



# APPLICANT WEBINAR

## CONNECTED COMMUNITIES GRANT PROGRAM: ROUND 2

Presented by the Office of Telecommunications and Broadband  
Bureau of Energy and Technology Policy

# AGENDA

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Round 1 Awards
3. Program Overview
4. Program Requirements
5. Program Priorities
6. Project Areas
7. Application Process
8. Scoring and Review Process
9. Reporting Requirements
10. Q&A

# MEET OUR TEAM

OFFICE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND BROADBAND  
BUREAU OF ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

**Kevin Pisacich**, Office Director

**Nadya Hoolahan**, Associate Research Analyst

**Maria Dezi**, Grants and Contracts Specialist

**Jillian Kara**, Research Analyst



# ROUND 1 AWARDS

# SUMMARY OF ROUND 1 AWARDS

Approximately \$28M in anticipated grant awards.

- 88 Municipalities (26 Distressed Municipalities) across the state
- 3,320 locations

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

# ARPA CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND

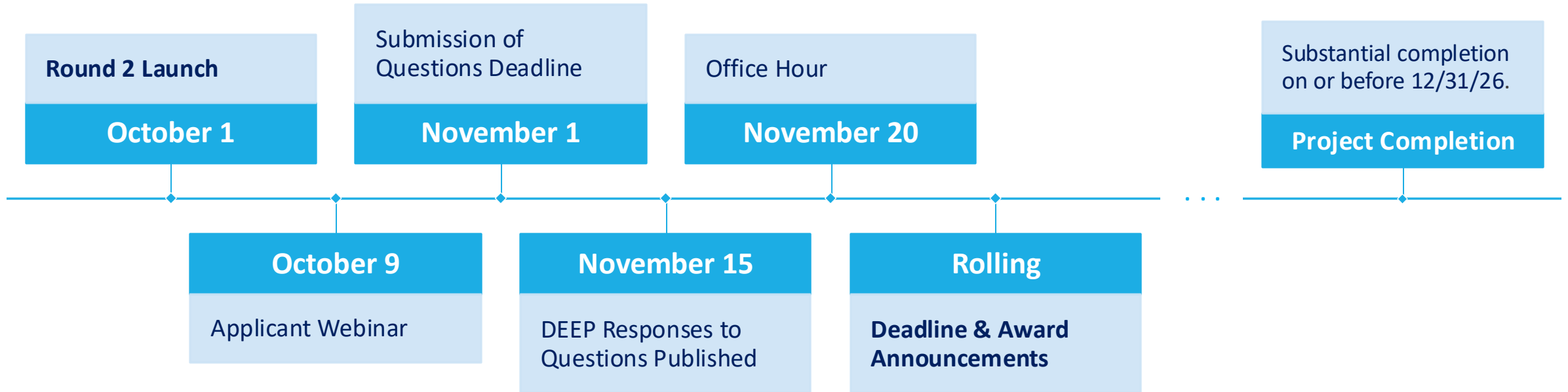
## Source:

- The 2021 ARPA CPF allocated \$10 billion for states to invest in high-quality, modern infrastructure to support communities' critical needs as they recover from the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- The Connecticut General Assembly set aside \$42.9 million (\$40.8 million after administrative costs) for “Low Income/Multi-family Curb-to-home and Business Broadband infrastructure buildout and underserved area broadband infrastructure grants”.

## Purpose:

- The CPF allows for investment in the construction and deployment of broadband infrastructure projects that will deliver service that reliably meets or exceeds 100 Mbps/100 Mbps, with a focus on last-mile connections.

# TIMELINE





# ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants must be eligible to receive Capital Projects Funds.

Eligible entities that can apply for the grants from the Program include:

- **Government entities:** Tribal governments; local units of government; State and local agencies
- **Private for-profit entities:** Commercial service providers (established or new entrants)
- **Non-profit entities:** Community organizations; institutes of higher education; etc.
- **Other:** Co-operatives, mutual organizations, utilities

Eligible entities must have the technical, managerial, and financial expertise to design, build, and operate high-speed broadband service infrastructure.

# PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

DEEP encourages partnerships between public and private entities.

