

Connected Community Facilities Grant Program FAQs

Updated 10/26/2023

Eligibility Requirements

Q: Can an application be submitted if a community does not fall under any of the automatically eligible categories?

A: Per ARPA CPF and SLFRF specifications, counties with AMIs above \$65,880 **are still eligible** to apply if they show that they are serving one of the following target populations:

- Households at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a default household size of 3 (\$65,880)
- Households that experienced unemployment or increased food or housing insecurity
- Households that qualify for the Children’s Health Insurance Program, Childcare Subsidies through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Program, or Medicaid
- Qualified Census Tracts: Census Tracts, blocks, or zip codes that meet the designation of “impacted”/“disproportionately impacted” designation or are considered Qualified Census Tracts

If these target population categories do not 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 of being a Covid-19-impacted population through eligibility verification.

For more information, please reference the [ARPA SLFRF Final Rule](#) (pages 12, 17 to 20), the [2023 Interim Final Rule](#) (pages 42 to 43), and [Revised CPF State Guidance June 2023](#) (treasury.gov).

Q: Where can we find the US Treasury estimates?

A: The “Tool for Determining Low and Moderate Income (LMI) Households” (an Excel spreadsheet) to assist recipients in determining income thresholds can be found under “Resources on Determining Eligible Uses of Funds Under the Final Rule” section at the U.S. Treasury website:

<https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>.

Q: Where can we find the Qualified Census Tracts?

A: Please locate the 2022 Qualified Census Tracts here:

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/qct.html#year2022>.

Q: I’ve reviewed the Eligibility Requirements and Target Populations guidance on your website and my county does not automatically fit into any of the allowable categories. How will I verify that the individual end users of the proposed project satisfy the state and federal guidance?

A: Subrecipients will be required to verify that projects serve eligible individuals or households if they are not providing services in a qualified census tract or an eligible county. This verification responsibility will be outlined in the subrecipient agreement and TNECD will monitor this verification process through the period of performance. TNECD will confirm funds are being deployed for eligible uses on an ongoing

basis during quarterly reporting and a mid-point monitoring site visit or phone call. Qualified Census Tracts can be found at:

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/qct/1statetable.html?statefp=47.0&DDAYEAR=2023>

If the project is in a Qualified Census Tract or an eligible county, verifying the end user is eligible is not required.

If a project *is in the following counties*, subrecipients will have to verify projects serve eligible individuals:

- Cheatham, Davidson, Fayette, Knox, Loudon, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Tipton, Williamson, Wilson

Q: Are cities eligible to apply for the Connected Community Facilities Grant Program?

A: Yes, local government units, such as cities, may apply for the grant program.

Q: How many applications can a county submit? Can multiple projects be submitted in one application?

A: TNECD recommends submitting one application per county. Multiple applications may be submitted, but only one project may be submitted per application. Only one project will be awarded per county.

Q: How does TNECD define a “community anchor institution” under the programs?

A: A community anchor institution is an entity such as a school, library, health clinic, health center, hospital or other medical provider, public safety entity, institution of higher education, public housing organization, eligible faith-based institutions, or community support organization that facilitates greater use of broadband service by vulnerable populations, including, but not limited to, low-income individuals, unemployed individuals, children, the incarcerated, and aged individuals.

Project Information

Q: Would community hotspots in downtown or public park areas qualify for the Connected Community Facilities grant program?

A: Community hotspots could be included in the proposed project, but the project must build new community facilities or rehabilitate existing ones to qualify. For example, if a county wants to rehabilitate a community center, hotspots could be included as a project component.

Q: What are some examples of Connected Community Facilities that would fit the objectives of this program?

A: Above all, the Connected Community Facility should enable digital workforce development, virtual health monitoring, and virtual education and provide broadband access within one space. If you have additional questions, please contact ECD.Broadband@TN.gov.

Other Requirements

Q: What are the environmental requirements for these projects?

A: The Treasury's Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund Environmental Checklist is a reference document that lists environmental laws that may apply to any eligible CPF project. Recipients must retain records, permits, and documentation necessary to evidence compliance with all environmental requirements. As the awarding entity, TNECD must perform due diligence to ensure their project complies with all applicable environmental laws; recording-keeping will be validated at mid-point and close-out with a monitoring visit or call. See the checklist at <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/CPF-Environmental-Questionnaire.pdf>.

Q: Would an applicant receive additional points if they are in a county considered distressed by Transparent TN?

A: Yes, to be eligible for additional points, the county's designation must be considered distressed per the Transparent TN metric which takes into account a number of different indexes:

<https://www.tn.gov/transparenttn/state-financial-overview/open-ecd/openecd/tnecd-performance-metrics/openecd-long-term-objectives-quick-stats/distressed-counties.html>

Additionally, the application may be eligible for additional points if the project refurbishes a "National Register of Historical Places" facility. For more information, please visit:

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm>.

Q: Will Development Districts be required to be procured by eligible grantees to administer?

A: TNECD does not require Development Districts to be procured by eligible grantees to administer, but it is a best-practice option.

Key Dates

Q: What is the application deadline for this program?

A: TNECD has updated the application deadline and grant applications are due by December 12, 2023

Q: What is the deadline for completeness reviews?

A: TNECD will review applications for completeness between December 13, 2023, and January 11, 2024.

Additional Information

Q: What is TNECD Broadband's website?

A: For more information regarding the Connected Community Facilities Grant, please visit:

<https://www.tn.gov/ecd/rural-development/broadband-office/grants.html>

Q: Given that the CCF application asks whether the applicant has the Broadband Ready Communities designation, what is the best email address to send the resolutions to if a county is not listed on the website as Broadband Ready but should be?

A: To submit resolutions for counties not listed on the [website](#), please email ECD.Broadband@TN.gov.

Q: Who can I contact directly for more information?

A: For more questions regarding the Connected Community Facilities Grant Program, please contact one of the following individuals:

- Codi Drake | Broadband Grants Coordinator
codi.drake@tn.gov
- Leah Mims | Broadband Grants Coordinator
leah.mims@tn.gov
- Taylre M. Beaty | State Broadband Director
taylre.beaty@tn.gov

Q: When will additional information, such as the webinar’s slides and webinar recording, be posted on TNECD’s website?

A: To view the slides from or to watch a recording of the Connected Community Facilities Grant Program webinar, please visit <https://www.tn.gov/e cd/rural-development/broadband-office/grants.html>, and click on the “Connected Community Facilities” tab and then the “Supplemental Resources” tab.

Q: What information will be asked during the quarterly reports?

A: In addition to expenditure and project progress, grantees will be required to report the number of individuals served and the demographic data of those served as well as outcomes of those served.