



**OFFICE OF STATEWIDE BROADBAND**

***Connect Maryland:  
FY25 Computer Labs Program***

***REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS***

*Issued October 21, 2024*



WES MOORE  
Governor  
ARUNA MILLER  
Lt. Governor  
JACOB R. DAY  
Secretary  
JULIA GLANZ  
Deputy Secretary



# Introduction

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## **Office of Statewide Broadband Maryland Computer Labs Program**

Having reliable access to computers and computing technologies remains a challenge in Maryland, especially for individuals that are unhoused, disabled, and/or veterans. These populations in particular often face additional barriers when disconnected from the digital economy and society, putting them at a significant disadvantage. The State of Maryland approved \$2 million for the Department of Housing and Community Development (“Department”) to support the Office of Statewide Broadband (“OSB”) in its efforts to assist in digital equity & inclusion efforts in Maryland. In accordance, the Office introduces the Maryland Computer Labs Program (MD-CLP). The funding source for this budgeted expense is from the American Rescue Plan Act, State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (ARPA). All federal rules regarding this funding must be adhered to by the applicant should an award be made.

Following the COVID pandemic, many Marylanders still face barriers to getting online, whether due to a lack of device ownership, lack of ability to access the Internet at home, or a lack of support that addresses their needs. In addition, due to the loss of the Affordable Connectivity Plan (ACP) subsidy, many Marylanders face yet another obstacle to getting connected. This grant program intends to remedy this by establishing and increasing community spaces where Marylanders may use desktop or laptop computers and other digital technologies safely and reliably.

The OSB aims to support local jurisdictions (City, County, or Municipal) and nonprofit corporations who are seeking to close the gap by providing public computer access for individuals with disabilities, Marylanders without permanent residence (i.e. unhoused), veterans, and our incarcerated & returning citizens. This grant opportunity will fund the creation, upgrade, and/or retrofit of computer labs/centers throughout Maryland. This grant opportunity will also fund the computer lab’s internet service subscription costs for up to three years. The majority (50% or higher) of those served by these computer labs and centers must fall into at least one or more of multiple covered populations: individuals with disabilities, homeless/unhoused individuals, veterans, incarcerated/returning citizens. Grant funding not to exceed \$65,000 will be offered to local jurisdictions or nonprofit corporations that are awarded.

Applications will consist of several written sections with a number of required worksheets and attachments. Applications must be prepared as described in this Guide.

# Application Submission

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## **When and Where to Submit Application:**

**Program applications must be submitted or postmarked by 11:59pm ET: November 29, 2024.**

While electronic submission is preferred, applications may be submitted in one of the following ways:

Postmarked, shipped, or hand-delivered paper copy of a completed application, with original signatures (*OSB may request electronic version in addition to paper submission*). Paper applications may be submitted to:

**Ronnie Hammond  
Office of Statewide Broadband  
Department of Housing and Community Development  
7800 Harkins Road  
Lanham, MD 20706**

## **Applications Delivered by Mail:**

Paper applications must show proof of mailing or shipping consisting of one of the following:

1. A legibly dated U.S. Postal Service (USPS) postmark;
2. A legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the USPS; or
3. A dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier showing the commercial carrier received the package on or before the application submittal deadline. Self-generated shipping labels where the actual pickup by the carrier occurs after the application submittal deadline are not acceptable.

If an application is sent through the USPS, neither of the following will be accepted as proof of mailing:

1. A private metered postmark; or
2. A mail receipt that is not dated by the USPS.

Applicants should note that the USPS does not uniformly provide a dated postmark. Before relying on this method, an applicant should check with its local post office.

## **Applications Delivered by Hand:**

Applications delivered by hand will be accepted daily between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. (Eastern Time), except Saturdays, Sundays and State or Federal holidays. Individuals delivering applications must provide proper identification to enter the building.

