TN Department of **Economic & Community Development** | Digital Adoption Grant Programs

THE BROADBAND READY COMMUNITIES GRANTS PROGRAM

Program Details and Application Process

September 26, 2023

Welcome!

Agenda

A. Program Overview

B. Eligibility Requirements

C. Project Budgets

D. Application Information

E. The Application Review Process

F. Summary

G. Next Steps

💬 **Tag your questions in the chat! #BRCQuestion**

A. Program Overview

Federal Award Information

Period of performance:

- All contracts with grantees must be in effect by June 30, 2024.
- Funds must be expended by December 31, 2026.

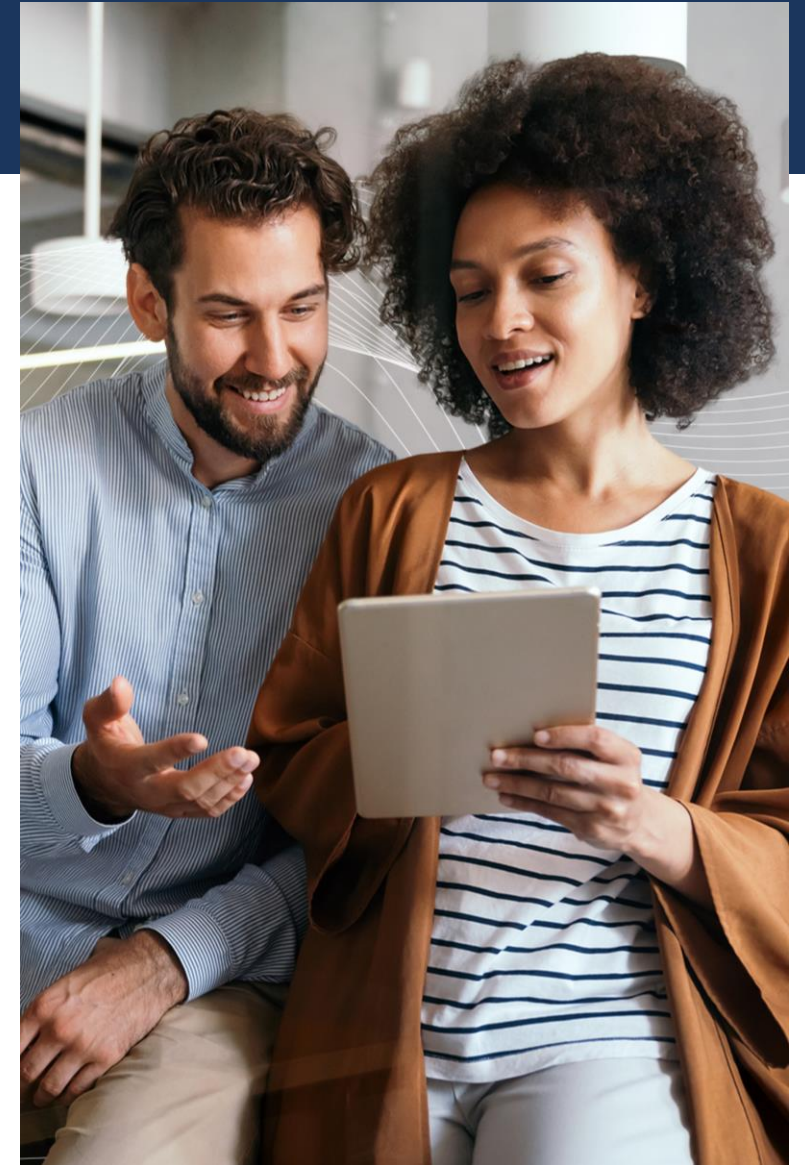| Total $	Max/Grant	Match Information	Program Goal
$10M	$100k	Non-competitive grant: • No match requirement • No competitive scoring process	Promote community-based digital adoption activities to ensure that constituents have the resources and skills necessary to access broadband infrastructure

B. Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Grant Applicants

The following are eligible to apply for a Broadband Ready Grant:

- Any counties that **have a Broadband Ready designation**

- Any counties that **do not have a Broadband Ready designation**
  - Must submit a *duly executed* Broadband Ready ordinance in the application; more information, including a sample ordinance, is on the <u>TNECD Broadband Ready Communities</u> page.

