence of the location through latitude and longitude data. Unbuilt parcels, adjacent outbuildings, and other non-BSL structures are not counted as Locations for the purposes of this grant, although applicants are encouraged to consider these types of locations in their project design, and deployment of infrastructure to pass these parcels and structures may be a cost eligible for funding if it is consistent with the goals of the Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program.

- Residential Location has the meaning given by the U.S. Department of Treasury, consistent with FCC guidance. See page 26 of this PDF: <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/CPF-PE-Report-User-Guide.pdf>.
- Business Location has the meaning given by the U.S. Department of Treasury, consistent with FCC guidance. See page 27 of this PDF: <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/CPF-PE-Report-User-Guide.pdf>.
- Community Anchor Institution Location has the meaning given by the U.S. Department of Treasury, consistent with FCC guidance. See page 27 of this PDF: <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/CPF-PE-Report-User-Guide.pdf>.

State means the State of Wisconsin and includes the Public Service Commission.

## **Communications Regarding the Application**

The official means by which the Commission will provide information related to the application is in docket 5-CPF-2023. Interested parties must proactively subscribe to the docket on the Commission's [ERF](#) system to ensure they receive timely information related to the process.

### **Reasonable accommodations**

The Commission will provide reasonable accommodations, including the provision of informational material in an alternative format, for qualified individuals with disabilities upon request. If you need accommodations, contact Alyssa Kenney at (608) 267-9138 or [Alyssa.Kenney@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Alyssa.Kenney@wisconsin.gov).

### **Clarification and/or revisions to the specifications and requirements for grant application**

Any questions concerning this application must be submitted in writing via email on or before October 2, 2023 at 1:30 p.m., to:

Email address:

[PSCStateBroadbandOffice@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCStateBroadbandOffice@wisconsin.gov).

Subject line:

CPF Broadband Infrastructure Grant Application Question

If an applicant discovers any significant ambiguity, error, conflict, discrepancy, omission, or other deficiency in this application, the applicant should notify the Public Service Commission

immediately by emailing [PSCStateBroadbandOffice@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCStateBroadbandOffice@wisconsin.gov). The applicant should describe the error and request modification or clarification of the application.

If it becomes necessary to provide additional clarifying data or information or to revise any part of this application, revisions, amendments, and/or supplements will be posted in docket 5-CPF-2023. Interested parties must subscribe to the docket to receive notifications.

Any contact with state employees concerning this application is prohibited, except as authorized by the grant administrator (Alyssa Kenney), from date of release of the application until the date on which the grant award is released.

## Schedule of Events

Below are the dates and times of actions related to this application. If the Commission finds it necessary to change any of the dates and times in the schedule of events listed below, it will do so by issuing a supplement to these instructions in docket 5-CPF-2023.

**Applications must be submitted using the PSC Grant System. Applications posted to ERF separately from the Grant System application process will not be accepted.** The PSC Grant System will automatically close the application process promptly on the day and time applications are due. The PSC Grant System will not accept late-filed applications. Start well before the deadline and allow sufficient time to address the administrative and programmatic requirements related to submitting a grant application.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>EVENT</b>
Aug. 14, 2023	Date of issue of the application instructions
Oct. 2, 2023	Last day for submitting questions and requests for clarification
Nov. 6, 2023	Last day to request Grant System assistance
<b>Nov. 7, 2023, 1:30 PM CT</b>	<b>Applications due from applicants (deadline for submitting in the Grant System)</b>
Nov. 30, 2023, 1:30 PM CT	Last day for submitting an objection to a grant application
Dec. 14, 2023, 1:30 PM CT	Last day for submitting a response to an objection

## Performance Period

A recipient may only use funds approved under Capital Project Fund Broadband Infrastructure to cover costs incurred during the performance period, which begins with the Commission Order and ends December 31, 2026.

## Objection and Response Period

The Commission will provide a period during which interested persons may review the grant applications that have been submitted and file written comments objecting to an application under review. Objections to a grant application must be filed via [ERF](#) under docket 5-CPF-2023. Objections are due by **1:30pm Central Time on Nov. 30, 2023**. An objection must identify and discuss an error of fact, or policy or a requirement that the application has contravened. Late filed comments objecting to an application will not be accepted nor given weight during the review process.

A response to an objection must be filed under docket 5-CPF-2023, using the [ERF](#) system. Responses are due by **1:30pm Central Time on Dec. 14, 2023**. Late filed responses objecting to an application will not be accepted nor given weight during the review process. If an objection or response is from an applicant with the intent to modify an application, a new budget, project summary, and map, as specified by the Commission, are required. Late filed responses will not be accepted nor given weight during the review process.

The Commission will only accept public objections and responses. Confidentially filed objections and responses will not be given weight in the evaluation process.

Any communication with the Commission in support of an application must be included as a supporting document within the application (including those uploaded as an attachment). Comments in support of an application received by separate letter, separate ERF filing, or email message before, during, or after the application is filed will not be accepted nor given weight during the review process.

## Preparing and Submitting a Grant Application

The Commission has developed an online PSC Grants System to submit grant applications.

The instructions for completing a CPF Broadband Infrastructure Grant application are in two parts. Both parts are available on the PSC CPF Broadband Infrastructure Grant webpage: <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/ServiceType/Broadband/CPFInfrastructure.aspx>

1. [PSC Grants System User's Guide for Grant Applicants and Recipients](#). The User's Guide provides step-by-step instructions to create a system account, navigate the online grant application, validate the application, and submit the complete application. If awarded, reimbursement requests are also submitted and managed via the PSC Grants System. The User's Guide is the primary resource an applicant should consult to enter and use the online grant system.
2. [CPF Broadband Infrastructure Grant Application Instructions](#). The second part of the instructions is this document. An applicant should use these instructions to understand the information that is requested for each page and each question in the grant application. Step-by-step instructions are available in Appendix A.



## Submitting Information

- The evaluation of an application and selection of an applicant for an award will be based upon the information submitted in the application and subsequent objection and response comments. Failure to respond to each of the requirements in the application may adversely affect the evaluation of the grant application.
- Do not use hyperlinks in your answers or attachments in excess of the requested documents in the grant system. Hyperlinks to additional information are not evaluated, nor are they considered to be part of the application.
- Neither the Commission nor the State is liable for any cost incurred by the applicant in preparing this application. Costs of preparing the application are not reimbursable if a grant is awarded.
- Expect for specific information related to the CostQuest Tier D License agreement, all application information filed with the Commission is considered public. Do not include confidential or proprietary information in your application.
- Multiple applications from an applicant are permitted. Each application must conform fully to the requirements for submission, and each application will be evaluated as a distinct and separate filing without reference to other applications from the same applicant. Each application must be submitted separately and be a unique application in the Grants System.
- Applicants may withdraw an application at any time by submitting a signed letter from an authorized representative of the applicant organization in the docket 5-CPF-2023. A request to resubmit after the application deadline has passed will be denied.

## Supplemental Information

An applicant may request that the Commission accept supplemental information related to an application that was otherwise timely filed. A request to supplement an application must be emailed to [PSCCapitalProjectsFund@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCCapitalProjectsFund@wisconsin.gov). The grant manager will work with the applicant to supplement the record. The Commission may request that an applicant submit supplemental or clarifying information, consistent with the application requirements. If received and accepted, supplemental information will be incorporated into the application and evaluated by the Commission using the established criteria to determine which applications should receive a grant award.

