

# Public Service Commission of Wisconsin



## Capital Projects Fund Digital Connectivity and Navigators Grant Program

### *Application Instructions*

**Docket 5-CPF-2024**

**Application Deadline**  
**June 19 July 3, 2024**  
**1:30 P.M.**

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## Capital Projects Fund Digital Connectivity and Navigators Grant Program Overview

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) is seeking applications for the [Capital Projects Fund \(CPF\) Digital Connectivity and Navigators Grant Program](#). CPF Digital Connectivity and Navigators grant program will provide up to \$33 million in grant funding to eligible applicants for use through 2026.

The American Rescue Plan Act provided \$10 billion to the CPF for states, territories, and Tribes to cover the costs of critical capital projects like digital connectivity and navigators. The CPF was established by Section 604 of the Social Security Act, as added by Section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021. The U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury) is the federal agency that administers and allocates CPF funding to states, and states are subject to Treasury guidance.<sup>1</sup>

CPF and subsequent Treasury guidance focuses on the effects of the COVID-19 public health emergency that highlighted shortcomings in U.S. infrastructure and revealed the importance of access to high-quality internet for work, education, and health monitoring. The CPF Digital Connectivity and Navigators Program was created to address critical gaps in high-speed internet access, affordability, and adoption in Wisconsin. The Program will prioritize funding towards communities that were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to be at higher risk for future disaster due to lack of access to critical services. Eligible applicants must demonstrate that the proposed communities to be served have critical needs related to work, education, and health monitoring and that their proposed project would address those needs.

The CPF Digital Connectivity and Navigators Program is organized around two program objectives: digital connectivity through device deployment, and digital connectivity through multiple dwelling unit (MDU) Wi-Fi or apartment building Wi-Fi. Both approaches will include a digital navigator component, which is a necessary piece to operationalizing the capital equipment (Wi-Fi and devices).

**The application is due Wednesday, ~~June 19~~ July 3, 2024, at 1:30 p.m. Applicants are strongly encouraged to complete and submit the application well ahead of the deadline.**

### Eligible Applicants

- Any nonprofit as defined as an IRS 501(c)(3) organization
- Tribal Governments of federally recognized Tribes
- Political subdivisions, city, village, town or county in Wisconsin
- Institutions of Higher Education
- Public Library Systems, Municipal, County, and Tribal Libraries
- Internet Service Providers (ISP), including residential managed service providers
- Public Housing authorities
- Non-profit housing organizations including community development housing organizations

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<sup>1</sup> <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/Capital-Projects-Fund-Guidance-States-Territories-and-Freely-Associated-States.pdf>

## **Anticipated Funds Available**

This CPF Digital Connectivity and Navigators Program grant round will make funds available from the federal allocated CPF funding established by Section 604 of the Social Security Act, as added by Section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021.

Up to \$33 million is available for the CPF Digital Connectivity and Navigators Program. A final determination of the funds awarded will be made by the Commission in a written order, after discussion in an open meeting.

## **Procuring and Contracting Agency**

This request for applications is issued by the Commission, which is the sole point of contact for the State of Wisconsin during the selection process. The person responsible for managing the grant application process is Rory Tikalsky, Broadband Expansion Manager. The grant awards resulting from this application process will be administered by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. The grant administrator is Alyssa Kenney, Bureau Director, Bureau of Broadband, Digital, and Telecommunications Access.

## **Definitions**

Digital device: A quality, internet-enabled device that meets the needs of end users to enable full participation in work, education, and health monitoring activities. Devices will have accessible functionality that allows for web browsing, drafting and editing complex written documents without internet service, downloading and viewing media, and remote video conferencing. Eligible devices are those that have operating systems, basic productivity software, antivirus software, and warranties and may include laptops, tablets, and desktop computers. Digital device does not include a cellular phone, smartphone, **television**, or other small hand-held device. Digital devices include only devices that can operate software and function in regular use without an ongoing connection to the internet.

Multi-dwelling unit building (MDU): A residential duplex, triplex, fourplex, apartment building, condominium, mobile home park/trailer court, or similar type of multiple dwelling unit arrangement on one parcel of land.

Digital Navigator: A trusted guide who assists community members in internet adoption and the use of digital devices. Digital navigation services may include ongoing assistance with affordable internet access, device support, digital skills, and application support.

Community engagement: Activities demonstrating working collaboratively with and through communities to make decisions that affect their well-being. Activities might include documented outreach with community to plan or support application (meetings and engagement with populations most impacted by pandemic that are not local government); letters of support from diverse communities; MOU with municipality or Tribal governments, and contract with community showing involvement in project design.

Underserved: A housing unit without access to reliable, affordable broadband service with a minimum speed of 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload and that with the quality and capacity necessary to accomplish common tasks including multiple users simultaneously using interactive video applications.

Underconnected: A household that has physical access to broadband service but lacks full access due to cost of service, quality of devices or service, limits on data, policies or practices of the provider, lack of choice, and/or need for digital literacy skills or devices. These are households that are often reliant on hot spots, cellular plans with data limits or public Wi-Fi not in their home. Their service is often slow, unreliable or has been limited or cut off due to trouble with payment.

Low-Income Household: A household with an income at or below 200 percent of the [Federal Poverty Guideline](#) or an Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) household, a household that is unable to afford the basics on housing, child care, food, transportation, health care and technology as documented by the applicant.

Target Population: For the purposes of this grant application the target population is people and households who live in underserved locations, and/or underconnected household and/or low-income households.