- Any locality/other political subdivision with a Broadband Ready designation that is **in a county that does not have such a designation**:
  - May apply for funding on behalf of the county
  - Must submit written proof that both the county government and locality government agree to the arrangement
    - Grant awards will be made to the county; the locality is responsible for coordinating with the county government throughout the application process.
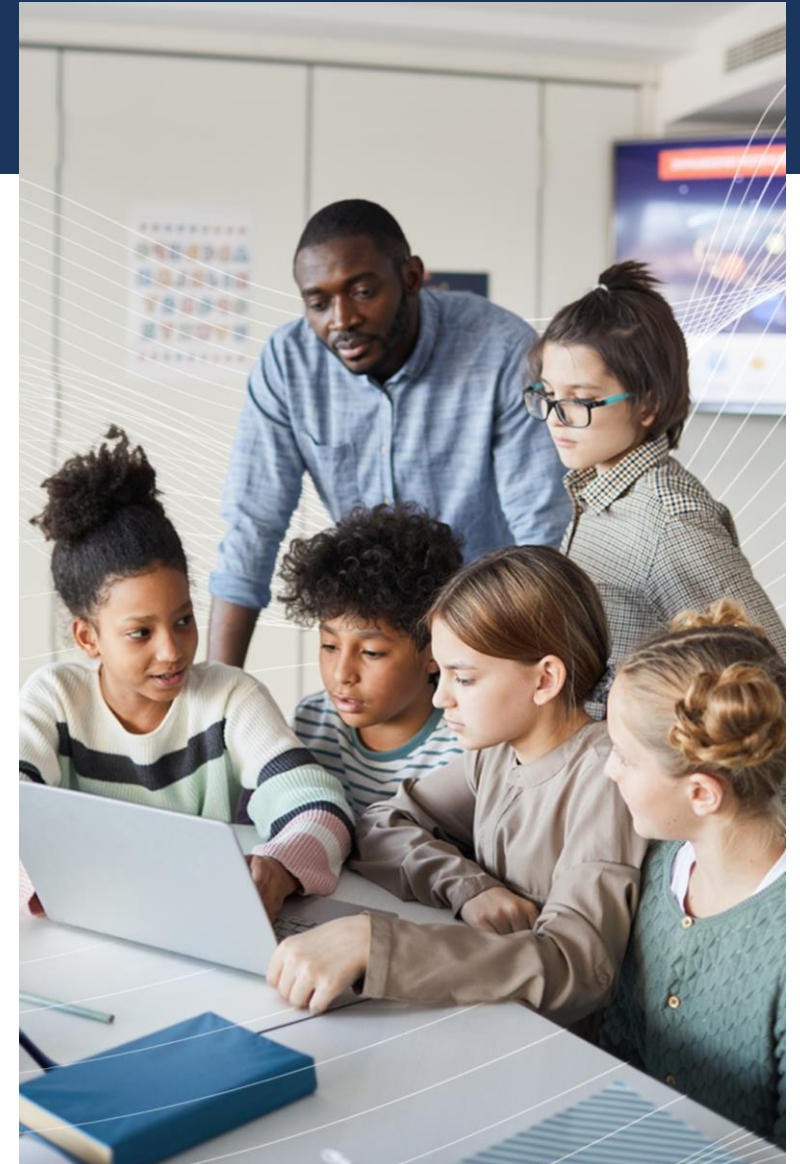
Target Populations

A **target population** is a population "impacted" or "disproportionately impacted" by COVID-19 that will be served directly by the grantee.

Per SLFRF guidelines, the applicant's target population must fall into **one** of the following 4 categories:

- **Households or populations at or below $65,880 in annual income** (300% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a default household size of 3, per 2022 US Treasury-provided estimates)

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OR

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- **Households that experienced unemployment or** *increased* **food or housing insecurity**

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OR

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- **Households that qualify for these programs:** Children's Health Insurance Program, Childcare Subsidies through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Program, or Medicaid

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OR

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- **Households or populations residing in Qualified Census Tracts**

If none of these categories apply to the project, the applicant will be responsible for verifying that the individual end users of the proposed project satisfy the state and federal guidance through eligibility verification.

Eligible Activities

Activities and initiatives that promote digital adoption are considered activities that Broadband Ready funds may be used for:

