



ConnectALL Deployment Program - County Partnerships | Request for Applications

Questions & Answers

Published: May 8, 2024 (Questions 1-29)

Note: Questions have been edited slightly from the original submission language in order to generalize and make them more applicable to all prospective applicants.

1. Our county has already issued its RFP and recently executed a contract with an ISP partner, with funding identified to cover the entire project. Can we rescind our existing contract in order to apply for grant funding through ConnectALL?

As long as you have concluded the RFP process, you can submit the funding request. If you choose to rescind an existing contract, you do so at your own risk and without any guarantee of an award from ConnectALL.

2. Can Counties utilize already awarded (but not yet built) projects as the 25% match to this program, so that we can build out further to areas that we previously lacked funding to reach?

Yes, if the already-awarded projects were an outcome of the same RFP process that forms the basis of your application.

3. The RFA states that "Eligible Applicants...will have completed their selection before the application deadline for this RFA." Is passage of a resolution by the full County Legislature considered completing a selection?

Yes, however this specific action is not required; each County's demonstration of having completed their selection may differ. Please include any relevant selection milestones in your answer to Q_15193.

4. The RFA states that Counties must have already selected their ISP partner(s). Must the partner already be under contract, or just selected?

Either scenario is acceptable. Please include any relevant selection milestones in your answer to Q_15193.

5. Can you share the list of counties that qualify?

A list of all New York State counties is available here:

<https://www.ny.gov/counties>.

6. Can ISPs apply for funding by themselves with a letter of support from the County?

No. ISP partner(s) may collaborate with Counties to prepare application materials, but County governments are the only eligible applicants for this program.

7. Are Tribal Nations eligible to respond to this RFA?

No. County governments are the only eligible applicants for this program.

8. Would retaining a third-party consultant to manage this project be an eligible expense, or funding to cover internal project management costs?

No, the only eligible use of ConnectALL funds is for direct expenses related to deployment. Expenses related to project management and administration can be considered part of the minimum 25% contribution funded through alternative sources.

9. Are pre-engineering field work costs paid for to prepare for this grant application considered an eligible reimbursement as part of the grant application?

No; ConnectALL funds may not be used to cover expenses incurred prior to an award.

10. If the ConnectALL contract is awarded directly to an ISP partner, what is the proposed flow of funds from ConnectALL?

In that scenario, ConnectALL will issue payments directly to the ISP partner based on documented expenses under the milestones agreed to through the contracting process.

11. If the County proposes to set aside funding to reimburse households (on a one-time basis) for a satellite connection for locations deemed as too remote/high-cost to be served by fiber, would this be an eligible use of program funds?

No, this program will not fund satellite connections because the locations, once awarded, must be considered “served” by the standard of the federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program. County funding for satellite connections can be considered part of the minimum 25% contribution.

12. Our County has applied for funding from the ConnectALL Municipal Infrastructure Program. We are awaiting confirmation of a potential award through the MIP, but also recognize that any award through the MIP may not be sufficient to cover our entire proposed project. Can we apply for County Partnerships funding as well?

Yes. In the “Sources of Funding” table within your Funding Request Template, note the total amount being requested through MIP as well as an explanation of your current application status.

13. ARPA funding rules enabled Counties to submit an audit proving that federal funds allocated to Counties had been used to reimburse Counties for expenses incurred during COVID. Those funds were then considered "defederalized" and not subject to the same program requirements. However, further rulemaking does require some reporting related to final use of funds. Does ConnectALL consider this funding federal or County?

This funding would be considered “federal” from ConnectALL’s perspective. Notwithstanding, in your “Sources of Funding” table within the Funding Request Template, you should specify the individual program that the funds are coming from, not merely categorize them as “federal” or “County.”

14. What constitutes "proof" of funding? Is a budget performance report indicating the expense account and balance amount in the fund sufficient?

Yes, however this specific document type is not required; each County’s proofs for their funding sources may differ.

15. During the MIP application period, the CAO added a reimbursement plan that came as a bit of a surprise. While municipal partners are accustomed to working under a reimbursement structure for most State and federal grants, the specific percentages allowed within specific time periods seemed very restrictive for a project turnaround that is somewhat accelerated considering the typical time required to get a project officially under contract with the state. Is there something similar that will be applied to the County Partnerships Program?

Unless otherwise agreed through the contracting process, and barring material changes in circumstances, ConnectALL anticipates that payment milestones will align with the project deployment milestones specified in Q_15200 of the application (i.e., construction kickoff; construction completion to 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% of awarded locations; and final project testing and acceptance).

16. Is there a preference for a grant award to be made directly to a County, with the County overseeing and managing the project or for the award to be made directly to the provider partners with oversight by ConnectAll?

A County's proposed grant management arrangement will not be a factor in application evaluation. A County that prefers to oversee and manage the project(s) must demonstrate it has the capacity to do so.

