Capital Projects Fund
Broadband Infrastructure Program
Frequently Asked Questions

DEO FLORIDA DEPARTMENT of ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

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General Program and Applicant Information:

What is the Capital Projects Fund- Broadband Infrastructure Program?

- **Purpose:**

  o Established by the U.S. Department of Treasury as part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 which provides funds to eligible states to carry out critical capital projects that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring, including remote options, in response to the public health emergency.

- **Funding:**

  o The Capital Projects Fund- Broadband Infrastructure Program is funded through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

- **Overview:**

  o The Capital Projects Fund program allows eligible entities to invest in capital assets that meet communities' critical needs in the short and long term. A key emphasis of the Capital Projects Fund is to make funding available for broadband infrastructure, especially in rural America, Tribal communities, and low-and moderate-income communities. Through the Broadband Infrastructure Program subgrant program, the Florida Office of Broadband aims to provide Capital Projects Fund funds to eligible communities for the purpose of expanding and improving broadband internet infrastructure and ensuring broadband internet minimum speeds of 100/20 megabits per second ("Mbps") scalable to at least 100/100 Mbps.

What entities are eligible to apply for the funds?

- Applicants eligible to apply for grant awards include:
  o Local governmental units (e.g., municipalities or counties);
  o Indian Tribes;
  o Non-profit organizations or private entities;
  o Co-operatives, electric co-operatives and utilities;
  o Other entities that develop and/or operate broadband networks, including networks that are owned, operated by, or affiliated with local governments; and
  o Private entities in the form of corporations, limited liability companies, general partnerships, or limited partnerships.

Are there any other requirements for applicants?

- Entities must show community engagement and partnership in all applications in terms of local investment, documentation of public-private consultation, and sustainability plans. Letters of support alone will not be sufficient to evidence this engagement.

What is the maximum grant amount to be awarded under this program?

- There is no maximum award amount for the Capital Projects Fund Broadband Infrastructure Program.

Can multiple applications be submitted within the same county?

- Yes, multiple applications may be submitted and will be reviewed to prevent duplication of prospective coverage areas.

What are the eligible uses of the funds?

- Eligible projects under this program are capital projects that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring. For a project to be an eligible use of Capital Projects Fund grant funds, it must meet all of the following criteria:

    o The project invests in capital assets designed to directly enable work, education, and health monitoring.

    o The project is designed to address a critical need of the community to be served by it.

    o Rural broadband infrastructure and connectivity projects that include the construction and deployment of broadband Internet infrastructure in rural areas, prioritizing the deployment of broadband Internet infrastructure in areas where broadband Internet service is not currently available from a terrestrial provider.

    o General broadband infrastructure and connectivity projects that include the build-out of broadband Internet infrastructure, prioritizing projects serving underserved areas throughout the state.

    o Emergency services broadband infrastructure and connectivity projects that focus on emergency services and future resiliency efforts in local communities and include the build-out of broadband Internet infrastructure.

When does the application cycle open and close?

- The application cycle opened on February 28, 2023, and all applications must be received by the Florida Office of Broadband by 5 p.m., Eastern Time, on April 14, 2023.

Will there be an application challenge period?

- The Broadband Infrastructure Program does not provide a challenge period; however, there will be an Open Comment Period between April 7, 2023, and April 21, 2023.

By what date must an awarded grantee complete its project?

- The awardee is required to expend all funds by December 31, 2026. Grant agreements will be structured to allow for expenditure and close-out of all agreements prior to the deadline.

Are there any substantial rule changes from round one?

- No. This is the first application window for the Capital Projects Fund- Broadband Infrastructure Program.

March 24, 2023

Where on your website is the application for the grant program?

- The application can be found under the Capital Projects Tab. Please click here: Capital Projects Fund.

Is this program focused on middle mile or last mile?

- Broadband Infrastructure Program is focused on last mile because each project must show a direct tie back to workforce, education, and health monitoring access.

Can you provide an approximate time frame for when Capital Projects Fund digital connectivity technology and multipurpose facility projects will be open for applications?

- The Office of Broadband continues to work with the U.S. Treasury to provide more information on the status of the digital connectivity technology and multipurpose facility projects. Information will be provided as it becomes available.

Will an application that has local match be scored higher than an application that has no match?

- There is no match requirement. The Office strongly encourages private leverage to gain points. There is no match or match requirement from local communities.

The scoring and evaluation document calls for proof of government partnerships, please describe the minimum standard for a partnership.

- The proof of partnership is to ensure that whoever applies for a project area, the local entity of the community is aware of the project. The Office conversation, coordination, and potentially collaboration through the application and planning phases.

