ConnectALL Regional and Local Assistance Program – Round 2

Request for Applications

Issued: June 6, 2024

Updated: June 17, 2024

Re-Issued: September 29, 2025

Contact: RLA@esd.ny.gov using the subject line “Regional and Local Assistance Program Request for Applications”

This Request for Applications is posted on the Empire State Development website:

https://broadband.ny.gov/regional-and-local-assistance

Applications must be submitted through the New York State Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) Portal:

https://apps.cio.ny.gov/apps/cfa/index.cfm

APPLICATION DUE DATE:

November 7, 2025

Table of Contents

Overview **3**
Objective 3
Background **3**
Program Background 3
Funding Sources 4
Program Assistance **4**
Grants 4
Eligible Applicants **4**
Eligible Uses of Funds **4**
Project Requirements **5**
Application Content and Scope of Services **6**
Application Process and Timeline **8**
Information Session 9
Q&A Process 9
Selection Criteria 9
Document Change Log **11**

Overview

Objective

The mission of the New York State Urban Development Corporation d/b/a Empire State Development is to promote a vigorous and growing state economy, encourage business investment and job creation, and support diverse, prosperous local economies across New York State through the efficient use of loans, grants, tax credits, real estate development, marketing, and other forms of assistance. ConnectALL is Governor Kathy Hochul's initiative to address New York State's digital divide, transform the state's digital infrastructure, and ensure that all New Yorkers have access to reliable and affordable high-speed broadband internet service. Empire State Development's ConnectALL Office, as the entity responsible for implementing the ConnectALL initiative, offers grants through multiple programs to close the digital divide, promote a robust broadband marketplace, and ensure all homes and businesses have access to reliable, affordable, high-speed internet.

ConnectALL's Regional and Local Assistance Program ("the Program"), through this Request for Applications, will maximize the effectiveness of ConnectALL programs by building capacity in local and regional government entities to manage and implement broadband and digital equity initiatives effectively. The Program will provide grants or technical assistance to eligible applicants for program funding to include non-capital resources, technical assistance and planning which could include feasibility studies or digital equity research, identifying areas in need of internet service or new investments in broadband, or the development of financing for broadband facilities.

ConnectALL is designated as the administrator of the Program and authorized to determine program structure and requirements, evaluate applicant information, monitor grantees for project completion and satisfactory performance, collect grantee data to ensure compliance with all program requirements and verify allowable uses of funds, and approve disbursement of grant funds to selected grantees.

Background

Program Background

Section §16-GG*2(8) of the New York State Urban Development Corporation Act ("UDC Act"), Chapter 174 of the Laws of 1968, as amended, establishes the ConnectALL municipal assistance program "to provide grant funding to municipalities, state and local authorities, and entities established pursuant to section 99-y of the general municipal law to plan and construct infrastructure necessary to provide broadband services, support the adoption of broadband services, or other purposes for maximizing the effectiveness of municipal broadband programs as determined by the division."

Grants awarded through this Request for Applications will provide eligible applicants (see "Eligible Applicants" below) with grants to advance their capacity to plan and execute broadband and digital equity initiatives.[1] The Program is informed by ConnectALL's extensive partner engagement, through which local

[1] As defined in the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 ("Infrastructure Act"), the term "digital equity" means the condition in which individuals and communities have the information technology capacity that is needed for full participation in the society and economy of the United States. The term "digital inclusion" means "the activities that are necessary to ensure that all individuals in the United States have access to, and the use of, affordable information and communication technologies, such as—reliable fixed and wireless broadband internet service; internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user; and applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration; and includes—obtaining access to digital literacy training; the provision of quality technical support; and obtaining basic awareness of measures to ensure online privacy and cybersecurity." The term "digital literacy" means "the skills associated with using technology to enable users to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information." Infrastructure Act § 60302(10)-(12).

and regional government partners identified a range of capacity challenges that are currently or potentially deemed to obstruct their ability to leverage ConnectALL programs. By providing grants aimed at addressing these challenges for local and regional government entities, the Program is a critical complement to the other programs of ConnectALL, including the Affordable Housing Connectivity Program, the Municipal Infrastructure Program, the Digital Equity Program, and the ConnectALL Deployment Program.