### **Applications Submitted Electronically:**

Applications may be submitted via email. If emailed, the message subject line should read “Maryland Computer Labs Program Application – *Organizational Applicant name*”. Except for file formats specifically called out in this guide, files should be converted to pdf’s prior to sending. Each file should be named to clearly reflect the information it contains. Emailed submissions may be sent to [osb.de@maryland.gov](mailto:osb.de@maryland.gov).

**Applicants that submit their applications after the deadline noted above will be notified that their applications will not be considered for review and their applications will be returned.**

Prior to official submission of applications, applicants may request technical assistance or other application guidance from the OSB, as long as such requests are made prior to, November 22, 2024. Technical assistance is not meant to create or edit an application, be an analysis or assessment of the quality of the materials submitted, a substitute for OSB review of completed applications, nor a determination of eligibility, if such determination requires in-depth analysis. The OSB will not solicit or consider scoring related information that is submitted after the application deadline. The OSB reserves the right to contact applicants to seek clarification on materials contained in the submitted application.

# Applying to the Program

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## **Applicant Eligibility**

Only entities legally organized as one of the following are eligible for receiving the grant award:

1. A Maryland local jurisdiction;
2. Incorporated Municipalities within the State of Maryland;
3. Local Government Agency delegated by the local Maryland jurisdiction;
4. A foundation, corporation, institution, association, or coalition that is— (i) a not-for-profit IRS approved 501(c) entity and (ii) providing services within the State of Maryland;
5. Community Anchor Institution within the State of Maryland
  - a. For this grant purpose, Community Anchor Institution is defined as an entity such as a school, institution of higher education, public housing organization, or community support organization that facilitates greater use of computer devices by vulnerable populations, including veterans, formerly incarcerated, unhoused individuals, and people with disabilities.

## **Timeframe**

**Applications are due on or before November 29, 2024. It is the OSB's intent to award funds beginning in December 2024. Projects must be completed by December 31, 2026.**

## **Funding Limits**

### **Computer Equipment Purchase:**

The Office will provide financial assistance for up to 100% for Computer Equipment Purchase(s).

Minimum grant amount: There is no minimum amount.

Maximum grant amount: \$65,000 per application

### **Internet Service Subscription:**

The Office will provide financial assistance for up to 100% for Internet Service Subscription.

Minimum grant amount: There is no minimum amount.

Maximum grant amount: \$10,000

While not required, we highly encourage applicants to identify other funding sources to leverage the available grant funding.

## **Funding Options**

The Office of Statewide Broadband provides flexibility for applicants to receive funding for both Computer Equipment Purchase and/or Internet Subscription.

The OSB will fund Internet Service costs **without requiring** applicants to request any funding for Computer Equipment Purchase, if the costs will fund Internet Service for a Computer Lab/Center. Similarly, applicants may request funding for only Computer Equipment Purchase without also applying to receive assistance for Internet Service Subscription.

## **Eligible Grant Purposes**

Grant funds may be used to finance:

1. **The purchase of computer equipment including i.e. Computers and Laptops:**
  - o Desktops or laptops with updated operating systems (computers must come with a standard manufacturer warranty or extended warranty).
  - o Keyboards, mice, and monitors.
  - o Accessories such as webcams, headphones, and microphones.
2. **Networking Equipment:**
  - o Routers and switches.
  - o Network cables and Wi-Fi access points.
  - o Network security devices such as firewalls.
3. **Cost of Internet Service Subscription:**
  - o Cost of Internet Service subscription up to 3 years (includes wired internet connection only).
4. **Marketing and Outreach up to 10% of total project budget:**
  - o Marketing and advertising materials targeted to the covered populations to be served.
  - o Outreach to the covered populations intended to be served to promote awareness of the computer lab/center and its activities.
5. **Operational Expenses up to 15% of total project budget:**
  - o Salaries for staff.
  - o General expenses required to maintain the computer lab.
6. **Administrative Expenses up to 15% of total project budget:**
  - o General administrative expenses related to the computer lab/center monitoring.