- Digital skills training
- Education and workforce development
- Free or low-cost equipment
- Public outreach
- Public Wi-Fi (limited to 50% of total funding)
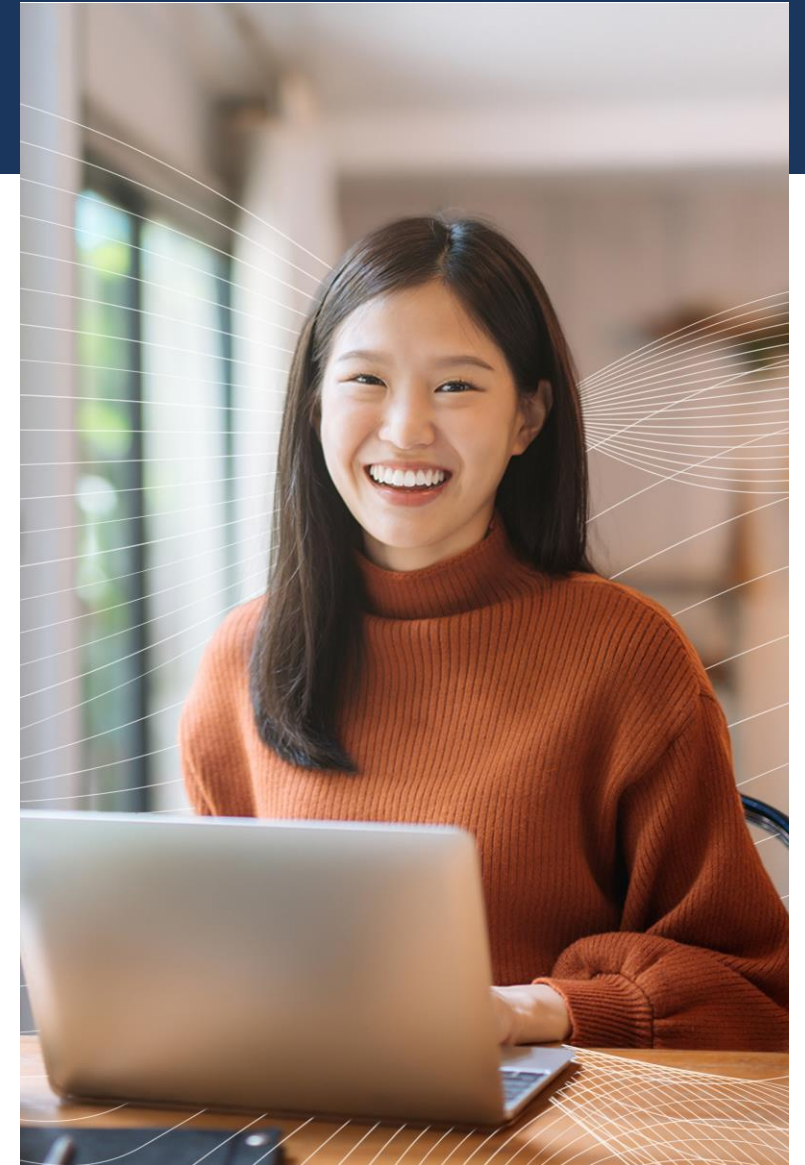- Other costs relating to broadband readiness

Allowable Costs

Following is a list of budget categories of allowable costs.

- Supplies, telephone, postage and shipping, equipment rental and maintenance, and printing
- Capital purchases
- Construction
- Architect/engineering fees
- Professional fees and grant & awards
- Other non-personnel
- Administrative expenses pertaining to the oversight of the grant (indirect expenses; limited to 6% or the indirect cost rate if a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement is in place)
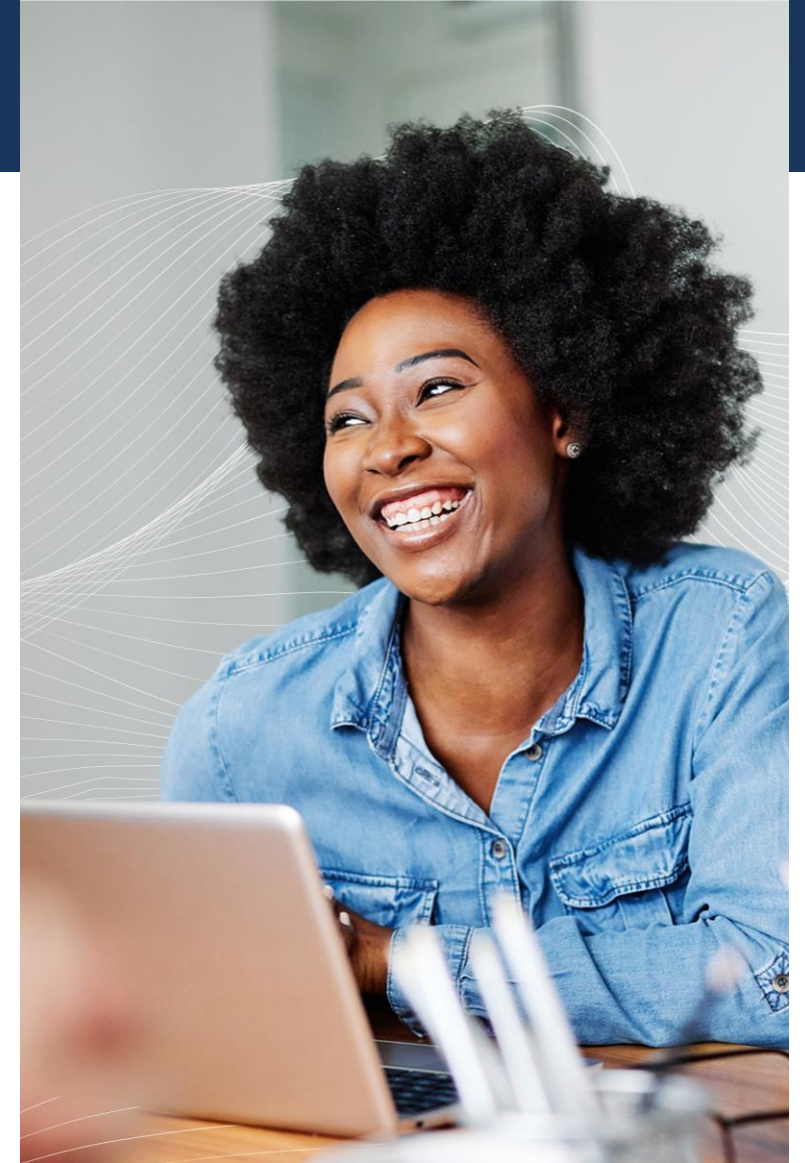
Note: Applicants are invited to suggest additional costs relevant to each of these categories with a justification. However, TNECD reserves the right to reject proposed costs that are not applicable to the grant.

