Connected Community Facilities Grant Application Guide

Connected Community Facilities

Significant Changes to Connected Communities Facilities Grant 1.0 are highlighted in the guidebook by the following symbol.

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01 | Program Description

1.1. Overview of the Grant Program

The Connected Communities Facilities 2.0 Grant Program's goal is to make digital access easier by **building and rehabbing spaces** where communities can come together and connect digitally. The goal is to create places where people can access digital resources for work, health, and education in one location. The Connected Communities Facilities Grant Program is funded by the ARPA Capital Project Fund (CPF).

1.2. Key Dates

TNECD Broadband anticipates opening the Connected Community Facilities grant opportunity application on May 15th, 2024, and closing the applications on July 12th, 2024. Anticipated announcement for the awards will be September 2024.

1.3. Federal Award Information

1.3.1. Award Amount
The maximum grant request allowable for the Connected Community Facilities Grant Program is $2 million.

1.3.2. Match Amount
The grant will cover up to 90% of eligible project expenses, with a required 10% match by the grantee.

1.3.3. Period of Performance
All contracts with grantees must be in effect by November 30th, 2024. Funds must be expended by December 30th, 2026.

02 | **Eligibility Requirements**

2.1. Eligible Applicants

- County Government
- Local Government
- Health Department
- K-12 School
- Library
- Public Safety Unit of Government
- Nonprofit partnering with any of the above governments to address the digital divide

Applicants who are not government units themselves must apply in partnership with a government entity. While non-profit organizations may own the building, it is imperative that the local government demonstrates support for the project and justifies why this facility fills a critical need that they cannot fulfill independently, especially in addressing the local digital divide.

For instance, this may entail a local government or educational institution expressing support for a non-profit childcare organization that offers comprehensive services such as training, education, and telehealth for families in the area. The partnership should emphasize the collaborative efforts to bridge the digital gap and provide essential resources to the community.

2.2. Eligible Communities

Automatically Eligible Communities: Any project that is in counties with a Median Family Income at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a default household size of 3 ($65,880).

This is all counties except: Cheatham, Davidson, Fayette, Knox, Loudon, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Tipton, Williamson, or Wilson. **Note:** Counties with AMIs above $65,880 are still eligible to apply if they show that they are serving a target population (defined in the next section).

Priority Eligible Communities: Following Governor Bill Lee's Executive Order 1, applicants from an "at-risk" or "distressed" county, as designated by the Appalachian Regional Commission, will receive 5 additional points in their scoring. In fiscal year 2024, Tennessee's "at-risk" and "distressed" counties were:

- **At-Risk (27):** Benton, Campbell, Carroll, Carter, Claiborne, Decatur, Fentress, Greene, Grundy, Hawkins, Haywood, Houston, Jackson, Johnson, Lauderdale, Lewis, Macon, McNairy, Meigs, Morgan, Pickett, Rhea, Sequatchie, Unicoi, Van Buren, Warren, Wayne
- **Distressed (8):** Bledsoe, Clay, Cocke, Hancock, Hardeman, Perry, Scott, Lake

Additionally, projects in a Qualified Census Tract (QCT) will receive 5 additional points in their scoring. Applicants may earn up to 5 points for projects in an At Risk/Distressed County or QTC, but not for both categories simultaneously.

2.3. Eligible Target Populations

If the project is located in Cheatham, Davidson, Fayette, Knox, Loudon, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Tipton, Williamson, or Wilson Counties, the project must serve one of the following eligible populations:

- Providing Services in a Qualified Census Tracts
- Low-or-moderate income households or communities
- Households that experienced unemployment
- Households that experienced increased food or housing insecurity
- Households that qualify for the Children's Health Insurance Program
- Households that qualify for Childcare Subsidies through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Program, or Medicaid

Verification of eligible population: As part of the application process, applicants will be required to provide verification of the end beneficiary that aligns with the selected target population. By choosing a specific population, applicants are committing to collect verification. Sampling the population and collecting data over given periods of time is acceptable.

2.4. Funds Matching

The grant will cover up to 90% of eligible project expenses, with a required 10% match by the grantee.

Utilization of Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) funds as matching funds is allowed.

Make Ready Cost: Expenses accrued before the sub-recipient agreement is signed can be considered as part of the grantee match requirements. This flexibility enables the sub-recipient to qualify for a higher percentage of reimbursement under the grant.