The challenges identified by local and regional government partners include a lack of staff capacity and specialization dedicated to broadband and digital equity, as well as a lack of resources for the planning necessary to engage with ConnectALL programs. Through this Request for Applications, the Program aims to address capacity gaps for eligible entities in the areas of:

- Broadband deployment
- Digital equity
- Wireless coverage
- Data, analysis & mapping
- Policy engagement

In September 2023, the ESD Board of Directors approved the program guidelines for the Regional and Local Assistance Program Guidelines and authorized ConnectALL to take related action to implement the program.

Funding Sources

The funding for this Program comes from the New York State Executive Budget and/or from federal grant funds, where eligible and applicable.

Program Assistance

Grants

The Program makes available financial assistance through grants for use by Applicants. Funds are available for the eligible uses described in “Eligible Uses of Funds,” and for the additional activities to be set forth in the grant disbursement agreement that ConnectALL will negotiate and execute with each Grantee. ConnectALL anticipates awarding a total of up to $10 million over the course of three years through this Program.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are New York local governments, counties, municipalities, Tribal Governments, and other government entities or entities created by units of government, such as special units of government, regional planning boards, or government-controlled nonprofits, as collectively authorized under section 99-y of the General Municipal Law. See also General Municipal Law §2. Eligible applicants may choose to subcontract for certain aspects of project implementation, but in that case, the applicant should identify that subcontractor through a public procurement process.

Eligible Uses of Funds

Eligible uses for Program funding include non-capital resources, technical assistance, and the following categories of technical assistance and planning:

- Staff wages/salaries for broadband planning, permitting, digital equity coordination, or other increases in capacity to support broadband deployment or adoption;

- Preparation of feasibility studies, financial or engineering plans, training and professional development, software licenses, market surveys, environmental studies, technical designs, local or regional plans, research, evaluation, support for grant application or other fund acquisition processes, and other plans or reports necessary to support broadband deployment and digital equity;
- Travel to relevant events and conferences;
- Publicity and outreach for relevant events or programs.

Ineligible uses of Program funds include the following types of expenses:

- Construction (in any form);
- Duplicative project costs such as pre-application expenses funded by another award;
- Indirect or Overhead costs;
- Activities defined as ineligible uses under applicable state or federal law.

Project Requirements

Grantees must identify whether they are applying for a Planning Grant or a Capacity Grant, as defined below, and meet the requirements for that grant as follows:

- **Planning Grants** fund the development of a plan, scope, design, or other documentation to prepare for the implementation of broadband deployment projects, public-sector led digital equity programs, or other efforts consistent with the ConnectALL mandate.
    - The maximum request and award for each Planning Grant is $249,999.
    - The planning activity funded by the Planning Grant must be completed within 24 months. The project being planned does not need to be completed within 24 months.
    - The Applicant must commit to participate in meetings with ConnectALL and other grantees to share progress, best practices, and be available to support communication and publicity about the program.
- **Capacity Grants** fund internal staff capacity for eligible applicants to implement broadband deployment projects, public-sector led digital equity programs, or other efforts consistent with the ConnectALL mandate.
    - The maximum request and award for each Capacity Grant award is $150,000. The minimum request and award for each grant is $50,000. Award amounts can be higher in some circumstances where the total impact or geographical area are large.
    - Any funded activities or purchases must be completed within 24 months.
    - The increased capacity from a Capacity Grant should be sustained beyond the grant period, but at minimum must be sustained for at least 12 months.
    - The Applicant must commit to participate in meetings with ConnectALL and other grantees to share progress, best practices, and be available to support communication and publicity about the program.