- o Training costs for instructional staff.
  - o Costs associated with security monitors. Monitors or security personnel if hired must be exclusively to monitor the computer lab/center.
7. **Software:**
- o Operating systems (e.g., Windows, macOS, Linux).
  - o Office productivity suites (e.g., Microsoft Office, Google Workspace).
  - o Educational and training software (must describe in detail the software and relation to program training).
  - o Antivirus and security software.
8. **Audiovisual Equipment:**
- o Projectors and screens.
  - o Smartboards (exclusively for training purposes).
  - o Speakers and sound systems (necessary for the operation of the computing devices).
9. **Assistive Technology:**
- o Screen readers and magnifiers.
  - o Adaptive keyboards and mice.
  - o Accessibility features.
10. **Miscellaneous:**
- o Cables, connectors, and adapters.
  - o Security devices.

All purchases must be necessary for the successful operation of the computer lab as well as for the effectiveness of the program.

### **Ineligible Grant Purposes**

The following are examples of ineligible use of funds:

1. **Operational Expenses:**
  - o Routine operational costs such as utilities and rent.
2. **Non-Broadband Infrastructure:**
  - o Construction or renovation of buildings.
  - o Non-broadband utility infrastructure (e.g., water, gas).
3. **Furniture and Miscellaneous Equipment:**
  - o Desks and chairs.
  - o Ergonomic accessories like wrist rests and monitor stands.
  - o Office furniture not specifically tied to broadband or computer lab use.
  - o Non-technical office supplies.

- Printers, photocopiers, scanners etc
  - Wi-Fi Hotspot(s).
4. **Entertainment and Recreation:**
- Video games, movies, or entertainment not related to educational or training purposes.
  - Recreational equipment.
5. **Personal Use Items:**
- Devices intended for personal use rather than communal or educational purposes.
  - Personal mobile phones or individual data plans.
6. **Travel and Hospitality:**
- Travel expenses, lodging, and meals.
  - Conference and event attendance fees.
7. **Marketing and Advertising:**
- Advertising not directly related to the digital equity initiative.
8. **Non-Digital Educational Materials:**
- Traditional textbooks and paper-based educational resources.
  - Classroom supplies not related to digital learning.
9. **Duplicative Projects:**
- Projects or purchases that duplicate existing services or infrastructure without adding significant value.
  - Overlapping projects funded by other grants or sources.
10. **Political and Lobbying Activities:**
- Funding political campaigns or lobbying efforts.
  - Advocacy work unrelated to digital equity or broadband access.

### **Covered Population**

While the grant program and its funding offer the ability to serve all communities in Maryland, the majority of the population (50% or higher) serviced by the computer lab must be one or multiple of the following populations:

- Individuals with disabilities;
- Individuals who are without permanent residence (i.e. unhoused or homeless);
- Incarcerated or Returning Citizens;
- Veterans



# Application Criteria

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The Application includes several items of information in narrative form as well as the Application form itself. While there is no minimum or maximum length of the required response, please be concise and limit your response to the information requested. If some of the information requested is not available at this time, please state this in your response.

## **Application Form**

Please complete the attached Application for the Maryland Computer Labs Program. Applications must be submitted by the specified date and time in order to be eligible. The application form must be completed in its entirety. Any missing information may result in the application being deemed ineligible. Instructions for the application form are provided to help guide applicants.

## **Project Narrative**

**Executive Summary:** The executive summary should provide a brief but comprehensive summary of the overall project, an overview of the covered populations being served, the needs of the population to be served, and how the funding will contribute towards project goals in a manner that advances digital equity for the covered populations served.

**Potential Barriers:** Discuss any barriers you might encounter.

**Partners and Local Engagement:** Applicants should include a list of community partners and describe their involvement in the computer lab/center development and/or their support of digital inclusion more broadly.

**Intended Outcomes and Metrics:** Describe the intended outcome(s) and metrics for the project. Discuss how you will define success.