- One entity in a partnership will be the official applicant, but all partners will be required to participate in the application process.
- If the Applicant is seeking to partner with another entity to operate the system, an agreement or draft agreement to do so must be provided with the application.
- This agreement must address the specific financial terms of this partnership and the specific entity or entities must be identified along with their qualifications.

# PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

# PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

**Projects must result in the deployment of broadband infrastructure to provide service to homes and businesses in underserved areas, including curb-to-building line extensions and rewiring in MDUs, as applicable.**

- At least 100 Mbps/100 Mbps with latency less than or equal to 100 milliseconds
- Compliance with state provider data filing requirements
- Applicants must pay for standard installation costs up to the network interface point at no cost to the end user or to DEEP. Any installation costs that exceed the standard installation cost average proposed by the Applicant may be compensated at DEEP's discretion.

# AERIAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEPLOYMENT

All subgrantees will be required to uphold best industry practices as a part of this grant program. These practices include, but are not limited to the following:

1. All wireline attachments will adhere to NESC and SPA labeling requirements on each attachment.
2. All wireline attachments will comply with NESC safety and compliance standards regarding material and hardware use, distance between attachments, height compliance and any and all other compliance standards.
3. All wireline attachments using the temporary attachment process will comply with all PURA requirements, including but not limited to those set forth in Docket No. 18-04-20RE01 and to SPA and ILEC requirements in their respective wireline agreements.

# NETWORK TECHNOLOGY & PERFORMANCE

**Projects must deploy reliable broadband service infrastructure that is wired and/or terrestrial fixed wireless technology utilizing entirely licensed spectrum or using a hybrid of licensed and unlicensed spectrum.**

- Internal wiring or internal service distribution should be fiber or Ethernet (CAT6).
- If coaxial cable, DEEP considers cable systems using DOCSIS 3.1 and above as capable of delivering 100 Mbps/20 Mbps service and cable systems using DOCSIS 4.0 and above as capable of delivering 100 Mbps/100 Mbps service when the cable company offers a service meeting these performance standards.
- In the case of inside wiring of MDUs, if the costs of internal wiring are demonstrated to be excessive, wireless may be allowed.

**A project that will provision service via end-to-end fiber-optic facilities to each end-user premises is preferred and will be the default winner if there are competing proposals for the same location or locations that satisfy all other requirements of the Program.**

# MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS: AT LEAST 25%

Contributions above 25% will be scored higher.

## Match Waiver:

In order to be considered for a waiver, an applicant must submit documentation supporting their eligibility under one of the following categories:

- 1. Distressed Municipalities** – Entire match waived if at least 75% of the addresses the project proposes to serve are located in one or more Distressed Municipalities.
- 2. Other** – An Applicant may submit a request that describes other special circumstances underlying the request and explain how a waiver would serve the public interest and effectuate the purposes of the Program. Projects located in areas with low or moderate income, high unemployment, high poverty, or economic distress that do not qualify for the above are encouraged to seek a waiver. DEEP retains the discretion to waive any amount of the match, including up to the full 25% requirement.

Please note that there is no matching contribution required for MDU inside wiring retrofit projects.

# NONSTANDARD INSTALLATIONS

**Projects must define what comprises a non-standard installation and identify any such locations in their Project Area.**

- Nonstandard installations are considered underserved locations for the purposes of this program.
- Awardees must pay for standard installation costs up to the network interface point at no cost to the end user or to DEEP. While standard installation costs must be absorbed by the Applicant at no cost to DEEP or the end user, applicants can request nonstandard installation costs that exceed the average standard installation costs be covered by this award.
- After award, awardees may request a modification of up to 10% of the estimated nonstandard installation costs if the estimate was lower than the final cost.
- DEEP will evaluate each request for modification on a case-by-case basis using a means testing methodology.



# MEANS TESTING FOR NONSTANDARD INSTALLATIONS

**DEEP will apply eligibility criteria aligned with the program's focus on economically distressed communities and other communities with critical need in determining eligibility for funding of nonstandard installations.**

A means test will be performed using income data or property value data to ensure that the proposed nonstandard installation location is reaching targeted populations in accordance with state and federal program guidance.