## Geospatial Data

Each application must be accompanied with geospatial data that shows the proposed eligible locations to be served, a list of BSL identification numbers and the wireline route and/or placement of facilities proposed to be built with the grant. Questions regarding formatting and content of maps should be addressed to [PSCBroadbandData@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCBroadbandData@wisconsin.gov)

Geospatial data will include BSLF data. If your entity lacks access to BSLF data, a license agreement is available from CostQuest Associates. The site to request a Tier D license is: <https://apps.costquest.com/NTIArequest/> the email address to request support is

[ifasupport@costquest.com](mailto:ifasupport@costquest.com). The applicant should submit the application for the CostQuest license at least 45 days in advance of the application due date.

Note: If there are delays in CostQuest issuing licenses to applicants before the deadline, the Commission may consider a cure or supplement of an application's geospatial data once the license is received. A delay in access to a license must be communicated prior to the application deadline.

**Data will be provided in three formats: a static map, a spreadsheet, and geospatial files.**

- 1) The static map must be uploaded within the grant system as part of the application using the Upload tab.
  - a. The static map must visually depict the entire project area, including (a) the wireline route and/or the location of tower placements; and (b) a point for each eligible location (BSL) proposed to be passed and serviceable by the project.
  - b. For large projects, a static map may be separated into several pages to capture all project areas.
- 2) The spreadsheet must be uploaded within the grant system as part of the application using the Upload tab.
  - a. Use the [CPF Application Location Data Template](#). The template includes instructions for each field to be completed.
  - b. If a location intended to be served meets the definition of Location above, but is not listed in the BSLF, provide a brief narrative explanation for why it should be included in the BSLF within the Fabric ID Number (column F) field.
  - c. Each location should be a unique row within the template, and complete all listed fields (columns).
- 3) The geospatial files will be delivered **consistent with forthcoming supplemental instructions**.
  - a. The geospatial files must include (a) the wireline route and/or the location of tower placements; and (b) a point for each eligible location proposed to be passed and serviceable by the project.
  - b. Geospatial file(s) of the project area must be shapefiles or a geodatabase with feature classes, or another format with prior written consent of the Commission.
  - c. Submitted geospatial files must include a field indicating the [FCC Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric](#) (BSLF) ID of each structure. If your project includes locations that meet the criteria to be included in the BSLF but are not currently included, you must separately delineate these locations within your geospatial file.

## **Evaluation of Applications**

The following eligibility and merit criteria will be used to guide Commission staff and screening panel in evaluating grant projects' eligibility, scoring grant applications, and preparing a merit list for Commission consideration. After all applications are reviewed, panelists meet to discuss and prepare a score for each application and produce the resulting merit list of the applications for the Commission's consideration.

Commissioners are not bound by the below scoring criteria or resulting merit list, which are staff analysis intended for advisory purposes only. In reviewing and awarding grants, the

Commissioners use their experience, technical competence, and specialized knowledge. The Commissioners, as the finder of fact and decision makers, are charged with evaluating all available information and applying any relevant statutory and federal criteria to reach well-reasoned decisions.

**Eligibility**

The eligibility criteria listed in the table below are required for each application project. Applicants will demonstrate compliance with each of these criteria as part of their responses to the application.

An [online map](#) is available to assist applicants in identifying locations eligible for funding due to a lack of 100/20 wireline service. Use the “Capital Projects Fund Eligible Guideline” layer and take note of the “Infrastructure Support In Progress” layer.

<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>	<b>Response Required</b>
1. Primary applicant for the CPF Broadband Infrastructure Grant is a public or private entity that builds or operates broadband networks. Applicants may include internet service providers, local units of government, non-profit entities, electric utilities, cooperatives.	Yes
2. The applicant’s broadband infrastructure project is designed to deliver, upon project completion, service that reliably meets or exceeds symmetrical download and upload speeds of 100 Mbps to all proposed locations. If the applicant has demonstrated it would not be Feasible to deliver 100/100 Mbps, the project must offer service that reliably meets or exceeds 100 Mbps download speeds and 20 Mbps upload and be scalable to a minimum of 100 Mbps symmetrical for download and upload speeds.	Yes
3. The applicant’s broadband infrastructure project is designed to deliver services to households and businesses lacking access to reliable, affordable wireline service at speeds of 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload.	Yes
4. The applicant’s broadband infrastructure project (1) invests in capital assets designed to directly enable work, education, and health monitoring; (2) is designed to address a critical need of the community that resulted from, or was made apparent or exacerbated by, the COVID-19 public health emergency; and (3) is designed to address a critical need of the community to be served by it.	Yes
5. The service provider for the completed broadband infrastructure project will participate in applicable federal programs that provide low-income consumers with subsidies for broadband internet access services (such as the Affordable Connectivity Program).	Yes
6. If the applicant’s broadband infrastructure project is within or traverses a Tribal area, the applicant received official Tribal consent, as shown through written documentation from the appropriate Tribal official submitted with this application.	Yes (if applicable)

## Merit

Commission staff and the screening panel will evaluate applications consistent with the scoring criteria in the scoring rubric below based on Treasury guidance. Points will be awarded based on a sliding scale, with full points given to projects that fully realize the goals of the given priority criteria.

Merit Criteria	Points
<b>Affordability of Service:</b> Proposed subscription price for Broadband Service for all funded locations is affordable. Full points will be awarded for projects with a Broadband Service subscription of less than \$65 per month for at least 100/20 service <u>and</u> that offers eligible low-income households service for less than \$30 per month after federal subsidy programs.	10
<b>Last-mile:</b> Applicant's proposal prioritizes infrastructure for last-mile connections. Full points awarded for projects that propose exclusively last-mile infrastructure. Partial points are available for hybrid-projects where some of costs are associated with last-mile connections.	10
<b>Fiber:</b> Project uses fiber-optic technology. A project that uses a mix of technology that include fiber-optic infrastructure may be awarded partial points.	10
<b>Community Engagement:</b> Applicant demonstrates that the planning of their proposal included a high-level of community engagement and support. Activities and supporting documentation may include demonstrated evidence of outreach or meetings within community, a public-private partnership, evidence of local community involvement in project design, local partnerships that support implementation or adoption efforts, letters of support from diverse communities with critical need for broadband, and Tribal consultations.	10
<b>Government, Coop or Non-profit:</b> Applicant's proposed infrastructure project will be owned or operated by local government, a non-profit, or a cooperative.	10
<b>Design and Performance:</b> Applicant's project is reasonable and the network is well designed. The applicant demonstrates financial and managerial capacity to execute the project successfully within the performance period. The applicant has a demonstrated history of building broadband infrastructure and/or participating in broadband grant programs, including compliance with state and federal law, grant agreement terms, and reporting requirements.	10
<b>Contiguous and Complete Project:</b> The proposed locations to be served by a project represent a contiguous project area or a project area that captures all locations in need of service within the area and does not exclude locations that would otherwise be most cost-effectively served as part of a project area.	10
<b>Cost Efficient and Match:</b> Applicant's proposal is cost efficient and demonstrates a reasonable public investment that is consistent with the rurality, geography, or other characteristics that impact the cost per location and return on investment. The applicant and partners, if applicable, offer matching funds that reduce the grant cost per location.	10
<b>No enforceable funding commitment:</b> The applicant's broadband infrastructure project does not propose to serve locations with an existing Enforceable Funding Commitment from state or federal funds that will result in wireline broadband	10



service that will deliver 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload before December 31, 2027.	
<b>Highest Need:</b> The project proposes to primarily serve locations that are located in economically distressed communities disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and at higher risk for future disaster due to lack of investment and access to critical services such as broadband. Projects that have the highest share and highest index score of vulnerable locations, as defined by the Center for Disease Control’s <a href="#">Social Vulnerability Index</a> (SVI), will receive the most points.	10
	<b>100</b>

### Grant Awards

The Commission will determine in writing which applicants will receive a Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure Grant by issuing an order awarding grants in docket 5-CPF-2023. The Commissioners are not bound by the merit criteria and evaluation in making final determinations. The order will also specify certain terms and conditions that the Commission finds appropriate and necessary for the administration of the approved grant projects. The order will serve as the notice of the Commission’s decision.

