Hamilton County
Public Wi-Fi Grant Program

Grant Overview & Application Packet

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Hamilton County Public Wi-Fi Grant Program

OVERVIEW

United Way of Greater Cincinnati is administering a grant program on behalf of Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners to provide FREE Public Wi-Fi to local governments and community organizations in underserved areas of the county. Broadband infrastructure has been shown to be critical for work, education, healthcare, and civic participation during the public health emergency. A total of $1,425,000 is available through the County's ARPA/SLFRF funding.

Nonprofits are permitted to submit an application for this funding **and** for the United Way of Greater Cincinnati Digital Equity Grant Program. United Way's grant program seeks programs that bridge the digital divide, fostering inclusivity and accessibility. We invite proposals for innovative digital inclusion solutions, empowering diverse populations to navigate the digital landscape with confidence and competence. The requests for proposals will be released concurrently and can be found on United Way's website.

PURPOSES OF FUNDS – PUBLIC WI-FI

Organizations can apply for funding to install Public Wi-Fi by providing expanded infrastructure to county residents and to expand affordable access to broadband internet. The minimum grant request is $10,000 and the maximum is $200,000. The program will consist of two rounds of funding: 75% or $1,068,750 is anticipated to be awarded in the first round and the remainder (about $356,250) will be awarded in the second round.

Public Wi-Fi is defined as Wi-Fi service provided for use by consumers on a wireless device, and is password protected or has other secure authentication protocols established and managed by the owner. Public Wi-Fi networks are open to anyone who can access them.

ORGANIZATIONAL ELIGIBILITY

Organizations must meet all the criteria under one of the following categories to be eligible for funding through this process:

Eligibility Type 1: Local Government	Eligibility Type 2: Community Organization
o Be a local government within Hamilton County, Ohio (township, village or city), **AND**	o Be organized as a nonprofit entity under the laws of the State of Ohio and recognized as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization by the Internal

o Not use Hamilton County American Rescue Plan funding in place of or instead of local, state, federal or other funds already designated for that purpose or activity.	Revenue Service (this includes Community Development Corporations), o Is operated for charitable or community benefit purposes, o Its principal place of business and location(s) where services are rendered is in Hamilton County, o Be registered and in good standing with the State of Ohio Attorney General's Office (see Resource Section), **AND** o Not use Hamilton County American Rescue Plan funding in place of or instead of local, state, federal or other funds already designated for that purpose or activity.

<u>Organizations that are not eligible</u>
- o For profit organizations and individuals
- o Internet service providers
- o Schools

OTHER KEY CRITERIA TO NOTE
In addition to the eligibility criteria, it is important to note that all applicants must be able to provide or demonstrate the following in their application:

- o Must be able to provide evidence of organization's capability to sustain (pay for) infrastructure for at least 3 years after construction/installation is complete.
- o Must be providing expanded and affordable broadband infrastructure to an underserved population with an identified need for additional broadband investment. Examples of need include:
    - o Lack of access to a reliable high-speed broadband connection
    - o Lack of affordable broadband
    - o Lack of reliable service

GRANT PROCESS & KEY DATES
These dates may change. Any changes will be communicated in a timely manner.

Thursday, January 18, 2024: Program Announcement Date

Thursday, January 25, 2024: Program Overview via Webinar

Wednesday, February 7, 2024 at 2:00pm: Q&A Webinar

Thursday, February 8, 2024: Application opens in e-CImpact

Thursday, February 22, 2024 at 2:00pm: Q&A Webinar

Tuesday, February 27, 2024 at 10:00am: Q&A Webinar

Friday, March 8, 2024 at 5:00pm: Applications for Round 1 DUE

Wednesday, March 27, 2024 at 2:00pm: Q&A Webinar for Round 2 Applicants

Friday, April 5, 2024 at 5:00pm: Applications for Round 2 DUE

April 2024: Round 1 Funding awards announced

May 2024: Round 2 Funding awards announced

INFORMATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

United Way will be providing a range of ways to support organizations as they explore this opportunity and complete the application.

- **Informational Webinar (Live and Recorded)** An informational webinar will be hosted on January 25th. A recording of the webinar will be made available for those unable to attend – visit https://www.uwgc.org/your-impact/programs-initiatives/digital-equity for the recording.

- **Send us an email at impact@uwgc.org** with your communication preference (email or phone) to ask questions, schedule a technical assistance meeting to navigate the application system or discuss a concern. The appropriate staff will connect with you within 1-2 business days of receiving your email.

- **Access online materials at** https://www.uwgc.org/your-impact/programs-initiatives/digital-equity **.** All materials, including a recording of the information session and additional resources, will be posted on United Way's website. We'll continue to add to these resources throughout the application process.