Regional and Local Assistance grants are intended to address planning and local capacity challenges that are under-resourced. As such, matching funding may be factored in as criteria, but will not be a strict requirement for award. ConnectALL may also factor in other criteria to assess applicants' level of commitment and readiness. Applicants must submit details of any match, including in-kind contributions, and an estimate of the dollar value of those commitments, in the Funding Template attachment. The estimated value of matching contribution will be included in the Total Project Cost.

Pursuant to New York State Executive Law Articles 15-A and Article 3 of New York State Veterans' Services Law, ESD recognizes its obligation under the law to promote opportunities for maximum feasible participation of certified minority and women-owned business enterprises (MWBEs) and service-disabled

veteran-owned businesses (SDVOBs) in the performance of ESD projects. The Recipient shall be required to use Good Faith Efforts (pursuant to 5 NYCRR §142.8 and 9 NYCRR § 252.2(n) to achieve MWBE and SDVOB Participation. In addition, ESD's MWBE and SDVOB Participation/Equal Employment Opportunity Policy will apply to this program. Specific goals related to the total value of ESD's funding will be established on a grant-by-grant basis.

Pursuant to New York State Executive Law Articles 15-A and Article 3 of New York State Veterans' Services Law, ESD recognizes its obligation under the law to promote opportunities for maximum feasible participation of certified minority and women-owned business enterprises (MWBEs) and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses (SDVOBs) in the performance of ESD projects. The Recipient shall be required to use Good Faith Efforts (pursuant to 5 NYCRR §142.8 and 9 NYCRR § 252.2(n) to achieve MWBE and SDVOB Participation. In addition, ESD's MWBE and SDVOB Participation/Equal Employment Opportunity Policy will apply to this program. Specific goals related to the total value of ESD's funding will be established on a grant-by-grant basis.

ESD has an agency-wide goal of 30% for MWBE participation, 15% for New York State-certified Minority-owned Business Enterprise ("MBE") participation and 15% for New York State-certified Women-owned Business Enterprise ("WBE") participation (based on the current availability of MBEs and WBEs). ESD has an agency-wide goal of 6% for SDVOB participation, based on the current availability of qualified SDVOBs.

Application Content and Scope of Services

Applications shall deliver a unique application containing all the required information detailed in the sections below.

1) Attachments
    a. Provide an organizational chart in PDF form identifying all key personnel who will be involved in administering the grant and overseeing implementation. The organizational chart should clearly identify which roles are existing or new for the project and show lines of reporting between personnel involved in the project and applicant entity executives. Name your file using the following naming convention: "ApplicantName_OrgChart_MM.DD.YY"
    b. Provide resumes (in a single Word/PDF file or .zip archive) for all key personnel that demonstrate their relevant experience and qualifications. Name your file using the following naming convention: "ApplicantName_Resumes_MM.DD.YY"
    c. Complete and upload the Funding Request Template to provide details on the proposed project budget, cost share, and sources of funds. Name your file using the following naming convention: "ApplicantName_Funding_MM.DD.YY"
    d. Attach letters of support from local, county, regional, or tribal governments or other documentation showing support for and engagement with the application. Name your file using the following naming convention: "ApplicantName_LettersofSupport_MM.DD.YY"
2) Applicant Profile, Experience, and Qualifications
    a. Name of and address for the primary applicant organization
    b. Identify the applicant public entity type:
        i. Local government
        ii. County government
        iii. Municipality
        iv. Tribal government

v. Regional Planning Board or Council
vi. Government-controlled nonprofit organization
vii. Other government entity or entity created by a unit of government (specify)

c. Point of contact name
d. Email
e. Phone number
f. Describe the applicant entity's proposed grant funding arrangement for this grant award. Will the applicant entity receive and administer funds as subgrants or contracts? Who will be responsible for managing the ConnectALL grant and managing all related administrative and reporting tasks?
g. Describe the applicant entity's experience with broadband planning, infrastructure deployment, and/or digital equity coordination projects.
h. Describe the applicant entity's experience administering grant funds. If the applicant entity has previously administered grant funds from Empire State Development, provide details.

