DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY GRANT

Frequently Asked Questions

Contents

General Questions

1. **What is the purpose of the Digital Opportunity Grant Program?**
    The NCDIT Digital Opportunity Grant Program will support Strategies 3-5 of the North Carolina Digital Opportunity Plan.

    - **Strategy 3**: Ensure that North Carolinians can acquire the digital and information-gathering skills and understanding to meet their personal needs and the state's workforce needs.
    - **Strategy 4**: Promote practices and leverage tools to ensure online privacy and security.
    - **Strategy 5**: Ensure that North Carolinians have access to large-screen computers, help desk and technical support to meet their needs.

2. **How much funding is available for the Digital Champions Community Grant Program?**
    The NCDIT Office of Digital Equity and Opportunity is allocating $17 million for grantees of the Digital Opportunity Grant Program.

3. **What are the program tracks?**
    The Digital Opportunity grant program includes two tracks, and applicants can apply for Track 1 and/or Track 2:

    - **Track 1**: Digital Skills, Digital Navigation and Online Safety

    - **Track 2**: Computer Ownership Capacity Building and Sustainability *(Applicants can apply for Track 2a or 2b but not both)*
        - **Track 2a**: Computer Refurbisher Hub
        - **Track 2b**: Computer Deployment Lead

4. **Can an applicant apply for more than one track?**
    Yes, applicants can apply for Track 1 and/or Track 2. However, applicants <u>cannot</u> apply for both Track 2a and 2b.

5. **When are applications due?**
    A full and complete application including all necessary supporting documentation, should be submitted no later than June 9, 2025, at 11:59 p.m.

6. **How do applicants apply?**
    The application is available at ncbroadband.gov/Digital-Opportunity-Grant. Grant guidelines and other resources are also available on this webpage. Applications will only be accepted online through this method.

7. **How much funding can applicants apply for?**
    Each track has different funding ranges:

    - **Track 1:** Digital Skills, Digital Navigation, and Online Safety
      The funding range will be $1 million to $3.5 million per Digital Skills, Digital Navigation, and Online Safety project. If you request more or less than the funding range, you must include a justification for the request. We will fund selected entities based on their requests and reserve the right to only fund a portion of an application.

- **Track 2a:** Computer Refurbisher Hub
  Each Hub will be funded $1,970,000. Each Hub will be responsible for supplying a minimum of 2,500 computers per year to Leads (and their Partners) for a total of 7,500 over the grant period.

- **Track 2b:** Computer Deployment Lead

  Each of the four Leads will receive $977,500 to support both Lead and Partner activities. Distribution of the funding is flexible.

  - Leads can utilize a maximum of $160,000 for their role in program activities.
  - Leads should distribute a minimum of $640,000 to Partners for programming and staff (the amount per Partner may differ, based on the needs of the Partner organization and those they are serving).
  - Leads (and their Partners) should utilize a minimum of $177,500 in supplemental funding for additional computers to meet the specific needs of individuals served.

8. **Who is eligible to apply for the grant program?**
   Eligibility requirements are the same for Tracks 1 and 2b. Due to the specific, technical nature of Computer Refurbisher Hubs, Track 2a has additional eligibility requirements.

   General Eligibility for all Tracks:

   Applicants and partners receiving funding will be accepted from:
   1. Community service organizations including:
      a. Local governments (town, city, county)
      b. Local library systems
      c. K-12 school systems (public, private and charter)
   2. Nonprofit organizations (501(c)(3)
   3. Higher education institutions
   4. Regional entities
   5. State government agencies and federally recognized tribal government entities