How Do I Apply?

STEP ONE: REVIEW THE GRANT PROGRAM INFORMATION

Prior to completing an application, be sure to review this grant packet along with attending or viewing the Program Overview Webinar and any other supplemental materials available. This is not a typical United Way grant program and we do not want anyone to complete the application who will not be able to fulfill all of the requirements if awarded funding.

STEP TWO: COMPLETE THE FULL APPLICATION

To complete the full application, you will be asked to use United Way's application system called e-CImpact to answer the following questions and provide the required documents.

Complete instructions on accessing the application through the system will be posted Digital Equity | United Way of Greater Cincinnati (uwgc.org) **by February 8.**

Application Questions: Organizational Level Information

Organizational Profile
Provide/ review general information about your organization. Some of the information may be prepopulated by the system:

- Organization Name
- Organizational EIN
- Organization Address
- Organization Phone Number
- Organization Website (if available)

Leadership and Primary Contact Information
- Executive Director or CEO Contact Information: Name, Pronouns, Title, Email, Phone; and Executive Director Demographics (Select age range, gender, and race)
- Primary Contact Information for this Application: Name, Pronouns, Title, Email, Phone

Organizational Eligibility

Answer the following questions:

- o Be a local government within Hamilton County, Ohio (township, village or city), AND
- o Not use Hamilton County American Rescue Plan funding in place of or instead of local, state, federal or other funds already designated for that purpose or activity.

OR

- o Be organized as a nonprofit entity under the laws of the State of Ohio and recognized as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization by the Internal Revenue Service (this includes Community Development Corporations as well),
- o Is operated for charitable or community benefit purposes,
- o Its principal place of business and location(s) where services are rendered is in Hamilton County,
- o Be registered and in good standing with the State of Ohio Attorney General's Office (see Resource Section), AND
- o Not use Hamilton County American Rescue Plan funding in place of or instead of local, state, federal or other funds already designated for that purpose.

Application Questions: Program Information

Overview of Current Programs & Services

Provide information on your current programs and services by answering the following questions.

- **Description of Programs/ Services:** Provide a description of the services provided by your organization to Hamilton County residents that make you eligible for this funding, including how you would provide free wi-fi to the public and what benefit that would have. (Maximum 1000 Characters)

Experience

- **Grant History:** Please describe in detail your organization's experience with other federal grants including your experience with managing and maintaining financial records and grant documentation. Be specific with funding sources, amounts, and outcomes. (Maximum 1000 characters)
- **Construction Management Experience:** Please describe in detail your organization's experience with construction projects, particularly if they involve broadband infrastructure and/or were funded with government funds. If you have experience with construction projects, please provide the name and contact information for the Point of Contact and if they are still employed by your organization. (Maximum 1000 characters)
- Does your organization currently provide free public Wi-Fi in public or common areas to assist with remote education, workforce development, or access to social services? Please describe. (Maximum 1000 characters)
  Provide other information relevant to your project such as collaborations to provide access to online learning and other services. (Maximum 1000 characters) *(optional)*

Plan to Expand Broadband Infrastructure

- **Funding Requested** (Minimum funding request is $10,000 and the maximum funding request is $200,000 per project): $
- **Match** (optional. PLEASE NOTE: the requirement to provide 36 months of free public Wi-Fi after end of contract term should NOT be included as match):
- Describe with specificity your organization's plan to expand free public Wi-Fi access (locations, number, range, number of potential people served, etc.) (Maximum 2000 characters)
- Describe how the public will use the free public Wi-Fi. How will you let people know they can access it and how will you make it available to the public in practice? (Maximum 2000 characters).

- **Description of those served:** Please describe how your project will provide broadband infrastructure to underserved populations or areas of Hamilton County. Provide available data, including but not limited to documentation of existing broadband internet service performance, federal and/or state collected broadband data, user speed test results, interviews with community members and business owners, reports from community organizations, and any other relevant information. (Maximum 2000 characters)
- **Sustainability**: Describe how your organization has funding available to pay for continued FREE public Wi-Fi services for at least 36 months after ARPA funding is exhausted. Include funding source, if it is projected or secured and the timeline. (Maximum 2000 characters)

Budget

Complete your budget request in table below for eligible expenses that you would submit for reimbursement. For each of the following categories you will be able to enter specific line items. For each of the categories, you will be asked to itemize detailed line items.

**Note: Eligible expenses include direct costs for materials, supplies, equipment, and installation to provide or expand public Wi-Fi access. Organizations must commit to providing at least 36 months of FREE public Wi-Fi in public or common areas AFTER the contract term has ended, but this should not be included in the budget.