### Grant Agreement

The Commission requires that each awarded grant applicant enter into a grant agreement with the Commission. The grant agreement will confirm the grant award, including the amount of the grant award and match or contributions, the scope of the project and the terms and conditions ordered by the Commission. The grant award is not final until the applicant signs and returns the grant agreement and the Commission executes the document. A signed grant agreement is due to the Commission no later than 60 days following the date of issuance of the grant agreement to the applicant. Failure to complete and return the grant agreement by the due date may result in cancellation of the award.

1. The order awarding grants and the grant agreement, including any amendments, will together constitute the entire agreement of the state and the applicant, and will supersede any representations, commitments, conditions, or agreements made orally or in writing prior to the issuance of the order.
2. Failure of an applicant to comply with the Commission’s order or grant agreement, as amended, may result in cancellation of the award.
3. Recommended or suggested contract language or terms submitted as part of a grant application will not be incorporated or assumed incorporated into the grant agreement. The final terms and conditions of the grant agreement will constitute the entire agreement, including attachments and any amendments.

### Right to Deny the Application and Negotiate Grant Terms

The Commission may reject any application as filed, and negotiate the terms of a grant award, including the award amount, with the selected applicant prior to offering the grant and executing a grant agreement. If negotiations cannot be concluded successfully with an applicant, as determined solely by the Commission, the Commission may withdraw its award offer.

## **No Appeal Process**

[Wisconsin Stat. § 196.504](#) does not specify an appeal process. However, the applicant may have other general administrative remedies under other provisions of [Wisconsin Statute Chapters 196](#) and [227](#) that it may use if the applicant believes it is aggrieved by any final award determination. This provision is for information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice and is not a determination by the Commission that the applicant has any right to protest or appeal with respect to the Commission's decision in this grant cycle.


## APPENDIX A COMPLETING THE ONLINE APPLICATION

### Step-by-Step Instructions for Completing the Online Grant Application Form

**Step 1:** From the [Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure Grant webpage](#), select ‘PSC Grants System Login’ or visit this link: <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/GrantsSystem.aspx>. This will open the login page of the PSC Grants System. For new applicants (those who have not logged into ERF), an applicant will first need to create an ERF system account and can do so from the Grant System login page. (See User’s Guide page 2.) Remember your username and password for future access to the system.

**Step 2:** Upon completing the login, the homepage for the PSC Grants System will display the page titled Available Grants. Find the line for the Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure Grant and click on ‘Apply.’ (See User’s Guide page 4.)

The application is arranged in a series of tabs along the top of the form. Each tab brings a page to the top so you can fill it in. **It is important that you save your work (using the save icon at the bottom of the page) before you leave a page.** Unsaved entries will be lost once you leave the page.

 *Please note: Hover over the tooltip icon and use the hyperlinks for more information about each question.*

#### **Step 3: Details**

Select the Details tab and fill in the required information. (See User’s Guide page 4.) Please note that this page has a validation step. You cannot save your entries or move to the next page until you enter the required information and correct any arithmetic errors in your entries.

#### **Step 4: Contacts**

You must fill in one Primary Contact. Use the Add New Contact to add additional contacts. If the financial manager will be different than the grant applicant, be sure to add a Financial Manager contact; the financial manager is the party that will execute the grant agreement if the applicant’s project is awarded. Please also fill in the Authorized Representative, the person who will sign the grant agreement. (See User’s Guide page 6.)

A grant recipient can use this page to add additional names or change the Primary Contact for the grant if the recipient has turnover or other change in staff assignment while the grant project is underway.

A grant recipient may wish to specify an individual to serve as a point of contact for GIS and mapping related concerns. If so, select ‘secondary contact’ and indicate their expertise as part of the contact title field.

### **Step 5: Contributions**

List contributions (otherwise known as match) from each entity involved in the grant project, including the recipient, and any other partners contributing anything of value. For example, for a municipality waiving a permit fee, list the municipality and cost of the waived fees. Please note there is a validation step here as well. You cannot save your entries on this page unless the entries agree with the data entered on the Details page; the information from your Details page is displayed above the '+Add New Record' button. (See User's Guide page 6-7.)

Matching funds contributions are part of the overall evaluation of the grant proposal. Thus, the response entered on this page of the grant application will be considered in the merit ranking. A list of contributions from one or more public entities could affect the merit ranking for a public-private partnership.

### **Step 6: Budget**

The Budget page requires that the applicant enter an aggregate total for all equipment that will be purchased on a single line of the budget. The same for labor expense, contract or third-party expense, etc. See Appendix B for budget categories under the CPF Broadband Infrastructure Grant.

The form requires that you divide the total cost of the grant into the portion that will be paid by grant reimbursement and the portion paid by matching funds contribution.

You cannot save your entries on the Budget page unless the entries agree with the data entered on the Details and Contributions pages. (See User's Guide page 7- 8.)

### **Step 7: Communities**

List each political subdivision in which infrastructure will be placed. This tab is not reviewed for merit. It is part of the project description. (See User's Guide page 8-9.)

### **Step 8: Narrative**

The Narrative tab consists of 45 questions. Answer every question. Unanswered questions affect application merit and may make an application ineligible for funding. Remember to save your work before advancing to the next page of the Narrative. (See User's Guide page 9-10)

#### ***Section 1 - Eligibility***

1. ELIGIBILITY: Is the primary applicant for the CPF Broadband Infrastructure Grant a public or private entity that builds or operates broadband networks?

*Tool tip:* A network includes those that are owned, operated by, or affiliated with local governments, cooperatives, electric utilities, and other entities.

2. ELIGIBILITY: Is the applicant's broadband infrastructure project designed to deliver, upon project completion, service that reliably meets or exceeds symmetrical download and upload speeds of 100 Mbps?



3. ELIGIBILITY: If No to question 2, does applicant attest and does this application demonstrate that it would be impractical to deliver 100/100 Mbps because of geography, topography, or excessive cost?
4. ELIGIBILITY: If No to question 2, does applicant attest and does this application demonstrate that the project is designed to offer service that reliably meets or exceeds 100/20 Mbps and is scalable to 100/100Mbps?
5. ELIGIBILITY: Will the applicant’s broadband infrastructure project deliver new or improved broadband service to households that currently lack access to reliable, affordable wireline service at speeds of 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload?
6. ELIGIBILITY: Is this CPF Broadband Infrastructure Grant project proposal a broadband infrastructure project that invests in capital assets designed to directly enable work, education, and health monitoring?
7. ELIGIBILITY: Does this CPF Broadband Infrastructure Grant project proposal address a critical need of the community that resulted from, or was made apparent or exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health emergency?
8. ELIGIBILITY: Does this CPF Broadband Infrastructure Grant project proposal address a critical need of the community it will serve?
9. ELIGIBILITY: Upon completion of this project, will the service provider participate in applicable federal programs, the Affordable Connectivity Program or subsequent programs, that provide low-income consumers with subsidies for broadband internet access services?
10. ELIGIBILITY: Is the project located in and/or serving locations in a Tribal area?
11. ELIGIBILITY: If this project is located in and/or serving locations in a Tribal area, has the project proposal received Tribal consent?

*Tool tip:* If the project does not impact tribal land, select “No”.

***Section 2 - Project Description***

12. What is the total number of broadband serviceable locations (BSLs) that will have new or improved broadband service because of this project?

*Tool Tip:* This answer should match the number of locations listed in the Application Location Data (spreadsheet), and equal the sum of the subsequent three questions.

