OFFICE OF STATEWIDE BROADBAND

Connect Maryland:
FY22 Digital Inclusion Grant Program

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Issued February 09, 2022

LARRY HOGAN
Governor

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
Lt. Governor

KENNETH C. HOLT
Secretary

OWEN McEVOY
Deputy Secretary

Executive Summary

COVID-19 has further exposed the digital divide in Maryland and its consequences for all residents. Families who do not have access to the internet, do not have a computer or laptop, or do not know how to use them are at an impossible disadvantage. The State of Maryland has approved $2 million in the FY2022 Budget for the Department of Housing and Community Development ("Department") to support the Office of Statewide Broadband ("OSB") in its efforts to assist in digital inclusion efforts in Maryland. To address the issue of the digital divide, the Office is introducing the Digital Inclusion Grant Program (MD-DIG). The funding source for this budgeted expense is the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds administered by the US Treasury. Funded Projects must comply with the ARPA requirements. All federal rules regarding this funding must be adhered to by the applicant should an award be made.

In order to best use the resources at its disposal, the OSB is looking to partner with local Jurisdictions (County or Municipal) and nonprofit corporations seeking to close the digital divide in Maryland. This grant opportunity will further access to high–speed internet, implement programs to expand digital literacy and expand digital opportunities. Grant funding not to exceed $75,000 will be offered to local jurisdictions or nonprofit corporations that are working to further the goals of the OSB, including:

- Enhancing the understanding of internet service;
- Assisting households with applications for internet service;
- Providing training to residents in the use of digital tools;
- Enhancing the capacity of communities to access jurisdiction services, participate in civic matters, and pursue educational opportunities;
- Researching and assisting populations with low adoption rates for home internet and computers; and
- Other digital inclusion or equity goals as defined in the application.

1. Summary of Program Requirements

This is a summary of the Digital Inclusion Grant Program requirements.

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible to apply, an applicant must meet one of the following criteria:

- be a local government (Counties & Municipalities);
- be 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; or
- be a community based anchor institution.

Timeframe

Applications are due on or before March 31, 2022. It is the OSB's intent to award funds beginning in May 2022. Projects must be completed by December 31, 2023.

Funding Limits

Digital Inclusion Planning:

The Office will provide financial assistance for the development of a Digital Inclusion Plan. Financial assistance for up to 50% of the cost of the plan development will be provided.

Minimum grant amount: $5,000

Maximum grant amount: $30,000

Digital Inclusion Programming:

The Office will provide financial assistance for up to 100% for Digital Inclusion Program(s).

Minimum grant amount: $10,000 grant minimum

Maximum grant amount: $75,000 per application

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

Eligible Grant Purposes

Grant funds may be used to finance

Digital Inclusion planning:
- local jurisdictions and communities that plan to develop a digital inclusion plan can apply for planning funds;
- local jurisdictions and communities that have completed or drafted a digital inclusion plan can apply for funds to implement a portion or all of their plan;

Digital Inclusion Programming:
- to develop a digital inclusion plan and/or to implement digital inclusion activities;
- to facilitate the adoption of broadband by covered populations in order to provide educational and employment opportunities to those populations;
- to implement (i) training programs that cover basic, advanced, and applied skills; or (ii) other workforce development programs;
- to construct, upgrade, expend, or operate new or existing public access computing centers for covered populations through community anchor institutions;

- researching and identifying populations with low adoption rates for home internet and computers; or
- to further other qualifying digital inclusion or equity goals as applicable.

Ineligible Grant Purpose

The Grant may not be used for construction of broadband infrastructure.

Covered Populations:

While the grant program and its funding offer the ability to serve all communities in Maryland the following covered populations who are most at need will receive priority:

- individuals who live in a household with income less than or equal to 150 percent of federal poverty level;
- aging individuals;
- individuals with disabilities;
- individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who -
    o are English learners; and
    o have low levels of literacy;
- individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group; or
- individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.

2. Application Criteria

Through the MD-DIG program, the OSB will provide funding to selected applicants to assist in the implementation of Projects that involve digital inclusion initiatives to address the digital divide. The OSB will review submitted applications to ensure that the information contained therein is complete and proposes an eligible digital inclusion project. While the Department will provide financial resources to help fund the Project, the applicant will be responsible for the overall funding, implementation and operation of the Project.

Application Form

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.

Executive Summary

The executive summary should provide a brief, comprehensive summary of the overall project, the needs of the population to be served and how the funding will contribute to a solution.

Digital Inclusion Plan: If you are applying for a grant for planning purposes, describe the goals for the plan, where you are in the process, the desired outcome, and how the grant funds will be utilized.

Digital Inclusion Program: If applying to implement a portion of a digital inclusion plan or if creating or expanding a digital inclusion program, indicate how this project fits into your plan's goals or how the program will enhance digital inclusion. Include who the project will serve, what the desired outcome is and how it will meet unmet needs in the community.