These expenses fall into the below categories:
- Removal/mitigation of hazardous substances
- Asbestos removal expenses
- Other cost necessary to make the project ready for construction.

2.5. Use of Project Funds

2.5.1. Eligible Uses
In line with the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), the Capital Projects Fund (CPF) Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program (MPCF) aims to provide essential resources to communities, particularly in addressing the critical needs of work, education, and health monitoring. The following criteria must be met for a facility to be considered eligible for funding under this program:

- **Direct Enablement of Work, Education, and Health Monitoring**: The facility must be designed to directly support work, education, and health monitoring

opportunities. Facilities must have all three components

- **Addressing Critical Needs**: The project must address a critical need that has been identified within the community. This could include a lack of community libraries with internet access, community schools with limited access to employment and work-related services, or health centers with limited internet and/or private areas for telehealth appointments.

- **Community Support and Need Demonstration:** The project must demonstrate a compelling need within the served community, supported by substantive evidence of community support. This includes outreach efforts to gather community feedback and the involvement of local communities in identifying the need for the project.

- **Project Readiness and Schedule**: The project will be assessed for its readiness, including the details of the project schedule, design, and the work related to environmental approvals and certificates.

- **Broadband Connectivity and Devices:** The facility must have the required broadband connectivity and devices, including details on current broadband connectivity at the facility and available/proposed devices. For new and existing facilities, discussions with Internet Service Providers to secure broadband connection to the facility must be initiated.

The facility will effectively serve the community by bridging the gap in work, education, and health monitoring opportunities, thereby addressing critical need to bridge the digital divide.

2.5.2. Ineligible Uses

Ineligible costs include any costs that are not for necessary construction, acquisition. and improvement of such facilities. Costs that appear excessive and/or without justification and costs not considered eligible will not be reimbursed.

- Operational and reoccurring expenses, other than grant administration costs

- Fundraising activities

- Short-term operating leases

- Expenses incurred prior to the date of the grant award announcement (except for make-ready and inventory backdated to March 15, 2021)

- 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

- Satisfaction of any obligation arising under or pursuant to a settlement agreement, judgment, consent decree, or judicially confirmed debt restructuring plan in a judicial, administrative, or regulatory proceeding

- Activities to support or oppose collective bargaining

2.5.3 Examples of Ideal Projects

Based on the information provided, here are examples of ideal projects for the Capital Projects Fund (CPF):

- **Digital Learning Hub:** A partnership between a local government and a private sector company could develop a digital learning hub. This facility would provide high-speed internet, computers, and telehealth equipment, serving as a digital learning center, workforce training center, and telehealth clinic. The private sector partner could contribute expertise in technology and digital literacy training, while the local government ensures accessibility and community engagement.

- **Maker Space:** A collaboration between a local government and a private sector innovation company could establish a maker space. This space would include a flexible space for workforce development, a computer lab for education, and a telehealth room for healthcare services.

- **Community Wellness Center:** A partnership between a local government and a healthcare provider could create a community wellness center. This

center would combine a fitness center, a library, and a telehealth suite.

- **Community Center:** A partnership between a local government and a cultural organization could establish a cultural and community center. This center would include a cultural arts space, a library, a workforce development center, and a telehealth suite. The private sector partner could contribute to the cultural arts space and workforce development center, ensuring a vibrant cultural scene and effective workforce training, while the local government could manage the library and telehealth services.

03 | **Application Information**

3.1. Applicant Qualifications

3.1.1. System Award Management (SAM) Registration

Each applicant must obtain a SAM Unique Entity ID from SAM.gov in order to be eligible to receive funding from the Connected Community Facilities Grant Program. To obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and please access the directions: https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration.

3.2. Content and Form of Applications

Applications will be submitted via the grant management software SmartSimple. Grantees will need to register with SmartSimple at the below mentioned link in order to access the grant application.