## **Communication Regarding the Application**

The posting of these application instructions to the Commission's [Electronic Records Filing \(ERF\) System](#) in docket 5-CPF-2024 will serve as official notice of the opening of a new grant round. The official means by which the Commission will provide information related to the application is in the docket 5-CPF-2024. Interested parties must proactively subscribe to the docket on ERF to ensure they receive timely information related to the process. Parties may subscribe at [ERF-EZ Subscriptions](#) or go to [Subscribing Instructions](#) for more information.

### **Reasonable accommodations**

The Commission will provide reasonable accommodations, including the provision of informational material in an alternative format, for qualified individuals with disabilities upon request. If you need accommodations, contact Alyssa Kenney at (608) 267-9138 or [Alyssa.Kenney@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Alyssa.Kenney@wisconsin.gov).

### **Clarification and/or revisions to the specifications and requirements for grant application**

Any questions concerning this application must be submitted in writing via email on or before Wednesday May 8, 2024

Email address: [PSCCapitalProjectsFund@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCCapitalProjectsFund@wisconsin.gov)

Subject line: CPF Digital Connectivity and Navigators Grant Application Question

If an applicant discovers any significant ambiguity, error, conflict, discrepancy, omission, or other deficiency in this application, the applicant should notify the Commission immediately by emailing [PSCCapitalProjectsFund@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCCapitalProjectsFund@wisconsin.gov). The applicant should describe the error and request modification or clarification of the application.

If it becomes necessary to provide additional clarifying data or information or to revise any part of this application, revisions, amendments, and/or supplements will be posted in docket 5-CPF-2024. Interested parties must subscribe to the docket to receive notifications.

Any contact with state employees concerning this application is prohibited, except as authorized by the grant administrator Alyssa Kenney at (608) 267-9138 or [Alyssa.Kenney@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Alyssa.Kenney@wisconsin.gov), from date of release of the application until the date on which the grant award is released.

## **Purpose of Grant**

The Commission's Digital Connectivity and Navigator Program will target underserved and underconnected communities and households in Wisconsin. Underconnected communities include those that are low-income or are impacted by low adoption rates. Through a competitive sub-grant program administered by the Commission, non-profits and other eligible entities will apply for grants to install Wi-Fi equipment in targeted MDUs and/or deploy digital devices. For both device distribution and MDU Wi-Fi projects, eligible applicants are required to provide digital navigation services to make use of internet connectivity and devices for work, education, and health monitoring.

Data from the [2022 U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey](#) (ACS) estimates that 254,827 Wisconsin residents did not have a computer in the household. Regardless of a device in the household, over 12 percent of households did not have a broadband subscription.

ACS data demonstrates that low-income households have the lowest rates of broadband adoption and device ownership of any demographic group. In 2022, the median household income in Wisconsin was \$70,996. Low-income households comprised 10.7 percent of all Wisconsin households. Data from [Pew Research Center](#) shows that 43 percent of households making less than \$30,000 do not subscribe to internet service at home. Comparatively, only 8 percent of households with incomes above \$75,000 lack an internet subscription. For this reason and consistent with the federal guidance the Digital Connectivity and Navigator Program will target low-income households.

Furthermore, an emerging body of research and practice from the nonprofit [National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#) and its affiliates emphasizes the important role that navigators play in making sure that all people and communities have meaningful access to the internet (access in which they feel confident in exercising their digital skills to pursue work, education, and health monitoring). The competitive sub-grant program will prioritize funding applicants with existing relationships that are well-positioned to engage groups facing critical need in under-connected communities or households.

The Digital Connectivity and Navigator Program is divided into two eligible project types designed to address specific needs, each of which have specific requirements. Applicants may choose to apply for one or both project types in a single application. For both eligible project types discussed below digital navigator services are required components, as is reflected in the general merit criteria.

### MDU Wi-Fi Projects:

Funds for MDU Wi-Fi projects will be used to purchase and install equipment necessary to deploy Wi-Fi in targeted MDUs with low-income or low-adoption households to provide low-cost or free internet service. Grant subrecipients will be responsible for installing necessary equipment to ~~connect all units~~ provide free Wi-Fi for all eligible units, conducting outreach to the target population, and ensuring that residents receive the support needed to make full use of the service. **Grant subrecipients must ensure service is broadly available to building residents throughout the property at no cost for the residents.**

The FCC's National Broadband Map displays broadband service status by location or building, rather than by individual housing units. An MDU location that is defined as 'served' per the National Broadband Map can be eligible for funding if an eligible applicant, for example, provides evidence of:

- ~~• lack of wireline access to individual units~~
- a cost burden making existing service unaffordable to a comparable share of residents
- aging technology that is shown to be unreliable
- limited bandwidth at location insufficient to meet connectivity needs of all residents
- that a group of residents are underserved or underconnected

Supplies and equipment eligible for purchase within the MDU include internal wiring for the MDU **only as needed to provide Wi-Fi throughout the property and not wiring to individual units**, Wi-Fi access point equipment, signal amplification or power equipment for service provision, and/or supplies and equipment for facilitating sufficient wholesale or backhaul broadband connectivity within the MDU to enable Wi-Fi throughout the building.

### Device Deployment Projects:

Funds for Device Deployment projects will be used to purchase or refurbish computers, laptops, desktops, tablets, and other eligible digital devices and loan these devices to low-income, underconnected or underserved households. The devices must meet the needs of end users to enable full participation in work, education, and health monitoring activities. Devices will have accessible functionality that allows for web browsing, drafting and editing complex written documents without internet service, downloading and viewing media, and remote video conferencing. Eligible devices are those that have operating systems, basic productivity software, antivirus software, and warranties and may include laptops, tablets, and desktop computers. Digital device does not include a cellular phone, smartphone, **television**, or other small hand-held device. Digital devices include only devices that can operate software and function in regular use without an ongoing connection to the internet.