   The categories above are inclusive of:
   i. Local municipalities (county, city, town) and divisions thereof including but not limited to:
      1. Workforce and economic development departments
      2. Social Services
      3. Housing Authority
      4. K-12 schools
      5. Libraries
   ii. Regional councils of governments
   iii. UNC System universities, community colleges, and N.C. private and independent institutions of higher education. This includes system offices as well as individual schools, universities, or centers within the system
   iv. Community Anchor Institutions
   v. Nonprofit organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code including charitable organizations.
   vi. An entity that carries out a workforce development program
   vii. Local Digital Opportunity coalitions
   viii. All state government agencies and organizations as outlined on this web page nc.gov/your-government/state-organizations
   ix. Native American tribe or tribal organizations (State or Federally recognized)
   x. A partnership between any entities described above

A Hub (Track 2a) must fit into one of the categories described above and be a computer refurbisher headquartered in North Carolina, with existing large-screen computer deployment programs and ongoing programmatic activities to close the computer ownership gap in the state. Hubs must demonstrate that they have established relationships with a minimum of ten community-based organizations, demonstrate that they are capable of deploying a minimum of 2,500 large-screen computers annually to program participants within North Carolina, and have operated within North Carolina for a minimum of seven years.

9. **Who is ineligible to apply for the grant program?**
   For-profit entities are not eligible to apply for this funding opportunity.

10. **What kinds of nonprofit organizations can apply?**
    Nonprofit organizations described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code including charitable organizations are eligible to apply.

    Note, a nonprofit based in North Carolina must also have Articles of Incorporation filed with the N.C. Secretary of State's office in compliance with the North Carolina Nonprofit Corporations Act and, if applicable, a license to solicit donations in North Carolina.

11. **Can an applicant apply for a grant and be listed as a subgrantee on another grant application?**
    Yes, if the projects are distinct and do not overlap.

12. **Who are the intended program recipients?**
    Funded projects will focus on serving all digital excluded groups in North Carolina. For definitions of excluded groups, please see NTIA's guidance.

    Program participants could include but are not limited to:

    - Individuals in areas with limited broadband access, including unserved (no access) and underserved (access with speeds less than 100 Mbps/20 Mbps) communities.
    - Households experiencing financial hardship, such as low-income or economically disadvantaged communities.
    - Residents in rural or remote areas who face barriers to digital access.
    - Individuals with limited digital literacy or technology skills who need training to participate in the digital economy.
    - Students and adult learners seeking digital skills for education and employment opportunities.
    - Job seekers and workforce participants who need digital training to enhance career readiness.
    - Entrepreneurs and small business owners looking to expand their digital capacity and online presence.
    - Older adults who want to improve digital skills for daily life, healthcare access, and social engagement.
    - Individuals relying on public Wi-Fi and community technology centers for internet access.
    - Public assistance recipients who need digital access to apply for and manage benefits and services.
    - Community members who want to improve cybersecurity awareness and protect themselves online.

- Individuals interested in using telehealth and online healthcare services for medical and mental health support.
- Residents in public housing or transitional housing who have limited internet access at home.
- Libraries, schools, and community centers that are expanding public digital access programs.
- Individuals in workforce reentry programs who need digital training, including incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Individuals seeking to improve literacy or language proficiency through digital learning.
- Individuals transitioning from military service who need digital access to explore careers and access benefits.
- State or federally recognized tribal members who need digital access for education, employment, and community engagement.

13. What are the geographic requirements?
Priority will be given to large-scale projects that are regional or statewide and that will partner with and/or subgrant funding to smaller, local organizations.

14. Are partnerships allowed?
- **For Track 1:** Partnerships are highly encouraged. The Office of Digital Opportunity expects to fund large-scale projects that demonstrate partnerships with local entities or organizations.

- **For Track 2a:** Computer Refurbisher Hubs will not be required to list partners on their application but will need to demonstrate how they've partnered with community organizations in the past year and be able to list 10 current partnerships.

- **For Track 2b:** Computer Deployment Leads serve as the liaison between NCDIT, Hubs, and Computer Deployment Partners, ensuring seamless communication, operational efficiency, program alignment and monitoring that program outcomes are met. Leads will identify and subgrant funding to four to six Computer Deployment Partners.