13. Of the BSLs indicted in the answer to question 12, how many are residential locations?

*Tool tip:* This number must equal the location type amount indicated in your Application Location Data (spreadsheet). See application instructions and/or CPF Application Location Data Template for detailed definition of ‘Residential’.

14. Of the BSLs indicated in the answer to question 12, how many are business locations?

*Tool tip: This number must equal the location type amount indicated in your Application Location Data (spreadsheet). See application instructions and/or CPF Application Location Data Template for detailed definition of 'Business'.*

15. Of the BSLs indicated in question 12, how many are Community Anchor Institution (CAI) locations?

*Tool tip: This number must equal the location type amount indicated in your Application Location Data (spreadsheet). See application instructions and/or CPF Application Location Data Template for detailed definition of 'Community Anchor Institution'.*

16. Of the BSLs indicated in question 12, how many are locations that lack access to wireline service at speeds of 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload?

*Tool tip: This number must be equal to or less than the answer for question 12.*

17. State the minimum guaranteed download transmission speed (in Mbps) that every location within the funded project would have the opportunity to subscribe to.

*Tool tip: Do not specify the slowest package available for purchase, but rather the minimum speed that is available to each location, if they choose to subscribe. Applicants must ensure that every location has the opportunity to subscribe and receive this speed.*

18. State the minimum guaranteed upload transmission speed (in Mbps) that every location within the funded project would have the opportunity to subscribe to.

*Tool tip: Do not specify the slowest package available for purchase, but rather the minimum speed that is available to each location, if they choose to subscribe. Applicants must ensure that every location has the opportunity to subscribe and receive this speed.*

19. Provide a description of the technology that the project will employ to reach the targeted locations in the project area. The description should include technology type, anticipated operating speeds and other pertinent transmission characteristics.

*Tool Tip: For fixed wireless, specify the spectrum used, the equipment vendor, the anticipated operating speeds and other relevant characteristics of the service. For wireline, specify if aerial or buried, the number of strands, and details about any hybrid models.*

20. State the total miles of fiber planned to be deployed for the project.

*Tool tip: Round to the nearest whole mile. For projects without fiber optic infrastructure enter 0.*

21. If applicable, provide information to demonstrate that the locations listed as served on the [Capital Projects Fund Complex Map](#) are actually lacking access to reliable, affordable wireline service at speeds of 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload.

*Tool tip: Existing coverage data is known to overstate the broadband service that is deployed to locations within Wisconsin. If this project proposes to serve BSLs with 100/20 service, describe the actual broadband service available to project locations.*

22. Was the [Wisconsin Internet Self Report \(WISER\) survey tool](#) used to aggregate information about affordability or actual availability of service within the project area?

23. Was the Breaking Points Solutions OptiMap speed test tool used to aggregate information about actual availability of service within the project area?

24. Did the applicant deliver the required geospatial files, a spreadsheet of locations served, and a static map as directed in the grant instructions?

*Tool tip: A static map, listing of locations served, and a geospatial file of the proposed project area are required elements of this application and are due at the same time as the application. See grant instructions for detailed information on spatial data submissions.*

25. Does the project area exclude locations adjacent to or otherwise surrounded by proposed project locations due to, for example, excessively long driveways, private property access, other planned investments, difficult topography, or other reasons?

*Tool Tip: Projects should be contiguous, meaning they capture all locations in need of service within an area, and do not exclude locations that would be most cost-effectively served as part of the proposed investment.*

26. If yes to question 25, explain why locations are excluded. If it does not exclude locations enter N/A in the answer field.

*Tool Tip: Projects should be contiguous, meaning they capture all locations in need of service within an area, and do not exclude locations that would be most cost-effectively served as part of the proposed investment.*

27. Starting with the Commission Order date [anticipated to be the first quarter of 2024], provide a schedule of significant project milestones/activities and projected date of completion for the project. The performance period ends December 31, 2026.

28. Does the proposed project area include any portion of a political subdivision that has completed certification as a [Broadband Forward Community](#) or [Telecommuter Forward Community](#)?

29. If the project includes a Broadband Forward or Telecommuter Forward community, list the communities that are certified.

*Tool Tip: If the answer to 28 is no, enter N/A.*

30. List the speed tiers offered and corresponding non-promotional monthly prices, including associated fees, for each tier of broadband service.

*Tool tip: Affordability scoring will be based on the lowest cost plan that provides at least 100/20. Please note any one-time installation, equipment, or other fees for new subscribers. Also note if an additional surcharge is imposed for exceeding a data allowance.*

31. For providers that are eligible telecommunications carriers (ETC) will the proposed broadband service be available to Lifeline customers?

*Tool tip: For providers that are not ETCs select "No".*

32. Does the internet service provider currently participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program?

33. Does the internet service provider for this project offer any additional program or service packages to eligible low-income households to access a low-cost or discounted broadband service?

34. If the provider offers a discounted broadband service and answered yes to question 33, explain the program. Include the eligibility (income threshold, or otherwise), pricing per month and any efforts to make eligible households aware of the discount.

*Tool tip: Explain any program or service beyond participation in ACP or special pricing for customers that are enrolled in ACP. If no to question 33, enter N/A.*

35. Is the proposed project best characterized as a last-mile, middle-mile or hybrid broadband infrastructure project?

36. If the proposed project is best characterized as a middle-mile project, have you identified last-mile broadband service provider(s) that will connect to the middle-mile facility?

*Tool tip: If not applicable, select "No".*

37. If yes to 36, list broadband service provider(s) and the estimated number of eligible locations that will receive new or improved service as a result of grant funding.

*Tool tip: If you answered no to question 36, enter N/A.*



38. Provide information about any outreach or community engagement in the communities where the project will be located.

*Tool Tip: If the community, local government or other organizations have indicated formal support, indicating the description. Include detailed information about how the community has informed the design, engaged in planning, and will support the implementation.*

39. For the total locations proposed to be served by the project, specify the provider’s anticipated subscription rate two years after completion of the project.

*Tool tip: If available, include data such as surveys, customer requests for service, or other market data to justify this estimated subscription rate.*

40. Will applicant’s proposed infrastructure project be owned and/or operated by local government, a non-profit or a cooperative?

41. Provide a description of the entities that will own and operate the proposed broadband network. If the application, ownership, or operation includes partnerships or collaborative agreements, describe the nature of each entity’s participation.

42. Will project utilize other state or federal funds? If so, describe the program funding and existing commitments to build. Why is additional public funding necessary for this project? How will additional public funding improve this project’s deployment?

*Tool tip: Applications in areas with existing enforceable funding commitments may be considered if an applicant demonstrates an additional public benefit to further investment.*

43. Describe the applicant’s history constructing broadband facilities in Wisconsin or elsewhere, including listing any broadband-related grants the applicant has previously received.

44. Describe the applicant’s financial ability to undertake the proposed project, which may include information such as years in operation, completed infrastructure projects, financial information, and credit rating.

45. Describe how the project will improve access to high-quality broadband internet for work, education, and health monitoring. Where possible, please provide specific examples of anticipated positive impacts in the project area.

### **Step 9: Uploads – 3 required, limit of 6 files**

Select the Upload tab and use the Upload Public Document button to add required and optional documents to the application.

- Upload 1: **(REQUIRED)** Applicants must add a static (image) map. See “Geospatial Data” section of these instructions for more details.
- Upload 2: **(REQUIRED)** Applicants must upload a spreadsheet (.xlsx) document listing a Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric ID for each location proposed to be served by

the project. If a BSLF ID is not available for a location, include a latitude and longitude point and provide an explanation for each point that explains why it is not currently part of the Fabric. Use the [CPF Application Location Data Template](#).

