

Hamilton County Public Wi-Fi Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions

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Organizational Eligibility Requirements

Are low-income housing providers eligible to apply for this program?

If a low-income housing provider is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, they are eligible to apply.

Are schools eligible to apply?

No, not directly. However, a school corporation could partner with a local government or nonprofit to benefit from their application.

Are Cincinnati City neighborhoods excluded?

They are not.

Could you please expand on how an org could not already have federal, state, or local funding already supporting the program?

The eligible expenses that you apply to be reimbursed for cannot have other funding dedicated to them already. This is called Duplication of Benefits and is imperative to avoid when applying for and using federal funding.

Besides the funding amounts to be awarded per round, is there any major difference between round one and round two funding?

No, the only differences are the deadlines and the pools of funding to be awarded per round.

Eligible Expenses

Will the grant be on a reimbursement basis, or will it pay for items upfront?

The grant is on a reimbursement basis only. You will be required to submit detailed documentation and proof of payment before being reimbursed. We are still determining the specific payout and documentation timeline.

What is the timeframe to turn everything in?

The application for Round 1 is due March 8th. Applications to be considered for Round 2 are due April 5th.

Can we use some of the bandwidth to put security cameras in the park?

Yes, you may use the additional/expanded bandwidth from the new infrastructure for security cameras, it does not have to solely be used for public Wi-Fi, but that should still be the main intent.

Can we include expenses to boost our cybersecurity?

Yes, recipients may use funds for modernization of cybersecurity for existing and new broadband infrastructure, including modernization of hardware and software.

Can we include administrative costs in our budget?

Yes, administrative costs that are directly related to the project are allowed. The maximum amount is be 20% of project cost, but applications with lower administrative costs will receive more points in the budget category of the scoring criteria. Indirect costs are not allowed.

We are a local government, can we add Public Wi-Fi outside in our main park?

Yes, this is an eligible use of funds.

Compliance

Will grantees need to complete an Environmental Review for their project?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) does not apply to ARP Funds. A project supported with SLFRF Funds may still be subject to NEPA review if it is also funded by another federal financial assistance program with a NEPA requirement.

Will grantees need to comply with the Davis-Bacon Act?

Davis-Bacon Act requirements for prevailing wage rates do not apply to projects funded solely with SLFRF Funds. However, you may still be subject to the requirements of the Davis-Bacon Act when SLFRF Funds are used on a construction project in conjunction with funds from another federal program that requires enforcement and compliance of the Davis-Bacon Act. Prevailing state construction wage laws may apply.

Will grantees need to complete a historic review?

Section 106 of the NHPA does not apply to SLFRF funds. Projects supported with payments from the funds may still be subject to Section 106 of the NHPA if they involve participation from other federal agencies, including funding from other federal financial assistance programs, or are subject to receipt of approvals from other 45 federal agencies.

Regarding competitive bids, is there a minimum dollar amount cut off? Ex. Some cities require bids if the project will exceed \$50,000.

Grantees are required to follow the procurement guidelines of Hamilton County. If your organization has procurement guidelines that are more strict, you must follow your guidelines. The basic rules for procurement in Hamilton County are as follows:

- Three price quotes are required for any purchase valued at \$2,500 to \$74,999.99.
- At \$75,000, competitive bids are required.
- If the value of the order is over \$1,000, grantees must give the vendor a purchase order before the order can be placed.
- Do not split up purchase order to keep it under the bid or quote thresholds.
- The general rules for procurement are based on the County's Purchasing Manual, Section 307.86 of the Ohio Revised Code.
- All procurement transactions must be conducted in a manner that provides for full and open competition. In order to avoid unfair competition, contractors that develop or draft specifications, requirements, statement of work, invitations to bid and requests for proposal must not be permitted to compete for such procurements.

UW will provide more guidance and assistance around procurement to grantees after awards are made.

Grant Application, Review and Documentation Process

How do we demonstrate that we can pay the 3 years of subscription fees?

We do not have specific documentation that we are looking for regarding the subscription fees. The demonstration of ability to continue the monthly fees will likely look different for everyone, particularly for governments versus nonprofits. A couple examples could include grants you have received or intent to apply for or perhaps demonstrating excess revenue the past 3 years to show that you have had the funding or budget projections for the next 3 years. Whatever you think best illustrates your organization's commitment and demonstration of that commitment for 3 years is what we want to see.

Under the budget section, what does it mean under monthly service fees (*Assume new obligation rule is passed)?

The Treasury Department has issued an Interim Final Rule. In the IFR, they have decided that that deadline to obligate funds by December 31, 2024 for Recipients does not apply to Subrecipients. Therefore, we are able to reimburse for subscription fees past 2024. Please ignore the parenthesis, since the Interim Final Rule is in effect.

How can we find information on broadband deserts and underserved populations?

A sample of potential sources includes:

Ohio's Broadband Availability Gaps: <https://broadband.ohio.gov/view-maps/ohios-broadband-availability-gaps>

Digital Equity Act population map: [Mapping Digital Equity in Every State \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov/programs-initiatives/digital-equity-act/population-map)

FCC Broadband Data collection: <https://www.fcc.gov/BroadbandData>

When will organizations be notified about awards?

Selected organizations will be contacted in April 2024.

Technical Assistance & Questions

How do I get technical assistance for this program?

There are three paths for accessing technical assistance:

- Please submit questions via email to impact@uwgc.org. There are several staff working on this grant process and the appropriate person will answer your question, typically within 1-2 business days. If you prefer to connect by phone, please send a short email to the same address and we can call you back. **The deadline for submitting questions to be answered before the Round 1 March 8th deadline is 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5th. The deadline for submitting questions before the Round 2 April 5th deadline is 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 2nd.**
- **Access online materials at** <https://www.uwgc.org/your-impact/programs-initiatives/digital-equity>. All materials, including a recording of the overview webinar and additional resources, will be posted on United Way's website. We'll continue to add to these resources throughout the application process.
- For updates to the Frequently Asked Questions, please go to <https://www.uwgc.org/your-impact/programs-initiatives/digital-equity>. The use of the FAQ Updates on the Web site ensures that all organizations have access to the same questions and answers. Organizations are advised to check the FAQ Updates section each week to see if new information is available. **No new FAQ updates will be posted after 5:00 p.m. on Thursday March 7th for Round 1 or 5:00 p.m. on Thursday April 4th for Round 2.**

Additional Resources

Do we have access to the federal granting documents to the County?

Yes, [Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds for Non-entitlement Units of Local Government | U.S. Department of the Treasury](#)