15. How can small, local organizations receive funding?
Small, local organizations with limited regional or statewide impact can receive funding as a partner of a main applicant.

16. What is the period of performance for the grant program?
The start date will be outlined in the signed contract between funding recipients and NCDIT, but the funding term will likely run from January 1, 2026-June 30, 2029.

The Office of Digital Opportunity will make contingent award announcements in September 2025. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) must approve our contingent awards. We anticipate awards will be issued, based on NTIA's approval, in November 2025. The timeline may be updated depending on NTIA's approval process.

17. Are individuals eligible to apply for funding?
No, individuals are not eligible to apply for grant program.

18. How will grant applications be reviewed?
Applications will be reviewed by a committee of digital opportunity, community partners and state agency officials. The Office of Digital Opportunity will review recommendations from

external reviewers and make final selection decisions. Scoring is one important factor considered for final recommendation. The Office of Digital Opportunity ultimately selects grantees to ensure that awarded applications are filling in known gaps in programming and are meeting geographic and community needs across the state.

19. When will funding determination and announcements be made?
The Office of Digital Opportunity will make contingent award announcements in September 2025. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) must approve our contingent awardees. We expect to make final awards based on NTIA's approval in November 2025. The timeline may be updated depending on NTIA's approval process.

20. Are there post award monitoring and reporting requirements for the grant program?
Yes, awarded projects are subject to project monitoring to ensure a grantee fulfills the terms and conditions of their grant. Grantees will be required to adhere to, at minimum, the following requirements outlined below:
- Risk Assessment
- Monthly Expenditure Reports
- Monthly Check-ins
- Quarterly Accountability/Status Reports

Monitoring and Compliance training and materials will be provided once projects are selected. Other requirements may be included to ensure compliance with NTIA policies.

Risk Assessment
The risk assessment is a foundational tool for developing monitoring plans tailored to each grantee. It generates a risk summary profile that identifies potential risks specific to the grantee. Upon award execution, all grantees are initially categorized as "high-risk" until their assessment scores are finalized. Grantees classified as medium or low risk will have reduced reporting frequency and detail requirements.

Monthly Expenditure Report
Grantees must submit a monthly expenditure report detailing all expenses charged to the grant. Each grantee is assigned a finance officer who provides support with reporting and ensures compliance.

Monthly Check-In
Grantees must participate in a monthly check-in meeting with their assigned program officer to review project progress, provide status updates and address any questions related to the grant.

Quarterly Accountability/Status Report
Grantees must submit a quarterly accountability report outlining the project's progress, including updates on outcomes and outputs achieved to date.

21. Will grantees be required to monitor their subgrantees?
Yes, if a grantee selects subgrantees, they will be required to monitor subgrantees. Grantees should have monitoring plans in place to outline how and the frequency in which subgrantees will be monitored. If grantees do not have, at the least, best practices for monitoring subgrantees, then monitoring should be conducted in the same way they are monitored by the Office of Digital Opportunity.

22. Is it possible to get less funding than originally applied?
Yes, this is possible and may occur due to funding resources available and the number of funding requests accepted.

23. Are there any funding matches required for this grant?
No, there are no funding matches required for this grant.

24. How will the grant funds be dispersed?
Awarded applicants will be able to request reimbursements on a monthly basis for costs to carry out the project. Costs for which reimbursement is requested must meet certain requirements to be eligible for reimbursement including 2 CFR 200- cost principles. To be eligible for reimbursement, the cost must be reasonable and necessary to carry out the project and have been incurred directly or indirectly in the performance of the project. The cost must also be considered an allowable expenditure as identified by the grant guidelines. A successful applicant may not cumulatively request more than what was awarded and identified in the grant agreement.

The Office of Digital Opportunity may consider approving requests for advance payment of initial project costs or for ongoing advance payments in appropriate circumstances. Advanced payment requests from an Applicant in no case should exceed the amount of cash required for a 30-day period to implement project deliverables.

