

# DIGITAL CHAMPION GRANT

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**Dec. 5, 2023**

N.C. Department of Information Technology  
Division of Broadband and Digital Equity



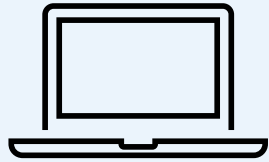
# IT'S TIME TO CLOSE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN NORTH CAROLINA

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At least 1.1 million North Carolina households lack access to high-speed internet, cannot afford it or do not have the skills needed to take advantage of the digital economy. Gov. Roy Cooper has a plan to close the digital divide to achieve digital equity for all North Carolinians.



# DIGITAL DEVICES, SKILLS & AFFORDABILITY



**328,000**

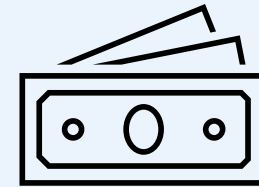
Estimated N.C. households without a home laptop or desktop computer

**91%**

of N.C. jobs require some digital skills

**1/3**

of U.S. workers don't have foundational digital skills



**1.3M**

N.C. households would have to pay more than 2% of their annual income to afford broadband cost of \$60/month

# AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDING



## INFRASTRUCTURE

\$971M

Ensure availability of internet service at speeds of at least 100/20 Mbps for more than 98% of North Carolina households.

\$380M

- GREAT Grant (\$350M American Rescue Plan Act; \$30M State CIF)

\$400M

- Completing Access to Broadband (CAB)

\$90M

- Stop Gap Solutions

\$100M

- Broadband Make Ready Accelerator (Pole Replacement Fund)

\$1M

- Broadband Mapping



## AWARENESS AND DIGITAL LITERACY

\$50M

Improve awareness and enable all North Carolina citizens to realize the benefits of high-speed internet through digital literacy allowing access to the digital economy.

# STATE DIGITAL EQUITY GRANT PROGRAM

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- Interagency Digital Equity Funding Program (Fall 2022) - \$9.9 million
  - Large, scalable programs that support the entire state or a region
  - Eligible entities were universities, community colleges, and state agencies
  - Announced awards Jan. 18 for eight state government agency projects
- Digital Champion Grant Program (2023) - \$14 million
  - Build capacity to develop or expand digital equity programs in communities across North Carolina
  - Will require partnerships between local municipalities and community-based organizations

# DIGITAL CHAMPION GRANT

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## Eligible Entities Include:

- Community services
  - Local governments (town, city, county)
  - Local libraries
  - K-12 school systems (public, private and charter)
- Nonprofit organizations
- Higher education institutions
- Regional entities (ex. councils of government)

*For profit entities are not eligible to apply for this funding opportunity*

## Funding

Applicants can apply for up to \$400,000 per county with a maximum of \$1.5 million allocated per project

- The start date will be outlined in the signed contract between funding recipients and NCDIT, and the funding term will end Dec. 31, 2026

# PRIORITY POPULATIONS

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Projects **MUST** prioritize one or more of the following groups:

- Low-income households (150% of the Federal Poverty Level or below)
- Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area
- Aging residents
- Incarcerated and second chance residents/Reentry/Justice Involved
- Veterans
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who
  - Are English learners; and/or
  - Have low levels of literacy
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group

# EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS

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- “Digital navigator” program to help community members get connected, use digital tools/devices, and access digital skills classes
- Digital literacy and digital skills courses and trainings
- Supporting local coalitions to implement municipal or regional digital inclusion plans
- Expanding device lending programs and/or device distribution programs
- Increasing the accessibility or usability of online and digital content
- Staff time or consulting services for digital inclusion projects
- Creating telehealth rooms in libraries, schools or other community spaces
- Other projects related to internet affordability, devices, digital literacy, or technical support/assistance



# APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Prompt	Notes
<b>Scope of the project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide a detailed description of all major project activities.</li><li>• Describe in detail how the project activities will advance digital equity.</li><li>• Describe your entity's experience working in digital equity (if applicable).</li></ul>
<b>Area and Population Served</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What geographic area will your project serve?</li><li>• Who will your project serve? What are their biggest digital needs?</li><li>• Which priority populations outlined above will your project serve? What is your experience serving this/these population(s)?</li></ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes and Metrics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is your intended outcome(s) and metrics for the project? How will you define success?</li><li>• How will you assess baseline metrics and outcomes?</li><li>• What tangible activities will you accomplish within the first year?</li><li>• How will you share what you learn outside your agency?</li></ul>
<b>Partners and Local Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Include a list of partners involved in the project and describe their role. If all partners are not yet identified, please describe process for identifying your partners.</li></ul>
<b>Potential Obstacles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss any barriers or obstacles you might encounter.</li></ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Please include a timeline for the activities outlined in the project narrative. Provide specific details on what activities will be accomplished in the first year.</li></ul>
<b>Budget</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The project budget should reflect all project costs. If you are leveraging other funding, please reference those funding sources.</li></ul>

# APPLICATION TIMELINE

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Prompt	Notes
<b>Applications Due</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jan. 22, 2024, by 11:59 p.m.</li></ul>
<b>Review of Applications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review Committee evaluations</li><li>• NCDIT Final Determination</li></ul>
<b>Grantees Announced</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Award Letters<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organizations have two weeks to accept/decline</li></ul></li><li>• Grantee selection announced</li><li>• Award Agreements</li></ul>

# REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

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Reporting requirements will be outlined in the contract between funding recipients and NCDIT. We will be available throughout the funding term for technical assistance and to discuss the status of a project.

Examples of these efforts include:

- **Monthly Check Ins:** A scheduled meeting between the grantor and the grantee organization to discuss the progress of the grant project and to ensure accountability for the use of grant funds
- **Monthly Financial Expenditure Reports:** A review of the organization's financial and programmatic records and documentation, conducted by the grantor
- **Quarterly Accountability Reports:** A quarterly progress report for the grantee, covering the project progress

# SCORING RUBRIC

Prompt	Notes
<b>Scope of the project - 15 points</b> (Scale: 13-15 Excellent, 11-12 Strong, 7-10 Average, 0-6 Poor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Addresses the digital divide by expanding or developing local focused digital equity programs.</li><li>• Provides a detailed description of all major project activities.</li><li>• Describes how the project activities will advance digital equity.</li></ul>
<b>Area and Population Served - 15 points</b> (Scale: 13-15 Excellent, 11-12 Strong, 7-10 Average, 0-6 Poor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The geographic area served by the project fits the application criteria</li><li>• Clearly identifies the populations the project serves and their biggest digital needs.</li><li>• Project serves one or more of the priority populations</li><li>• Demonstrates experience working with the named priority populations.</li></ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes and Metrics - 15 points</b> (Scale: 13-15 Excellent, 11-12 Strong, 7-10 Average, 0-6 Poor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outcomes and metrics are clearly defined for the project and fit the application requirements.</li><li>• Activities are clearly outlined, tangible, and achievable.</li><li>• Demonstrates plan for sharing best practices.</li><li>• Applicant indicates methods for documenting baseline and outcome metrics</li></ul>
<b>Partners and Local Engagement - 10 points</b> (Scale: 9-10 Excellent, 7-8 Strong, 5-6 Average, 0-4 Poor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Includes list of partners engaged and/or involved and describes their role. If all partners aren't yet identified, describes process for identifying partners.</li><li>• Listed partners are appropriate for the described project.</li></ul>
<b>Potential Obstacles - 5 points</b> (Scale: 5 Excellent, 4 Strong, 2-3 Average, 0-1 Poor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Barriers or obstacles seem appropriate and surmountable.</li></ul>
<b>Timeline - 5 points</b> (Scale: 5 Excellent, 4 Strong, 2-3 Average, 0-1 Poor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Activities are appropriate for duration of project cycle.</li><li>• Demonstrates key activities to be accomplished throughout the project cycle</li></ul>
<b>Budget - 10 points</b> (Scale: 9-10 Excellent, 7-8 Strong, 5-6 Average, 0-4 Poor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Budget is realistic, well-planned, accurate and fits within the grant guidelines (\$1.5 million or less)</li></ul>

# OPTIONAL PLANNING PERIOD

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For the benefit of organizations that may require additional time for planning due to capacity or experience, we are providing a 120-day window for planning upon the execution of the grant. This option is **not mandatory** but is an opportunity to provide the necessary resources and time to ensure a successful implementation. **Please indicate in your application narrative if you need to utilize this option.**

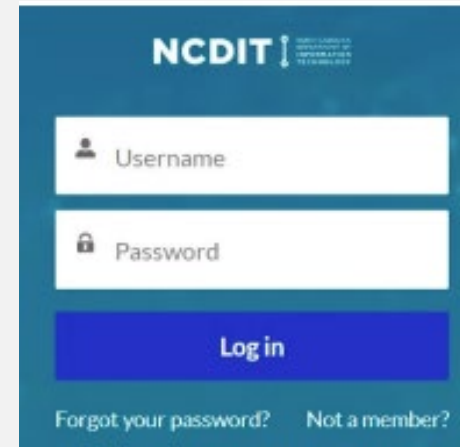
- Grantees selecting this option must submit a comprehensive project plan at the end of the planning window that will serve as a more detailed version of the project proposal
- We understand that each organization has unique needs, and grantees who require financial support during this planning period can request project funds
  - To access the funds during the planning window, the organization must submit a budget justification for our review

# APPLICATION PORTAL - REGISTRATION

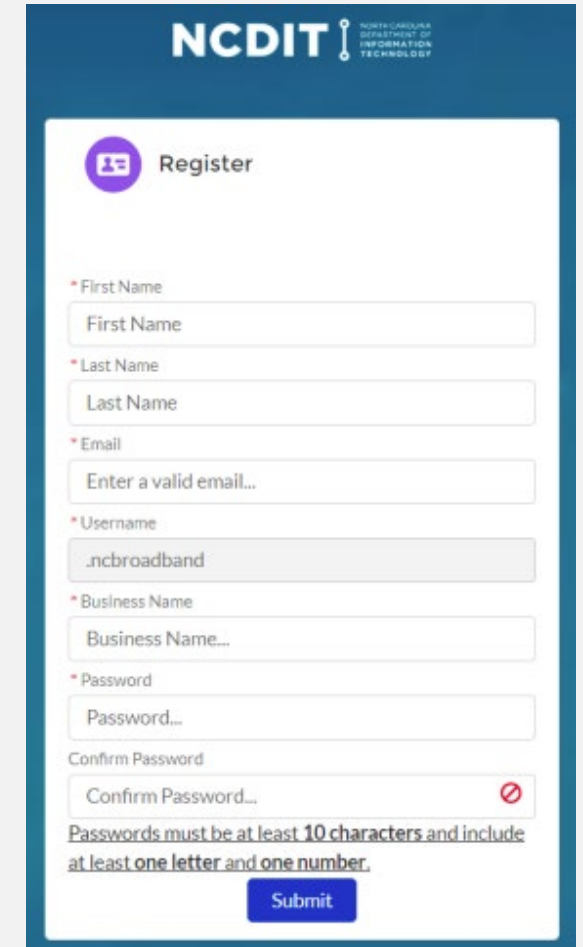
The Digital Champion Grant application must be submitted in the new Digital Equity Grant Portal

To register to complete an application, please complete the following steps:

1. Go to the Digital Equity Grant Portal at <https://ncbroadband.my.site.com/digitalequity>
2. Click **"Not a member?"** to start your registration
3. Complete the registration fields shown and click the **"Submit"** button



A screenshot of the NCDIT login page. The page has a dark blue header with the NCDIT logo and the text "NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY". Below the header, there are two input fields: "Username" and "Password". A blue "Log in" button is positioned below the password field. At the bottom of the form, there are two links: "Forgot your password?" and "Not a member?".



A screenshot of the NCDIT registration page. The page has a dark blue header with the NCDIT logo and the text "NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY". Below the header, there is a purple icon of a person and the word "Register". The registration form consists of several input fields: "First Name", "Last Name", "Email" (with a placeholder "Enter a valid email..."), "Username" (with a placeholder ".ncbroadband"), "Business Name" (with a placeholder "Business Name..."), and "Password" (with a placeholder "Password..."). Below the password field, there is a "Confirm Password" field (with a placeholder "Confirm Password...") and a red "X" icon. At the bottom of the form, there is a blue "Submit" button. A note at the bottom of the form states: "Passwords must be at least 10 characters and include at least one letter and one number."