## **Income threshold**

- Any location in a census tract where 80% of households are below 80% of the state median income is considered eligible.

## **Property value thresholds**

The thresholds below apply to single-family homes.

- **Category 1:** If home value is below the state median home value (according to U.S. Census Bureau data), the location is considered eligible for 100% of the installation cost.
- **Category 2:** If home value is 150% of the state median home value, the location is eligible for 50% of the installation cost.
- **Category 3:** Home values above 150% of the state median are ineligible.

# MDU RETROFIT INSIDE WIRING PROJECTS

**Purpose: To enhance residents' access to fast, affordable, and reliable broadband service by upgrading deficient wiring and infrastructure in Multi-Dwelling Units (MDUs) of at least four units in Distressed Municipalities.**

The funding provides for all capital costs associated with network design, construction, and equipment for:

- New or upgraded fiber broadband
- New or upgraded Wi-Fi networks

Wiring must reach the unit-level. Building-wide Wi-Fi solutions in common areas may be permitted if connected to a larger last-mile project (but would be considered an ancillary cost).

There is no matching contribution required for MDU inside wiring retrofit projects.

Applicants may propose these types of projects and/or select from qualified locations that will be posted to DEEP's website.

# MDU LOCATIONS IDENTIFIED BY DEEP

1. DEEP will post the details on qualifying MDUs to its website as they are identified, indicating that the location(s) are available to be bid on by applicants proposing qualifying service.
2. Once posted, an MDU will have a two-week bidding period, during which bids will be reviewed by DEEP for compliance with the program requirements described in this application guidance.
3. If there are competing bids for the same location during the two-week period, DEEP will score and prioritize according to the scoring criteria.
4. If no bids are received during the first two weeks, applications will then be accepted on a rolling basis until a qualifying application is awarded.

**DEEP will provide one week of notice before the first MDU is posted – make sure you are signed up for our newsletter and check the website for updates!**

# PROGRAM PRIORITIES

# PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

**The Program will prioritize proposals with strong last-mile projects that provide for quality and reliable service that have already undergone extensive prior planning and are supported with substantial matching funds.**

In addition to compliance with Program requirements, applications will be prioritized based on secondary factors, including:

- Delivery of end-to-end fiber optic infrastructure
- Delivery of 1 Gbps/100 Mbps speeds, or scalability to deliver 1 Gbps/100 Mbps
- A commitment to service quality and affordable service plans offerings
- A commitment to open access
- A higher contribution of matching funds (unless waived)

# AFFORDABILITY: AFFORDABLE SERVICE PLANS

DEEP will consider whether the broadband service options offered by an Applicant will be affordable to their target markets in the proposed service area by assessing:

- A description of any specific activities, programs, introductory pricing, or other promotions planned for the project area to overcome any barriers to adoption, and metrics to determine the success of the initiatives.
- A description of efforts aimed at ensuring low to moderate income households in the project area will have sustained and affordable access to speeds at or above 100 Mbps/100 Mbps.
- A description of the service plan prices resulting from proposed projects, including fees, taxes, equipment rentals, contract lengths, and non-promotional pricing.
- Whether a project would charge connection costs associated with serving locations long distances away from telecommunications infrastructure.
- Any communications plans to disseminate information about the proposed project in the communities it will serve.
- An explanation of why the selected strategies will be effective.

# AFFORDABILITY: ACP

**Capital Projects Fund guidance requires that service providers participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program, if active, and are committed to participating in any comparable federal subsidy program.**

In addition to participation in the ACP, applications proposing a service plan with speeds above 100 Mbps/20 Mbps to those eligible for the ACP at a price that is fully subsidized under the ACP (or would have been fully subsidized, if program(s) are not active) will be more competitive.

*The ACP stopped accepting new applications and enrollments on February 7, 2024. The last fully funded month of the program was April 2024.*

# PROJECT AREAS



# ELIGIBLE PROJECT AREAS

The following project types are permitted, and preference will be given in the order listed if multiple applications are received for or within the same municipality and/or census block:

1. Projects proposing service to 100% of underserved locations in one or more municipalities
2. Projects proposing service to 100% of underserved locations in one or more census blocks
3. Projects proposing service to an area in which not less than 80% are underserved locations

**Projects proposing service to project areas as described in scenarios 1 and 2 above may build out service to additional locations in the project area as long as:**

- At least 80% are underserved locations as determined by the eligible sources of data described in the guidance, or
- In Distressed Municipalities, at least 50% must be underserved locations.