3) Approach and Scope
   a. Identify whether this application is for a Planning or Capacity grant.
   b. Which of the following dimensions does the proposed project build capacity in?
      i. Broadband Deployment
      ii. Digital Equity
      iii. Data, Analysis & Mapping
      iv. Wireless Coverage
      v. Policy
      vi. Communications
      vii. Other
   c. Describe the project plan and give an estimated timeline.
   d. What is the capacity gap the Applicant faces?
   e. What capacity resources does the Applicant need to address the capacity gap? Why is this cost outside the scope of current activities? How does it address an emergent opportunity?
   f. What work has been done, by the Applicant or others, to address the capacity gap?
   g. Describe the interest of any partners or vendors to support the project. Detail how the project has been socialized and specific commitments that have been made. Discuss any other actors relevant to the project and how their support or collaboration could improve project outcomes.
   h. How will capacity resources be sustained beyond the term of the grant?
4) Impact
   a. What is the geography the Project would service (the "Project Area")? Describe the needs of the Project Area relative to its level of broadband service or digital equity and address any patterns of non-investment or other challenges.
   b. How is the Applicant positioned to share findings and outcomes from the project with other entities within and beyond the Project Area?
   c. Describe the extent to and ways in which the Project will address broadband barriers and/or opportunities in alignment with the New York State Digital Equity Plan.[2]
5) Disclosures and Acknowledgement of Requirements

ConnectALL Office, Empire State Development, "New York State Digital Equity Plan," at https://broadband.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/06/final_new-york-state-digital-equity-plan-accessible.pdf.

a. Acknowledgement of ESD's Contractor & Supplier Diversity policy and Minority and Women Business Enterprise utilization goals. Each project will be assigned an individual contract-specific goal, which may be higher or lower than 30%.
b. Confirm whether the Applicant:
    i. Is presently the subject of any litigation, or if any litigation is threatened, which would have a material adverse effect on the Applicant's financial condition.
    ii. Has ever been involved in bankruptcy, a creditor/s rights or receivership proceeding, or sought protection from creditors.
    iii. Has ever settled a debt with a lending institution for less than the full amount outstanding.
    iv. Has ever had a senior manager or principal convicted of any felony or misdemeanor, other than a minor traffic violation, or whether there are any such charges pending.
    v. Has been cited for a violation of federal, State, or local laws or regulations with respect to labor practices, hazardous wastes, environmental pollution, or operating practices.
    vi. Has any outstanding judgments or liens pending against them other than liens in the normal course of business.
    vii. Is delinquent on any New York State, federal, or local tax obligations.

    The Applicant will be required to provide an explanation for any "Yes" answers given above.

c. Acknowledge that the Applicant is not receiving funding from other federal or State sources for the same activities proposed for Regional and Local Assistance Program funding.
d. Acknowledge that Regional and Local Assistance Program funding cannot be used for costs incurred prior to an award of funding.
e. Applicant acknowledges it will meet all Project Requirements.
f. Applicant acknowledges review of and compliance with any/all addenda to this Request for Applications. ConnectALL reserves the right to amend the requirements.

Application Process and Timeline

ConnectALL will award Regional and Local Assistance grants under this Request for Applications in multiple funding rounds per 12-month period (i.e., at least two funding rounds per 12-month period are projected), until a total of up to $10 million is awarded through this Request for Applications. The number of funding rounds, timing of the opening and closing of funding rounds and award totals are subject to change at ConnectALL's discretion. Applicants may submit multiple applications but are encouraged to submit only one application per funding round. In Round 2, ConnectALL expects to award $1,000,000 to $5,000,000 in grants up to $249,999 each.

Empire State Development will execute a Grant Disbursement Agreement with each Grantee that will describe the planned use of funds, the timeline, the geographic area of focus, and the intended impact on digital equity and/or a robust broadband marketplace in the area.

