NCDIT | NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

INTERAGENCY DIGITAL EQUITY FUNDING GUIDELINES

Overview

To help achieve Governor Roy Cooper's plan to close the digital divide in North Carolina, the N.C. Department of Information Technology's Office of Digital Equity and Literacy (ODEL) invites state government entities to apply for funding to develop or expand digital equity programming. **We will fund large-scale projects that can be deployed quickly and create transformational change for residents of North Carolina.**

In total, we will invest $10 million to support 10-15 state government entities. All projects must serve a statewide or regional audience (more than one county). Each applicant may apply for up to $2 million. Applications must be received by 5 p.m. on Nov. 10.

Background

[NC Session Law 2021-180](#) and the associated appropriation committee report allocated $50 million of State Fiscal Recovery Funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 for digital literacy efforts. With these funds, and to achieve Governor Cooper's plan to close the digital divide, ODEL will make funding available for programs designed to increase access to affordable, reliable high-speed internet service and digital devices, promote adoption and meaningful use of digital services, and improve digital literacy skills for all.

Project Guidelines

ODEL seeks to fund large-scale projects that can be deployed quickly. While the project term is two years (24 months), project descriptions should have specific, achievable goals within the first year of programming. While not required, demonstrated experience in advancing digital equity is preferred.

Eligible Uses
All projects must develop or expand digital equity programming and address at least one of the following elements of digital inclusion:
1. Affordable, robust high-speed internet;
2. Internet enabled devices (computers, laptops, etc.) that meet users' needs;
3. Access to digital literacy and skills training;
4. Quality technical support; and
5. Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration.

Examples of projects include but aren't limited to:
- A "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 develop and 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 or digital devices including providing technical support,
- Staff time or consulting services for digital inclusion projects,
- Creating telehealth rooms in libraries, schools or other community spaces, and
- Other projects related to internet affordability, devices, digital literacy, or technical support/assistance.

Priority Populations
All projects must serve a statewide or regional audience (more than one county), and must serve one or more of the following populations:
1. Low-income households (150% of the Federal Poverty Level or below)
2. Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area
3. Aging residents
4. Incarcerated and second chance residents/reentry/justice Involved individuals
5. Veterans
6. Individuals with disabilities
7. Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who
   a. Are English learners or whose first language is not English; and/or
   b. Have low levels of literacy
8. Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group

Applicant Eligibility
Applicants must be an entity of North Carolina state government, which includes:
- All State Government Organizations as outlined on this web page
- University of North Carolina System or individual schools, universities, or centers within the system
- N.C. Community College System or individual schools, colleges or centers within the system

Only one application per office will be accepted. However, we will accept more than one application per agency or institution if they are a part of a separate division or office. For example, we would accept an application from the Office of Rural Health and an application from the Division of Social Services, because while they are both under the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, they are separate offices/divisions. We would not accept two applications from the Office of Rural Health.

All grantees must meet all relevant federal and state requirements for monitoring and reporting on these funds.

Funding Range
Funding will not exceed $2 million per project. No matching funds are required. Entities are encouraged to request only the specific amount needed to fund their effort and proposed needs. ODEL will fund selected entities based on their requests up to the provided limit and reserves the right to fund a portion of an application.

Application Process and Deadline

By 5 p.m. on Nov. 10, 2022, applicants must:
1. **Complete an online application form.**
2. Submit a complete application document (cover page, project narrative, timeline, and budget) formatted as a **single PDF to Maggie Woods, Digital Equity Manager for the N.C. Department of Information Technology's Office of Digital Equity and Literacy, at** maggie.woods@nc.gov.

Application details can be found in the Application Requirements section below.

Upon receipt of a full application and consideration of it relative to criteria set forth in this document, the N.C. Department of Information Technology's Division of Broadband and Digital Equity shall determine whether the proposed project should receive funding under this program.

Applicants will be notified in writing if their project has been awarded. Following award, ODEL will provide a contract to execute the terms of the program. Projects must be completed within 24 months of award.

Funding Invitation Opens	Sept. 27, 2022
Information/Q&A sessions	Oct. 4, 4-5 p.m. (Click to register) Oct. 10, 3-4 p.m. (Click to register) Oct. 20, 1-2 p.m. (Click to register)
Funding Invitation Closes	5 p.m. on Nov. 10, 2022
Funded Projects Announced	December 2022

Application Requirements

All project descriptions should include the following sections:
1. Cover Page
2. Project Narrative
3. Project Timeline
4. Project Budget

Cover Page
The cover page should include the following information:
- Organization
- Mailing Address
- City, State Zip
- Telephone
- Website
- Contact Name
- Contact Email

Project Narrative
The project narrative must not exceed four pages, single-spaced, 12-point font, and one-inch margins. The cover page, timeline and budget are not included in the four-page limit.

Project narratives should include the following sections. Please fully answer and address each bulleted sub question.

- Scope of the Project
    - Provide a detailed description of all major project activities
    - Describe in detail how the project activities will advance digital equity
    - Describe your entity's experience working in digital equity (if applicable). If your entity does not have experience working in digital equity, how will you build your expertise?
    - Describe your entity's staff capacity for this project. Describe any positions you plan to hire to increase your capacity.

- Area and Population Served
    - What geographic area will your project serve?
    - Who will your project serve? What are their biggest digital needs?
    - Which priority populations outlined above will your project serve? What is your experience serving this/these population(s)?

- Intended Outcomes and Metrics
    - What are your intended outcome(s) and metrics for the project? How will you define success?
    - What tangible activities will you accomplish within the first year?
    - How will you share what you learn outside your agency?

- Partners and Local Engagement
    - Include a list of partners involved in the project and describe their role. If all partners are not yet identified, describe process for identifying partners.

- Potential Obstacles
    - Discuss any barriers or obstacles you might encounter.

Timeline

Please include a timeline for the activities outlined in the project narrative. Specifically demonstrate what activities can be accomplished in the first year.

Budget

The Project Budget should reflect all Project Costs. Please use the attached template as you build your budget. If you are leveraging other funding, please reference those funding sources.

Project funds will be reimbursed as you make expenditures and funding recipients will need to invoice the N.C. Department of Information Technology for funds spent. However, if reimbursement presents a burden to your organization or project, please explain why and how much you will need up front to successfully complete your project. We are committed to working with you to ensure the financial viability of your project.

Technical Assistance and Questions

All questions can be emailed to Maggie Woods at maggie.woods@nc.gov.