



Department of
**Economic &
Community Development**

Digital Adoption
Grant Programs

DIGITAL SKILLS, EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE 2.0 GRANTS PROGRAM

Application Webinar

June 2024

The background features a dark blue gradient. On the left side, there are several overlapping, semi-transparent five-pointed stars. A large, faint circular arc is also visible, partially overlapping the stars and extending towards the center of the image.

Welcome!

Housekeeping

Kindly remain on mute throughout the presentation. For questions, please utilize the provided QR code or link in the chat.



Agenda

- A. Program Overview
- B. Eligibility Requirements
- C. Application Information
- D. The Application Review Process
- E. Administration
- F. Summary



Use the QR code for questions



2024 Changes



Changes to the Digital Skills, Education and Workforce Grant 1.0 are highlighted in the webinar by the following symbol.

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A. Program Overview

Tennessee's Goals for Digital Opportunity

80%

of Tennessee residents belong to a covered population that may be disproportionately impacted by the digital divide (*NTIA Estimates*)



Digital Opportunity Taskforce



Community Listening & Working Groups



Digital Opportunity Summit



Online Surveys



Digital Opportunity Asset Inventory

Needs and Barriers

Affordability

Broadband cost was the top barrier across all covered populations and communities

Digital Skills

Key Concern for Aging individuals as well as for employment opportunities and higher education

Technical Support

Lack of resources around troubleshooting, technical repairs, and maintenance services

Access to Quality Devices

Most Tennesseans have a smartphone, but many lack access to a device that enable remote working, online education etc.

Online Safety and Privacy

Tennesseans expressed concerns for the safety of both children and aging individuals utilizing the Internet with a strong correlation to digital skills

TNECD's Digital Opportunity Efforts to Date

Using funds effectively to maximize impact and intentionally advance covered populations

DO Initiatives to Date

Through ARPA dollars, launched:

- Digital Skills, Education, and Workforce Development (DSEW) – in process of distributing funds across digital skills, education, and workforce development
- Connected Community Facilities (CCF) – in process of enabling digital workforce development, virtual health monitoring, virtual education, and broadband access through construction or rehabilitation of a building
- Broadband Ready Communities (BRC) – \$10 million distributed to non-competitive grant for county and local governments to secure up to \$100,000 for broadband adoption activities
- Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) - \$5 million across 5 adult educational institutions offering the Telecommunications Electronics Technician Diploma to produce the well-trained and diverse telecommunications workforce

Main DSEW Goals

The goal is to provide basic and advanced digital skills training and device initiatives, enabling the technical proficiency necessary to navigate complex digital environments.

Award Information

Award Amount

The maximum grant request allowable for the Digital Skills, Education and Workforce Grant Program is **\$1 million**.

Period of Performance

All contracts with grantees must be in effect by December 2024, and funds must be expended by December 31st, 2026.

Match Amount

This is a **reimbursement-only grant**. The grant will cover up to **90% of each invoice** submitted for reimbursement. If an applicant would like to propose an alternate budget/method to demonstrate the 10% match, they need to notify ECD Broadband as soon as possible. For example, if \$100,000 of invoices is submitted in an invoice package, \$90,000 will be paid.



There is a limit to **one submission per applicant**. Each application can reflect only one program.

Grant	Grantee Match	Total	Total to be reimbursed
\$1M	\$100k	\$1.1M	\$1M

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B. Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Grant Applicants

The following entities may apply for the DSEW Grant:

- A local educational agency (e.g., community college, such as a vocational school)
- A community-based or faith-based organization
- A volunteer literacy organization
- A public or private nonprofit agency
- A library
- A public housing authority
- A nonprofit institution (that does not fit the above)
- A small business (1-10 employees)
- A consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or entity described above
- A partnership between an employer or ISP and an entity above
- State and Regional Agencies/Authorities if:
 - The proposed project is a new project (lacking funding), or
 - The proposed project is a scaling-up based on existing funding available

NOTE: Supplanting funds with DSEW is not allowable and against federal regulations.

- The proposed project can abide by the ARPA deadline of Dec 2026.



Ineligible Grant Applicants



- Local or county governments, local or county commissions
- An institution of higher education
- "Pass-through" entities, or entities seeking to receive TNECD grant funding to distribute to other organizations through their own grant programs.