Ineligible Activities

Broadband Ready funds may not be used for the following activities
or initiatives:

- County wages
- Internal administrative
- Fundraising
- Outstanding debt
- New debt
- Judicial, administrative, or regulatory proceedings
- Collective bargaining

Unallowable Costs

- **Travel costs** (associated with program-related functions)
  - Flights/airfare
  - Hotels/lodging
  - Meals
  - Vehicle rentals, etc.
  - Related insurance
- **Discounts or subsidized** broadband service
- **Incentives for incorporation** of broadband across different sectors
  - Subsidies
  - Tax benefits
- Expenses incurred **prior to the date of the grant award** announcement

- **Promotional Items/memorabilia**
  - Models
  - Gifts
  - Souvenirs
  - Other costs designed solely to promote the grant-holding agency
- **Entertainment**
  - Food
  - Amusement
  - Diversion
  - Social activities
  - Other associated costs
- **Fundraising activities**

- **Capital purchases**
  - Vehicle
  - Land acquisition
- **Grants and Awards**
  - Scholarships or vouchers to fund industry-relevant credentialing
- Payment of interest or principal on **outstanding debt** instruments, or other **debt service** costs
- Fees or issuance costs associated with the issuance of **new debt**
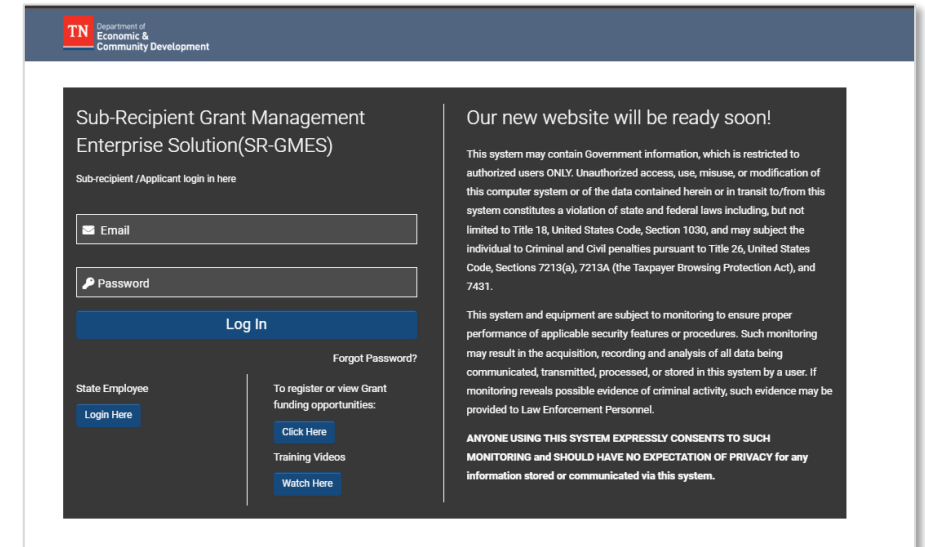- Costs that are **not reasonable, necessary, or allocable** to the grant

C. Application Information

Content and Form of Applications

Applications will be submitted via the grant management software SmartSimple. Applicants will need to register with SmartSimple at https://ecd.grants.tn.gov/s_Login.jsp in order to access the grant application.