The grant subrecipient will be responsible for supporting and maintaining the device throughout the project performance period and will maintain ownership of the device throughout the project. Applicant proposals should include a clear use and deployment plan, and a management plan including device procurement, software licensing, distribution, warranty, and disposition.

### Digital Navigators:

For both MDU Wi-Fi and Device Deployment projects, applicants must also include digital navigators to support device use, increase internet adoption, and address inequities in access to critical needs that were made apparent by the COVID-19 public health emergency. Digital navigator costs will be ancillary costs necessary to operationalize and employ capital assets (devices and Wi-Fi equipment) and will include supports to increase broadband adoption and improve digital literacy for targeted Wisconsin residents.

Digital navigators address the whole digital inclusion process and will support households with home connectivity, setting up and using devices, ongoing technical support, and the digital skills that the client needs to make full use of the device and the internet. Digital navigators will provide training, support, and digital literacy efforts necessary to ensure that the end user is able to connect the device to the internet and make full use of the capital asset. Digital navigators may have proficiency in the language of a targeted population; have knowledge of assistive technologies for persons with disabilities, and other attributes to ensure the programs effectively address critical needs of the target populations.

### **Schedule of Events**

Below are the dates and times of actions related to this application. If the Commission finds it necessary to change any of the dates and times in the schedule of events listed below, it will do so by issuing a supplement to these instructions in docket 5-CPF-2024 (docket subscribers will receive notification).

Applications must be submitted using the PSC Grants System. The PSC Grants System will automatically close the application process promptly on the day and time applications are due. The PSC Grants System will not accept late-filed applications. Applicants are advised to start well before the deadline and allow sufficient time to address the administrative and programmatic requirements related to submitting a grant application.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>EVENT</b>
April 2, 2024	Date of issue of the application instructions
April 11, 2024 2:00 p.m.	Application Overview <a href="#">Webinar</a>
May 8, 2024	Last day for submitting questions and requests for clarification
July 2, 2024	Last day to request Grant System assistance
<b>June 19-July 3, 2024 1:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Applications due from applicants (deadline for submitting in the Grant System)</b>

### **Performance Period**

A recipient may only use funds approved under the Capital Project Fund Digital Connectivity and Navigators Grant to cover costs incurred during the performance period which begins with the Commission Order and ends November 1, 2026. ~~unless extended by the Commission. The Commission may use its discretion to award project extensions through the end of the U.S. Department of the Treasury Period of Performance as defined in its guidance, which is currently December 31, 2026. Treasury will require Recipients to commit that the Capital Projects will~~



provide services or activities that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring for at least five years from the completion of the Project.

## Preparing and Submitting a Grant Application

### Application Submission and Deadline

All applicants are required to submit an application using the Commission's online grant application system. **Applications posted to ERF instead of through the PSC Grants System will not be accepted.** The [PSC Grants System](#) will automatically upload the application to the appropriate ERF docket when the application is submitted. The PSC Grants System will not permit late applications. Applicants are encouraged to start early and leave plenty of time to work with the grant application.

### Application Procedure

The instructions for completing a CPF Digital Connectivity and Navigator Program grant application are in two parts. Both parts are available on the PSC website:

<https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/ServiceType/Broadband/DigitalConnectivityNavigators.aspx>

- The first part of the instructions is the [PSC Grants System User's Guide](#) for Grant Applicants and Recipients. The User's Guide provides a detailed overview of the PSC Grants System. The User's Guide provides step by step instructions to create a system account, navigate the online grant application, validate the application, and submit the complete application. The PSC Grant account will also provide the online form and filing process that grant recipients will use to request reimbursement and submit program status reports. The User's Guide is the primary resource an applicant should consult to enter and use the online grant system.
- The second part of the instructions is this document. This document, the Grant Application Instructions, provides specific guidance on completing an application for a CPF Digital Connectivity and Navigators Program Grant. These instructions discuss the questions in the narrative section of the application. An applicant should use this supplement to understand what information is requested for each page and each question in the grant application.

### Submitting Information

- The evaluation of an application and selection of an applicant for an award will be based upon the information submitted in the application. Failure to respond to each of the requirements in the application may adversely affect the evaluation of the grant application.
- Applicants should not use hyperlinks in their answers or provide attachments in excess of the requested documents in the grant system. Hyperlinks to additional information are not evaluated, nor are they considered to be part of the application.
- Neither the Commission nor the State is liable for any cost incurred by the applicant in preparing this application. Costs of preparing the application are not reimbursable - even if a grant is awarded.
- Multiple applications from an applicant are permitted. Each application must conform fully to the requirements for submission, and each application will be evaluated as a

distinct and separate filing without reference to other applications from the same applicant. Each applicant must be submitted separately and be a unique application in the PSC Grants System.

- Applicants may withdraw an application at any time by submitting a signed letter from an authorized representative of the applicant organization in the docket 5-CPF-2024. A request to resubmit after the application deadline has passed will be denied.

### **Supplemental Information**

An applicant may request that the Commission accept supplemental information related to an application that was otherwise timely filed. A request to supplement an application must be emailed to [PSCCapitalProjectsFund@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PSCCapitalProjectsFund@wisconsin.gov). The grant manager will work with the applicant to supplement the record. The Commission may request that an applicant submit supplemental or clarifying information, consistent with the application requirements. If received and accepted, supplemental information will be incorporated into the application and evaluated by the Commission using the established criteria to determine which applications should receive a grant award.

### **Evaluation of Applications**

The following eligibility and merit criteria will be used to guide Commission staff and the screening panel in evaluating grant projects' eligibility, scoring grant applications, and preparing a merit list for Commission consideration. After all applications are reviewed, panelists meet to discuss and prepare a score for each application and produce the resulting merit list of the applications for the Commission's consideration.

Commissioners are not bound by the below scoring criteria or resulting merit list, which are staff analysis intended for advisory purposes only. In reviewing and awarding grants, the Commissioners use their experience, technical competence, and specialized knowledge. The Commissioners, as the finder of fact and decision makers, are charged with evaluating all available information and applying any relevant statutory and federal criteria to reach well-reasoned decisions.

### **Eligibility**

The eligibility criteria for MDU Wi-Fi and Digital Device projects are listed in the two tables below. Applicants will demonstrate compliance with each of these respective criteria as part of their responses to the application.

**General Eligibility Criteria**

<i>Eligibility Criteria</i>	<i>Response Required</i>
1. Primary applicant for the CPF Digital Connectivity and Navigators Program is a 501(c)(3) organization, internet service provider including residential managed service provider, Public Housing authority, federally recognized Tribal government, a non-profit housing organization including community development corporations, city, village, town or county political subdivision, institution of higher education, or public library system, municipal, county, or Tribal library.	Yes
2. The project (1) invests in capital assets designed to directly enable work, education, and health monitoring; (2) is designed to address a critical need of the community that resulted from, or was made apparent or exacerbated by, the COVID-19 public health emergency; and (3) is designed to address a critical need of the community to be served by it.	Yes
3. The applicant and/or applicant’s partner(s) confirm grant funding will primarily be for low-income, underserved or underconnected households for the following activities: MDU Wi-Fi and/or eligible device long term loan programs, and digital navigator services for recipients of devices deployed and/or to MDU residents for during the performance period.	Yes

**Merit**

Commission staff and the screening panel will evaluate applications consistent with the scoring criteria in the scoring rubric below. Points will be awarded based on a sliding scale, with full points given to projects that fully realize the goals of the given priority criteria.

While points are assigned across each of the two eligible project types, the resulting scores produced by the screening panel are not intended to provide comparisons between the relative merit and value between the two project types. Instead, scores will be used to rank and evaluate projects of the same type. If a project proposes a Wi-Fi deployment and device deployment, it will be scored under each category. Merit points will be distributed proportionally within categories and all scored proposed projects will total up to 90-points, with a grant being scored in either the Wi-Fi Deployment or Device Deployment category. Applicants proposing both deployment methods will have each project proposal scored against each 100-point merit list criteria and compared based on their overall score separately.

~~As part of its application to the U.S. Department of Treasury for Capital Projects Funding, the Commission established a target of 8,000 units connected to Wi-Fi and 20,000 devices deployed.~~ As part of its application, the Commission established a target of 8,000 units able to be connected to building-level MDU Wi-Fi funded by CPF, along with 20,000 devices deployed to support the capital assets. There is no set allocation of funding for either project type within the grant round, but it is the intent that in awarding funding the Commission will select a mix of projects that best allocates funding to meet these two targets. This could result in a higher scoring application in one project type not being selected in favor of a lower scoring application of the other project type.

Staff will review and score applications and provide a recommended allocation between these categories based on the resulting merit of projects. Commissioners will apply their special expertise on broadband access, affordability, and adoption to select applications that best serve the public interest and these deployment targets.

**General Merit Criteria for all Projects** – 80 points

<i>Merit Criteria</i>	<i>Points</i>
<b>Engagement:</b> Applicant demonstrates that the planning of their proposal includes a high-level of community engagement and support. Applicants should provide documentation of community engagement in identifying the needs, and designing program plans.	10
<b>Digital Navigators:</b> Applicant’s proposed project includes a clearly defined digital navigator program or service that attests to the quality of the digital navigator breadth and depth of services. More points will be awarded to applications that include a digital skills or digital upskilling that navigators may facilitate as well as a plan that details frequency of meetings, digital navigator availability, and the method/s of providing navigation services (i.e., home visiting, call center, library appointments, etc.).	10
<b>Financial and operational capacity:</b> The applicant demonstrates financial and operational capacity to execute the project successfully within the performance period. The applicant has a demonstrated history of administering similar programs and grants, including compliance with state and federal law, grant agreement terms, and reporting requirements.	10
<b>Trusted relationship with target population:</b> The applicant has a mission, history and/or organizational goals that relate to the target population and there is evidence of a trusting relationship between the applicant and target population. The applicant has the capacity and credibility to reach the target population. The applicant’s proposal is culturally responsive and meets the specific and unique needs of the low-income, underserved or underconnected Wisconsin residents or community it proposes to serve.	10
<b>Demonstrated Need:</b> Applicant has conducted surveys, collected information or provided other data regarding the target population and /or locations / communities to be served. The application demonstrates that the target population is low-income and/or underserved and/or underconnected.	10
<b>Highest Need:</b> The project proposes to primarily serve locations, communities, or individuals that are in economically distressed communities disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and at higher risk for future disaster due to lack of investment and access to critical services such as broadband. Projects that have the highest share and highest index score of vulnerable locations, as defined by the Center for Disease Control’s <a href="#">Social Vulnerability Index</a> (SVI), will receive the most points.	10
<b>Project Design and Impact:</b> The applicant’s proposal and goals are clear, achievable, measurable, and able to be completed within the performance period. The proposed activities are reasonable and aligned with the goals and intent of the program. The number of households anticipated to be reached is reasonable as it	10