Link: https://ecd.grants.tn.gov/ s_Login.jsp
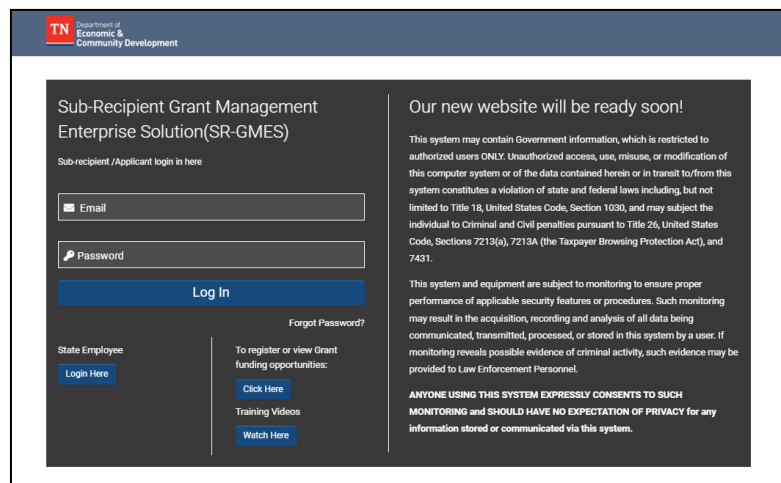
SmartSimple Registration Page

3.2.1. Organization Information

The applicant should be prepared to provide identifying information including the legal entity name, Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN), SAM ID, mailing

address, and primary contact information.

3.2.2. Project Information

The applicant will need to provide information including project descriptions, information about the service area, facility information, project implementation information, and information on the project timeline.

3.2.3. Community Impact

Applicants will have the opportunity to describe how the project will provide activities and services to directly enable education, workforce development, healthcare monitoring, and broadband accessibility.

Applicants are expected to provide numerical estimates and explanations of how they calculated those estimates and how they plan to measure their stated impact.

3.2.4. Budget Information

For each budget category with a ^, there must be multiple line items within the category and justifications for the necessity and basis for the listed costs. The description should include methods used to calculate the costs and any additional information to describe the costs.

Construction

Applicants must provide a high-level budget (only one line will be available) and description of any proposed construction costs for the project. Examples of construction costs are costs related to the construction, repair, rehabilitation, installation, and improvement of facilities, along with internal labor costs incurred as part of eligible project activities.

Architect/engineering fees

Applicants must provide a high-level budget (only one line will be available) and description of proposed architect and engineering costs for the project. Examples of architect and engineering costs are costs related to engineering, architectural, and project management costs involved in design and constructing the proposed project. Engineering expenses can be included if they fall within the contract period. Mileage rates charged as a part of engineering expenses should be brought down to the state- level regulations ($0.655/mile), which also needs to be

shown on the invoices.

Professional fees, grant, and award^

Applicants must provide multiple lines items and a detailed description of any proposed professional fees and grant and award costs for the project. Examples of professional fees and grant and award costs are engagement and public feedback processes, equity assessments and planning, needs assessments, permitting, planning, architectural design, and work related to environmental, historical, and cultural reviews. Operation expenses are not permissible.

Supplies, telephone, postage & shipping, Occupancy, equipment, rental & maintenance, printing & publications

Applicants must provide a high-level budget (only two lines will be available) and description of supply and occupancy costs for the project. Cost will be broken between two-line items: Supplies an Occupancy.

Examples of supplies costs are devices, office equipment and furnishings, telecommunications equipment, and shipping. Digital device distribution should constitute no more than 30% of the total project cost. While the grant aims primarily to support the construction of a new facility, it is permissible for devices and furnishings to account for up to 30% of the total funding request.

Examples of occupancy cost are the cost of long-term leases (for terms greater than five years) of facilities, including indefeasible right- of-use (IRU) agreements and capital leases.

Grant/project administration (limited to 6% of total budget or indirect cost rate if a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement is in place)

Applicants must provide a high-level budget (only one line will be available) and description of proposed administrative cost for the project. Administrative expenses refer to indirect costs associated with operating the program. Examples of covered administrative costs are:

- **Reporting Activities:** Administration activities includes carrying out performance accountability requirements e.g. compiling monthly expenditure reports, aggregating quarterly performance data,

- **Planning Activities:** All planning activities pertaining to the grant excluding strategizing and implementation of developed plan.

- **Budgeting & Accounting:** Budgeting and accounting services to track grant funds and prepare reimbursement requests.

- **Environmental Review**

- **Federal Grant Compliance:** Activities done for complying to Federal grant regulations such a Davis-Bacon compliance, financial management, procurement, close out etc.