📅 **Submission Period: Oct. 2 to Nov. 15**

SmartSimple Registration Page
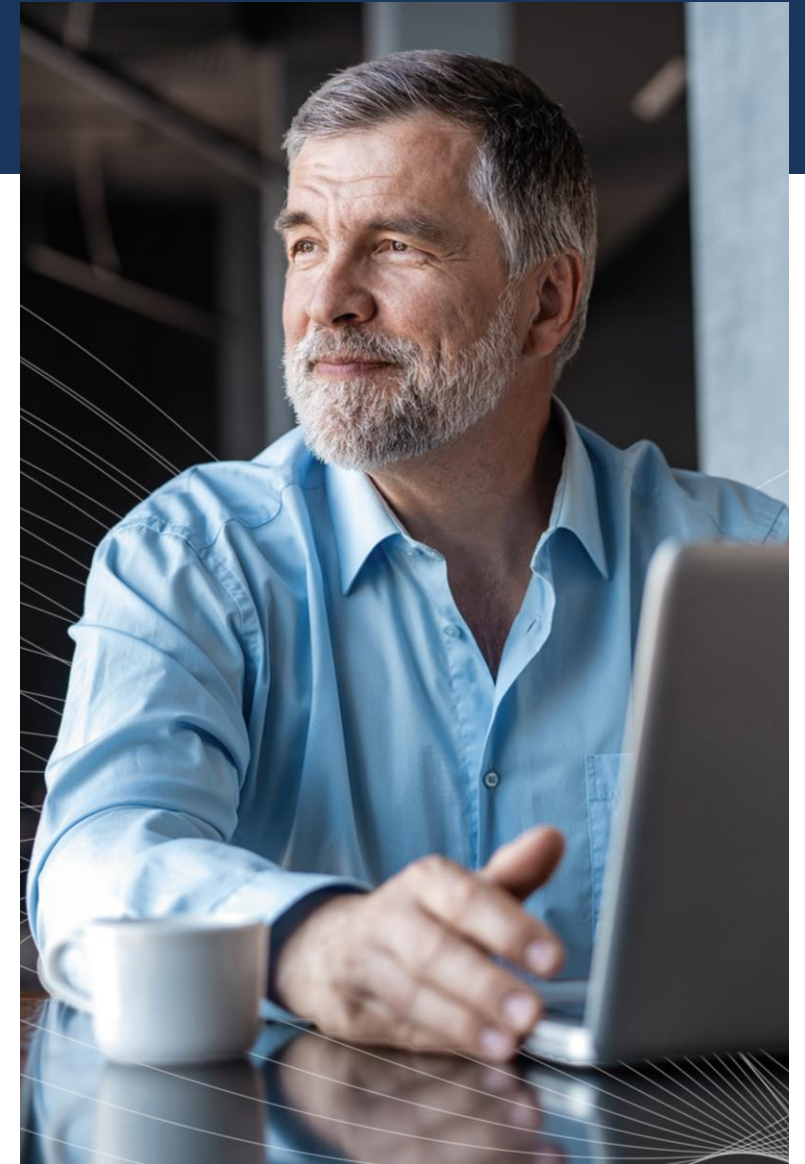
Registering in SmartSimple

Project Information

The applicant should be prepared to provide **identifying information** including:

- Legal entity name
- Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN)
- System Award Management (SAM) ID
- Mailing address
- Primary contact information.

The applicant will also need to provide **information about the following details**:

