



## Technical Assistance Fund Program | Request for Applications

### Question & Answers

*Published: June 18, 2024 (Questions 1-11)*

*Update: July 16, 2024 (Questions 12-21)*

*Update: July 19, 2024 (Questions 24 – 27)*

**Note:** Questions have been edited slightly from the original submission language to promote clarity for all prospective applicants. Questions will be added as they are received.

#### 1. What kind of entity is eligible for this program?

Eligible entities include non-governmental nonprofit entities registered with the Charities Bureau within the Office of the New York State of the Attorney General, or Tribal Entities. Eligible entities must have been in operation in the State of New York for at least two years.

#### 2. What is a Covered Population?

Covered Populations are:

- i) Individuals who live in covered households the income of which for the most recently completed year is not more than 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level, as determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census;
- ii) Aging individuals who are 60 and above
- iii) Incarcerated individuals, other than those incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility;
- iv) Veterans;
- v) Individuals with disabilities;
- vi) Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners; and have low levels of literacy;
- vii) Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group;
- viii) Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.

3. Can I apply on behalf of or with other organizations?

Yes, applications can be submitted on behalf of multiple organization partners.

4. How much can I apply for?

The maximum award for each grant is \$100,000.

5. What can I use this grant award to do?

Eligible uses for technical assistance funding include the hiring of consultants, grant writers, data analysts and evaluators, resourcing software licenses, staff trainings, translation services, and other uses approved and authorized in writing by ConnectALL etc. Please see full description of eligible uses in the Request for Applications.

6. What use of funds are not allowed?

Ineligible uses of non-capital funds include construction in any form, duplicative project costs, overhead costs, staff salaries and stipends and any activities defined as ineligible uses under applicable State law.

7. What is the Grantee Selection Timeline?

Milestone	Date
Request for Applications issued	6 June 2024
Opening of Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) Portal	17 June 2024
Information session	24 & 27 June 2024
Application submission deadline	30 July 2024
Notification of conditional eligibility	August 2024
Anticipated incentive proposal execution	August 2024
<i>All schedule descriptions and dates are tentative and subject to change.</i>	

8. How will grant funds be disbursed?

As a condition of the grant award, grantees will each enter into a Grant Disbursement Agreement with ConnectALL, which will outline the Program’s stipulations for compliance with Program requirements and penalties for failures to comply. The disbursement of funds detailed in the Grant Disbursement Agreement may differ based on the agreed-upon scope of work for each grantee (or subgrantee); and the grant

amount and terms of each Grant Disbursement Agreement may vary accordingly. Payments will be made as reimbursement of expenses at agreed-upon project milestones that meet specific project requirements. The final portion will be due upon ConnectALL's verification of completion of the project.

9. Are there any alternatives to reimbursement for this fund?

No, Empire State Development follows strict state guidelines and requirements.

10. What is the MWBE requirement and does it apply to nonprofits?

Grants awarded through this program may be subject to Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) participation goals. Empire State Development typically assigns a 30% target for MWBE participation, where not subject to federal preemption. This target, if it applies, may be adjusted based on the applying entity, the scope of work, and whether the work will be contracted or self-performed by the applying entity.

11. What is the 10% match?

State assistance awarded and paid to a grant recipient shall not exceed 90% of the total eligible costs. Total project cost is the sum of State funds awarded to an awardee and equity contributed by the awardee. Equity is defined as cash injected into the project by the Recipient and should be auditable through Recipient financial statements or Recipient accounts, if requested by ESD. In-kind contributions may also be considered. Equity cannot be borrowed money secured by the assets in the project.

12. What is the purpose of the Digital Equity Technical Assistance Fund?

The purpose of ConnectALL's state-funded Digital Equity Technical Assistance Fund is to address a specific, time-bound challenge that limits an Applicant's ability to plan towards, and apply for, federal and state grants for essential digital equity programs or services for Covered Populations. This \$1.4 million dollar program is intended to precede the ConnectALL Digital Equity Capacity Grant program, which ConnectALL will launch after receiving approximately \$37 million allocated to the State of New York under the federal [Digital Equity Act Program](#).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) will launch its **Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program** before the end of July 2024 – a date significantly earlier than previously anticipated. The Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program is administered by NTIA with applications submitted directly to the federal government. [See NTIA's "Get Ready" webpage for more information.](#) As a result of this change in the timeline for NTIA's Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program, applications submitted to ConnectALL's Digital Equity Technical Assistance Fund focused **solely** on NTIA's Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program may no longer be considered at this time.