- Upload 3: **(REQUIRED)** Any geospatial files as directed in Geospatial Data section above. Supplemental guidance is forthcoming on submission of geospatial data.
- Upload 4: If applicable, applicants may add any documentation of partnerships.
- Upload 5: Applicants may compile and add any additional letters of support, survey data or additional materials that best support the application. This is limited to 20 pages that will be reviewed.
- Upload 6: Applicants may compile any additional supplemental materials. For projects transiting or serving Tribal lands, a document showing a letter of consent or acknowledgement from the associated Tribe(s) must be included as an attachment.

## APPENDIX B BUDGET CATEGORIES

<b>Contractual, Consultant Fees</b>	All project expenses for work performed by a third-party contractor. A third-party contractor is any entity that is not a signatory to the grant agreement. Examples: legal services, cement contractors, tree trimmers, electrician, engineering services, etc. Any materials supplied by a third-party contractor should be included here.
<b>Equipment</b>	Equipment means tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a <u>per-unit</u> acquisition cost which equals or exceeds \$5,000.
<b>Supplies</b>	Supplies means all tangible personal property other than those described by the Equipment category. All items with <u>per-unit</u> acquisition costs of less than \$5,000, regardless of the length of useful life, are considered supplies.
<b>Labor (Salary, Fringe)</b>	Actual labor expenses, including fringe benefits, of the grant recipient. This category is limited to direct personnel expenses only.
<b>Permitting, Licensing Fees</b>	All permitting & licensing expenses.
<b>Travel</b>	Grantee's travel expenses related to the project.
<b>Other</b>	Other expenses not specified above. Please provide details in the notes.

**NOTE:** “Eligible Costs” means those costs which are: (1) not covered by any other federal or state funding; (2) subject to audit by the Commission; (3) directly attributable to activities identified in Attachment B – Project Scope of a recipient’s grant agreement; (4) identified in Attachment C – Project Budget of a recipient’s grant agreement, subject to any amendments to the grant agreement; and (5) incurred between the date of the Commission’s written Order—which officially awards grant funds to a recipient—and the end of the Performance Period defined in the grant agreement, as may be amended.

## **Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**AS OF APRIL 28, 2022**

This document contains answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ) regarding the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (CPF), established by Section 604 of the Social Security Act, as added by Section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. This FAQ document clarifies CPF Guidance for States (defined to include the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico), Territories, Freely Associated States, and Tribal Governments (the Guidance), and does not supersede the Guidance except as noted. Terms used in the FAQ but not defined herein have the meaning specified in the Guidance.

Treasury will be updating this document periodically in response to questions received from stakeholders; changes will be clearly marked. Recipients and stakeholders should consult Treasury’s [CPF Guidance for States, Territories, and Freely Associated States](#) and [CPF Guidance for Tribal Governments](#) for additional information.

- For overall information about the program, including information on requesting funding, please see <https://treasury.gov/CPF>
- For general questions about CPF, please email [CapitalProjectsFund@treasury.gov](mailto:CapitalProjectsFund@treasury.gov)

Questions added 1/4/22: 2.9, 3.2, 3.6, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.9, 4.10, 4.13, 6.2, 6.3, 8.3 (noted with “[1/4]”)

Questions added 4/28/22: 2.10, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 4.6, 4.14, 5.5, 5.7 (noted with “[4/28]”)

## **1. Eligibility and Allocations**

### **1.1. Which governments are directly eligible for funds?**

The following governments are eligible to apply for CPF grants:

- The 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (the States)
- Tribal governments and the State of Hawaii (for Native Hawaiian Programs)
- The United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau

**1.2. Are cities and counties eligible to apply for CPF grant funds?**

No. The Capital Projects Fund makes grant funds available to States (defined to include the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico), territories, freely associated states, and Tribal governments. While cities and counties are not directly eligible recipients, Treasury encourages direct recipients of CPF grants to engage with communities when planning for the use of grant funds.

**1.3. Are libraries and other community centers eligible to apply for CPF grant funds?**

No. The Capital Projects Fund makes funds available to States, territories, freely associated states, and Tribal governments. While libraries and other community centers are not eligible to apply, Treasury encourages direct recipients of CPF grants to engage with communities when planning for the use of grant funds.

**1.4. What is the grant period of performance?**

A recipient may use CPF grant funds to cover costs incurred beginning March 15, 2021 and ending December 31, 2026.

For pre-award costs incurred after March 15, 2021, but prior to execution of the Grant Agreement, CPF recipients are required to provide reasonable assurance that the costs were incurred pursuant to the negotiation of and in anticipation of the CPF grant award and are necessary for the efficient and timely performance of the program.

**1.5. When will CPF recipients receive grant awards?**

Treasury will make CPF grant funds available to States, territories, and freely associated states once the Grant Agreement is provided and a Grant Plan (containing at least one Program Plan) is reviewed and approved by Treasury. Only one Grant Agreement must be executed per State, territory, and freely associated state. For States, territories, and freely associated states, funds will be released to the recipient on an advance basis as requested by CPF recipients, rather than as a single lump sum for the total amount allocated to the State, territory, or freely associated state at the time of approval.

Treasury will make requested Capital Projects Fund administrative funds (up to 5% of total allocated funds, as indicated by the recipient in the application) available to States, territories, and freely associated states once the Grant Agreement is executed. Additional funds will be made available for project costs as related Program Plans are approved.

Tribal governments will receive CPF funds once an application is reviewed and Grant Agreement is executed.



## **2. Applications, Grant Plans, and Project Plans**

### **2.1. What is the deadline to apply for CPF grants?**

States, territories, and freely associated states must submit applications by December 27, 2021 to receive funding under the Capital Projects Fund. These entities must also submit Grant Plans and Program Plans by September 24, 2022.

Tribal governments must submit applications by June 1, 2022 to receive funding. Tribal governments do not need to submit a separate Grant Plan.

### **2.2. Will Treasury review CPF applications on a rolling basis?**

Yes. Treasury will review applications upon submission and make CPF grant funds available upon approval.

### **2.3. What is the deadline for CPF recipients to submit a Grant Plan?**

States, territories, and freely associated states must submit Grant Plans, including one or more Program Plans, by September 24, 2022.

Tribal applicants do not need to submit a separate Grant Plan.

### **2.4. When must CPF grant funds be expended?**

All funds must be expended by December 31, 2026, which is the end of the period of performance. Recipients must return to Treasury any grant funds that are not used by the end of the period of performance on December 31, 2026. Treasury may, in its sole discretion, grant extensions to the period of performance upon request from CPF recipients.

### **2.5. For State, territory, and freely associated state applicants, what is an “Authorized Representative”?**

An Authorized Representative is an individual who will sign the CPF application, necessary certifications, and the Grant Agreement on behalf of the eligible applicant. For States, territories, and freely associated states, the Authorized Representative will be one of the following:

- An individual who is duly authorized by law (such as the Governor). In some cases, Treasury may request documentation confirming the status of the duly authorized individual.
- An individual who has been granted authority to act on behalf of the eligible applicant by someone who is duly authorized to delegate such authority. A designation letter showing the delegation of authority must be provided to

Treasury. The letter must provide the Authorized Representative authority to act on behalf of the eligible applicant to apply for and execute a CPF grant, and to enter into agreements on behalf of the eligible applicant. The designation letter must be signed by a person who is duly authorized by virtue of their position (such as the Governor) to delegate such authority.

**2.6. Can eligible CPF recipients modify a submitted Grant Plan?**

Recipients may submit or modify Grant Plans prior to the deadline. Updates to Grant Plans will be subject to review and approval by Treasury.