**Statement of Experience:** Applicants must provide a written narrative describing their demonstrated capability and experience, if any, as it relates to the proposed project. The applicant must include principal employees' relevant work experience that would ensure the success of the project.

**Timeline:** Applicants must provide an estimated timeline of key project milestones.

## **Funding Scope & Budget**

A scope of work related to the funding must be provided. The scope of work should be specific to the funding requested.

Please include a simple budget that shows how you plan to spend the funding. The budget should be in the following categories:

- Operations (payroll, supplies, materials etc.)

- Contracted services (payments to independent contractors, external organizations, etc.)
- Travel (must be related to program deployment)
- Please also include any other funding necessary for the project including the anticipated source of the funds

A complete and thorough executive summary is crucial for the success of your proposal. Utilize the below key components that must be included as you create and design your application.

1. **Eligibility Criteria:** Verify your organization's eligibility with proof of non-profit status or local jurisdiction documentation.
2. **Project Proposal:** Provide a detailed description of your project, demonstrating the need for a computer lab in your community and the expected impact.
3. **Budget and Financial Plan:** Submit a detailed, itemized budget and outline your sustainability plan for maintaining the computer lab post-grant.
4. **Implementation Plan:** Include a project timeline, key milestones, and information about your project team and any partnerships.
5. **Impact and Evaluation:** Explain the anticipated benefits of the project and outline a plan for measuring success through key performance indicators.
6. **Technical Specifications:** List the equipment to be purchased, ensuring it meets relevant technical standards.
7. **Community Engagement:** Describe how you will engage the community and support users through training and technical assistance.
8. **Equity and Inclusion:** Highlight how your project will promote equity and accessibility, particularly for underserved groups.
9. **Documentation and Compliance:** Attach letters of support and agree to comply with all grant terms, including reporting requirements.

A complete and full application will significantly enhance your chances of securing funding. Make sure to address each requirement thoroughly to demonstrate the viability and potential impact of your project.

## Additional Information

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1. The OSB reserves the right to waive any formalities of the RFA process, to re-issue the RFA, to amend the RFA, to extend the dates provided herein, or to suspend the RFA as the OSB may determine, at its sole discretion, is in the best interest of the OSB.
2. No reimbursement will be made by the OSB for any costs incurred in responding to this RFA, developing or submitting responses to the RFA, or attendance at meetings or interviews.
3. The OSB reserves the absolute right to conduct such investigations as it deems necessary to assist in the evaluation of any response to the RFA, to establish the claimed participant experience, the responsibility, reliability, references, reputation, business ethics, history, qualifications and financial ability of the applicant, proposed partner(s), independent consultants and suppliers.
4. Successful applicants will be chosen based on qualifications, evaluation of Responses, and a possible interview. The OSB reserves the right to conduct such discussions or negotiations with Counties or other entities, as it deems necessary to assist in the evaluation of any proposal, to secure maximum clarification and completeness of any proposal, and to select the Responses that best meet the requirements of the OSB and the public interest.
5. All awardees will be required to execute a Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) that outlines the obligations of the awardee and State to the Project.
6. Questions should be addressed to the OSB Digital Equity Team, Office of Statewide Broadband at [osb.de@maryland.gov](mailto:osb.de@maryland.gov) or 301-429-7964.

### **Instructions for completing the Computer Labs Program application:**

1. Applicant Name: this is the name on your W-9 form.
2. Federal EIN Number: the Employer Identification Number assigned by the IRS.
3. UEI Number
4. DUNS Number (if applicable)
5. 501(c) documents for nonprofits (if applicable)
6. Certificate of good standing (if applicable)
7. Address: this is the address of your office, not the project address.
8. Contact Information: please provide a contact for the application.
9. Client Organization Name & Location: address of the computer lab/center.
10. Project Information: estimate the % of covered population served by the computer lab.
11. Project Budget: provide a detailed breakdown of how you plan to spend project funds.
12. Project Narrative: provide project narrative document including an executive summary and scope of work with timeline.