Are local city governments who also operate as an Internet Service Providers eligible for funding?

- Yes, local city governments which also operate as Internet Service Providers are eligible for funding, but must adhere section 350.81, Florida Statutes.

I see that local governments could apply directly for this new program if the local government wanted to partner with an Internet Service Provider, would we have to be the owner of the infrastructure and lease it out to the provider or would we partner with a provider?

- It is a partnership. If the community does not want to own the infrastructure, they should have the conversation with the Internet Service Provider. The Internet Service Providers are a resource regarding providing the sustainability and maintenance for that project.

May a county or political subdivision apply for funding on its own without a formal public private partnership with an Internet Service Provider?

- The Office will not define the formality of the public private partnership. Applicants will score higher if they can show a public /private partnership. Political subdivisions applying on their own must be aware there are no administration funds associated with these awards, and the time frame is short. The competitive solicitation process may consume valuable construction time.

Since most cities and nonprofits don't have the additional manpower or ecosystem in place to deliver, manage, or monitor these types of programs, does the grant cover salaries, project management, program delivery, etc.?

- No, the grant does not cover salaries, project management, or project delivery costs.

Who needs to supply the five years of audited financial statements? Is it the main applicant or is it for each of the partners, as well?

- The main applicant will be the one to supply the five years of audited financial statements.

The webinar indicated that if an applicant is already receiving a broadband grant from a number of programs, they are not eligible for funding under this program. Is that a federal or state restriction?

- If a service area is already receiving funds from another broadband program, the project, not the applicant, is ineligible for funding.

What is the word and/or character limits for each of the responses that require a brief or detailed description?

- The Office encourages full narratives when possible. The Executive Summary is 200 characters but if more space is needed, please add it as an attachment.

Is there still more Broadband Opportunity Program funding coming as the challenge process has not been completed? Can we apply for the same areas that are pending broadband opportunity program outcomes?

- Yes, applicants may apply to the same areas as the Broadband Opportunity Program. Applicants must be sure to address the nuances of the Capital Projects Fund- Broadband Infrastructure Program. However, there will be more Broadband Opportunity Program funds available.

Can the grant funds be used towards the vehicle purchases or is it only for equipment?

- Grant funds may only be used for equipment for the project and the project infrastructure. The applicant will need to show the direct purchase for infrastructure for the project.

When do you anticipate the emergency services broadband infrastructure and connectivity program to be open for grant applications?

- This Broadband Infrastructure Program encompasses rural connectivity, general connectivity, and emergency services broadband infrastructure. Partner with the community Local Technology Planning Team and Internet Service Provider to submit applications, making sure the Emergency Services Broadband Infrastructure is included in the application.

If there are more applications than funds available, can you confirm that Department of Economic Opportunity will award the application by highest score until available funds are fully used?

- The scoring will take into consideration all details of the application to ensure that it is the highest score. The level of detail will be reflected in the score.

If there are multiple applications that overlap, will Department of Economic Opportunity only award the highest scoring applicant, or will they allow multiple awards in overlapping areas?

- The Office will review all submitted applications. Awards will not be provided to overlapping areas. Applications that cover the most service area will be awarded.

Can Internet Service Providers be part of the public private partnership for Capital Projects Fund if they apply for Broadband Opportunity but have yet to be awarded?

- Yes, the application would need to be resubmitted for the Capital Projects Fund.

If the service area has received funding from another program, but the application supplements a previous application for the same service area, will the application be eligible?

- It depends on if the application is serving unserved or underserved area. If the application is an expansion project, it is allowed, especially if it is covering specific portions within the county or community that are not already connected. The expansion will be treated as a new project area and must follow the requirements of 2 CFR 200, including competitive solicitations.

Award Details, Contract Details, and Affordability:

For small counties, will there be an advancement of grant funds to start projects?

- No, the Broadband Infrastructure Program does not provide an advancement of grant funds.

Is the reimbursement provision a criterion of the federal program or is that a state decision?

- The reimbursement provision is a decision. It is consistent with the state administers federal and state funding programs.

Are there minimum and maximum funding amounts?

- No, there is no minimum or maximum funding amount.

How long does it take for a reimbursement to take place after expenditure?

- Usually, a reimbursement takes 2-3 weeks, at minimum, pending appropriate documentation and invoice submission. The Office understands that time is of the essence in getting reimbursement for these programs. The Office will work individually with each applicant to ensure swiftness.

When is the period of performance start date? What date should we start our project timeline?