**2.7. Can the Grant Plan be submitted at the same time as the application (i.e., before the Grant Agreement is executed)?**

Treasury will not review a Grant Plan until an eligible State, territory, or freely associated state application has been approved. An eligible State, territory, or freely associated state may submit a Grant Plan prior to executing the Grant Agreement, but no funds other than the administrative funds will be available to the recipient until the Grant Agreement has been executed and the Grant Plan approved. Funds for project costs will be made available as related project plans are approved.

For Tribal governments, the initial application for the CPF grant will also serve as the Grant Plan. After approval of the Tribal application, funds will be made to the Tribal government.

**2.8. What should State, territory, and freely associated state recipients include in a Program Plan?**

Program Plans can be a framework for how the State, territory, or freely associated state will utilize CPF funds. A Program Plan may propose funding for multiple, individually related projects or subgrants that all serve a common objective (e.g., Broadband Infrastructure). In the Program Plan, recipients are not expected to submit information about each individual project or subgrant, however project level data will be gathered during the reporting phase.

Additional information regarding CPF grant and Program Plans will be made available in the coming weeks. Future updates will be posted on the CPF landing page: <https://treasury.gov/CPF>.

**2.9. How does Treasury categorize costs associated with completing the CPF application and Grant Plan? [1/4]**

Treasury categorizes costs associated with completing the CPF application as program administrative costs. In addition, for States, territories, and freely associated states, Treasury categorizes costs associated with the development of the Grant Plan (including Program Plans) as program administrative costs. This classification marks a change from

the CPF Guidance for States, Territories, and Freely Associated States and CPF Guidance for Tribal Governments posted in September 2021. By making this change, Treasury aims to ease the burden on CPF recipients by making funds available for these costs sooner. Non-Tribal government recipients may now access program administrative funds to pay for these costs upon execution of the Grant Agreement.

As a reminder, CPF recipients may use up to five percent of the total grant award amount or \$25,000 (whichever is greater) for program administrative costs unless a CPF recipient receives written approval from Treasury.

This change is effective immediately; Treasury will update the Guidance to reflect this modification.

**2.10. How does Treasury categorize costs for community engagement activities? [4/28]**

Treasury categorizes costs associated with community engagement activities in connection with the development of the Grant Plan (including Program Plans) as program administrative costs. All other costs associated with community engagement activities (e.g., seeking public comment related to a project’s location, design, or environmental impacts) should be categorized as project costs.

This classification broadens how costs for community engagement activities may be treated and is consistent with the Program Plan Use Code templates available in the Treasury Submission Portal. Treasury will update the CPF Guidance for States, Territories, and Freely Associated States posted in September 2021 to reflect this modification.

**3. Tribal Governments**

**3.1. How has Treasury determined the amount each Tribal government will receive in CPF grant funding?**

Each Tribal government and the State of Hawaii (for Native Hawaiian Programs) are allocated an equal amount of approximately \$167,504 in line with the statutory text, which requires Treasury to allocate funds to these governments in “equal shares.”

**3.2. For Tribal government applicants, who is an “Authorized Representative”? [1/4]**

For Tribal governments, an “Authorized Representative” is the individual who will sign the necessary application certifications and the Grant Agreement on behalf of the eligible applicant.

There are two types of Authorized Representatives for Tribal governments:

1. an individual who is duly authorized by virtue of his or her position in the Tribal government (e.g., Tribal leader, chief executive officer), or
2. an individual who has been designated authority to act on behalf of the eligible applicant by a duly authorized Tribal official.

For the second type, a designation letter must be submitted on official letterhead by the duly authorized Tribal official that specifically delegates responsibilities related to a Capital Projects Fund grant. These responsibilities include certifying the application and executing the Grant Agreement on behalf of the eligible Tribal government.

Tribal governments may apply on behalf of other Tribal governments, and joint Tribal organizations (e.g., Tribal consortiums) may apply on behalf of multiple Tribal governments. A designation letter, as described above, must be submitted by each Tribal government that delegates responsibilities to the external entity applying on their behalf. For example, if Tribal Consortium W is applying on behalf of Tribal governments X, Y, and Z, Treasury must receive three designation letters on official letterhead, one from each Tribal government's duly authorized Tribal official (X, Y, and Z) that states that Tribal Consortium W has permission to act on their behalf. Tribal Consortium W should upload these letters to [Treasury's Submission Portal](#).

**3.3. Can a Tribal government apply for CPF grants through another Tribal government or consortium?**

Yes. Tribal governments may apply on behalf of other Tribal governments, and Tribal consortiums and similar joint Tribal organizations may also apply on behalf of multiple Tribes. If any entity (a different Tribal government, a consortium, etc.) is applying on behalf of an eligible applicant, the eligible applicant must grant the other entity the authority to apply and enter into agreements on their behalf. A designation letter must be submitted to show that the eligible applicant has authorized this other entity.

**3.4. Do Tribal governments need to submit a Grant Plan?**

The application for the Capital Projects Fund will also serve as the Grant Plan for Tribal governments. Tribal governments do not need to submit separate Grant Plans.

**3.5. Can a State award CPF grant funding to a Tribal government as a subrecipient?**

Yes. A State may award CPF grants to subrecipients. Subrecipients may include other levels or units of government, nonprofits, private entities, or Tribal governments.

Tribal governments are also eligible to apply for CPF grants directly, as each Tribal government and the State of Hawaii (for Native Hawaiian Programs) are allocated an equal amount of approximately \$167,504 in line with Section 604 of the [American Rescue Plan Act of 2021](#).

**3.6. Can Tribal governments use their entire CPF award towards planning for a project that is primarily funded by other sources? [1/4]**

Yes. Tribal government recipients may use a portion or all of their CPF grant award towards planning for a project that is primarily funded by other sources. Tribal government recipients must ensure that the target project complies with CPF statutory requirements, all other applicable federal statutes, regulations, executive orders, and Treasury's CPF Guidance for Tribal Governments. Specifically, the target project must be designed to address a critical need in the community and directly enable work, education, and health monitoring in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The project must also be operational before the end of the period of performance (December 31, 2026). Tribal government recipients should ensure that the target project is an acceptable use of funds for the other funding source(s).

Treasury will review the Tribal government's CPF application and may request additional information. Tribal governments may be required to report on the project and should expect additional details in forthcoming reporting guidance.

**3.7. What is the deadline for Tribal government recipients to expend their CPF funds after they receive them from Treasury? [4/28]**

Tribal recipients must expend CPF funds by the end of the period of performance, December 31, 2026. Any grant funds that are not used by the end of the period of performance must be returned to Treasury as part of the closeout process pursuant to 2 CFR 200.344(d).

Treasury has made the determination that if a Tribal recipient fully disburses award funds before the end of the period of performance, the timing and amount of advance payments made by Treasury are as close as is administratively feasible to the actual disbursements by a Tribal recipient, and are therefore in compliance with 2 C.F.R. 200.305(b)(1).

**3.8. Should Tribal government recipients track interest earned on CPF funds, and may they retain the interest? [4/28]**

Tribal government recipients should track the amount of interest earned on total Federal awards per year received from all Federal awarding agencies. If the amount of interest earned per year is \$500 or less, a Tribal government recipient may keep the interest earned for administrative expenses. If the amount of interest earned in one year is more than \$500, a Tribal government recipient must return the additional interest according to the instructions found at 2 C.F.R. 200.305(b)(9).



**3.9. Must a Tribal government recipient maintain CPF funds in an interest-bearing account? [4/28]**

If a recipient receives \$250,000 or more in total Federal awards per year, it must maintain those funds in interest-bearing accounts, unless certain conditions apply. Please consult 2 C.F.R. 200.305(b)(8) for further detail.

