

CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM PLAN

Program Summary

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's (DEO) mission and vision is to assist the Governor in advancing a connected economy in Florida by championing the state's economic development vision and by administering state and federal programs and initiatives, including broadband, to help visitors, citizens, businesses, and communities. DEO's Office of Broadband (Office) actively provides guidance and works with entities throughout the state to increase the availability and effectiveness of broadband Internet by utilizing mapping initiatives and the goals within The Florida Strategic Plan for Broadband. DEO's Local Technology Planning Team (LTPT) initiative helps communities, residents, and service providers identify goals and projects for broadband expansion in last mile areas, especially in rural Florida. The Broadband Opportunity Program ensures DEO's goal of expanding the availability, adoption and use of broadband Internet to unserved/underserved communities through state grant funding. Availability, adoption, and the use of broadband Internet services throughout Florida allows the state's residents to reap benefits from a connected economy that fuels advancements and allows more Floridians to fully partake in available workforce, education, health, and housing opportunities.

The Office will establish a subgrant program to award Capital Projects Fund (CPF) funds to eligible entities to make devices and equipment necessary to access the broadband Internet available to households who lack such devices and equipment.

This project will make computers, laptops, and tablets available to qualifying households and Multi-Purpose Community Facilities through a long-term, no-cost loan program administered by eligible local entities. Subrecipients will maintain ownership of the devices throughout the term of the loan. Upon termination of the program or end of the useful life of the equipment, Subrecipient shall properly dispose of said equipment in accordance with 2 CFR 200.312 and s. 274.05, F.S.

Qualifying households will also be eligible to borrow equipment, such as routers, needed to access the Internet. Subrecipients will develop a monitoring plan to ensure that households with no computers are prioritized over those receiving laptops from school districts and other programs.

The primary objective of this program is to make digital connectivity devices and equipment available to households. A second, but equally critical objective, is to help communities equip Multi-Purpose Community Facilities with the devices necessary to ensure full connectivity throughout the facility.

Subrecipients will be required to provide borrowers with training on the use of computers and tablets, including how to access and use the Internet. Subrecipients will be required to provide installation of equipment and instruction on set-up and use of digital equipment, including routers and Wi-Fi devices.

Allowable costs will include purchasing of equipment, damage insurance, payment for training on the use of devices and equipment, as well as installation in the borrower's home if requested. Subrecipients will be allowed up to 5% of the award amount for program administration.

Eligibility

Based on survey, workshop feedback, and information gathered by the Local Technology Planning Teams (LTPT), the gap in access is partially related to the availability of electronic devices. The critical need for Internet connectivity was made apparent in recent years. Even those who remain at home can participate in society, their work, attend remote health appointments, and take part in remote learning, provided they have access to the devices and equipment necessary for Internet connectivity. Household eligibility will be based on participation in Federal income assistance programs, such as free or reduced school lunch, supplemental security income, social security disability income, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and other public assistance programs.

Entities eligible to apply for subgrants under the program include counties, municipalities, non-profit organizations, and community action agencies serving high poverty areas.

Preference will be given to rural communities with demonstrated economic distress factors identified in section 288.0656(2)(c), Florida Statutes, including low per capita income, low per capita taxable values, high unemployment, high underemployment, low weekly earned wages compared to the state average, low housing values compared to the state average, high percentages of the population receiving public assistance, high poverty levels compared to the state average, and a lack of year-round stable employment opportunities. This includes the 29 Florida counties within three Rural Areas of Opportunity designated by the governor under section 288.2656, Florida Statutes, a county under section 288.0656(2)(e), Florida Statutes, or a community designated as rural under section 288.0656(2)(e)(4), Florida Statutes. Applicants must also include all information used to determine the critical need of the project and how the proposed project addresses the identified need. Additional factors considered in scoring include demographic information including historically disadvantaged communities. American Community Survey data regarding computer use and percentage of households with computers, income, and poverty data from the U.S. Census Bureau will also be considered.

The Office will publish a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) identifying eligible communities, amounts available, maximum awards, allowable costs, and other requirements. The application and scoring matrix will be included in the NOFO. Eligible communities will be able to apply for funding during an open application window of no less than 30 days. During this time the Office will offer applicants technical assistance in completing and submitting their applications.

When determining the individuals and communities with a critical need that will be served by a proposed Capital Project, recipients may choose to consider any available data, including federal and/or state collected data; interviews with community members and business owners; reports from community organizations; documentation of existing facilities providing similar or identical services to those the Capital Project is intended to provide; and any other information they deem relevant.

Program Administration

This will be a new grant program under the Capital Projects Fund umbrella which includes digital connectivity programs. DEO has extensive experience designing, implementing, and administering grant programs, many in rural areas of the state.

DEO plans to issue a procurement for contracted support for financial and performance auditing services for monitoring and compliance of state and federal requirements for the Capital Projects Fund programs. The DEO Project Manager will ensure the Programs meet federal program requirements as well as reporting requirements, and awarded projects are reviewed efficiently and accurately in

accordance with Federal law, rule, and Treasury guidance. The Office will provide technical assistance and guidance throughout the period of performance.