Expanded Wi-Fi Expenses	Hamilton County Public Wi-Fi ARP Funds	Other Funds
Computer/Network Upgrades, Access Points, Hotspots, Mounting Materials, Etc.		
Simple Installation		
Activation Fees		
Construction		
Monthly Service Fees * Assumes new obligation rule is passed		
Other – define		
Other – define		
Total		

- Please identify any "other funds" (Maximum 500 characters)
- Provide additional details to justify the proposed budget (Maximum 500 characters)
- Expenditure Timeline: Describe how your local government will ensure the funds are completely spent by July 31, 2025.

Procurement & Certifications

- All grantees must follow federal procurement policies and procedures, which includes a competitive bidding process. UW will provide guidance to grantees.
- Projects must meet high-speed technical standards of 100 Mbps download and upload speeds. In cases where it is not practicable, because of the excessive cost of the project or geography or topography of the area to be served by the project, eligible projects may be designed to reliably meet or exceed 100/20 Mbps and be scalable to a minimum of symmetrical 100 Mbps download and upload speeds.
- Grantees must require the service provider for a broadband project that provides service to households to either:
  - o Participate in the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) or Provide access to a broad-based affordability program to low-income consumers that provides benefits commensurate to ACP

☐I hereby attest that the information contained on this Application is complete and accurate.

☐I understand and agree that if awarded funding: 1) the organization shall sign an agreement; 2) all funding distributed as a part of this program must be spent by July 31, 2025; 3) funding provided hereunder can be only be used for expenses that are not being paid for or reimbursed from another source; 4) when submitting pay requests, the organization shall submit an itemized list of all permitted expenses along with all supporting source documentation; 5) source documentation shall be in the form of paid invoices <u>and</u> canceled checks, bank statements, or similar documentation showing payment of expenses; and 6) if the organization cannot properly substantiate its permitted expenses or did not meet the eligibility criteria, the organization shall repay the undocumented funds.

☐I understand and agree that SLFRF funds will not be used for costs that will be reimbursed by the other federal or state funding streams.

Required Documents
Nonprofits only
- State of Ohio Attorney General Charitable Organization Registration
- 501c3 Registration

All applicants
- Financial Certification DOB Statement

Evaluation

All applications submitted by the set deadline will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility. Those applications that are deemed complete and eligible will be considered via the following factors:

Criteria	Evaluation	Scoring
Experience - Grants	Experience with federal grants and/or other grants that require significant documentation of expenses.	0 to 3 points
Experience -Construction	Experience managing construction projects, particularly involving competitive procurement.	0 to 7 points
Outcome and Residents Served	Plan to increase Wi-Fi service to include increased bandwidth, distance, speed, number of people served, etc.	0 to 20 points
Need for Service	Justification for the need of the service including service gaps in community	0 to 10 points
Budget	Budget justification and description of expenses; Can demonstrate the ability to pay for continued FREE public Wi-Fi services for at least 36 months after contract ends.	0 to 10 points

Sustainability	Clearly demonstrate ability to sustain free public Wi-Fi services for at least 36 months after ARPA funding ceases or actionable steps to be able to maintain the system.	0 to 10 points
Max Total Points		60 Points

Compliance & Monitoring

United Way will monitor each subgrantee to ensure that:

- Proper accounting and financial controls are in place
- Program regulations are being followed
- Supporting documentation is provided for all expenses
- Demographic and income data of population served is received (e.g. race, income level, number of individuals/HH assisted, etc.)
- Any other information required to ensure compliance with ARPA/SLFRF funding is obtained

Specific periodic reporting, including but not limited to:

- Projected/actual construction start date
- Projected/actual initiation of operations date
- Location of project
- Demographics of residents/people benefited and community impact
- Project Technology Type (Fiber, Coaxial Cable, Terrestrial Fixed Wireless, Other)
- Total miles of fiber deployed (Planned/Actual)
- Total number of planned locations served (Planned/Actual)
- Total number of funded locations served, broken out by speeds
- Pre-SLFRF Investment speed by location:
  - Locations receiving 25/3 Mbps or below, or between 25/3 Mbps and 100/20 Mbps
- Post-SLFRF investment speed by location:
  - Locations receiving at least 100/100 Mbps
  - Locations receiving at least 100/20 Mbps and scalable to minimum 100/100 Mbps
- Total number of locations served by type (Planned/Actual)
  - Residential (total housing units)
  - Business
  - Community anchor institution
- Standardized FCC identifiers:
  - Fabric ID#
  - FCC Issued Provider ID#

Upon the communication of grant awards, organizations will be provided detailed information on the grant disbursement schedule, reporting timelines and the process to provide documentation of expense.