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 planning process and/or their support of digital inclusion more broadly. If a digital inclusion plan has been developed, please list the partners who were a part of that planning. If you are proposing to start the planning process, indicate the partners that are currently a part of the planning group and who you plan to include in the process. Partners may include but are not limited to: entities of local jurisdictions (city and county personnel), educational institutions (K-12, community colleges and universities), libraries, businesses, nonprofit organizations, internet service providers, and faith groups. We encourage applicants to reach out to any partners in advance of developing their application. If you are not a local jurisdictional agency, please indicate whom you are working with from the local jurisdiction.

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.

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.

3. Additional Information

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 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 Ronnie Hammond, Program Manager, Office of Statewide Broadband at ronnie.hammond@maryland.gov or 301-429-7514.

Definitions

- *Access* - The existence of broadband infrastructure and availability of reliable high-speed internet plans.
- *Adoption* – Percentage of the population that subscribes to a broadband service.
- *Affordability* – Ensuring that broadband service is not only available but can be obtained at reasonable pricing.
- *Digital Divide* - The gap between those who have access to technology, the internet, and digital literacy training and those who do not.
- *Digital Equity* – Condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy.
- *Digital Inclusion* - Activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of internet service.
- *Digital Literacy* - Ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.
- *Non-Profit* – Organization in which no part of the organization's net earnings can inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

Instructions for completing the Digital Inclusion Grant 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. DUNS Number for the applying entity

4. Address: this is the address of your office, not the project address.

5. Contact Information: please provide a contact for the application.

6. Project Information-Funding: enter the amount of funding being requested as well as the amount of funding being received from other sources.

7. Project Information-Project Use: identify the use of the project and describe the project briefly.

8. Application Narrative: narrative addressing all required items in the "Application Criteria" section of the application guide.

9. Budget: Simple budget indicating how you plan to spend the funding. Include any leveraged funding.

10. Applications and all correlating documents should be submitted to **OSB.MD@maryland.gov** please include in the subject line: "MD-DIG: *Name of Applying Organization*"

OFFICE OF STATEWIDE BROADBAND
Digital Inclusion Grant Program
FY22 Grant Application Form

(additional information required – see RFA for all application requirements)

Applicant Information

Applicant's Legal Name (must match W9):

_____

Federal EIN Number: _____   DUNS Number: _____

Attach a copy of your most current IRS W-9 Form

Address:

Street: _____

City: _____

County: _____

State: _____   Zip: _____

Contact Information

This should be the primary contact for the person coordinating all elements of this application for the Applicant. This is the person the Office will contact with any questions regarding the application.

Name: _____   Title: _____

Email: _____   Phone: _____

Project Information

Estimated Funding:

Applicant: _____ (funding provided by applicant)

Local Jurisdiction: _____ (funding provided by local jurisdiction)

State: _____ (funding requested from OSB)

Other: _____ (funding provided by any other source)

Project Total: _____

Identify the Project Use (check all that apply):

    Access   Planning

    Affordability   Adoption

    Literacy/Training   Other

Please briefly describe what the funding will be used for:

_____

_____

Other Required Information

The following should be attached to your application:

1.   Executive summary of the project

2.   Project budget

3.   Federal Form W-9

CERTIFICATION OF GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW

I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the information provided in this Application is true and correct. I further certify that I have reviewed the Request for Applications, FY22 Digital Inclusion Grant Program documentation including eligibility of costs.

_____   _____

Signed by Authorized Representative   *Date*

_____

Typed Name

_____

Title

Sample Budget

Organization Name: ABC Cares
IRS 501(c)3 EIN #: 77-1234567
Project Title: Digital Equity for All
Total Budget: $35,000.00

Budget Line Item Description	Requested Grant Funds	Grantee In-Kind (monetary, non-monetary)	Total
Personnel:	$20,000.00	$40,000.00	$60,000.00
Fringe Benefits:	$6,400.00	$12,000.00	$18,400.00
Travel: Staff travel for skills training event, etc.	$300.00		$300.00
*Equiptment: 2 Lenovo Think Pads purcased from Central Computers at $900 each.	$1,800.00		$1,800.00
Supplies: General office and program supplies	$1,000.00		$1,000.00
Contracts:			$0.00
Other: Virtual Training Platform	$5,500.00		$5,500.00
Totals:	$35,000.00	$52,000.00	$87,000.00

* If requesting funds to purchase devices, please specify: (1) number of devices; (2) cost per device; (3) vendor.

*Name of Employee	FTE %
Janice Doe, Program Coordinator	40.0%
Charlie Brown, Class Instructor	25.0%
Total FTEs:	65.0%

*Please specify personnel assigned to the Grant Project: