5-CPF-2024 Capital Projects Fund (CPF) Digital Connectivity and Navigators FAQ

PSC Capital Projects Digital Connectivity and Navigators Program (wi.gov)

Updated:	Content updated:
5/29/2024	FAQ

There have been updates to the CPF Digital Connectivity and Navigators Grant Program (CPF DCN) grant instructions document stemming from additional guidance from U.S. Department of the Treasury.

The amended Application Instruction are here. PSC REF#: 503281

A redline version of the amended application instructions are here. PSC REF#: 503282

The application deadline has been extended to: July 3, 2024, 1:30 p.m. CT.

The Public Service Commission (Commission) expects that in some cases, grantees may need to adjust their budget before accepting awards to be in compliance with Capital Project Funds guidance from U.S. Department of Treasury. Awarded Grant Recipients may expect that the Commission will reach out to amend their budgets as needed.

1. Is there a minimum or maximum grant request?
   o There is no minimum or maximum grant request, although this grant round is limited by the amount of funds available overall, which is up to $33 million.

2. Is there a required or minimum match?
   o There is no match for this grant. However, Grant Recipients should plan for ongoing, unallowed costs like Operations and Maintenance, internet subscriptions and program requirement to keep the program operational for at least five years following project close.

3. How do I know the character limits for a particular question on the application?
   o Character limits will be listed as help text beneath each question when completing the application within the PSC Grants System. You can also utilize the "CPF Connectivity Application Questions Table" which is posted on the PSC's CPF webpage. This document contains each question, help text, question type, and applicable character limits.

4. To whom should letters of support be addressed?
   o Letters of support should be addressed to the Secretary to the Commission, Cru Stubley. Letters of support must be included with the application and uploaded to the PSC Grants System. No letters of support will be accepted outside of the Grants System.

- Cru Stubley
  Secretary to the Commission
  Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
  North Tower, 6th Floor
  Hill Farms State Office Building
  4822 Madison Yards Way
  Madison, WI 53705

5. How will my application be evaluated?
   o CPF DCN grants will be evaluated by a screening panel using eligibility and merit guidelines included in the [amended grant application instructions](). Scoring is developed consistent with the priority criteria laid out in federal guidance. The panel evaluation will inform an advisory memo prepared for Commissioners. Commissioners make the final grant award decision and are not bound by the panel scores or resulting merit list.

6. Can a device distributor organization partner with an organization that provides digital navigator services to apply together?
   o Yes, partnerships are allowable.

7. Are there any restrictions on a subgrantee or subcontractor entity being proposed as a partner across multiple award applications?
   o There is no limitation on the number of applications submitted or the structure of partnerships of those applications. You are welcome to partner with multiple applicants. Applicants are recommended to be as detailed and specific as possible in describing the partnership roles and responsibilities.

8. Can an eligible entity apply for grant funds and subaward to another subrecipient?
   o Yes, Grant Recipients of CPF DCN funds are allowed to subaward if the proposal is eligible according to PSC eligibility criteria and follows guidance from the U.S. Department of the Treasury for reporting and compliance. However, we strongly encourage partnerships, MOUs, and contracts that are drafted or defined at the application phase.

9. Does there need to be a lead or sole applicant?
   o Yes, there needs to be a single entity to that will complete the application, sign the Grant Agreement, and be responsible for reporting. The entity to complete the application will work with the Commission on the grants administration and will be responsible for following the conditions of the Grant Agreement. If a project proposal includes partnerships or collaborations between multiple organizations, only one entity should complete the application but make sure to include project partners.

10. During the grant period, can Grant Recipients distribute free or discounted devices for permanent ownership, or must devices be on loan? Additionally, can subgrant recipients transfer ownership of distributed refurbished laptops rather than collecting them at the project's end?
    o [Treasury guidance](#) states, "Permitted devices and equipment include laptops, tablets, and desktop personal computers for distribution to members of the public through a short- or long-term loan program or to be made available for use in public facilities." CPF DCN projects are <u>required to operate for at least five years following project close</u> (defined as when the project close letter is filed by the Commission). Purchase of equipment fleets should be planned with this requirement in mind, with partial or full depreciation planned for all capital assets over the period of performance. Device collection or ownership transfer will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the value of the fleet of devices.

11. Are applications being accepted for statewide device distribution projects?
    o Yes, projects may be proposed to cover eligible populations in the entire state or specific geographic areas of the state.

12. Can you clarify what would be allowable regarding disposition plans for the devices after the grant period has ended?
    o Applicants have discretion in disposition plans but must follow all applicable laws regarding data security and privacy protection and dispose of equipment in a safe and environmentally responsible way.

13. Does the CPF DCN grant program require the applicant meet certain criteria in their plan to distribute devices to households?
    The applicant must demonstrate that the program is designed to target low-income, underserved, and/or under-connected households as defined in the application instructions.

14. Is there a list of specific device needs outside of the basic outline provided in the Grant Application Instructions on page 7? (Eligible devices are those that have operating systems, basic productivity software, antivirus software, and warranties and may include laptops, tablets, and desktop computers.)
    o Please see the definition of Devices below, available in [the grant instructions on page 4](#). 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.

15. What is the definition of a digital navigator, for the purpose of the CPF Connectivity program?
    o Please see the definition of Digital Navigator below, available in the grant instructions on page 4. The applicant must demonstrate that the program is designed to target low-income, underserved, and/or under-connected households as defined in the amend application instructions.
        ▪ 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.

16. Can digital navigation services be offered beyond the target population? For example, if the target population is low-income seniors and we offer classes, can others attend those classes?
    o No, the purpose of the digital navigation services is to enable the capital assets (devices and/or MDU Wi-Fi) and to maintain devices.

17. Is there going to be a standardized aging guide for devices or will it be up to the individual organizations to determine the value of devices and their value at the end of the grant period?
    o There will not be a standardized aging guide. The applicant is encouraged to provide their own device management plan including device collection, disposition, or distribution.

18. If submitting an application for both device deployment and MDU Wi-Fi projects, can the proposals utilize the same digital navigation services for both projects?
    o Yes, the digital navigators are meant to enable the full of use of the capital assets. It is recommended that applicant's proposed project includes a clearly defined digital navigator program or service that attests to the quality of the digital navigator's breadth and depth of services.

19. Are hotspots or hotspot service plans an allowable expense?
    o No, supplies and equipment eligible for purchase within the MDU include internal wiring for the MDU to support the Wi-Fi network, 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. Please see Appendix B in the grant instructions that address allowable costs for MDU Wi-Fi projects.

20. Are there any reporting requirements for the duration of the project?
    o Yes, reporting is required on a quarterly basis. See Appendix C of the amended grant instructions that detail the reporting schedule and requirements.

21. What are the reporting requirements for the device management portion? As in what will be required to be provided to show that we maintain ownership of the device during the program period?

- The reporting requirements are listed below. Please see [Appendix C in the amended grant instructions](#) that detail the reporting schedule and 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 Grant Recipients measuring the Project's effectiveness and impact through data collection, such as surveys? (Y/N)