Monitoring will include verifying subrecipient compliance with federal labor and procurement regulations and law including Part 2 CFR 200, Davis-Bacon compliance, and strong labor practices. The Office will acquire 5 additional staff to support and complement the knowledge, skills, and ability of the existing Office staffing. One of the additional staff members will act as the Team-Lead and Capital Projects Fund subject matter expert and the remaining new hires will be grant managers responsible for maintaining direct liaison with awardees to ensure projects progress on time, on budget, and in accordance with the Subrecipient Agreements. It is anticipated between 50-60 grant awards will be made under the CPF program. Depending upon response for this program, workload may be adjusted to account for the anticipated 80 Subrecipient Awards under Broadband Opportunity Program. Charge codes have been initiated to appropriately account for time worked under each of the programs.

DEO plans to issue a procurement for contracted support for management consultant services for intake, initial review for applicant and project eligibility, and system of record document management for all applications received for this program.

DEO Plans to issue a procurement for contracted services to develop a public facing application portal to be used by CPF, Broadband Opportunity Program and the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment program with costs allocated appropriately across each of the programs. This portal will interface with existing systems at DEO and serve as system of record for all applications and subsequent awards.

LTPTs will assist communities with identifying critical needs and identifying eligible projects. LTPTs are familiar with the local communities and are acutely aware of the challenges and barriers faced by Florida's small, capacity-constrained communities. LTPTs can provide more accurate and relevant information on the needs of the communities they serve. This close level of communication will continue throughout the performance period and provide the Office with direct communications with subrecipients.

The Office will rely on input from divisions within DEO and other state agencies with experience in real property lending programs to design a grant program that targets communities with a demonstrated critical need for connectivity devices and ensures accountability from subrecipients. Subrecipients will be required to maintain ownership of devices and equipment purchased with CPF funds and design disposition procedures in compliance with Part 2 CFR 200. Subrecipients will be required to maintain records showing the number of devices and types of equipment being loaned, borrowers' locations, and signed agreements by borrowers describing the terms and conditions of the loan program and their responsibilities and report this information to the DEO in their quarterly progress report.

Program Measures

DEO will ensure program performance is measured in a robust manner, measuring outputs and outcomes for projects and programs, through a program evaluation plan. Grant applications will include sufficiently detailed data, aggregated and anonymized appropriately, which will be useful for the Office's planning efforts as well as for the evaluation of the service area proposed for the funded program. The funding application scoring system will include weighting factors that will result in selection of grantees most likely to achieve the specific program goals. The Office will have sufficient contract management expertise in-house to monitor subrecipients' progress toward fulfillment of grant requirements during and upon completion of the program. Such monitoring includes verification of work in progress and

upon completion. Agreements will include provisions for regular reporting to the Office with data necessary to track project progress and evaluate the extent to which identified goals are met as a result of the project.

All agreements with subrecipients will be cost reimbursement.

Required Performance Indicators and Project Data

Project Use Code 1B – Digital Connectivity Technology Projects

- Address(es) from which devices will be distributed or installed (in the case of public wi-fi equipment), or other location information as appropriate
- Device type (Select all that apply)
 - o Laptops
 - o Tablets
 - o Desktop Computers
 - o Public Wi-Fi Equipment
 - o Other
- For each selected device type, provide: (Planned/Actual)
 - o Total number of devices purchased
 - o Total expenditure
- Total number of individuals using devices (Planned/Actual)
- A brief narrative explaining the number and types of digital literacy trainings and other support services provided to enable use of the devices, including the number of individuals who attend or make use of the trainings and support services (Proposed/Actual)
- Are Subrecipients measuring the Project’s effectiveness and impact through data collection, such as surveys? (Y/N)

Timeline

The Office will develop and publish a NOFO within 30 days of Treasury’s approval of the plan. An application and scoring matrix are currently under development.

DEO will award all funds before December 31, 2024, and ensure all projects are completed by December 31, 2026.

Phase	Duration	Anticipated Completion Date
Submission of Application	60 days after Release of Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)	<<DEO to insert completion date>>
Application Review	30 days	<<DEO to insert completion date>>
Announcement of Awards	10 days after Application Review and Approval Complete	<<DEO to insert completion date>>

Contract Awarded	1 day	<<DEO to insert completion date>>
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Project Milestones

Projects will be broken down by percentage of completion of program goals and metrics, including borrower’s training classes on the use of computers, laptops, and tablets, and how to access and use the Internet. Subrecipients will be required to provide metrics on the installation of equipment and instruction on set-up and use digital equipment, including routers and Wi-Fi devices, with specific target dates based on program completion. Progress towards milestones will be monitored by site visits and regular reports attested to by the entity in charge of the project.

It is anticipated that most projects will be awarded within 30 days of the close of the application window. Notice of commencement for each project is expected no later than 30 days from award. All construction must be completed and all CPF funds expended by December 31, 2026.

PROGRAM BUDGET – Digital Connectivity Technology Program						
Program Administrative Costs						
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
2a. Administering the CFP funds (by the recipient)		\$12,736	\$134,080	\$134,080	\$134,080	\$134,080
2b. Technical Assistance to potential subrecipients		\$4,245	\$44,693	\$44,693	\$44,693	\$44,693
2c. Complying with grant administration and audit requirements		\$2,123	\$22,346	\$22,346	\$22,346	\$22,347
2d. Community Engagement		\$2,123	\$22,347	\$22,347	\$22,347	\$22,347
2. Total Program Administrative Costs (not to exceed amounts listed in source funding)		\$21,227	\$223,466	\$223,466	\$223,466	\$223,467
Project Costs						
3a. Subrecipient Awards			\$3,260,015	\$3,260,016	\$3,260,016	\$3,260,016
3. Total Project Costs			\$3,260,015	\$3,260,016	\$3,260,016	\$3,260,016

No Pre-Award costs requested