Note: If an applicant has a current Negotiated Indirect Costs Rate Agreement (NICRA), the applicant may use their current NICRA to charge indirect costs to the award. However, if the applicant does not have a current NICRA, they may elect to use the de minimis rate of 6 percent of the modified total direct costs to charge indirect costs to the award pursuant to 2 CFR 200.414(f).

Other non-personnel^

Applicants must provide multiple line items and a detailed description of any proposed non-personnel costs for the project. Examples of other non-personnel costs are any other upfront costs not covered in other categories, such as permits, required licenses, sales tax applicable to new equipment purchases and warehousing expenses, and miscellaneous minor material.

Capital purchase^

Applicants must provide multiple line items and a detailed description of any proposed capital costs for the project. Examples of capital purchase costs include significant investments such as the acquisition of real property and the procurement of vehicles or equipment valued at $10,000 per unit or more. These

are considered substantial expenditures that contribute directly to the development and implementation of the proposed project.

Project contingency (Max 15% of total request)

Applicants must provide a high-level budget (only one line will be available) and description of proposed contingency cost for the project. Project contingency for construction costs refers to a reserve fund set aside to account for unforeseen expenses or changes that may arise during the construction phase of a project. This contingency fund acts as a safety net to cover unexpected circumstances such as material price fluctuations, design changes, or unforeseen site conditions. It provides flexibility to address issues without disrupting the project timeline or exceeding the allocated budget. The purpose of a project contingency is to mitigate risks and ensure that construction projects can be completed successfully within the planned scope, schedule, and budget.

3.2.5. Additional Uploads

The upload section of the application will allow applicants to upload the following required and optional documents. Templates for the additional uploads are also linked in the application.

- W9 Form.
- Grant Payment Setup Form.
- The Government partnership agreement, if applicable.
- Attach Community Support Letter(s).
- Resolution Attachment.
- PE and/or Architect Certification.

The resolution should clearly demonstrate the applicant's ability to meet the financial match requirement if awarded the grant.

If the main applicant is a non-profit organization, the resolution should detail the reasons for the government entity's support of the application and its alignment with identified gaps within the locality. Non-profit organizations must provide proof of financing to cover the match if the government is not fully covering it. This documentation should be attached to the resolution and clearly outline the sources of funding and their intended use.

04 | Application Review Process

4.1. Scoring Review

Applications will also be assessed for their impact on the community they seek to serve. The following criteria will be assessed as part of the community impact review; note that the points per category are not divided equally across each scoring criteria within the category:

Parameter	Key Question(s)	Max Scoring
Eligibility	Is the proposed application and the organization attending a community need?	**Up to 10 points**
Project Information	How will the project enable digital opportunity? What services are offered through the proposed project and how are these services tailored to community needs? Are the proposed services based upon the economic thresholds in the community? How is the project aligned to Tennessee's Digital Opportunity vision?	**Up to 30 points**

Facility Information	The use of a structure or location on this list will make the application eligible for additional points.	**Up to 5 points**
Project Timeline	Has the applicant a detailed timeline covering the different stages of the project until competition by December 31, 2026? Has the applicant demonstrated ability to meet project milestones and timeline, and to meet project objectives requirements (enabling healthcare, work, and education)?	**Up to 25 points**
Operations	Evaluate current and future sources of income and fees structure	**Up to 15 points**
Facility Accessibility	Evaluate the location, operation availability and visibility of the services provided, and these serve the community needs	**Up to 15 points**

Community Impact	Evaluate the applicant's level of community support and outreach to the community. Evaluate the project's impact and plan for community development considering the specific target population of the project.	**Up to 30 points**
Partnerships	Evaluate the applicant's partnerships with community and service providers.	**Up to 10 points**
Budget	Do the budget justifications assure financial ability to fund operational & maintenance costs of the facility and provide additional impact to the community?	**Up to 30 points**
Project located in At Risk/Distressed County or QTC		**Up to 5 Points**
Project use of a historically significant structure or location		**Up to 5 Points**
Total maximum points		**Up to 180 points**

05 | TNECD Award Administration

5.1. TNECD Award Notices

If an applicant is awarded funding, the TNECD Broadband Grants Officer will issue a subrecipient agreement. By signing the document, the recipient agrees to comply will all terms, conditions, and provisions set forth. If an applicant is awarded funding, TNECD Broadband office is not under any obligation to provide additional funding in connection with that award or make any future awards.