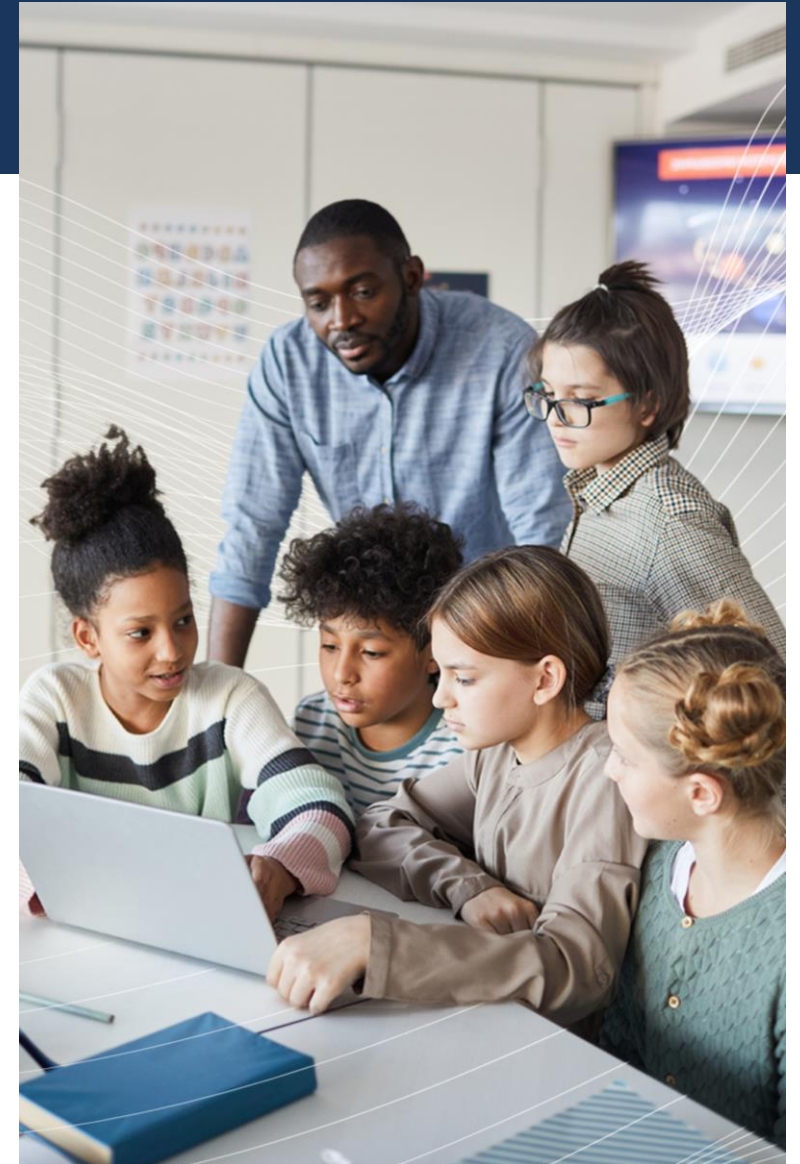
Eligible Communities

Projects in Counties Above AMI

If the project is 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 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 Childcare Development Fund (CCDF) Program or Medicaid
- Title I Schools

 **Verification of eligible population:** By choosing a specific population, applicants commit to collecting verification. Sampling the population and collecting data over given periods of time is acceptable.