relates to the budget and the scope of the work. The application provides evidence that it will connect low-income, underserved and underconnected Wisconsin residents to the internet. If the proposal includes a partnership or collaboratives the relationships are clear and enhance the program design or intended impact.	
<b>No or extremely low cost to target population:</b> Proposed project provides devices, Wi-Fi and digital navigation service at no cost or extremely low cost to the target population. The applicant demonstrates that any costs are reasonable and will not be a barrier to participation in the program or in access to the internet. As feasible and applicable the applicant demonstrates that participants are encouraged to enroll in the Affordable Connectivity Program or its successor and any other available discount program.	10

**MDU Wi-Fi Project Merit Criteria - 10 points**

<i>Merit Criteria</i>	<i>Points</i>
<b>Network Design:</b> Applicant’s project is reasonable, and the network is well designed, in the context of the building(s) and existing Wi-Fi deployment assets and barriers. The applicant and/or any applicable partners has a demonstrated history of building broadband infrastructure, deploying comparable Wi-Fi networks in a MDU or similar buildings, and/or participating in broadband grant programs	5
<b>Affordable Housing:</b> The proposed project serves an MDU that currently receives state, local, or federally-funded housing assistance (including, but not limited to state or federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Section 8 funding, or other funding administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) or U.S. Department of Agriculture). For non-subsidized housing, more points will awarded for projects that serve a large percentage of units available for rent below HUD’s fair market rent for the region, with full points given to projects where 75 percent or more of units are available for rent at or below <a href="#">HUD’s fair market rent threshold</a> . For owner-occupied housing, more points will be awarded for projects that demonstrate the owner-occupied units are affordable with monthly mortgage, property tax, and maintenance costs comparable to or below HUD’s fair market rent threshold.	5

**Device Deployment Project Merit Criteria - 10 points**

<i>Merit Criteria</i>	<i>Points</i>
<b>Device Management:</b> Applicant has demonstrated technical capacity for device deployment and management on a scale commensurate to the proposed project. Applicants provide a full device management plan including device procurement, software licensing, distribution, warranty, and disposition. More points awarded to plans that includes device collection or distributes devices at a discounted rate at the end of the grant term.	5
<b>Device Equipment:</b> Applicant proposes to provide high quality digital devices that meet the needs of users to fully participate in work, school, and health monitoring activities. More points will be awarded to applicants that provide new equipment or	5

devices certified by an authorized refurbisher. Devices tailored to meet individual household needs and that can function fully without internet service.	
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## **Grant Awards**

The Commission will determine in writing which applicants will receive a Capital Projects Fund Digital Connectivity and Navigators Grant by issuing an order awarding grants in docket 5-CPF-2024. The Commissioners are not bound by the merit criteria and evaluation in making final determinations. The order will also specify certain terms and conditions that the Commission finds appropriate and necessary for the administration of the approved grant projects. The order will serve as the notice of the Commission’s decision.

## **Grant Agreement**

The Commission requires that each awarded grant applicant enter into a grant agreement with the Commission. The grant agreement will confirm the grant award, including the amount of the grant award and match or contributions, the scope of the project and the terms and conditions ordered by the Commission. The grant award is not final until the applicant signs and returns the grant agreement and the Commission executes the document. A signed grant agreement is due to the Commission no later than 60 days following the date of issuance of the grant agreement to the applicant. Failure to complete and return the grant agreement by the due date may result in cancellation of the award.

1. The Commission Order awarding grants and the grant agreement, including any amendments, will together constitute the entire agreement of the state and the applicant, and will supersede any representations, commitments, conditions, or agreements made orally or in writing prior to the issuance of the order.
2. Failure of an applicant to comply with the Commission’s order or grant agreement, as amended, may result in cancellation of the award.
3. Recommended or suggested contract language or terms submitted as part of a grant application will not be incorporated or assumed incorporated into the grant agreement.
4. The final terms and conditions of the grant agreement will constitute the entire agreement, including attachments and any amendments.

## **Right to Deny the Application and Negotiate Grant Terms**

The Commission may reject any application as filed, and negotiate the terms of a grant award, including the award amount, with the selected applicant prior to offering the grant and executing a grant agreement. If negotiations cannot be concluded successfully with an applicant, as determined solely by the Commission, the Commission may withdraw its award offer.

## **No Appeal Process**

Wisconsin statute does not specify an appeal process. However, the applicant may have other general administrative remedies under other provisions of Wisconsin Statute Chapters [196](#) and [227](#) that it may use if the applicant believes it is aggrieved by any final award determination. This provision is for information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice and is not a

determination by the Commission that the applicant has any right to protest or appeal with respect to the Commission's decision in this grant cycle.

**False, Misleading, or Omitted Statements**

False or misleading statements, or omissions that render the information provided on an application to be false or misleading, are grounds for rejection of an application, for denial, or for termination of funding. In addition, the Commission reserves the right to take any other action allowed by law.



## APPENDIX A: COMPLETING THE ONLINE APPLICATION

### **Step-by-Step Instructions for Completing the Online Grant Application Form**

Step 1: The user will navigate to the login page for the [PSC Grants System](#). For the first instance of logging in, an applicant will need to create a system account. (Information at [User's Guide page 2.](#)) An applicant must remember their username and password. For all subsequent instances, an applicant will use this username and password.

Step 2: On the page titled Available Grants, the applicant will find the line for the Digital Connectivity and Navigator Program and click on 'Apply.' (Information at [User's Guide page 4.](#))

Step 3: The program will now display the application which is arranged in a series of tabs along the top of the form. Each tab must be completed (instructions below detail tabs in order from left to right). The applicant must select the Details tab and fill in the required information. (Information at [User's Guide page 4.](#)) Application data must be validated before moving to the next page/tab. Applicants must save their work using the save icon at the bottom of the page before leaving a page, as any unsaved entries will be lost if not saved.

Step 4: The applicant selects and completes the information required in the Contacts tab. (Information at [User's Guide pages 5-6.](#)) Each applicant must supply at least one Primary Contact. Additional contacts can be added by selecting Add New Contact. A grant recipient can use this page to add additional names or change the Primary Contact for the grant if the recipient has turnover or other change in staff assignment while the grant project is underway.

Step 5: The applicant selects the Contributions tab and fills in the required information. Contributions mean match in the system. Match is not required for this grant but you may choose to include it. (Information at [User's Guide pages 6-7.](#)) The validation step applies to this tab as well. Entries here must agree with the data entered on the Details page before they can be saved.

Step 6: The applicant selects the Budget tab and completes the required information. (Information at [User's Guide pages 7- 8.](#)) At this point there is another validation step where entries must align with the data on the Details and Contributions tabs. The Budget page requires that the applicant enter the total cost of all requested budget categories that will be purchased on a single line of the budget. The form requires a split between the portion of each line item between what will be funded by a potential grant and the portion covered by in-kind contributions. Applicants must enter zero if no costs are associated with a budget field.

Step 7: The applicant selects the Communities tab and completes the required information. (Information at [User's Guide pages 8-9.](#))

Step 8: The applicant selects the Narrative tab and fills in the required information for all questions. (Information at [User's Guide pages 9-10](#).) The Narrative section consists of 36 questions. Answer every applicable question. If the question does not apply to the proposed project, write n/a. Unanswered questions affect application merit and may make an application ineligible for funding.

### ***Section 1 – Eligibility Questions***

1. ELIGIBILITY: Is the primary applicant for the CPF Digital Connectivity and Navigators Program an eligible applicant as listed in the grant instructions? (Yes/No)
2. ELIGIBILITY: Specify the type of organization of the primary applicant. (300 character limit)
  - *Any nonprofit as defined as an IRS 501(c)(3) organization*
  - *Tribal Governments of federally recognized Tribes*
  - *Political subdivisions, city, village, town or county in Wisconsin*
  - *Institutions of Higher Education*
  - *Public Library Systems, Municipal, County, and Tribal Libraries*
  - *Internet Service Providers (ISP) including residential managed service providers*
  - *Public Housing authorities*
  - *Non-profit housing organizations including community development housing organizations*
3. ELIGIBILITY: Will the project invest in capital assets designed to directly enable work, education, and health monitoring? (Yes/No)
4. ELIGIBILITY: Will the project be designed to address a critical need of the community that resulted from, or was made apparent or exacerbated by, the COVID-19 public health emergency? (Yes/No)
5. ELIGIBILITY: Is the project designed to address a critical need of the community to be served by it? (Yes/No)
6. ELIGIBILITY: Will the grant funding be used for one or more of the following activities for eligible households: MDU Wi-Fi and/or eligible digital devices, and digital navigator services during the grant performance period? (Yes/No)

### ***Section 2 – Applicant Questions***

7. Briefly describe the applicant organization(s) including its organizational leadership and capacity, history, mission, program or services, current geographic area(s) of focus and target communities or populations served. (Narrative up to 3000 characters)
8. Describe the applicant's history of engaging with the targeted communities. How has the organization cultivated a trusted and culturally responsive relationship with the community? (Narrative up to 3000 characters)

9. Does the proposed project include a partnership or collaboration with other entities? If yes, describe each entity involved and their defined roles in the project plan. *Attach any partnership agreements, contracts or MOUs as applicable to the application under the uploads tab.* (Narrative up to 3000 characters)
10. Describe the financial and operational capacity of the applicant and partner organization(s) including the applicant's history in receiving and administering public or philanthropic grants? (Narrative up to 3000 characters)
11. Describe the history of the applicant and partner organizations in conducting similar activities, services and programs. (Narrative up to 3000 characters)

### ***Section 3 – Project Description***

12. Is the applicant submitting a proposal for a MDU Wi-Fi project, device distribution project, or both? (Short Narrative up to 300 characters)
13. If a project will be both a Wi-Fi project and device distribution project, briefly explain how the projects are connected. (Short Narrative up to 300 characters)
14. Provide a description of the proposed project, including details regarding the digital navigation program or services, identify the target population and/or locations, goals and implementation strategy. (Narrative up to 3000 characters)
15. Describe the activities to be performed throughout the timeframe of the project, including priorities, sequence and necessary materials, equipment or contracts. (Narrative up to 3000 characters)
16. Provide a narrative description of the project's budget, including any details about the types of individuals proposed to be employed and their qualifications, equipment purchased, and a per-unit estimate of the total cost of digital devices to be distributed. (Narrative up to 3000 characters)
17. Starting with the Commission Order date [anticipated to be the last quarter of 2024], provide a schedule of significant project milestones/activities and projected date of completion for the project. The performance period ends November 1, 2026. (Narrative up to 3000 characters)
18. If due to limited funds and requested by the Commission, could the proposed project be scaled down or reduced in scope? (Yes/No)
19. Describe how the project will improve access to high-quality broadband internet for work, education, and health monitoring. Where possible, please provide specific examples of anticipated positive impacts for the target population? (Narrative up to 3000 characters)
20. Describe the applicant's community engagement efforts, surveys, data collection or other efforts that have informed the proposed project. (Narrative up to 3000 characters)