- Project descriptions
- Implementation of the project
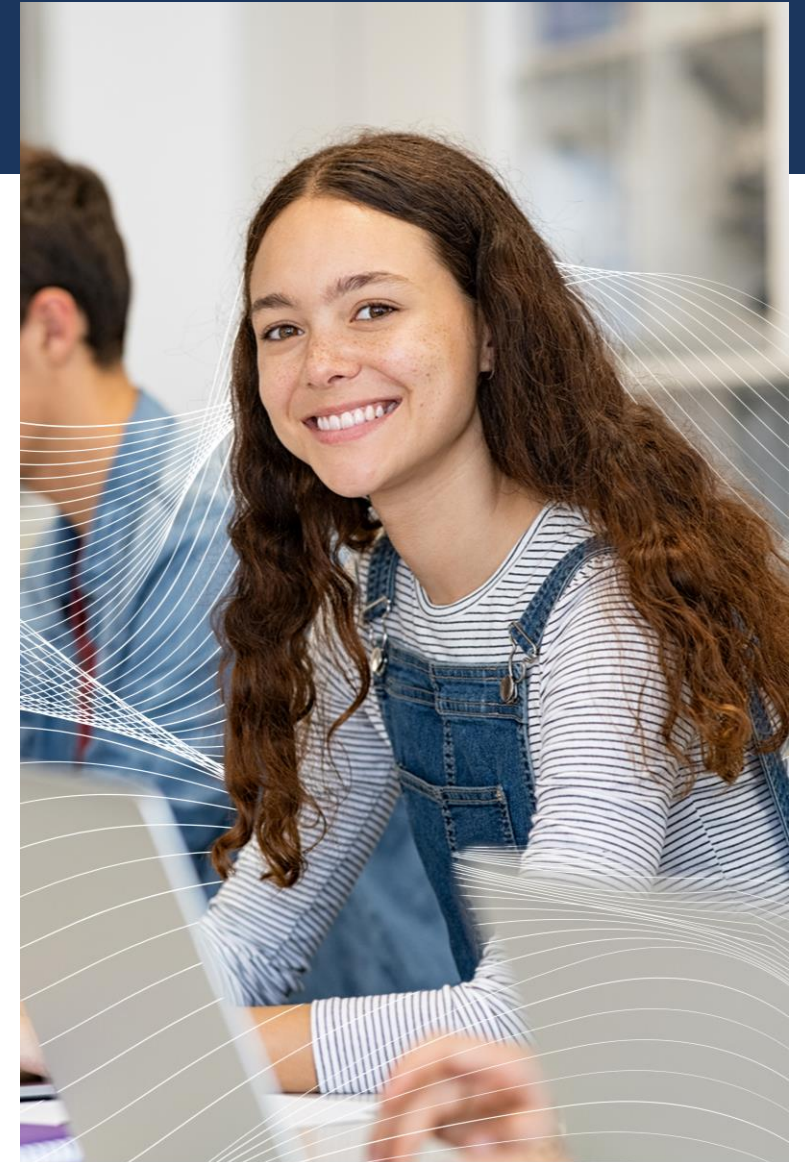- The project timeline

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Project Information

Applicants must outline efforts to promote digital adoption, and they will be required to describe those efforts in a series of application questions.

Examples of areas where counties may focus their digital adoption efforts: **telehealth, workforce development,** and **education.**

Efforts should address **three** of the following five **elements of digital inclusion** (defined by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance [NDIA]):

- Affordable, robust broadband internet service
- Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user
- Access to digital literacy training
- Quality technical support
- Online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration

Completeness Review

This is a **non-competitive grant opportunity**; submitted proposals will not undergo a competitive scoring process.
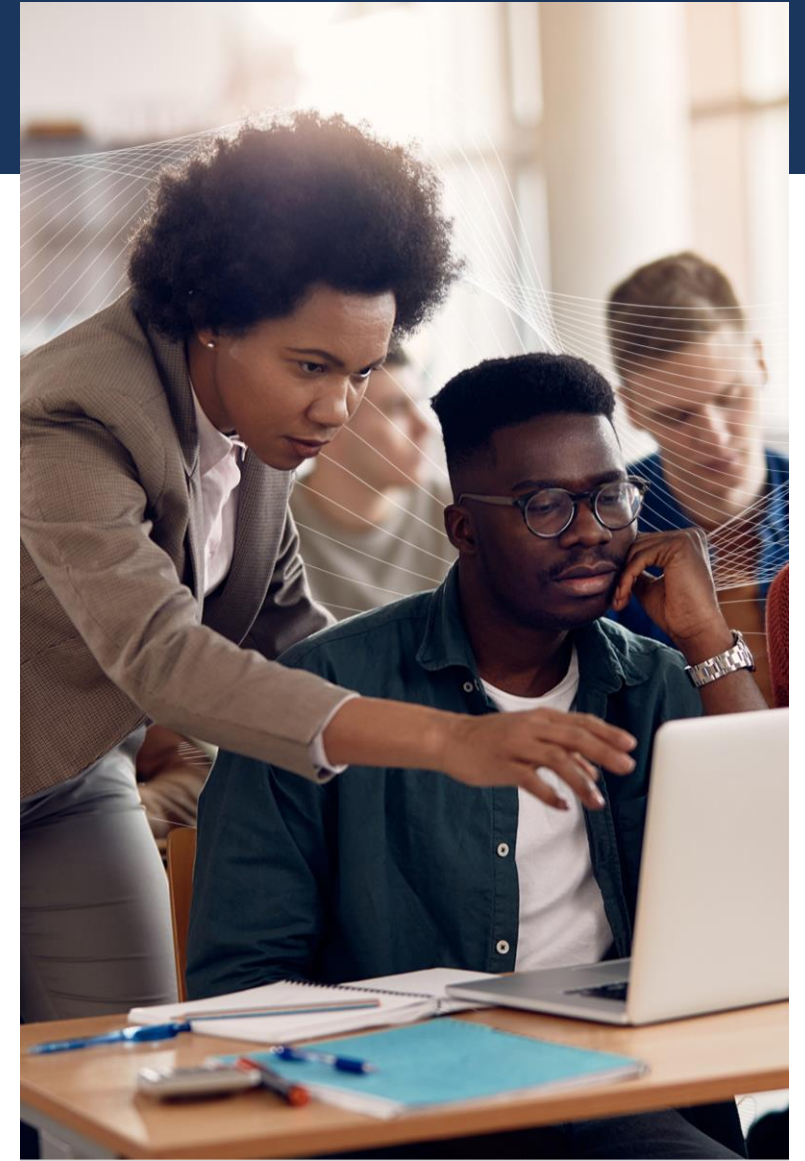
TNECD and the Development Districts* of Tennessee will assess all applications for **eligibility and completeness**, focusing on:
- Community need/support
- Project impact
- Project plan
- Local coordination