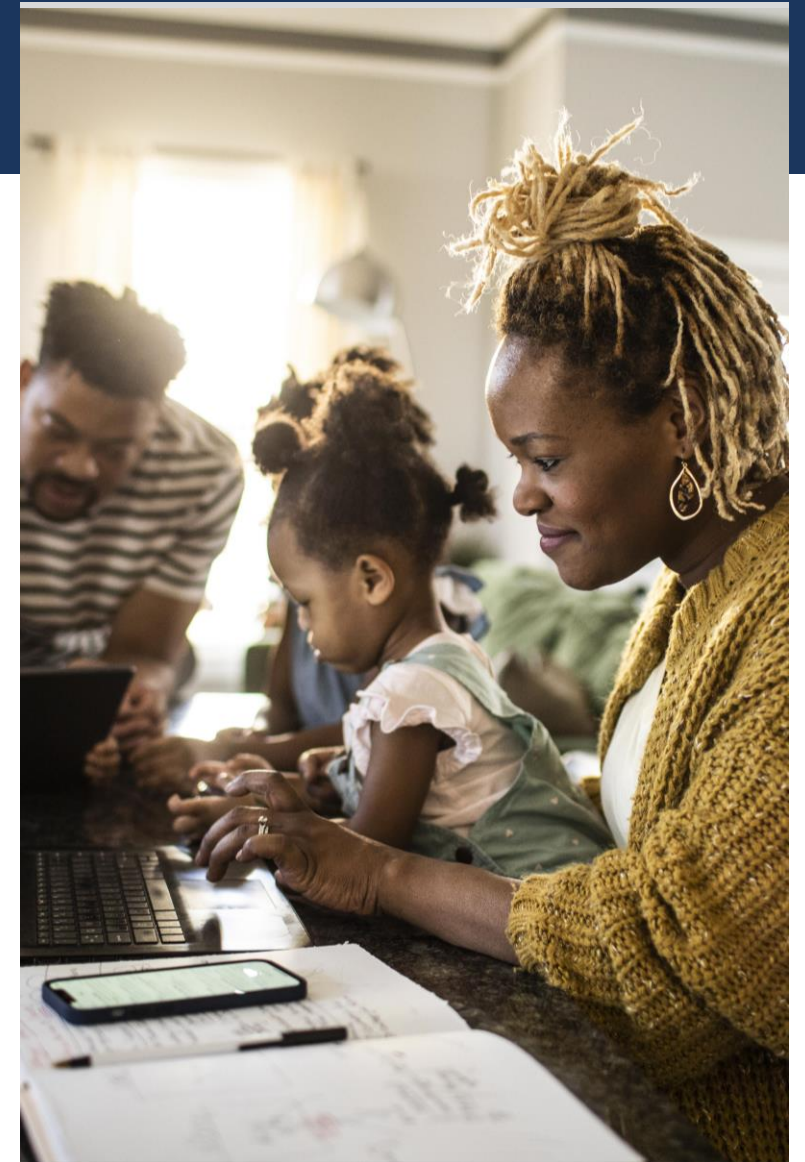


Eligible Populations

Priority Populations

Additionally, applicants must address if their proposed project directly serves any of the following priority-covered populations. Please note that this will not yield a higher score.

- Household income of most recent year is not more than 150% of the poverty level)
- Aging individuals (60 and above)
- **Incarcerated individuals** (excluding individuals who are incarcerated in a federal correctional facility)*
- **Veterans***
- **Individuals with disabilities***
- Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners and have low levels of literacy
- Immigrants and/or refugees
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
- **Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area***



Use of Project Funds

Eligible Educational Activities

- Adult education
- Intermediate and/or specialized digital skills training in K-12 schools
- Workplace education, which refers to adult education and literacy activities offered by an eligible provider; collaboration with an employer or employee organization at a workplace or an off-site location is required.
- Micro-learning
- Apprenticeship program
- Industry-relevant credentialing programs
- Digital navigators
- Other educational activities
- Providing training to trainers/educators on eligible activities



Use of Project Funds

Ineligible uses

- Conducting adoption promotion activities without training program.
- Digital opportunity coalitions/taskforces without training program.
- One-to-one computer programs without a training program.
- Direct technical troubleshooting or repair services for broken devices without a training program.



Requirements for Skilling Programs



Cybersecurity Component

- Applicants are obligated to provide cybersecurity training to individuals they serve. This training can range from basic intertwined guidance to advanced levels as stand-alone training.



Digital Government Accessibility Component

- Applicants are obligated to offer accessibility training focusing on government and civic digital resources. This training can range from basic to advanced levels, covering areas such as accessing government forms, navigating government websites, to registering a business online.



Requirement for Workforce Development

- Must upload a letter from employers **affirming job availability for trained workers and commitment to hiring** if demand exist (this does not require employers to hire if they do not have demand).
- Letter(s) from committed employers are permissible.
- To the best of the organizations' ability, workforce development participants will be required to monitor the gainful employment status of trainees six months to one year post-training.