5.2. Reimbursement Grant

This grant operates on a reimbursement basis. Applicants are permitted to submit invoices once per month for reimbursement of eligible expenses.

In certain circumstances, ECD may provide payment to the applicant for unpaid invoices related to work completed by a contractor on construction projects. This provision will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and addressed during the post-award phase.

5.3. Compliance with State and Federal Guidelines

5.3.1. *Fair labor Practices*

Applicants must provide record of and plans to be in compliance with federal labor and employment laws. The following is a general summary of laws that applicants must comply with; this summary is not exhaustive. For the exhaustive list of federal labor and employment laws, reference [Revised CPF State Guidance 2023 (treasury.gov)](treasury.gov) specifically Part 2 Sections A.5.

If awarded more than $5 Million:

1) Applicants must provide certification that all laborers employed to be working on the project are paid wages at rates not less than those prevailing.

2) If certification is not provided, then the applicant must provide a project employment and local impact report that includes the following:

- The number of contractors and sub-contractors working on the project
- The number of employees on the project hired directly and hired through a third party
- The wages and benefits of workers on the project by classification
- Whether those wages are at rates less than those prevailing

3) Compliance for National Labor Relations Act (29 U.S.C. 158(f)):

- Recipients are to provide certification that the project includes a project labor agreement, a pre-hire collective bargaining agreement that is in accordance with the National Labor Relations Act (29 U.S.C. 158(f)) section 8(f).

4) Applicants must provide information on whether the project prioritizes local hires.

5) Applicants must provide information on whether the project has a Community Benefit Agreement with a description of such agreement.

5.3.2. *Civil Rights and Nondiscrimination law*

Recipients of Connected Community Facilities Grants are required to be in compliance with all civil rights and nondiscrimination federal laws related to the use of federal funds. Recipients shall not discriminate or deny benefits or services, on the basis of race, color, national origin (including limited English proficiency), disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or handicap. Recipients are required to agree to, by a form of binding commitment, abide by all civil rights and non-discrimination requirements set forth.

5.3.3. Domestic Preference

Under Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200.322), grantees must provide a preference for the purchase, acquisition, or use of goods, products, or materials produced in the United States. This includes items and construction materials composed of metals, plastics, aggregate (such as optical fiber), and lumber. All items made in whole or in part of these covered materials apply. Grantees should make all efforts to document this preference and ensure subcontractor compliance, including listing the referenced clause in all subcontracts.

5.4. National Policy Requirements

5.4.1. Uniform Guidance and Cost Principles

Recipients of an award are subject to various federal regulations, including Uniform Administrative Guidance, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements set forth in 2 CFR Part 200. Subpart D - Post Federal Award Requirements of the Uniform Guidance shall apply to this award, along with Subpart E - Cost Principles and Subpart F - Audit Requirements, including the Single Audit Act, of the Uniform Guidance. For an exhaustive list of uniform guidance requirements, reference [eCFR :: 2 CFR Part 200 -- Uniform Administrative Requirements. Cost Principles. and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.](#)

5.4.2. Environmental and National Historical Preservation Requirements

Recipients must retain records, permits, and documentation necessary to evidence compliance with all environmental requirements. If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," contact the relevant federal agency or agencies for further guidance on environmental compliance. See the checklist at https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/CPF-Environmental-Questionnaire.pdf.

1. Will the proposed activity be under the permitting authority of any federal agency?
2. Will the proposed activity receive federal assistance (other than the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund and American Rescue Plan- State Local Fiscal Recovery Funds)?
3. Will the proposed activity be subject to any federal regulatory decision or approval?
4. Has a NEPA or NEPA-like review been independently prepared for this proposed eligible activity or is a NEPA review underway?

The NHPA (16 U.S.C. §§ 470 et seq.) states that recipients are required to inform the awarding agency of any direct or indirect effects the award may have on properties included or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Recipients may also be inquired to assist with consulting with State or Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, among others, to assess unfavorable effects to historic properties. For more information on the requirements for NHPA and other compliances, see Federal Historic Preservation Laws (nps.gov).