17. The RFA notes a preference for fiber technology but that Counties may provide an explanation if alternative technologies are used. Are coax cable and licensed fixed wireless eligible as components of a hybrid technology solution?

Yes. For any locations proposed to be deployed with non-fiber technology, include an explanation in the appropriate column of the Location List Template (updated on April 26).

18. The RFA notes a goal to connect all unserved and underserved locations within the county. Our county has unserved areas which we plan to serve through another grant program, although award decisions have not yet been made. How should we handle these locations in our application?

The Location List Template includes a field to provide an explanation for any unserved or underserved locations in the county that are not included in your proposed project. In this case, you can explain that these locations are under consideration to be served through another program and provide the latest status of those decisions.

19. Are counties required to own infrastructure to qualify for this program. If so, what are the terms and conditions of ownership?

There are no public ownership requirements in this program. Whatever the ownership terms are should be detailed in your response to Q_15199 regarding operational terms of the network.

20. Applicants must provide ConnectALL with copies of the proposals received in response to the County's solicitation. If Designated Partner(s) identified confidential information in their proposals, will the State abide by those confidentiality restrictions?

ConnectALL will, to the extent allowable by law, consider information as confidential when so marked.

21. Applicants are asked to provide "a copy of the Request for Proposals or other solicitation document". Can you please clarify what the "other solicitation document" is required to be?

This language is simply meant to accommodate a County who may not have issued a Request for Proposals, but who may have issued some other type of solicitation. If your County conducted an RFP, a copy of that RFP will be sufficient.

22. Is it possible for Counties to receive an extension beyond the 5/10 due date? We are working with counties on their responses and may not have time to redo our bids to meet the requirements.

Counties are not expected to significantly refactor their planned projects for the application. Please refer to the instructions for the Program Alignment Checklist. The intent is for County applicants to explain how their currently-

planned projects line up with the Program policies and requirements. If ConnectALL determines the County proposal as submitted is conditionally eligible, the County partner will then have an opportunity to align with the requirements.

23. Our County required that respondents to our RFP have an existing network within the County. None of the bidders meeting this requirement are MWBE businesses. Would this meet sole/single-source procurement requirements and could the County apply for a waiver to ESD participation goals on this basis?

ESD's Office of Contractor and Supplier Diversity reviews all projects to determine appropriate MWBE goals. The County should provide in its application a justification for narrowing participation in its RFP, but this will not form the basis for a waiver of MWBE requirements.

24. Can the prevailing wage requirement be waived, or is it a statutory obligation under State law for ConnectALL-funded projects?

This is a statutory requirement that cannot be waived.

25. As the BSLs are revised based on in-field observations and unserved addresses are discovered that show on the FCC BDC as being served, would we be able to add these BSLs to the grant application? Or are these BSLs excluded since they were not challenged, nor do they appear on the BEAD-eligible list?

These locations can be included in your project and added on the "Other Locations" tab of the Location List Template, along with an explanation of the data or methodology used to determine such locations' inclusion in the project. If the question is about adding locations after the grant is agreed to, that is not a consideration in the application but can be factored into any agreement.

26. Does the ConnectAll office encourage project designs that can include running fiber to Community Anchor Institutions and key county facilities?

Connecting Community Anchor Institutions and county facilities is not considered as part of ConnectALL's scoring criteria, but such connections can be included in your justification for selection of your Designated Partner(s) and may be considered eligible expenses as part of the minimum 25% contribution.

27. The Funding Request Template notes that total project cost must match the total given in the Designated Partner proposal(s). Must our funding requested from ConnectALL also be this figure, or can we round up?

Total project cost must match the Designated Partner proposal(s), unless changes have been made/negotiated since the time of the proposal submission(s). The applicant should explain any discrepancies in the "Notes" field of the Funding Request Template. The amount requested from ConnectALL cannot be the same as this figure, as applicants are required to contribute a minimum of 25% of the project cost (the

applicant's cost share should include all Designated Partner contributions). Thus the requested funding from ConnectALL can only be up to 75% of the total project cost.

28. If the County partnership grants require that a County have already conducted a competitive ISP solicitation process prior to the date of the RFP (April 5, 2024), was this requirement previously publicized? i.e., Were Counties alerted to this requirement ahead of time so that they could prepare to apply?"

The purpose of the County Partnerships RFA is to work with those Counties that chose of their own accord to utilize their own available funding for an RFP, in most cases based on planning and mapping carried out at their own expense.

29. When will awards for the phase I Municipal Infrastructure Program be announced?

Some parts of our county applied for this funding and if they are successful we can remove them from our proposal.

ConnectALL will address any issues that arise pertaining to locations that are subject to enforceable commitments under another grant program. If locations currently included in your project may receive funding through another program (and thus be removed), you can indicate this and provide additional context within the explanations fields of the Location List Template.