25. How do I get in touch with the NCDIT Office of Digital Opportunity if I have questions?
We encourage you to reach out with questions. Please send your questions to
digitalopportunity@nc.gov.

You can also check ncbroadband.gov/Digital-Opportunity-Grant for upcoming grant webinars and office hours.

26. Will the Digital Opportunity grant program be affected by changes in federal funding or law?
The Digital Opportunity grant awards are contingent on federal approval and applicable law. We will keep applicants apprised of any additional updates and responses from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration or changes in law that may impact funding, program guidelines or criteria.

Track 1: Digital Skills, Digital Navigation and Online Safety

1. What is the primary purpose of North Carolina's Digital Opportunity Grant Track 1: Digital Skills, Digital Navigation and Online Safety?
This track can be used to expand or create digital literacy programs and online safety skills and/or that expand or create digital navigator programs. This track will focus on:
   1. Increasing the capacity of current digital literacy and navigation programs led by partner organizations across the state and
   2. Developing new programs that target funding for organizations with strong community trust.

Track 1 will focus on the following elements of digital literacy, digital navigation and online safety:

- **Digital Literacy and Skills:** Digital literacy (often referred to as digital skills, especially in community settings) is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and

technical skills ([National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#), 2025). Digital literacy also includes cybersecurity and online privacy, as well as digital health literacy.

- **Digital Navigation/Navigators:** Digital navigators are trusted guides who assist community members in the use of computing devices and technology adoption and can offer individual support and attention. Digital navigation services can look different based on community needs. Services can include ongoing assistance with accessing affordable internet, computers and help desk support as well as technical and digital skills training. Organizations can provide more one-to-one support like library help desks or provide long-term, holistic support to meet individuals' comprehensive digital needs ([National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#), 2025).

- **Online Safety – Privacy and Cybersecurity:** Ensuring that people know how to keep their online data and identity secure is key to protecting them online and making sure they feel safe connecting to the internet and using devices. Online privacy refers to how data is collected, stored, processed and used. Cybersecurity, keeping your data and identity safe, can involve protecting any form of personal information - photos, videos, drawings or documents. To maintain online privacy, your information must be secure ([NIST](#) 2021).

- **Digital Health Literacy:** Digital health literacy, sometimes referred to as eHealth literacy, is defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the ability to seek, find, understand and appraise health information from electronic sources and apply the knowledge gained to addressing or solving a health problem. Examples of digital health literacy include being able to find and evaluate health information online, access telehealth services and electronically communicate with healthcare providers ([Patient Safety Network](#), 2025).

2. **Do Track 1 applicants need to identify all their partners ahead of application submission?**
As part of the application, applicants must include a list of partners and/or subrecipients involved in the project and describe their role. If all partners or subrecipients are not yet identified, applicants must describe the process for identifying partners.

3. **Are there staff training requirements for grantees to participate in and, if so, what do they entail?**
The Office of Digital Opportunity is currently convening digital skills experts, researchers and practitioners in the development of digital skills standards and digital navigator best-practices. Awardees will receive training on these standards and best practices and must align their programs to align with minimum standards and follow best practices. The publication of these standards and best practices is planned for summer 2025.

4. **How much funding can applicants apply for?**
We anticipate the funding range will be $1 million to $3.5 million per Digital Skills, Digital Navigation, and Online Safety Funding project. Applicants are encouraged to request only the specific amount needed to fund their proposed projects. If you request more or less than the funding range, you must include a justification for the request. We will fund selected entities based on their requests and reserve the right to only fund a portion of an application.

Track 2: Computer Ownership Capacity Building and Sustainability Program

1. **What is the primary purpose of the NCDIT Digital Opportunity Grant program's Track 2: Computer Ownership Capacity Building and Sustainability?**
   Track 2 is designed to establish a sustainable statewide ecosystem for computer ownership by increasing the capacity of organizations to refurbish, deploy, and support high-quality, affordable computers for North Carolinians in need.