- The project timeline will start upon execution of the contract between the grantee and the state. The grantee will have until December 2026 to complete the project and expend all funds.

What are the ongoing reporting requirements?

- Reporting requirements will be established in executed subrecipient agreements and will follow the requirements established in the Federal/State Award agreement and may be found under Guidance for States, Territories and Freely Associated States.

Are Davis Bacon and other or otherwise prevailing wages required for a project?

- Yes, Davis Bacon and other prevailing wages requirements apply to the program.

Is there a remediation period?

- No, there is no remediation period.

Can this grant program assist communities of where there is broadband coverage but where most people lack access due to income?

- Affordability is a component of all broadband funding programs, and each community will need to work with the Internet Service Provider's and the low-income programs offered.

The program details call for a low-cost service option, is there a definition of low cost?

- Please refer to the Affordable Connectivity Program, as well as low-cost programs through Internet Service Providers.

Can you clarify the requirement of participation in the Affordable Connectivity Program assuming this requirement is just providers?

The Affordable Connectivity Program is a federal program. All Internet Service Provider awardees are required to participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program.

Local Technology Planning Teams:

How do you see Local Technology Planning Teams assisting applicants as members are typically not grant writers?

- The Local Technology Planning Team's are not expected to write applications. The Local Technology Planning Teams are a way for the communities to have a voice in project areas and gain an understanding of the needs of their communities. The Office highly encourages the internet service providers to be a part of these teams. Per section 288.9961, F.S., Local Technology Planning Teams include any of industry sectors (11 listed in the statute): libraries, K-12 education, college/universities, local health care providers, private businesses, community organizations, economic development organizations, local governments, tourism, parks and recreation, and agriculture. Internet Service Providers are considered an industry sector and should be present in these conversations. It is important to have collaborative conversations between the communities and the Internet Service Providers. Many Internet Service Providers are very familiar with writing out these applications, and a benefit of partnering with an Internet Service Provider who would be filling out this application. Communities may have multiple applications from multiple Internet Service Providers for multiple areas.

Since we are a local city government and an Internet Service Provider, do we have to form a partnership with another entity?

- A partnership is not required, but the Office encourages communication and collaboration to ensure that community priorities are kept in focus.

Is there a list of Local Technology Planning Team contacts available?

- Please contact Sean Lewis Sean.Lewis@DEO.MyFlorida.com for information on Local Technology Planning Team contacts.

Additional:

For the Serviceable User Segment attachment, are we to list the individual entities? For example, Jones Middle School, Firehouse #4, Mercy Hospital, YMCA, etc.?

- It is advised to provide as much information as possible in your application to help gain an understanding of exactly who will be served in these projects.

CAF II award areas are ineligible for funding, but the speed tier for eligible service locations is now 100/20 Mbps, per this round of funding. How do we rectify this discrepancy since CAF II had a minimum speed requirement of 10/1?

- For this program the definition of unserved is >25/3 Mbps, underserved are considered < 25/3 and >100/20.

Could we install community Wi-Fi in unserved neighborhoods to meet access needs?

- If the project meets the requirements listed in the U.S. Treasury guidance, and there is a direct tie back to workforce, education, and health monitoring, then the project may be submitted for consideration under the Capital Projects Fund- Digital Connectivity Technology Program, which has not yet opened.

If I have a 5000 FTTH project under constructions today, if there is no challenge process how is the state going to prevent funding overbuild?

- The Open Comment Period from April 7, 2023- April 14, 2023, provides an opportunity for information to be shared with the Office regarding infrastructure build out around the state. The Office will also post maps of projects submitted and ask Internet Service Providers to review and provide information to the Office of overlapping areas. While the is no formal Internet Service Provider "challenge" process, the Office internal review will look at existing infrastructure and service areas.

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Is there any requirement for an application to have previously reported broadband data to the Federal Communications Commission's 477 database and/or the state broadband location map?

- There is no requirement to report to the Office, but Internet Service Providers are required to provide data to the Federal Communications Commission. If an Internet Service Provider is willing to share data with Department of Economic Opportunity for inclusion in the Faster Florida map, the Office welcomes the additional data.

When asking about the order of awards?

- Awards will be announced after all projects have been reviewed and scored.

Are ACAM areas eligible?

- ACAM agreements will be reviewed to determine eligibility. Under no circumstances will duplication of benefits be allowed. If your agreement commits you to serving specific locations, those locations will not be eligible for this program.

Will unlicensed wireless options be permitted where it may be more economical to do trenching versus trenching physical fiber in the last mile?

- This will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

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