

Digital Opportunity Grant Information Session

Maggie Woods

Deputy Director, Office of Digital Opportunity

Adrienne Clark

Digital Opportunity Program Manager

April 16, 2025

Agenda

- Office of Digital Opportunity Overview
- Digital Opportunity Grant: General Overview
- Track 1: Digital Skills, Digital Navigation and Online Safety
- Track 2: Computer Ownership Capacity Building and Sustainability
- Grant Resources and Questions

Please add your questions to the chat throughout the presentation

Office of Digital Opportunity Overview

Digital Devices, Skills & Affordability



328,000

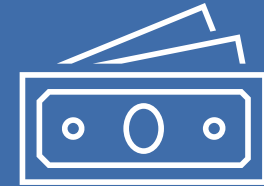
Estimated N.C.
households without a
home laptop or desktop
computer

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

Digital Opportunity Grant Overview

Federal Funding

- The Digital Opportunity grant awards are contingent on federal approval and applicable law
- We will keep applicants apprised of any additional updates and responses from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) or changes in law that may change funding, program guidelines or criteria

Digital Opportunity Grant - Overview

Total funding: \$17 million

- Period of performance: Jan. 1, 2026* - July 31, 2029
- Deadline for applications: June 9 by 11:59 p.m.
- We expect to fund 10-15 projects total

**Official start dates will depend on approval from the NTIA*

What is the Purpose of the Digital Opportunity Grant?

Digital Opportunity Grant

The purpose of the \$17 million Digital Opportunity Grant program is to **develop new and expand existing digital skills, digital navigation and online safety programs**, as well as **create a structured system for the provision and deployment of computers to increase ownership, help desk and technical support to those who need it most**

Supports Strategies 3-5 of the North Carolina Digital Opportunity Plan

- **Strategy 3:** Ensure that North Carolinians can acquire the digital and information-gathering skills and understanding to meet their personal needs and the state's workforce needs.
- **Strategy 4:** Promote practices and leverage tools to ensure online privacy and security.
- **Strategy 5:** Ensure that North Carolinians have access to large-screen computers, help desk and technical support to meet their needs

What are the Program Tracks?

The Digital Opportunity grant program includes two tracks, and applicants can apply for Track 1 and/or Track 2:

- **Track 1: Digital Skills, Digital Navigation and Online Safety**
- **Track 2: Computer Ownership Capacity Building and Sustainability**
(Applicants can apply for Track 2a or 2b but not both)
 - **Track 2a:** Computer Refurbisher Hub
 - **Track 2b:** Computer Deployment Lead

Applicants can apply for Track 1 and/or Track 2, but they cannot apply for both Track 2a and 2b

How much funding can applicants apply for?

Track 1: Digital Skills, Digital Navigation and Online Safety

- \$1 million to \$3.5 million per project
- If you request more or less than the funding range, you must include a justification for the request
- We will fund selected entities based on their requests and reserve the right to only fund a portion of an application

Each track has different funding ranges

How much funding can applicants apply for?

Track 2: Computer Ownership Capacity Building and Sustainability

Track 2a: Computer Refurbisher Hubs

- NCDIT expects to award two grants to Hubs
- Each Hub will be funded \$1,970,000
- Each Hub will be responsible for supplying a minimum of 2,500 computers per year to Leads (and their Partners) for a total of 7,500 over the grant period

Each track has different funding ranges

How much funding can applicants apply for?

Track 2: Computer Ownership Capacity Building and Sustainability

Track 2b: Computer Deployment Leads

- NCDIT expects to award four grants to Leads
- Each of the Leads will receive \$977,500 to support both Lead and Partner activities
 - Distribution of the funding is flexible

Each track has different funding ranges

Applicant Eligibility – General Eligibility (ALL Tracks)

Applicants and partners receiving funding will be accepted from:

- Community service organizations including:
 - Local governments (town, city, county)
 - Local library systems
 - K-12 school systems (public, private and charter)
- Nonprofit organizations (501(c)(3))
- Higher education institutions
- Regional entities
- State government agencies and federally recognized tribal government entities

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

Applicant Eligibility – Track 2a Hubs

Due to the specific, technical nature of Computer Refurbisher Hubs, Track 2a has additional eligibility requirements

Eligible Hubs must meet the general eligibility for all tracks AND must:

- be a **computer refurbisher headquartered in North Carolina** with existing large-screen computer deployment programs and ongoing programmatic activities
- currently serve a **minimum of ten** community-based organizations
- **deploy a minimum of 2,500 large-screen computers annually** to North Carolina residents
- have operated within North Carolina for a **minimum of seven years**

Program Recipients and Geographic Requirements

Program Recipients

Funded projects will focus on serving all digital excluded populations in North Carolina

Geographic Reach

Priority will be given to organizations that are regional or statewide and that will partner with and/or subgrant funding to smaller, local organizations

Application Process and Deadline

- All applications must be submitted online via Qualtrics by 11:59 p.m. on June 9
- The application for each track is at ncbroadband.gov/Digital-Opportunity-Grant
- A list of application questions for each track as well as other grant other resources are also available on the webpage

Application Review

- Applications will be reviewed by a committee of digital opportunity and community partners and state agency officials
- The Office of Digital Opportunity will review recommendations from external reviewers and make final selection decisions

Selection Timeline

Application Window Opens	April 10, 2025
Information Session Webinars	April 16, 2 - 3 p.m. April 22, 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Track Specific Webinars and Drop-In Office Hours	Dates TBD
Funding Invitation/Application Window Closes	June 9 at 11:59 p.m.
Contingent Awards Announced <i>(All recommended grantees must be approved by the NTIA before award is considered final)</i>	September
Contingent Grantee Trainings	September - November
Award Approvals from NTIA (anticipated)	November
Anticipated Grant Start Date	January 2026

Track 1: Digital Skills, Digital Navigation and Online Safety

North Carolina's Goals

Track 1 of the NCDIT Digital Opportunity Grant Program will support Strategies 3-4 of the North Carolina Digital Opportunity Plan

- **Strategy 3:** Ensure that North Carolinians can acquire the digital and information-gathering skills and understanding to meet their personal needs and the state's workforce needs
- **Strategy 4:** Promote practices and leverage tools to ensure online privacy and security

Measurable Objectives:

- **By 2029:** Increase in percentage of North Carolinians who are confident using word processing programs, finding educational content, applying for jobs, and communicating with a healthcare provider by 10%
- **By 2029:** Improve confidence and ability to protect personal data online by 10%

Track 1: Goal/Eligible Use

To expand or create **digital literacy** and **online safety skills programs** and/or expand or create **digital navigator programs**

1. **Increase the capacity** of current digital literacy and navigation programs led by partner organizations across the state
2. **Develop new** programs that target funding for organizations with strong community trust

Awardees will receive trainings on state-level digital skills standards and digital navigator best practices and must align their programs to align with minimum standards and best practices

Track 1: Overview

- **Total funding:** \$9,150,000
- **Period of performance:** January 1, 2026* - July 31, 2029
- **Deadline for applications:** June 9 at 11:59 p.m.

We expect to fund four-nine projects for Track 1

*Official start dates will depend on approval from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

Track 1: Partners

- As part of the application, applicants must include a list of partners and/or subrecipients involved in the project and describe their role
- If all partners or subrecipients are not yet identified, applicants must describe the process for identifying partners

Track 2: Computer Ownership Capacity Building and Sustainability

North Carolina's Goals

Track 2 of the NCDIT Digital Opportunity Grant Program will support Strategy 5 of the North Carolina Digital Opportunity Plan

- **Strategy 5:** Ensure that North Carolinians have access to large-screen computers, help desk and technical support to meet their needs

Measurable Objective:

- **By 2029: 95% of North Carolina households** will own a working, large-screen (laptop, desktop or tablet), internet-capable computer that meets their needs

Track 2: Goal/Eligible Use

This track will **expand computer ownership initiatives** to build a foundation for a **sustainable, statewide ecosystem** of local refurbishers and community organizations working to **increase computer ownership** in local communities

- Computer ownership refers to individuals **owning a personal computer**, as opposed to using loaner computers or publicly accessible computer labs
- Access to the internet in any form is valuable, but owning a computer provides individuals access and agency over when and how they access the internet

Track 2: Overview

- **Total funding: \$7,850,000**
 - Hub awards (2): \$1,970,000
 - Lead awards (4): \$977,500
- **Period of performance:** January 1, 2026* - July 31, 2029
- **Deadline for applications:** June 9 by 11:59 p.m.