21. Describe how the digital navigators program or service will be incorporated into the project. Provide details about how the navigation services will be delivered, including describing who will deliver what service, from what locations, and in what manner. *Describe the breadth and frequency of service and support that the targeted population will receive. Detail if services will be multilingual, customized to meet needs of individuals with disabilities, or otherwise responsive to individual needs.* (Narrative up to 3000 characters)

### **Section 3 – MDU Wi-Fi Projects Only**

**For questions in this section, enter “n/a” if your project does not include a Wi-Fi component.**

22. Will the proposed project include a MDU Wi-Fi deployment? If no, enter “n/a” for questions 23 through 29. (Yes/No)
23. If the proposed project includes MDU Wi-Fi deployment, specify the number of buildings/parcels and count of housing units set to receive Wi-Fi. Include addresses or latitude/longitude for each as an attachment to the application under the uploads tab. (Narrative up to 3000 characters)
24. If the proposed project includes MDU Wi-Fi deployment, describe the network design for each building or parcel. If the design is uniform across all MDUs, provide a comprehensive description and list all relevant locations. ((Narrative up to 3000 characters)
25. If the proposed project includes MDU Wi-Fi deployment, describe the Wi-Fi service that will be available to each housing unit. Describe the planned performance, speed and latency of the service. (Narrative up to 3000 characters)
- ~~26. If the proposed project includes MDU Wi-Fi deployment, will any Wi-Fi service option be free for residents of the MDU? (Yes/No/NA) Please answer NA for this question. The public Wi-Fi must be free throughout the MDU for all residents.~~
- ~~27. If the proposed project includes MDU Wi-Fi deployment that will not be free, specify the cost for residents, and specifically detail any tiered pricing that will be offered. Explain any equipment and/or installation costs that will be paid by residents. (Short Narrative up to 300 characters) Please answer NA for this question. The public Wi-Fi must be free throughout the MDU for all residents.~~
28. If the proposed project includes MDU Wi-Fi deployment, does the served MDU receive federal other state, local, or federally-funded housing assistance? Specify the assistance program, its source, and the percentage of residents that benefit. *Housing assistance includes, but is not limited to, state or federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Section 8 funding, or other HUD, USDA, or locally administered funding.* (Short Narrative up to 300 characters)
29. If the proposed project includes MDU Wi-Fi deployment to non-subsidized housing, specify rental rates and unit counts per type. Are these rates affordable per HUD? For owner-occupied

MDUs, share market values and reasons for considering them affordable. (Short Narrative up to 300 characters)

[Link: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html>]

#### ***Section 4 – Digital Devices Projects Only***

**For questions in this section, enter “n/a” or “0” if your project does not include a digital device component.**

30. Will the proposed project include device deployment? If no, enter “n/a” for questions 31 through 36. (Yes/No/N/A)
31. If the proposed project includes device deployment, indicate the number of households expected to receive a loaned device through the proposed project. (Number)
32. If the proposed project includes device deployment, specify device types, new or refurbished status, and the applicant’s device supply reliability. Devices must function fully offline and may include laptops, tablets, and desktop computers. (Narrative up to 3000 characters)
33. If the proposed project includes device deployment, describe the operating system and software that will be pre-installed on each device. What types of activities will the device allow a user to do? (Short Narrative Up to 300 characters)
34. If the proposed project includes device deployment, will there be any charges or fees associated with devices being loaned to individuals? If yes, please explain and provide the amount. (Short Narrative Up to 300 characters)
35. If the proposed project includes device deployment, explain the device distribution method(s). How will devices be deployed to the target population? If devices will be targeted to certain areas or populations, describe how eligibility will be determined. (Narrative up to 3000 characters)
36. If the proposed project includes device deployment, describe the device management plan. Include any warranties, replacement policies, asset disposition plans. (Narrative up to 3000 characters)

## APPENDIX B: BUDGET CATEGORIES

<b>Contractual, Consultant Fees</b>	All project expenses for work performed by a third-party contractor. A third-party contractor is any entity that is not a signatory to the grant agreement. Examples: legal services, cement contractors, tree trimmers, electrician, engineering services, etc. Any materials supplied by a third-party contractor should be included here.
<b>Equipment</b>	Equipment for this grant means everything that makes the program functional over the period of performance, including all components for Wi-Fi networks, fleets of devices*, software, warranties, navigators to bring the capital assets to full use for the duration of the period of performance plus five years following project close. Televisions are not an eligible digital device.
<b>Supplies</b>	Supplies means all tangible personal property other than those described by the Equipment category. All items with <u>per-unit</u> acquisition costs of less than \$5,000, regardless of the length of useful life, are considered supplies.
<b>Labor (Salary, Fringe)</b>	Actual labor expenses, including fringe benefits, of the grant recipient. This category is limited to direct personnel expenses only.
<b>Permitting, Licensing Fees</b>	All permitting & licensing expenses.
<b>Travel</b>	Grantee's travel expenses related to the project.
<b>Other</b>	Other expenses not specified above. Please provide details in the notes.
<b>Indirect Costs</b>	Administrative and overhead costs necessary to bring the capital asset to full use should be charged as indirect costs.