To learn about ConnectALL’s Regional and Local Assistance Program for local governments, counties, municipalities, Tribal Governments, and other government entities or entities created by units of government, see: <https://broadband.ny.gov/regional-and-local-assistance>.

13. What do you mean by “technical assistance”?

Technical assistance enables an Applicant to develop a response to an existing challenge by engaging an external consultant or securing a resource to initiate changes to help an Applicant reach digital equity goals. This includes receiving assistance with applying for and administering federal funding to better serve Covered Populations. ***Funds may not be applied to general administrative expenses, general operating support, nor direct service and program delivery.*** Funding may be used to support staff development activities but not staff salaries. Funding may be used to purchase grant management software, but not equipment (e.g., laptops) for program delivery, for example.

14. What kind of entity is eligible for this program?

An Applicant must be a non-governmental nonprofit entity registered with the Charities Bureau, Office of the New York State of the Attorney General, or a Tribal Non-Governmental Entity, with at least two years in operation in the State of New York. Public libraries with a 501c3 certification are eligible to apply.

Applicant must directly serve one or more Covered Population(s) in the State of New York through the provision of one of the measurable objectives laid out in the State Digital Equity Plan:

- Availability and affordability of access to broadband technology;
- Online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services;
- Digital literacy;
- Online privacy and cybersecurity; and
- Availability/affordability of consumer devices and technical support for those devices.

A digital equity provider or coalition may use a fiscal sponsor to apply.

15. How do you define a “consultant”?

A consultant is an individual, team or entity engaged to achieve a certain result (e.g. provide expert advice, guidance, or technical support), that is not subject to the direction of the employer as to the means and methods of accomplishing the result.

16. What can I use this grant award to do?

Eligible uses for technical assistance funding include the hiring of consultants (e.g., grant writers, development consultants, data analysts and evaluators); resourcing software licenses pertaining to fiscal management and grants-tracking; staff trainings; translation services; and other uses as approved and authorized in writing by ConnectALL. Funds cannot be used for administrative expenses, general operating support, nor direct service and programming delivery.

17. Can I apply on behalf of or with other organizations?

Yes, multiple partners can form an application as long as there is one lead applicant that satisfies eligibility criteria. The lead Applicant must be a non-governmental nonprofit entity registered with the Charities Bureau, Office of the New York State of the Attorney General, or a Tribal Non-Governmental Entity, with a minimum of two years in operation in the State of New York.

18. What is the regional approach to grant awards?

ConnectALL anticipates issuing ONE award in each geographic region in New York State: Capital Region, Central New York, Finger Lakes, Long Island, Mid-Hudson, Mohawk Valley, North Country, Southern Tier, Western New York, and in each of New York City's five boroughs – Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and the Bronx. If funds remain, ConnectALL will consider a second round of awards to high-scoring applications regardless of location.

19. Do employee hours working on the project with the consultant qualify as equity contributed to total value of the project and thus the 10% match?

No, to the extent that staff salaries are not eligible expenses under the grant program, employee hours may not be treated as equity contributions for the purposes of the match requirement.

20. How does the grant award reimbursement process work?

ConnectALL will negotiate payment terms with each grantee in accordance with requisite State law, Empire State Development grant policies and regulations, and the type of technical assistance being supported.

21. What address should the applicant use?

The application should use the entity's legal business address.

22. Would these platforms qualify under your definition of "Resourcing fiscal management/grants-tracking software licenses"? Salesforce, Zoom, Online Learning Management?

It depends on how the resources at issue will be utilized. Applicants should articulate in their application how their chosen resources will improve their capabilities as digital inclusion program providers and digital equity grant seekers.

23. Can the grant be used to fund programs that provide internet service?

No. Technical assistance funding may not be used toward internet service.

24. On the funding sources template there is a section for "Construction Miles." What do I input here seeing that construction is an ineligible use?

Applicants may input "N/A" as a response.

25. Are letters of support accepted as part of the application? If so, how do I submit letters of support?

Letters of support are not required and will not be accepted or reviewed as part of an application.

26. Many of the questions show a 400 character count. Is this correct?

The Consolidated Funding Application portal questions have been updated to allow applicants to submit a long form response as appropriate.

27. Given that awards will be granted on a regional basis, am I deemed eligible if my programs are delivered statewide?

Yes. While there is a focus on promoting equitable distribution of grant awards on a regional basis, applicants whose programs and services reach beyond their specified region are eligible for this program.

**For more information, or to submit questions, please contact [digitalequity@esd.ny.gov](mailto:digitalequity@esd.ny.gov).**