We expect to award 2 grants to Hubs and to award 4 grants to Leads

*Official start dates will depend on approval from the NTIA

Funding Range: Leads (Track 2b)

NCDIT expects to award four grants to Leads

- Each of the Leads will receive \$977,500 to support both Lead and Partner activities; Distribution of the funding is flexible
 - Leads can utilize a maximum of \$160,000 for their role in program activities
 - Leads should distribute a minimum of \$640,000 to Partners for programming and staff
 - The amount per Partner may differ, based on the needs of the Partner organization and those they are serving
 - Leads (and their Partners) should utilize a minimum of \$177,500 in supplemental funding for additional computers to meet the specific needs of individuals served

Track 2: Roles & Responsibilities

Computer Refurbisher Hubs (Track 2a)

- Hubs are organizations responsible for **receiving, processing, and preparing used computers for redistribution through Computer Deployment Leads and Partners** throughout North Carolina
- Hubs ensure that donated computers are properly sanitized, refurbished, tested and prepared for deployment

What are the responsibilities of the Hubs?

During the performance period of the grant each Hub will supply Leads and their Partners with a minimum of **7,500** refurbished computers, and will:

1. Acquire, process, refurbish and prepare a supply of donated computers over the grant period to NCDIT's specifications
2. Transport or ship computers to designated Leads and/or their Partners
3. Provide warranties on the computers delivered to Leads and Partners
4. Provide Help Desk support
5. Participate in NCDIT's computer deployment training (up to 20 hours annually) and project related meetings
6. Mentor and build relationships with Leads and their Partners, as assigned by NCDIT
7. Collect data and provide feedback from recipients, as required by NCDIT

Computer Deployment Leads (Track 2b)

- Leads are key coordinating organizations responsible for identifying, managing and supporting local Computer Deployment Partners
- They **serve as the liaison** between NCDIT, Hubs, and Computer Deployment Partners, ensuring seamless communication, operational efficiency, program alignment and monitoring program outcomes are met
- Leads will **subgrant funding** to Computer Deployment Partners

What are the responsibilities of Leads?

The Leads will identify and coordinate with four to six Partners, as subgrantees, of the Computer Ownership Program to support the deployment of computers to individuals

1. Identify Partners and ensure their programs alignment with the grant goals and performance
2. Collect data from the Partners and report data to NCDIT
3. Monitor Partners, including budget monitoring, program reporting, and conduct regular meetings
4. Participate in NCDIT's computer deployment training (up to 20 hours annually)
5. Accept computers from Hubs and transfer to the Partners, if appropriate
6. Provide support to Partners to expand and strengthen their capacity and impact
7. Procure computers in addition to those received from their Hub

Computer Deployment Partners (Track 2b)

Partners are trusted organizations in local communities responsible for the direct distribution and support of computers to individuals

They work with Leads, NCDIT, and Hubs to ensure that computers are effectively delivered, properly utilized and accompanied by necessary support services

- Leads must designate and subgrant to at least four to no more than six Partners
- Leads are eligible to be one of the designated Partners and receive the associated funding to also serve in this role

What are the Responsibilities of Partners?

Partners will:

1. Conduct outreach to potential computer recipients
2. Vet recipients to meet eligibility requirements
3. Identify computer needs of recipients
4. Ensure on-site staff support for computer distribution
5. Accept computers from Leads or from Hubs directly, if appropriate
6. Utilize allocated funding to purchase additional computers to supplement those supplied by Hubs
7. Deploy computers to residents based on needs

See the Grant Program Guidelines for the full list of Partner responsibilities

Resources

Grant Resources

Application links:

- [Application for Track 1: Digital Skills, Digital Navigation and Online Safety](#)
- [Application for Track 2: Computer Ownership Capacity Building and Sustainability](#)

Guidelines, FAQs, Budget Template and Instructions, Digital Opportunity Plan Executive Summary, and Application Questions available at ncbroadband.gov/Digital-Opportunity-Grant

Questions?



digitalopportunity@nc.gov

www.ncbroadband.gov