

## Digital Champions Program Funding FAQs

### 1. Who is eligible to apply for the Digital Champion Grant funding program?

Applications will be accepted from:

- Community Services
  - Local governments (town, city, county)
  - County libraries
  - K-12 school systems (public, private and charter schools)
- Nonprofit organizations (501c3 or in the process of applying for the 501c3 status)
- Higher education institutions (individual schools, colleges, or centers within the system)
- Regional entities (ex. councils of governments)

### 2. What is the deadline for submitting grant applications?

All applications must be submitted by Jan. 22, 2024, at 11:59pm.

### 3. Does the \$1.5 million maximum application request apply for the total amount of money a county can receive from this grant?

The \$1.5 million maximum is per project, not per county. We will not limit the funding amount per county. However, geographic footprint of projects will be considered.

### 4. How much funding can each applicant apply for?

Each applicant may apply for up to \$400,000 per county served with a maximum application request of \$1.5 million. The Office of Digital Equity and Literacy will fund selected entities based on their requests up to the provided limit and reserves the right to fund a portion of an application.

### 5. How long is the funding term?

This funding term start date will be outlined in the signed contract between the funding recipients and the N.C. Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) and will run through Dec. 31, 2026.

### 6. Can these funds be used for salary?

Yes, this funding can be used to cover a portion of salary for current employees if they will be working on this project. This funding can also be used to hire staff for the project.

### 7. How will the grant funds be dispersed?

Grantees may request funds on a quarterly basis. Once received, grantees are required to report their detailed expenditure transactions monthly.

### 8. Does this funding allow for overhead costs?

Yes, this funding may be used for up to 10% of overhead costs.

### 9. What kinds of projects are eligible for funding?

Eligible projects will support the development or expansion of digital equity programming and address at least one of the following elements of digital inclusion:

- a. Affordable, robust high-speed internet

- b. Internet enabled devices (computers, laptops, etc.) that meet users' needs
- c. Access to digital literacy and skills training
- d. Quality technical support
- e. Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration

Project examples are listed in the [Digital Champion Grant Funding Guidelines](#). If you have questions about the eligibility of your project, please contact our team at [digitalequity@nc.gov](mailto:digitalequity@nc.gov).

## **10. Will certain populations be prioritized?**

Yes, all projects must serve one or more of the following populations:

- 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 have low levels of literacy
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group

## **11. What is the purpose of the optional 120-day planning period, and how can it be utilized?**

We are providing an optional 120-day planning window upon the execution of the grant for organizations that may require additional planning time. Applicants must indicate in their project narrative if they plan to use this planning window. Utilizing this option will not negatively impact the applicant's final score.

## **12. Can grantees receive funding during the optional 120-day planning window to hire personnel to support plan development or execution?**

Yes. To access funds during the planning window, the organization must submit a budget justification for our office to review. Once the budget justification is approved, grantees will be authorized to draw down funds in accordance with the project's requirements. We have the right to approve, deny or reduce the funding request.

## **13. What are reporting expectations?**

Reporting requirements will be outlined in the contract between funding recipients and NCDIT. This program is funded through the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 in the "revenue replacement" funding category. 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.
  - The report outlines the major workplan milestones achieved during the review period, including the number of clients served as compared with projections, staffing updates, undertaken activities, and significant accomplishments.

#### **14. How will applications be evaluated?**

Applications will be evaluated based on the criteria outlined in the [Digital Champion Grant Funding Guidelines](#). Please pay close attention to the Application Requirements section and answer all necessary questions in the project narrative. The application review committee is looking to recommend funding for a diverse set of programs that represent geographic diversity and meet the needs of the priority populations.

#### **15. Can we partner with other organizations?**

Yes, partnerships are encouraged but are not required. If we receive applications from organizations that have significant similarities, we may encourage partnership between those organizations as a requirement for funding.

#### **16. Can an applicant apply for a grant and be listed as a subgrantee on another grant application?**

Yes, if the two projects are distinct and do not overlap.

**If you have additional questions, please email the Office of Digital Equity and Literacy at [digitalequity@nc.gov](mailto:digitalequity@nc.gov).**