Use of Project Funds

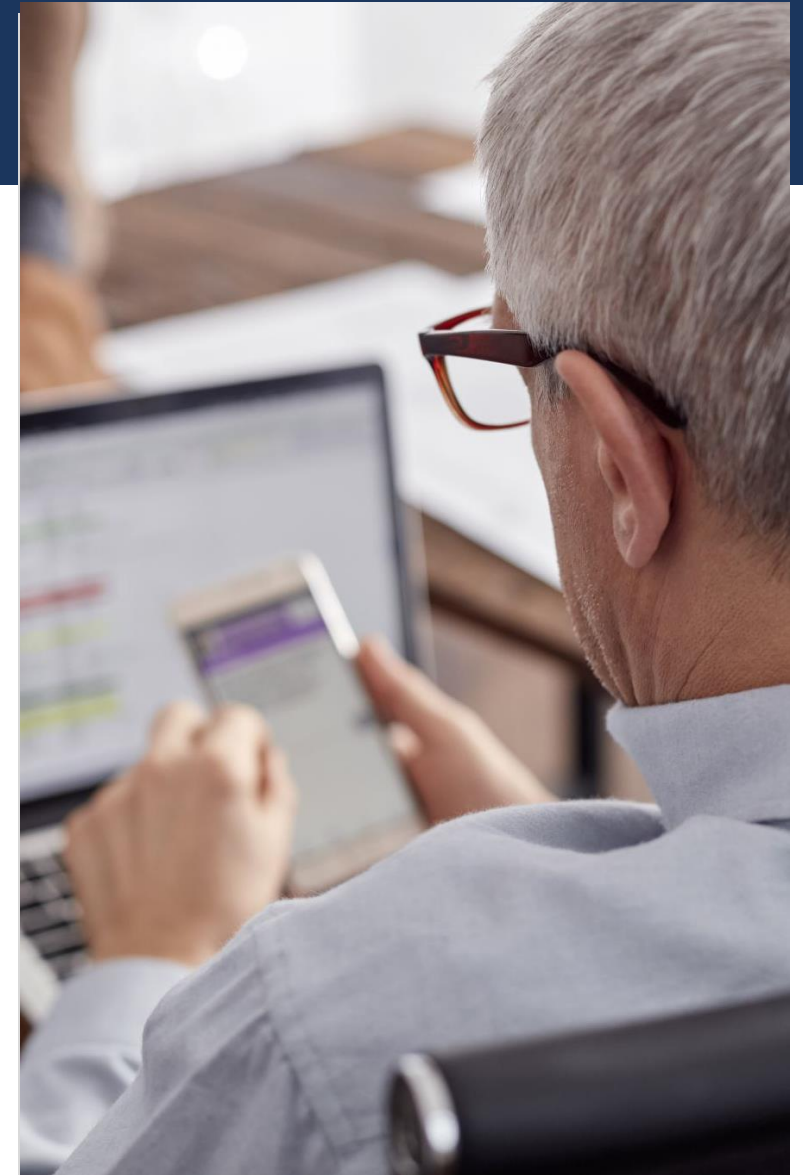


Free or Low-Cost Devices Component

All applicants are eligible to receive fifteen points if they offer free or low-cost devices to a percentage of the program's applicants.

- **No Minimum Threshold/ Reasonable Proportionality:** Applicants must clearly articulate how the provision of devices and the associated costs are reasonable and proportional to the program's goals and objectives.

We encourage applicants to think creatively about leveraging this opportunity to make a meaningful impact on their communities.



Example of Ideal Project 1

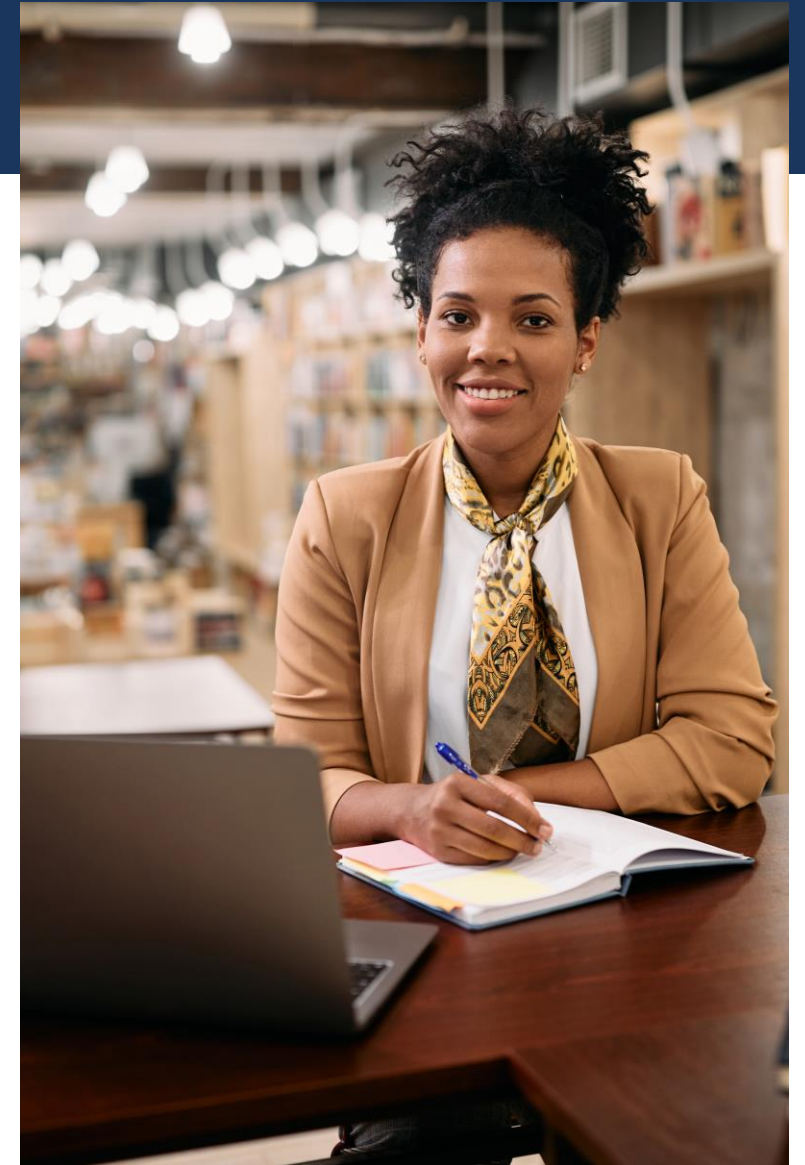
Fiber Workforce Development Application (K-12):

A K-12 school collaborated with a municipal telecom provider to provide telecom workforce development skills through a semester of on-the-job training. The program has a defined curriculum for vocational training and experienced schools and industry partners to align training with industry needs.