And **to confirm that**:
- Administrative information is complete and correct
- The applicant is in good standing with their other federally funded projects
- The applicant adhered to application instructions, including submitted a budget and other supplementary attachments

* Development Districts will only review applications from their respective region.
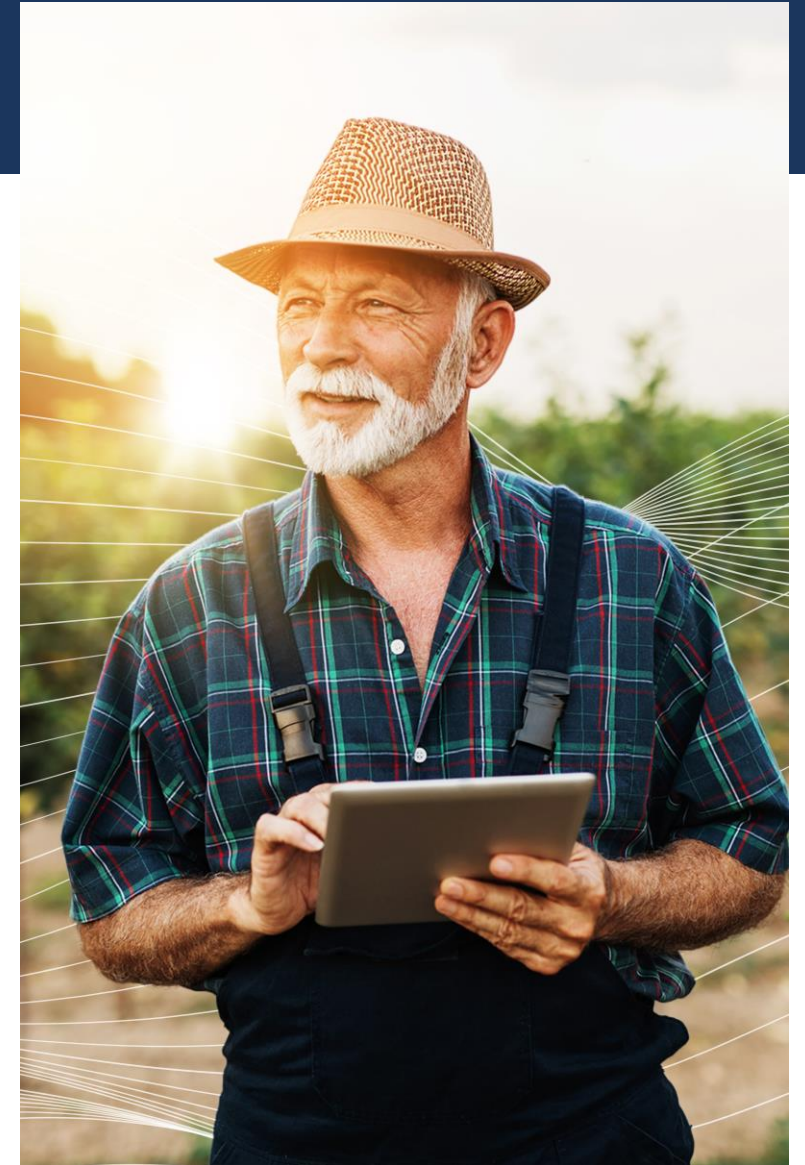
Completeness Review

TNECD and the Development Districts may take up to **15 business days** (November 16 - December 11, 2023) to review the application for completeness.

If TNECD determines that an application is incomplete, the applicant will be allowed **5 business days** to make the necessary adjustments.

All projects that meet the completeness review and are approved by the review team will be presented to TNECD's Grant Committee, comprising the commissioner, deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners, and others designated by the Commissioner that approves all TNECD grants.