**3.10. Which federal consumer broadband subsidy programs must a service provider participate in for a completed Broadband Infrastructure Project funded by a Tribal government recipient? [4/28]**

Treasury has identified the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) as the federal consumer broadband subsidy program that a service provider must participate in for a completed Broadband Infrastructure Project funded by a Tribal government recipient. Tribal government recipients must require the service provider to participate in the ACP for a period of five years after the completion of a Broadband Infrastructure Project, or until the ACP or its successor program(s) are no longer operating, whichever is earlier.

**4. Eligible Uses - General**

**4.1. Can CPF recipients use funds for administrative purposes?**

Yes. CPF recipients may use funds for program administrative costs, which include both indirect and direct administrative costs. This amount may not generally exceed five percent of the total requested grant amount, or \$25,000, whichever is greater. Recipients may request a higher limit on program administrative costs by providing to Treasury, for its consideration, the rationale for the use of additional funds for administrative purposes.

**4.2. Do program administrative costs need to be pre-approved by Treasury? [1/4]**

No, program administrative costs do not need to be pre-approved by Treasury; however, CPF recipients are required to report on the usage of funds for these costs. Additional information will be provided in forthcoming reporting guidance.

**4.3. Can program administrative funds be reallocated and used for project costs? [1/4]**

Yes. CPF recipients may reallocate funds they initially intended to use for program administrative costs to instead be used for project costs. Changes to the amount of funds expended on program administrative costs should be made in a timely manner and promptly reflected in their Grant Plan (i.e., allocation table and Program Plan(s)) and in subsequent reporting. Updates to a non-Tribal government recipient Grant Plan can be made at any time prior to the end of the period of performance (December 31, 2026) through Treasury's Capital Projects Fund Submission Portal, and are subject to review and approval by Treasury.

Tribal governments should document this change during the reporting phase.

**4.4. How does Treasury differentiate between subrecipients and contractors? [1/4]**

Treasury follows the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR § 200.1) definitions of “subrecipients” and “contractors” and uses 2 CFR § 200.331 to differentiate between them.

For purposes of CPF, a “subrecipient” is an entity that receives a subaward from a CPF recipient to carry out a capital project on behalf of the CPF recipient. Subrecipients may include, but are not limited to, other levels or units of government, non-profits, or private entities. CPF recipients remain responsible for reporting to Treasury on their subrecipients’ use of funds. CPF recipients are also responsible for monitoring and overseeing subrecipients’ use of funds and other activities related to the award to ensure that the subrecipient complies with the statutory and regulatory requirements and the terms and conditions of the award.

A “contractor” is an entity that receives a contract by which a CPF recipient or subrecipient purchases property or services needed to carry out a CPF project or program. For example, CPF recipients may award contracts to other entities—contractors—in order to build, modify, or improve a capital asset.

**4.5. Can direct recipients of CPF grants award funds to subrecipients in the form of subgrants?**

Capital Projects Fund recipients may award funds in the form of subgrants to subrecipients, such as other levels or units of government (e.g., municipalities, counties), non-profits, private entities, or Tribal governments. Recipients are responsible for ensuring that subrecipients comply with the statutory and regulatory requirements and the terms and conditions established by Treasury’s CPF guidance.

**4.6. Can direct recipients of CPF grants award funds to subrecipients in the form of loans? [4/28]**

No. CPF recipients may not award funds to subrecipients in the form of loans.

**4.7. Do subrecipients of CPF funds have to comply with CPF guidance?**

Yes. Subrecipients receive a subaward from a recipient to carry out a Capital Project on behalf of the recipient with their federal award funding and must comply with CPF guidance. Additionally, direct recipients of CPF grants are responsible for ensuring that subrecipients comply with the statutory and regulatory requirements and the terms and conditions established by Treasury’s CPF guidance.

**4.8. Can a CPF grant recipient allocate its entire allocation to a single program and award subgrants to subrecipients?**

Yes. A recipient may use the allocated funding for a single eligible program that awards subgrants to subrecipients.

**4.9. Are subrecipients of CPF grant funds capped at five percent of their subaward for program administrative costs? [1/4]**

CPF recipients may use up to five percent of the total CPF grant award or \$25,000 (whichever is greater) for program administrative costs, which includes any CPF grant funds that subrecipients use for program administrative costs. In other words, the total of the CPF recipient's program administrative costs and each subrecipient's program administrative costs may not exceed five percent of the total CPF grant award unless a CPF recipient receives written approval from Treasury.

**4.10. Are pre-award costs incurred by a subrecipient preparing an application an allowable use of CPF grant funds? [1/4]**

Yes, but only if the subrecipient is successful in receiving a CPF subaward from a CPF recipient. CPF recipients should categorize a subrecipient's pre-award costs associated with preparing an application as a project cost as these costs will be incurred for individual projects. Note that if an entity incurs pre-award costs as part of a competitive selection process but is not ultimately selected as a subrecipient, its pre-award costs may not be reimbursed using CPF grant funds.

**4.11. Can funds be used to pay staff salaries and benefits?**

Salaries and benefits may qualify as program administrative costs or project costs, depending on the work being performed. Personnel costs required for administering CPF awards, including salaries and benefits to staff and consultants, are an allowable use of funds under the program administrative cost category (e.g., program directors, subject matter experts, equity consultants, grant administrators, financial analysts, accountants, and attorneys). Personnel costs required for carrying out a Capital Project are also allowable use of funds under the project cost category (e.g., project managers, construction labor, architects, environmental engineers, network engineers).

However, CPF grant funds may not be used for operating expenses, which includes the salaries of staff operating the capital project once it is completed.

**4.12. Can funds be used to convert buildings into Multi-Purpose Community Facilities?**

CPF recipients may construct or improve buildings that jointly and directly enable work, education, and health monitoring in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

**4.13. Can CPF grant funds be used for environmental reviews? [1/4]**

Yes. Costs associated with conducting environmental reviews for an eligible project are considered project costs.

CPF recipients are responsible for complying with all applicable environmental laws and regulations applicable to projects supported by CPF grant funding. CPF recipients must also retain records, permits, and documentation necessary to evidence compliance with all environmental requirements.

Treasury has developed an environmental checklist to assist CPF recipients in conducting due diligence related to compliance with environmental laws.

**4.14. Can CPF grant funds be combined with other sources of funds to carry out an eligible capital project? [4/28]**

Yes. Recipients can use CPF grant funds, in conjunction with other funding sources (e.g., federal funding sources, state and local funding sources, private funding sources) to undertake an eligible capital project. In all cases, projects funded with CPF grant awards must comply with all CPF requirements, in addition to requirements of the other funding source(s).

**5. Eligible Uses - Broadband**

**5.1. Can a program fund a presumptively eligible Broadband Infrastructure Project in an area where there is an existing enforceable federal funding commitment?**

If a recipient is considering using Capital Projects Fund grant funds in areas where there is an existing enforceable funding commitment for service that meets or exceeds 100Mbps download by 20Mbps upload, the recipient must ensure CPF grant funds will not be used for costs that will be reimbursed by the other federal or state funding streams. Additionally, CPF grant funds must be used only for complementary purposes.

**5.2. Is fiber-optic infrastructure the only eligible broadband investment?**

CPF recipients are encouraged to prioritize investments in fiber-optic infrastructure where feasible, as such advanced technology better supports future needs. To be presumptively eligible for funding, Broadband Infrastructure Projects must be designed to deliver, upon project completion, service that reliably meets or exceeds symmetrical download and upload speeds of 100 Mbps, unless impracticable.

**5.3. Are middle-mile broadband projects an eligible use of CPF grant funding?**

CPF recipients may use funds for middle-mile broadband grant projects. However, Treasury encourages recipients to focus on projects that will achieve last-mile connections and those considering funding middle-mile projects are encouraged to have commitments in place to support new and/or improved last-mile service.