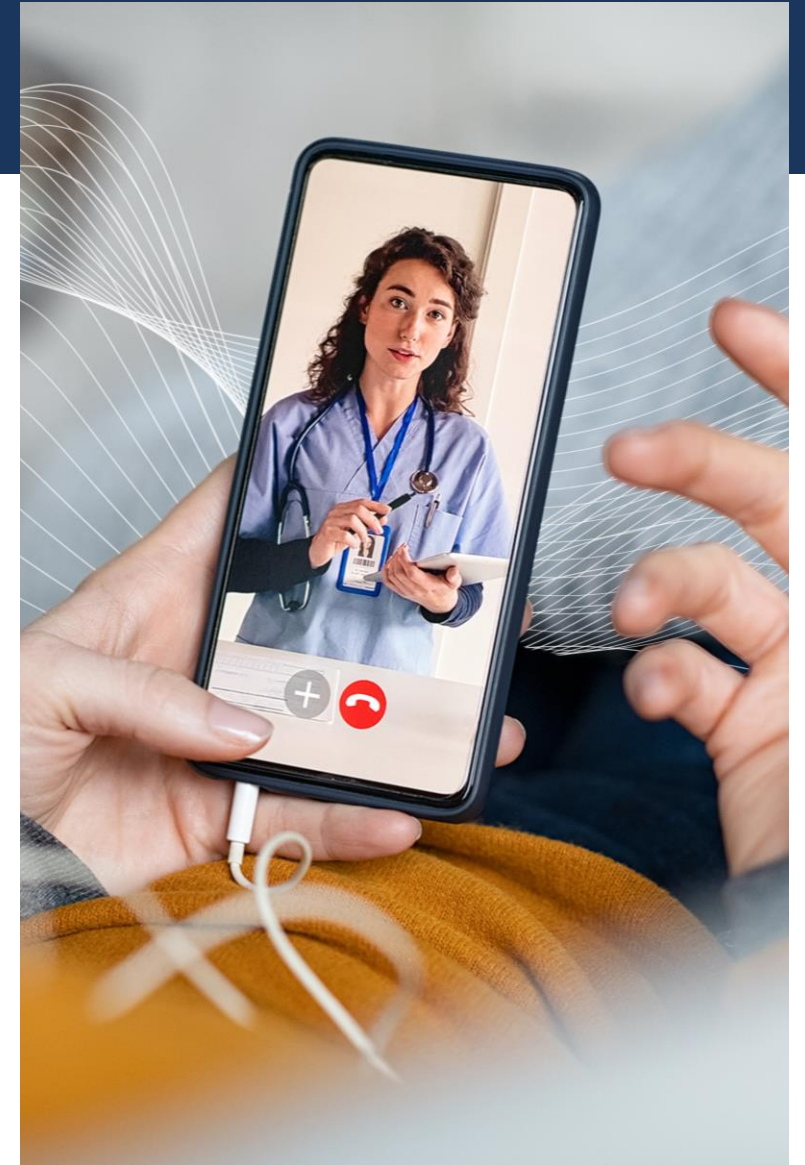
Example of Ideal Project 2

Music Mixing Digital Training: A program by a music foundation focused on music mixing for young adults who were rejected by other music credentialing programs or services. These individuals being rejected may have opted out of the music industry. The training provides guidance to denied music applications and offers digital skilling and advanced AI tools. The program has experience in developing training programs and ties to the industry needs and gaps.



Example of Ideal Project 3

Telehealth Apprenticeship: A partnership between higher educational institutions and health care institutions with a focus on specific skills needed to provide health access in a digital space. The program has experience developing apprenticeship programs and a strong understanding of the telehealth clients and needs.



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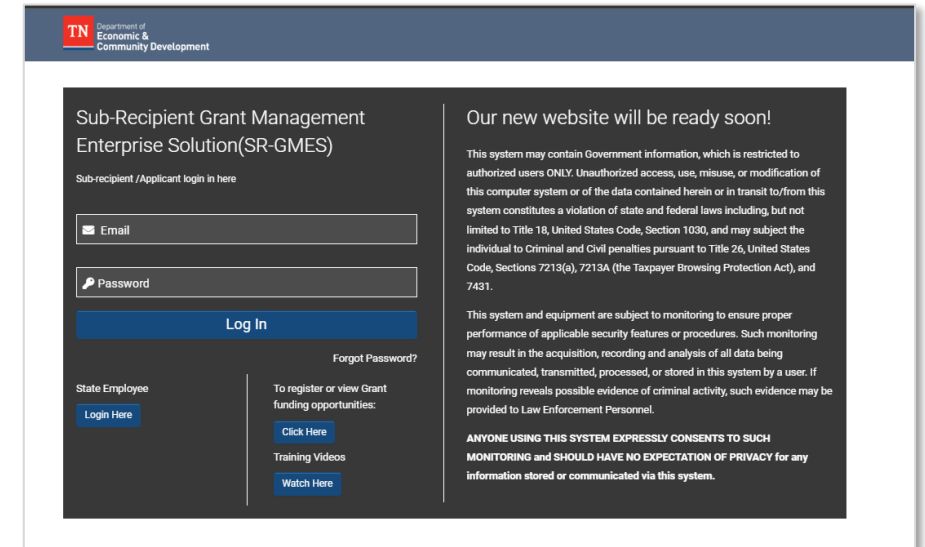
C. Application Information