5.4.3. Property Trust Relationship and Public Notice Filings for Grant-Acquired Property

In accordance with § 200.316 Property trust relationship, real property, equipment, and intangible property, that are acquired or improved by a federal award must be held in trust by the recipient as trustee for the beneficiaries of the award under which the property was improved or acquired. For more information refer to, eCFR :: 2 CFR 200.316 -- Property trust relationship.

5.4.4. Contracting with Small and Minority Businesses, Women's Business Enterprises, and Labor Surplus Area Firms

In accordance with 2 CFR. § 200.321, recipients are required to make specific efforts to work with small and minority-owned businesses, women's business enterprises, and firms from labor surplus areas.

5.5. Reporting

Subrecipients will need to submit quarterly reports to TNECD on the following dates: January 3, April 3, July 3, and October 3 of each year. These reports are mandatory until the final expenditure of the grant or until the final report, due April 2027.

These reports should include financial data, programmatic details, and information about any delays or issues encountered during the project implementation. These reporting requirements ensure transparency and accountability throughout the grant period.

5.6. Audit Requirements

Requirements for Non-profit and Government Subrecipients: If the subrecipient

spends $750,000 or more during the fiscal year on federal awards, the subrecipient is required to undergo a single audit and submit the audit to the federal audit clearing house at fac.gov. For more details on audit requirements, please refer to [eCFR :: 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart F -- Audit Requirements](#).

5.7. Monitoring and Site Visits

As part of the grant process, all grantees will undergo monitoring activities, which include a desk review (phone call) or site visit twice during their performance period. The first monitoring check will occur at the midpoint of project completion, when the project is 50% complete as confirmed by the grantee. Another review will take place during the closeout phase. Depending on the risk level determined by TNECD's broadband team, some grantees may undergo additional monitoring, such as a site visit.

5.8. Invoicing

This is a reimbursement grant. Grantees will be required to invoice exact expenses directly to TNECD. Grantees must follow the format prescribed by TNECD, which includes a cover sheet outlining the invoice items against each contractor or make-ready/material charge-out/ inhouse labor expenses along with supporting documentation, including individual invoices and proofs of payment. The file should be submitted to the mail ID **ECDBroadband.Invoices@tn.gov.**

Grantees will become eligible for the remaining 15% of their invoice reimbursements once the closeout review has been completed. This ensures accountability and transparency throughout the project lifecycle.

5.9. Technical Assistance

TNECD will provide grantees with technical assistance and resources including compliance webinars, invoicing training, and other programming and guidance throughout the contract period.

06 | TNECD Contacts

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07 | Appendix

7.1. Application Checklist

Completion Status	Document Upload	Notes
	W9 Form	Found here
	Grant Payment Setup Form	The Grant Payment Setup Form can be found here.
	The Government partnership agreement, if applicable.	
	Attach Community Support Letter(s)	
	Resolution	The resolution should clearly demonstrate the applicant's ability to meet the financial match requirement if awarded the grant.
	PE and/or Architect Certification	Please upload a document signed by PE and/or architect that outlines all of the following: 1) high-level overview of the project budget, 2) site map, and a 3) technical project description. Document must contain all three.

7.2. Application Questions

Please note that the questions provided here are a representative sample and may be subject to slight modifications. They are intended to assist applicants in initiating their application process.

Eligibility

1. Select your organization type. (If your organization is a Nonprofit, applicants will be asked which populations there serve and to provide a history of your organization's working with the described population.)

2. What is the primary county where the project will be served?

3. Is the county where the project will be implemented designated by the Appalachian Regional Commission as "at-risk" or "distressed" or a Qualified Census Tract by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)?

4. List any additional counties that the facility will serve.

5. Will your proposed project primarily serve one of the following counties: Cheatham, Davidson, Fayette, Knox, Loudon, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Tipton, Williamson, Wilson? (5.1. If yes, the organization will be required to select which of the listed populations the proposed project will serve primarily.)

Project Information

6. Does this project propose a new construction of a facility or a rehabilitation or renovation of an existing facility? (new construction or a rehabilitation).

7. Please describe how the project aligns with Tennessee's vision for Digital Opportunity.

8. Select all education-related activities that the facility will provide to the community.

9. Describe how the project will directly enable digital education. If the organization is offering digital education, be specific of the types of digital literacy training and other support services provided to enable use of the devices and more broadband adoption.