F. Summary

Key Points Discussed

- As part of the Tennessee Broadband Accessibility Act of 2017 (TBAA), the State of Tennessee established the Broadband Ready Communities Program.
  - **$10 million** will be distributed
  - Goal: **promote community-based digital adoption activities** to ensure that constituents have the resources and skills necessary to access broadband infrastructure
- **Eligible entities are:**
  - Any counties that have a Broadband Ready designation
  - Any counties that do not have a Broadband Ready designation (must submit an ordinance in the application)
  - Any locality/other political subdivision with a Broadband Ready designation that is in a county that does not have such a designation (may apply for funding on behalf of the county)
- To prove eligibility, each application must submit a **detailed budget narrative**.
- As this is a **non-competitive grant opportunity**, proposals will not undergo a competitive scoring process. However, a **review for eligibility and completeness** will focus on community need and support, project impact, project plan, and local coordination.
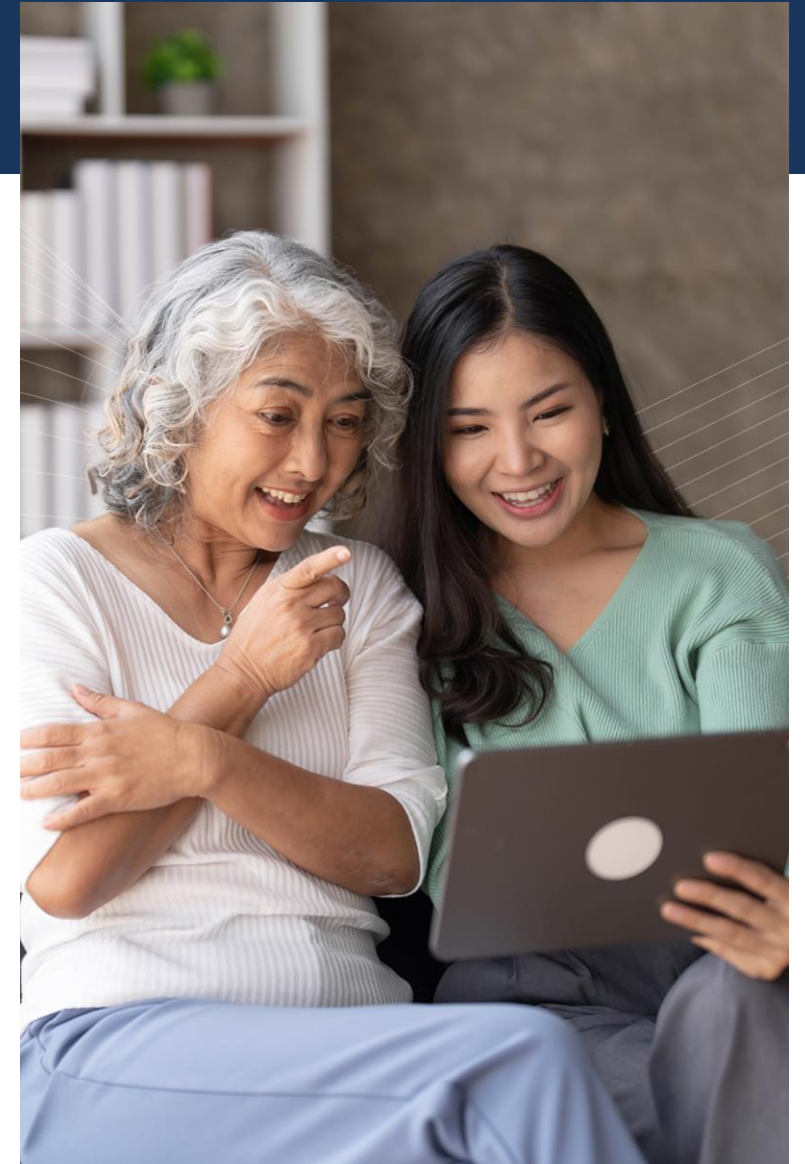
📅 **Submission Period: Oct. 2 to Nov. 15**

G. Next Steps

Resources and Key Dates

TNECD Broadband Office:	https://www.tn.gov/ecd/rural-development/broadband-office.html
TNECD Broadband Grant web page:	https://www.tn.gov/ecd/rural-development/broadband-office/grants.html
Contacts:	Leah Mims, Broadband Grants Coordinator – Digital Opportunity Coordinator: leah.mims@tn.gov Codi Drake, Broadband Grants Coordinator: codi.drake@tn.gov
Grant application period: **Award announcement date:** **Contract signature deadline:** **End of contract period:**	Oct. 2 to Nov. 15 March 2024 (tentative) June 30, 2024 (tentative) Dec. 31, 2026

Take the Survey!

Please take a few minutes to share your feedback.

**Post-event Survey
Broadband Ready Communities Grants:
Program Details and Application Process**

TN Department of Economic & Community Development

THANK YOU