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: June 17 to August 14



SmartSimple Registration Page

Registering in SmartSimple

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL tn.gov/ecd/rural-development/broadband-office.html. The page header features the TN Department of Economic & Community Development logo, a search bar for ECD, and a navigation menu with items: Advantages, Industries, Corporate Expansion, Small Business, Rural Development, News, Resources, and Grants. The main content area is titled "Broadband Office" and features a large banner image of trees with the text "Digital Opportunity Plan Public Comment". Below the banner are three resource cards: "Individual and Family Resources" (with sub-points: Get Help with Internet Bills, Find Low-Cost Wifi Options and Devices), "Providers Resources" (with sub-points: Funding Opportunities, Broadband Accessibility Grantee Report), and "Community Resources" (with sub-points: Digital Opportunity Listing Session Toolkit, Broadband Ready Communities). A small TN logo is visible in the bottom left corner of the page.

Application Reminder

Please be clear and concise in the application response.
Grants must align with the goals of the program.

Read the Guidebook



Concise and clear: Our project aims to build a partnership between higher educational institutions and health care institutions with a focus on specific skills needed to provide health access in a digital space. Over the course of three months, we will develop apprenticeship programs and a strong understanding of the telehealth clients and needs.



Vague: Our project aims to promote the telehealth apprenticeship through a comprehensive educational program. Over the next few months, we will explore various strategies to engage with telehealth clients and needs.

Required Information on Organization and Project

1. Introduction and Organization Information

- County your proposed project will be serving primarily
- Populations your proposed project will serve primarily
- Organization type
- Describe any previous history working with the selected groups
- Education-related services that will be offered

2. Project Information

- Describe the programming or services your organization seeks to provide
- Will your organization distribute free or low-cost devices to participants?
- How your organization will incorporate evidence-based intervention or methodologies into the design of your proposed programming or services
- How the proposed programming fills a specific need of the community
- Why the services are strategically located near the target population or easily accessible
- Hours of operations by the target population
- Will patrons be charged a fee for the training or services during the grant period?

Required Information on Project Implementation

3. Project Implementation

- Do you agree this project can be completed by December 31, 2026.
- Provide a construction timeline for the proposed project.
- How many individuals will the proposed project directly serve until December 30, 2026?
- How your organization calculated the number of individuals expected to be served by your proposed project
- Explain the intended outcomes for the program and its participants and specify the metrics
- How your organization plans to collect participants' feedback or suggestions

4. Demonstrated Capacity

- Describe your organization's capacity to manage reporting and compliance requirements
- Describe your organization's background, business model, clientele, and activities

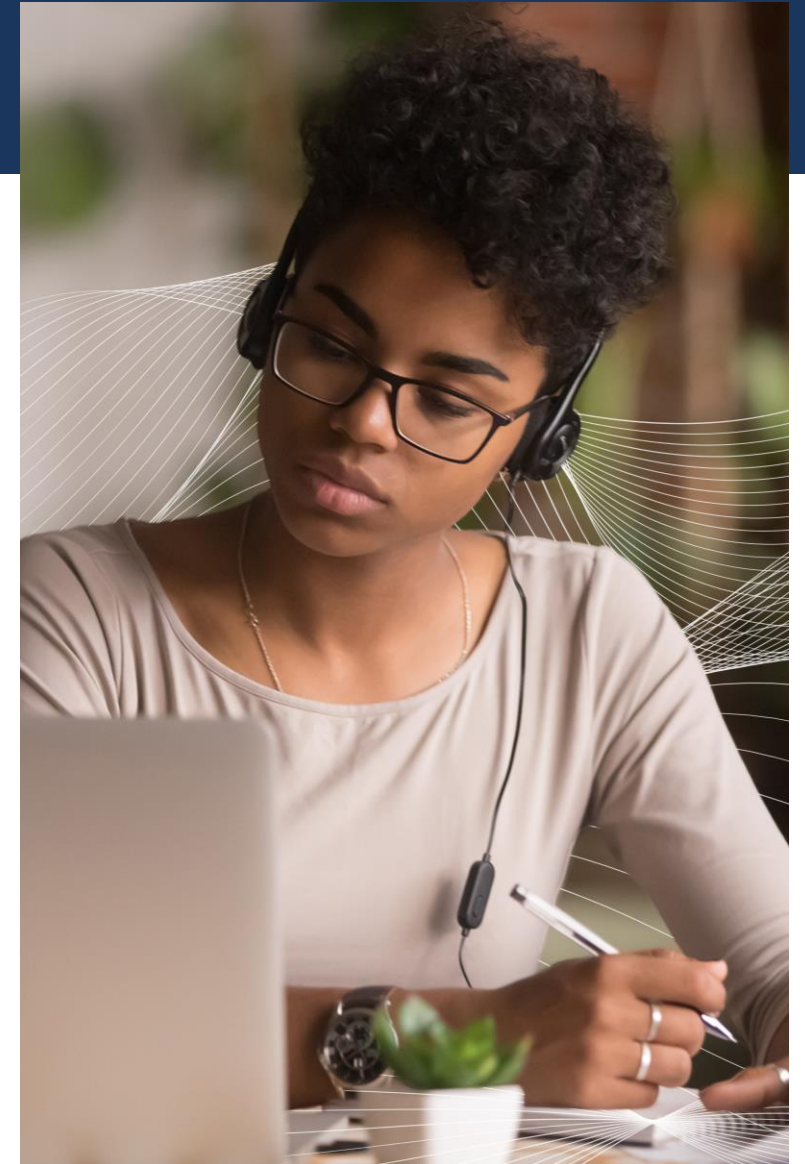
Budget Reminder

Please put budget items in the correct budget category. The revisions requested delays scoring and contracting.