10. Select all workforce development-related activities that the facility will provide to the community.

11. Describe how this project will provide the community with workforce development assistance.

12. Select all healthcare monitoring-related activities that the facility will provide to the community.

13. Describe how the project will directly enable healthcare monitoring.

Broadband Availability

14. Select all broadband services that will be available at the facility.

15. Does the project location currently have broadband service available at 100/20mbps and scalable to 100/100 mbps? (14.a. If yes, state the name of the service provider and their participation in the development of the project, if applicable. 14.b. If no, Describe your plans to get broadband service to the area and what Internet Service Provider (ISP) you intend to use.)

Facility Information

16.   Address of the Facility.

17.   Does the project require the use of a historically significant structure or location?

18.   Does the applicant own or lease the building being used for the proposed project?

Project Timeline

19.   Do you agree this project can be completed by December 31, 2026?

20.   Provide a construction timeline for the proposed project. (Address the following stages: permitting/contracting/approvals, construction, acquisition, procurement, renovation, close-out, and maintenance and operations.)

Operating Budget (Current Funding Sources)

21.   Will patrons be charged a fee for using facility services during the grant period? List the fees. (21.a. If yes, Do you agree to follow Treasury guidelines, that fees charged to facility patrons during the grant period must be channeled back into supporting the facility.)

Facility Accessibility

22.   Describe the proximity of your facility to public transportation hubs or coordination with public transportation and the ease of access for individuals utilizing these services.

23.   Explain why that location is strategically located near target population or easily accessible.

24. Detail the hours of operations and the availability of this building to be used by the general public of the community or target population.

Community Impact

25. How many individuals are expected to use the facility during the 5 years after project completion?

26. Describe how that number was calculated.

27. Describe the economic and community impact your proposed project will have for the application area.

Partnerships

28. Will any organizations be subcontracted with to deliver services at the facility after the construction or renovation is completed?

Budget

29. Complete the Grant Budget Worksheet in SmartSimple.

Match Funding

30. Do your match funds include federal funds? (Only Exceptions for federal funds include ECD-administered Community Development Block Grant, funded by the HUD. 31.a. If yes, state if you will be using ECD CDBG HUD funds as the match.)

31. Would you like to count eligible costs incurred between March 15, 2021 and the grant contract's start date towards the 10% match requirement? (32.a. If yes, state how

TNECD's Connected Community Facility Grant demonstrates that the funds lead to additional impact rather than maintaining existing or planned efforts that may have been budgeted for already.)

Budget - Acknowledgement Statements

- Our organization acknowledges that fiscal responsibility of this facility shall be maintained by the applicant for a period of at least five (5) years.
- Our organization has read and understands the budget terms, limitations, and requirements as they are described on the website and associated documents.
- Our organization agrees that these funds will not be used to backfill funds that have already been budgeted.

7.3 FAQs

Updated 4-9-2024

Eligibility Requirements

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

A: If a project is in the following counties, subrecipients will either have to conduct the project in a Qualified Census Tract or verify projects serve eligible individuals: Cheatham, Davidson, Fayette, Knox, Loudon, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Tipton, Williamson, Wilson.

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

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-tribalgovernments/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: 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.

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. Hotspots in a park or downtown should be adjacent to the facility. For example, if a county wants to rehabilitate a community center, hotspots could be included as a project component. This would be listed in the supplies budget.

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.

Other Requirements

Q: What are the environmental requirements for these projects?

A: Generally, rehabilitation projects that do not involve significant disturbances to land or water are not subject to NEPA permits. This means that if the project does not significantly alter the environment, such as through construction, land use changes, or impacts on floodplains or wetlands, the do not need to obtain a NEPA permit. The NEPA process is primarily concerned with evaluating the environmental impacts of proposed actions that have the potential to significantly affect the environment.

However, it's important to note that certain activities, even within the realm of rehabilitation, may still require NEPA compliance. For instance, if the project involves restoring, rehabilitating, or stabilizing lands occupied by roads and trails, or if it includes activities that restore, rehabilitate, or stabilize water bodies by modifying water control structures, there might be a

need to consider NEPA compliance. These activities are considered significant and could fall under the scope of NEPA requirements.

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. See the checklist at https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/CPFEnvironmental-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-performancemetrics/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 deadline for applicants to be awarded?
A: TNECD anticipates making the final selection and notification in late September 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: Codi Drake | Broadband Grants Coordinator codi.drake@tn.gov

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