   There are two tracks within Track 2. Track 2a is for Computer Refurbisher Hub applicants. Track 2b is for Computer Deployment Lead applicants.

2. **What is a Computer Refurbisher Hub, Computer Deployment Leads, and Computer Deployment Partners?**
   - **Computer Refurbisher Hubs (Hubs)** are organizations responsible for receiving, processing, and preparing used computers for redistribution through Computer Deployment Leads and Partners throughout the state. Hubs ensure that donated computers are properly sanitized, refurbished, tested and prepared for deployment.

   - **Computer Deployment Leads (Leads)** are key coordinating organizations responsible for identifying, managing and supporting local Computer Deployment Partners. They serve as the liaison between NCDIT, Hubs, and Computer Deployment Partners, ensuring seamless communication, operational efficiency, program alignment and monitoring that program outcomes are met. Leads will identify and subgrant funding to Computer Deployment Partners.

   - **Computer Deployment Partners (Partners)** are trusted organizations in local communities responsible for the direct distribution and support of computers. They work with Leads, NCDIT, and Hubs to ensure that computers are effectively delivered, properly utilized and accompanied by necessary support services.

3. **How much funding can Track 2a applicants apply for?**
   Each Hub applicant can apply for $1,970,000. Each Hub will be responsible for supplying a minimum of 2,500 computers per year to Leads (and their Partners) for a total of 7,500 over the grant period. We anticipate funding two Hubs (Track 2a applicants).

4. **How much funding is available for Track 2b?**
   - Each Lead can apply for $977,500 to support both Lead and Partner activities. Distribution of the funding is flexible. We anticipate funding four Leads (Track 2b applicants).
   - Leads can utilize a maximum of $160,000 for their role in program activities.
   - Leads should distribute a minimum of $640,000 to Partners for programming and staff (the amount per Partner may differ, based on the needs of the Partner organization and those they are serving).
   - Leads (and their Partners) should utilize a minimum of $177,500 in supplemental funding for additional computers to meet the specific needs of individuals served.

5. **Is there a required number of Partners that each Lead must designate and subgrant to under this program?**
   Within Track 2b, the Leads must designate and subgrant to at least four and no more than six Partners.

6. **Do Leads (Track 2b) need to identify all their Partners ahead of application submission?**
Yes, Leads need to identify four to six deployment partners. On the application they will list the organizations that will serve as partners and how much funding each partner will receive for the project. A lead can also serve as a deployment partner.

7. **How and when will NCDIT assign Leads (Track 2b) and their Partners to a Hub (Track 2a)?**
Assignments will be determined based on geographic proximity, capacity, operational compatibility, and each Hub's ability to meet the computer supply needs of the Leads and their Partners. The assignment of Leads to Hubs will occur shortly after grant award notifications, typically within 60 days, to allow adequate time for coordination, planning, and onboarding.

8. **Are there staff training requirements for grantees to participate in and, if so, what do they entail?**
Hubs, Leads and their Partners must participate in NCDIT's computer deployment training (up to 20 hours annually) and project related meetings and ensure the project is aligned with those standards.

9. **What minimum technical specifications must Hubs follow when supplying refurbished computers to the Leads and/or their Partners?**
Hubs should follow the NCDIT's specifications as listed in the Grant Program Guidelines under header "Computer Ownership Track Details" in the "NCDIT Computer Specifications" section.

10. ***What are the computer deployment requirements for Leads and their Partners?***
Over the course of the grant period, each Lead (and their Partners) will:
   - Deploy 3,750 computers received from the Hubs
   - Procure and deploy additional computers with their supplemental funding to meet the specific needs of individuals served.

11. **Are there requirements for how a Lead distributes funding and/or the number of computers across their Partners?**
Leads (Track 2b) have flexibility in distributing funding and allocating computers across their Partners. However, each Lead must select and subgrant to at least four and no more than six Partners. Leads should ensure effective distribution based on the Partners' capacity, community need, and overall program goals.