Budget Categories

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 individual items and concise descriptions will be pulled into the subrecipient contract.

- Professional fees, grants, and awards^
- Supplies, telephone, postage and shipping, equipment rental and maintenance, printing and publications
- Travel, Conferences and Meetings
- Grant/project administration (Admin expenses; limited to 6%)
- Other non-personnel^
- Capital purchases^



Budget Categories

- Professional fees, grants, and awards[^] : salaries and wages, specific assistance to individuals, legal and auditing fees, public feedback processes, equity assessments and planning, needs assessments, permitting, planning.
- Supplies, telephone, postage and shipping, occupancy, equipment rental and maintenance, and printing: Examples of supplies costs are office furnishing, equipment and supplies, shipping, curriculum materials/kits instructors and students, such as textbooks and manuals, student computers, including subsidized or free devices.
- Travel, Conferences, and Meetings: Include travel for the main applicant's staff, encompassing activities such as providing direct training services within the county or state. Contractors should be budgeted under Professional Fees.
- Grant/project administration (Administrative expenses; limited to 6%); Hours for reporting, monitoring, and invoicing for the grant.
- Other non-personnel[^] : any other upfront costs not covered in other categories, such as permits, required licenses, sales tax applicable .
- Capital purchases[^]:significant investments in special-purpose equipment, equipment for hands-on learning activities (e.g., power tools, wiring lab, simulating lab) valued at **\$10,000 per unit or more**.

Budget: Indirect Costs

Please be aware that indirect costs are considered ineligible and will not be covered. These ineligible indirect costs include:

- Any hours worked that cannot be specifically identified and documented as directly related to the grant activities. This includes general administrative duties or other tasks that do not have a direct connection to the specific objectives and activities outlined in your grant proposal.
- Rent and utility expenses that cannot be directly allocated to the grant activities are ineligible. Only those costs that can be clearly and accurately documented as necessary for the completion of the grant-funded project will be considered eligible.

Additional Uploads

The upload section of the application will allow applicants to upload the following required and optional documents.

- W9**
- Grant Payment Forms**
- Procurement Policy**
- Title VI Training Certification**
- Audit, 990, or Annual Report**
- One proof of financing, this includes proof for financing the first six months or the first milestone**
- Community Feedback or Gap Analysis Report* (required if no evidence provided)
- Documentation of any proposed overlapping federally funds scheduled to be served by 2026
- Documents of community support (including letters of support, community survey results)
- Partnership agreements
- Local Assurance Letters,
if applicable

** Required

2023-1585

APPLICATION GUIDELINES PROJECT INFORMATION COMMUNITY IMPACT BUDGET **DOCUMENT UPLOAD AND SUBMISSION** INTERNAL

Attach Community Support Letter(s)

Drop files here or browse files
Maximum file size: 2 GB

Financial Capability

Applicants must provide one proof of the project's financing documentation, including their ability to fund the match as well as the grant funds for financing the first six months or the first milestone (before reimbursement).

This does not need to be signed.

One of the following documents must be provided and show that the project can cover the match requirement and any additional funding needed for expenses prior to reimbursement:

- Audited financials
- Bank statement
- Letter of credit
- Proof of funds



D. The Application Review Process

Application Scoring

Below are the scoring categories, expected information under each category, and respective maximum scores possible for each category.

Category	Description	Possible Points	Maximum Score
Project Design	Describes the design of the services/programming offered and how they support digital skills training or Workforce Development. Describes evidence-based intervention and discusses the evidence if applicable. Describes how the program will enable digital skilling or market-relevant competence, professional development, and/or learner agency if applicable.	15	Up to 70 points
	Describe how the project aligns with the TN's Digital Opportunity Plan goals and objectives.	5	
	Applicant will provide services for free or at a discounted rate to program participants.	10	
	Applicant will provide devices for free or at a discounted devices to program participants.	5	
	Describes how the proposed programming fills a specific community need through an identified gap by local employers or a skills gap. This could include a discussion of how the applicant assessed the digital skills needs or workforce development needs and wants of the community or employers and what they are, how involved the community was in the design of the described programming, any relevant research about how the program fits within the context of local labor/employer/industry conditions, etc.	20	
	Programming is designed to be accessible to the target population in a variety of ways (e.g., time of day, location of choice, remote options, childcare assistance, transportation assistance, ADA-compliant building and equipment, participation stipends offered).	15	

Application Scoring

Below are the scoring categories, expected information under each category, and respective maximum scores possible for each category.