# APPLICATION PORTAL - REGISTRATION

1. Following your submission, you will see instructions directing you to check your email for a **“Welcome to NCDIT Digital Equity Grants”** email from [digitalequity@nc.gov](mailto:digitalequity@nc.gov) to finish registering
2. Open the email from [digitalequity@nc.gov](mailto:digitalequity@nc.gov) and click the link and follow the steps to change your password
3. Click the **“Start Application”** button on the right side of the page to begin an application



# APPLICATION PORTAL - REGISTRATION

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4. Fill out all the fields in the Applicant Information section and click the **"Save & Next"** button at the bottom of the application to save your progress
5. At any point in the application creation process, you may exit the application and return to it later for completion.
6. From the Home page, click the **"Application"** tab in the navigation bar
7. Click the application name (App-#) on the List View to open the application and complete the information



# ADD COUNTIES

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1. In the **"Area and Population Served"** section, to add Counties that the project will serve, locate the "Which Counties will your project serve?" table
  - a) Click the **"Add"** button
  - b) In the **"County"** field, search for the name of the county to add. Click the **"Show all results for..."** dropdown item to search for counties meeting the search term
  - c) Once you have located a County to add, select it and click the **"Save"** button
  - d) Repeat steps 1a through 1c for each county you would like to add

Please specify all of the North Carolina counties that your project will serve using the table below.

To add a County:

1. Click the **Add** button and use the county search box to search the name of your county. As you type, options should appear in the dropdown below the search box.
2. Once you have located your county, select it and click the **Save** button to add it to the list.
3. To remove a County, click the **Trashcan icon** next to the County name
4. Repeat steps 1, 2, and 3 to add additional Counties as needed. Once finished adding counties, click the **Save** button to move on.

Which Counties will your project serve?

Add

# ADD PRIORITY POPULATIONS

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1. In the **"Area and Population Served"** section, locate the **"Which priority populations will your project serve?"** question
2. You can select multiple priority populations from the checkbox group
3. When the section is completed, click **"Save & Next"** to save the application section

**\* Which priority populations will your project serve?**

- Aging individuals
- Immigrants
- Individuals who live in households at or below 150% of Federal poverty level
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners and have low levels of literacy
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
- Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area
- Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility
- LGBTQI+ people
- Veterans

# PROJECT BUDGET

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1. The budget section provides fields to enter budget information
2. Follow the instructions at the top of the page to download the personnel spreadsheet and complete the budget fields
3. Complete the downloaded personnel spreadsheet and upload your completed personnel spreadsheet in the file upload field
4. Complete the budget categories as needed
5. Click the **"Save & Next"** button to save the budget section

# UPLOAD DOCUMENTS

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1. Upload any documents in the document upload section of the application.
2. Click the **“Upload Files”** button and select one or multiple files to attach to the application.
3. Click **“Save & Next”** to save the file uploads and attach them to the application.

**Note:** Uploading documentation is not required. This option is provided to give applicants the opportunity to provide supplemental resources that may assist the review committee with their assessment. Examples of documentation can include letters of support from project partners or community stakeholders.

1. the section is completed, click **“Save & Next”** to save the application section.

If you have any supporting documentation to include with your application, please do so here. Supporting Documentation is not required to be considered for the program.

Supporting Documents

Accepted Formats: .pdf, .doc, .docx, .csv, .jpeg, .jpg, .png, .webp, .pps, .ppt, .pptx, .xls, .xlsm, .xlsx, .mp4, .m4v, .mov



Upload Files

Or drop files

# APPLY

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1. If you have completed and saved all sections of the application, and have completed the Attestation section, the application can be submitted
2. To submit your application, click the **"Submit Application"** button in the bottom center of the screen
3. In the confirmation popup, click **"Ok"**
4. Verify that the application status has been updated to **"Submitted"**
  - **Once the application is submitted, you can no longer edit it**

# HELPFUL TIPS

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- **Research is Key**

Understand the grant's objectives, criteria and tailor your proposal to meet the goals

- **Demonstrate Impact**

Show how your project benefits the community, addresses a need, and creates a positive change

- **Storytelling with Data**

Use statistics, case studies and testimonials to strengthen your narrative and demonstrate need

- **Budget Clarity**

Present a detailed and justifiable budget. Use the budget narrative to explain how funds will be used and impact achieved

- **Partnerships and Collaboration**

Highlight any existing or potential collaborations that strengthens your project's potential for success

- **Ask for Help!**

Reach out to us if you have any issues while drafting your proposal or submitting your application

# QUESTIONS?

Place your questions in the Q&A feature

Visit the division's website to learn more and see additional resources:

[ncbroadband.gov/digital-equity-grant](https://ncbroadband.gov/digital-equity-grant)