**5.4. How should a CPF recipient determine the threshold of affordability for broadband connectivity?**

Treasury's CPF guidance provides flexibility for recipients of CPF grant funds to best determine the threshold of affordability for their communities. CPF recipients are encouraged to consult with the community as part of the process they undertake to consider affordability and are required to publish the description of their methods for considering affordability in their project selection process. Treasury will also require CPF recipients to report pricing data as part of program performance and monitoring. CPF recipients are also required to ensure that service providers for completed CPF funded Broadband Infrastructure Projects participate in the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program, which provides eligible households with discounts on broadband internet access services and devices.

**5.5. Which federal consumer broadband subsidy programs must a service provider participate in for a completed Broadband Infrastructure Project? [4/28]**

Treasury has identified the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) as the federal consumer broadband subsidy program that a service provider must participate in for a completed Broadband Infrastructure Project. State and territory recipients must require the service provider to participate in the ACP for the lifespan of the Broadband Infrastructure Project, or until the ACP or its successor program(s) are no longer operating, whichever is earlier

**5.6. How does a recipient of CPF grant funds demonstrate that technical standards established in the CPF guidance are impracticable because of geography, topography, or excessive cost?**

Treasury gives CPF recipients the flexibility to provide a range of data and other information to demonstrate impracticability. CPF recipients should provide this information in the Grant Plan.

**5.7. Can CPF grant funds be used to pay for the replacement or placement of utility poles? [4/28]**

The replacement or placement of utility poles is an eligible project cost when it is part of a CPF-approved Broadband Infrastructure Program Plan that directly provides new or improved broadband service to end users. CPF funds may not be used to fund a program or project which only supports the replacement or placement of utility poles..



## 6. Reporting

### 6.1. What reporting will be required for CPF grant recipients?

All recipients of CPF grants are required to submit **project and expenditure reports**. These reports will generally include, but are not limited to, data regarding projects, expenditures, project status, subawards, equity indicators, community engagement efforts, programmatic data, and other measures as determined by Treasury.

States, territories, and freely associated states will submit project and expenditure reports quarterly. Tribal governments will submit project and expenditure reports annually.

States, territories, and freely associated states (but not Tribal governments) are also required to submit **annual performance reports**. Annual performance reports must include data related to program outputs and outcomes against the stated objectives of the recipient's Grant Plan.

Specific reporting deadlines will be provided to recipients at the time of application approval. Treasury will release additional reporting guidance in the coming weeks which will be available on the [CPF website](#).

### 6.2. What data should a State, territory, and freely associated state recipient collect to facilitate compliance with its reporting requirements? [1/4]

Treasury will provide detailed reporting instructions, including reporting timelines, in forthcoming reporting guidance.

**Quarterly Reports:** At a minimum, State, territory, and freely associated state recipients should collect and be prepared to provide the following for *quarterly* project and expenditure reports:

- Project description;
- Project location(s);
- Project start and end date;
- Project status;
- Project expenditures;
- Number of households, businesses, and anchor institutions to be served;
- Location of communities to be served; and
- Description of how equity and community engagement activities informed project selection and design.

Additionally, States, territories, and freely associated states using CPF grant funds for *Broadband Infrastructure Projects* should collect and prepare the following information for each project:

- Whether the project is designed to, upon completion, reliably meet or exceed symmetrical 100 Mbps download and upload speeds;
- Technology type;
- Project ownership (e.g., private, public private partnership, municipal government, tribal government, non-profit, cooperative);
- Miles of fiber;
- Whether each location served is residential, commercial, or a community anchor institution; and
- Pricing offered (speed tiers to be offered, including the speed/pricing of its affordability offering).

More information will be released at a later date regarding specific reporting requirements applicable to other grant use types (Digital Connectivity Technology projects, Multi-Purpose Community Facility projects, and projects determined to be eligible based on case-by-case review).

**Annual Reports:** At a minimum, State, territory, and freely associated state recipients should collect and be prepared to provide the following for *annual* reports:

- Narrative response outlining progress towards objectives submitted in the application and Grant Plan (including Program Plan(s));
- Number of households served by the capital asset upon project completion (e.g., number of households with broadband access; number of households receiving devices through loan out programs; number of households with access to work, education, and health monitoring activities and services offered, etc.);
- Summary of community engagement and public participation activities conducted to solicit input from and/or partner with communities from the past year that informed the definition of critical need for program(s) and projects; and
- Summary of future community engagement and public participation activities planned for the upcoming year that will continue to shape program and project selection, implementation, and operation.

In the forthcoming reporting guidance, Treasury will provide additional information about what will be required by quarterly and annual reports. CPF recipients will be notified when the reporting guidance is publicly available on the [CPF website](#).

### 6.3. What data should Tribal government recipients collect to facilitate compliance with its reporting requirements? [1/4]

Treasury will provide detailed reporting instructions, including reporting timelines, in forthcoming reporting guidance for Tribal governments. Tribal governments will have a unique set of reporting guidelines separate from State, territory, and freely associated state CPF recipients.

**Annual Reports:** At a minimum, Tribal government recipients should prepare and collect the following, among other data, for *annual* reports:

- Project description;
- Project location(s);
- Project start and end date;
- Project status;
- Project expenditures;
- Number of households, businesses, and anchor institutions to be served; and
- Location of communities to be served.

Additionally, Tribal governments using CPF grant funds for *Broadband Infrastructure Projects* may be required to provide the following information for each project in the *first annual report* after a program has been approved by Treasury:

- Whether the project is designed to, upon completion, reliably meet or exceed symmetrical 100 Mbps download and upload speeds;
- Technology type;
- Project ownership (e.g., private, public private partnership, municipal government, tribal government, non-profit, cooperative);
- Miles of fiber;
- Whether each location served is residential, commercial, or a community anchor institution; and
- Pricing offered (speed tiers to be offered, including the speed/pricing of its affordability offering).

For other uses of funds, more information will be released at a later date. CPF recipients will be notified when the reporting guidance is publicly available on the [CPF website](#).

## 7. Miscellaneous

### 7.1. What are examples of eligible “health monitoring” services?

Treasury defines health monitoring services as, “services to monitor an individual’s health, including with respect to either physical or behavioral health.” This can include,

but is not limited to, services such as telemedicine appointments or community health screenings.

CPF recipients should review the CPF guidance to determine if their program or project is eligible. Treasury will evaluate all projects that are not presumptively eligible on a case-by-case basis.

## **8. Operations**

### **8.1. I cannot log into the Treasury Submission Portal or am having trouble navigating it. Who can assist me?**

If you have questions about the [Treasury Submission Portal](#) or need technical support, please email [CapitalProjectsFund@treasury.gov](mailto:CapitalProjectsFund@treasury.gov).

### **8.2. Why is Treasury employing ID.me for the Treasury Submission Portal?**

ID.me is a trusted technology partner to multiple government agencies and healthcare providers. It provides secure digital identity verification to those government agencies and healthcare providers to make sure you're you – and not someone pretending to be you – when you request access to online services. All personally identifiable information provided to ID.me is encrypted and disclosed only with the express consent of the user. Please refer to ID.me Contact Support for assistance with your ID.me account. Their support website is <https://help.id.me>.

### **8.3. Can multiple points of contact have access to an application on Treasury's CPF Submission Portal? [1/4]**

Yes. The application's primary contact should submit a request to [CovidReliefSupport@treasury.gov](mailto:CovidReliefSupport@treasury.gov) that includes the application number, the name of the CPF recipient, and the name and email address of the individual requesting access. Please also include [CapitalProjectsFund@treasury.gov](mailto:CapitalProjectsFund@treasury.gov) in the cc line of the e-mail to assist us in tracking requests.

Additionally, the application's primary contact may download a PDF copy of the CPF application to share at any time by logging into the [Treasury Submission Portal](#).