Category	Description	Possible Points	Maximum Score
Community Impact	Applicant's demonstrated ability to meet proposed project plan (timeline and key milestones) given requirements of federal funds, documented experience in program management, ability to oversee a program using federal funds or non-federal organizational funds, etc.	20	Up to 65 points
	Applicant states the # of people it will serve and how that number was calculated. Note that a higher # of individuals served does not necessarily equate to a higher score.	5	
	The applicant outlines which metrics they will use to measure the impact of the program's services on the community and defines the program's target outcomes. Applicant's metrics are both outputs and outcome-focused	15	
	Applicant has an established process of collecting participant's feedback regularly through various methods (i.e., offline or online). The applicant has an established organizational procedure in place to incorporate participant's feedback and make necessary changes to their services accordingly	10	
	Demonstrates a strong connection with working with marginalized and historically underserved communities. Communities may include one or more of the following groups (detailed in the Guidebook)	10	
	Applicant primarily serves (more than 50% of participants) one of the following covered populations: rural individuals, incarcerated individuals, veterans, and individuals with disabilities.	5	

Application Scoring

Below are the scoring categories, expected information under each category, and respective maximum scores possible for each category.

Category	Description	Possible Points	Maximum Score
Demonstrated Capacity	Describes the applicant’s capacity or history to provide digital skills education and/or workforce development programming or services. Discuss evidence of demonstrated capacity, including secured partnerships, available staff, and resources.	20	Up to 20 points
Financial Feasibility	Budget and expense descriptions are clear and specific.	20	Up to 40 points
	Budget is realistic and reasonable based on the project’s defined design and impact.	20	
Total Base Score All Programs			Up to 195 points

Application Scoring: Program Specific Points

Below are the scoring categories, expected information under each category, and respective maximum scores possible for each category.

Category	Description	Possible Points	Maximum Score
Workforce Development Program-Specific Points	Applicant has an agreement with an employer to provide apprenticeships or employment if the candidate has completed the program.	10	Up to 15 points
	Applicant offers workforce development programs that are tailored to TNECD's priority industries (detailed in the Guidebook)	5	
Digital Skills Training Program-Specific Points	Applicant has a program outreach strategy at place that would ensure that program objectives and plan reach out to maximum number of eligible participants (e.g., program outreach strategy may include reaching out to participants through targeted social media platforms, online forums, community centers, schools, local businesses, or relevant events).	5	Up to 15 points
	Applicant's program also includes cybersecurity trainings.	5	
	Applicant's program also includes government public services/resources accessibility trainings.	5	

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E. Administration

Reimbursement Only Grant

- DSEW grant operates on a **reimbursement basis** and applicants are permitted to submit invoices once per month for reimbursement of eligible expenses.

Brief Overview of Post Award Compliance Requirements

Reporting Requirements

- Subrecipients will need to submit quarterly reports to TNECD

Audit Requirements

- If the subrecipient spends \$750,000 or more during the fiscal year on federal awards, the subrecipient is required to undergo a single audit. Please account for this in administration budget.

Monitoring

- During their performance period, all grantees will undergo monitoring activities—a desk review or site visit—based on their risk level, with the first at the project's 50% completion and another during the closeout phase

Invoicing

- Grantees will be required to invoice exact expenses* in the prescribed format directly to TNECD. Grantees will become eligible for the remaining 15% of their invoice reimbursements once the closeout review has been completed.

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F. Summary

Key Points Discussed

- Projects must provide access to advanced digital skills and devices, enabling beneficiaries to enhance the technical proficiency necessary to navigate complex digital environments, participate in the digital economy, and drive innovation (digital skills, education and workforce):
 - **\$1 million is available per award.**
 - The grant covers up to 90% of eligible invoices, with a **10% match** per invoice submitted.
- Projects in Cheatham, Davidson, Fayette, Knox, Loudon, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Tipton, Williamson, or Wilson Counties, are eligible to apply if they show that they are serving one of the eligible populations
- Ensure budget items are listed in the correct category



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
TN ECD Grant Administration Resources	https://www.tn.gov/ecd/rural-development/crd-grant-administration.html
Contacts:	Codi Drake, Broadband Grants Coordinator – Digital Opportunity Coordinator: codi.drake@tn.gov
Grant application period:	June 17 to August 14, 2024
Award announcement date:	September 2024 (tentative)
Contract signature deadline:	November 2024 (tentative)
End of contract period:	Dec. 31, 2026



Do you have any queries or feedback for ECD?

- Please scan the **QR code** on the slide to provide feedback on the webinar or ask any relevant queries related to DSEW 2.0 applications.
- Alternatively, you can access the form using the link that will be posted in the chat box.

[Link to the Feedback Form](#)

- We would appreciate your valuable feedback in order to improve future sessions





Department of
**Economic &
Community Development**

THANK YOU