Table 1: Round 2 Grantee Selection Timeline

Milestone	Date
Request for Applications issued; opening of Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) Portal	September 29, 2025
Application submission deadline	November 7, 2025
Anticipated announcement of conditional awards	December 2025
Anticipated incentive proposal execution	January 2026
All schedule descriptions and dates are tentative and subject to change.	

Information Session

ConnectALL held a Program Information Session via Webinar for Round 1. All parties interested in responding to this Request for Applications are encouraged to review the slides and recording. Anything stated at this Information Session is not intended to change the solicitation document. Any changes will be in writing in the form of an addendum issued by ConnectALL posted on the website at http://broadband.ny.gov. Slides and the recording of the Information Session will be made available following the session at http://broadband.ny.gov.

Q&A Process

Applicants may communicate with the ConnectALL Office. All questions or requests for clarification must be in writing, sent by email to RLA@esd.ny.gov. Please include "Regional and Local Assistance Program Request for Applications" in the subject line of the email.

Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to submit questions by October 15, 2025.

Application Review

Upon receipt of applications, ConnectALL will review applications for eligibility, completeness, quality, readiness, and conformance with this Request for Applications. Applications shall be processed in full compliance with the applicable provisions of federal and state law, including 16-GG*2 of the New York State Urban Development Corporation Act[3].

Selection Criteria

Following the evaluation of the proposals based on the requirements listed under **Project Requirements**, ConnectALL will score the projects based on the following evaluation criteria. Based on the availability of funds, ConnectALL will deem the highest-scoring proposals to be conditionally approved.

Table 2: Application Evaluation Criteria

	Evaluation Criterion	Scoring Weight
A	Applicant Profile, Experience, and Qualifications *Qualifications of key personnel, past management experience, past grant administration experience, project management approach*	5%
B	Approach and Scope *Demonstrated capacity gap and approach to address gap*	50%

[3] See https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/UDA/16-GG*2.

C	Impact *Entity capacity to better address broadband service or digital equity needs in alignment with the New York State Digital Equity Plan[4].*	30%
D	Funding Request *Soundness of financial assumptions*	5%
E	Letters of Support *Letters or other documentation in support of the application*	10%
	Total	**100%**

As a condition of the grant award, ConnectALL and the Grantees will enter into a Grant Disbursement Agreement, which will outline the Program's stipulations for compliance with Program requirements and penalties for failures to comply.

The financial structure of the Grant Disbursement Agreement may differ based on each Grantee (or Subgrantee), the agreed-upon scope of work, the regional variation in costs associated with the Project, and the pricing of the work in relation to market fluctuations as best as the pricing can be understood in advance of the work execution. Depending on the project, Subgrantees may be party to the Grant Disbursement Agreement.

The anticipated terms of the Grant agreements awarded will range, including start dates. Payments are expected to be made in the form of reimbursement of expenses at agreed-upon project milestones that meet specific project requirements. The final portion will be due upon ConnectALL's verification of substantial completion of the project. Operating expenses will not be eligible for reimbursement.

[4] ConnectALL Office, Empire State Development, "New York State Digital Equity Plan," at https://broadband.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/06/final_new-york-state-digital-equity-plan-accessible.pdf.

Document Change Log

Version	Date Published	Summary of Changes
1.0	June 6, 2024	Initial publication

1.1	June 17, 2024	• Corrected application deadline on cover page
		• On p.5, added public-sector led to clarify that the digital equity programs are those led by public sector entities
		• Updated “Project Requirements” as follows:
		  ○ Removed statement that State assistance awarded and paid to a grant recipient shall not exceed 90% of the total eligible costs
		  ○ Added statement that matching funding may be factored in as scoring criteria but will not be a strict requirement for award.

1.2	September 29, 2025	Round 2 RFA publication • Updated application release date and deadline throughout • Updated dollar amount ConnectALL expects to award in Round 2 on p.5 • Updated information to access Round 1 Information Session recording and slides on p.5 • Updated MWBE and added SDVOB requirements on p.5-6. • Updated digital equity impact criteria to align with the New York State Digital Equity Plan