**Allowable costs** are determined in accordance with the cost principles identified in 2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E.10 Federal funds committed to an award may only be used to cover allowable costs incurred during the period of performance and for allowable closeout costs incurred during the grant closeout process. Cost sharing is not a requirement for the use of these funds.

*SOURCE: [GUIDANCE FOR THE CORONAVIRUS CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND \(treasury.gov\)](#)*

**Match:** There is no match for this grant. However, organizations should plan for ongoing, unallowed costs like Operations and Maintenance, internet subscriptions and program requirement to keep the program operational five years following project close.

**Eligible Costs:** Eligible Costs mean those costs incurred and previously paid by Grant Recipient during the Performance Period that are not covered by any other federal or state funding, can be audited by the Commission, are directly attributable to activities identified in Attachment B-Project Scope, and are identified in Attachment C-Project Budget, subject to any Amendments to

this Agreement.; which are incurred between the date that the Commission issues an order approving awarding grant funds to the Grant Recipient and November 1, 2026; and expenditures for materials, community planning and pre-engineering that are for the project and may have been purchased before the date the Commission issues an order approving awarding grant funds but after March 15, 2021, so long as they are used exclusively for the project. And that the recipient provide reasonable assurance that the costs were incurred pursuant to the negotiation of and in anticipation of the Capital Projects Fund award and are necessary for the efficient and timely performance of the Project.

\*CPF projects are required to operate for at least five years following project close (defined as when the project close letter is filed). Equipment and fleets should plan with this requirement in mind and plan for full capital asset depreciation over the period of performance.

***Eligible Project Costs. Below is a non-exhaustive list of eligible costs:***

- Costs associated with completing the grant or Application and Grant Plan;
- Pre-project development costs and uses, including data-gathering, feasibility studies, community engagement and public feedback processes, equity assessments and planning, and needs assessments; permitting, planning, architectural design, engineering design, and work related to environmental, historical, and cultural reviews;
- Costs of repair, rehabilitation, construction, improvement, and acquisition of real property, equipment (e.g., devices and office equipment), and facilities (e.g., telecommunications equipment, including infrastructure for backhaul, middle, and last mile networks);
- Cost of long-term leases (for terms greater than one year) of facilities required to provide qualifying broadband service, including infeasible right-of-use (IRU) agreements and capital leases;
- Personnel costs including salaries and fringe benefits for staff and consultants required for carrying out a Capital Project (such as project managers, program directors, subject matter experts, equity consultants, grant administrators, financial analysts, accountants, and attorneys);
- Ancillary costs necessary to operationalize and put the capital assets to full use, including costs to increase broadband adoption and improve digital literacy;
- Costs associated with monitoring of and reporting on Projects in compliance with Treasury requirements, including award closeout costs;
- Costs associated with collecting and measuring performance data and conducting activities needed to establish and maintain a performance management and evaluation regime related to Projects funded by the Capital Projects Fund program.

***Unless otherwise permitted by Treasury, Capital Projects Fund grant funds may not be used for the following purposes:***

- Acquisition of spectrum licenses;
- Operating expenses, other than grant administration costs;
- Short-term operating leases;

- Payment of interest or principal on outstanding debt instruments, or other debt service costs incurred prior to March 15, 2021;
- 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; or
- To support or oppose collective bargaining. This does not affect the ability to use funds to comply with 41 C.F.R. 60-1.4.

*SOURCE: GUIDANCE FOR THE CORONAVIRUS CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND (treasury.gov)  
page 12*

***Program Income***

- Awardees may not charge fees for access to the wireless internet service in an MDU.
- For approved projects that are not Broadband Infrastructure Projects (i.e., Digital Connectivity (1B), Recipients are required to add program income to their CPF award pursuant to 2 CFR 200.307(e)(2). Note that program income must be utilized and applied to benefit the same project from which it was generated.

*SOURCE: CPF Reporting Guidance, page 5*



## APPENDIX C: REPORTING

### Reporting Timeline:

Year	Quarter	Period Covered	Due to PSC
2024	Q3	July 1 - September 30	October 10, 2024
	Q4	October 1 - December 31	January 10, 2025
2025	Q1	January 1 - March 31	April 10, 2025
	Q2	April 1 - June 30	July 10, 2025
	Q3	July 1 - September 30	October 10, 2025
	Q4	October 1 - December 31	January 9, 2026
2026	Q1	January 1 - March 31	April 10, 2026
	Q2	April 1 - June 30	July 10, 2026
	Q3	July 1 - September 30	October 9, 2026
	Q4	TBD	TBD
Final Report		End of Project*	Within 30 Days of Project Completion

### Reporting Requirements:

- Address(es) from which devices will be distributed or installed (in the case of MDU Wi-Fi equipment), or other location information as appropriate
- Device type (Select all that apply)
  - Laptops
  - Tablets
  - Desktop Computers
  - MDU Wi-Fi Equipment
  - Other
- For each selected device type, provide: (Planned/Actual)
  - Total number of devices purchased
  - Total expenditure
- Total number of individuals using devices (Planned/Actual)
- A brief narrative explaining the number and types of digital literacy trainings and other support services provided to enable use of the devices, including the number of individuals who attend or make use of the trainings and support services (Proposed/Actual)
- Are Subrecipients measuring the Project’s effectiveness and impact through data collection, such as surveys? (Y/N)