**The network must be able to provide broadband service to all, or nearly all, underserved location(s) in the Project Area. Otherwise, the Applicant must explain why any underserved location is left out.**

# ELIGIBLE PROJECT AREAS

Note that, for purposes of the Connected Communities Grant Program:

**Non-standard installations** are considered underserved locations.

- Projects must define what comprises a non-standard installation and identify any such locations in their Project Area.
- The application should include a completed Nonstandard Installation Cost Form to provide estimates of nonstandard installation costs as well as whether the Applicant already has a customer agreement in place to serve particular nonstandard installation locations.

**Applicants are encouraged to identify Multi-Dwelling Units** in their Project Area and coordinate with the building owner(s) to evaluate any inside wiring issues.

# DATA TO SUBSTANTIATE UNDERSERVED AREAS

In determining what may constitute an underserved area, applicants must first consult the FCC National Broadband Map, but may utilize additional resources, as identified in the guidance, to provide justification that an area has critical need for broadband infrastructure.

- CT State Broadband Availability Map
- American Community Survey Data
- Survey Data
- Speed Test Data
- Distressed Municipalities list
- ***Other Data (Strong evidence)***

# WHAT QUALIFIES AS "OTHER DATA"?

Applicants may also propose other datasets including but not limited to documentation of existing broadband internet service performance, federal and/or state collected broadband data, nonstandard installation data, interviews with community members and business owners, reports from community organizations.

Datasets utilizing information from community members and business owners and reports from community organizations should include strong evidence.

## Examples of strong evidence include:

- Evidenced report of inside wiring issues
- An analysis showing that the average cost of a service plan (of at least 100 Mbps/100 Mbps) compared to the average income level in a proposed project area is significantly higher than in other areas of the state
- Speed tests showing six or more broadband serviceable locations and/or MDUs using a particular technology and a single provider within a census block group are underserved
- Speed tests showing MDUs are underserved as follows: One unit for MDUs having fewer than 15 units, two units for MDUs of between 16 and 24 units, at least three units for larger MDUs

# APPLICATION PROCESS

# APPLICATION PORTAL



Log In

## ConneCTed Communities Grant Program

Print

Help

Download

Save

Apply

### Opportunity Information

Title	ConneCTed Communities Grant Program
Description	ConneCTed Communities is a competitive grant program that will fund the construction and deployment of broadband infrastructure designed to support the goal of universal access to affordable, resilient, and reliable broadband. DEEP is seeking applications for grant funding to facilitate low-income and multi-family curb-to-home and business broadband infrastructure buildout in underserved areas that will result in service at speeds of at least 100 Mbps/100 Mbps. All projects funded through this program must reach substantial completion within twenty-four (24) months of the award or before December 31, 2026, whichever occurs earlier.
Awarding Agency Name	Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Opportunity Manager	Nadya Hoolahan
Posted Date	4/1/2024
Announcement Type	Initial Announcement
Public Link	<a href="https://stage.amplifund.com/Public/Opportunities/Details/403fdd71-39be-4e16-b2eb-da809ce0150e">https://stage.amplifund.com/Public/Opportunities/Details/403fdd71-39be-4e16-b2eb-da809ce0150e</a>
Is Published	Yes

### Funding Information

Funding Source Description	<p>The United States (U.S.) Treasury launched the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund in 2021, which is funded by the American Rescue Plan. It provides ten billion dollars (\$10,000,000,000.00) for eligible governments to carry out critical capital projects that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring including remote options, in response to the public health emergency.</p> <p>For a Capital Project to be an eligible use of the Capital Projects Fund, it must meet all of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Capital Project invests in capital assets designed to directly enable work, education, and health monitoring;</li><li>• The Capital Project is designed to address a critical need that resulted from or was made apparent or exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health emergency; and,</li><li>• The Capital Project is designed to address a critical need of the community.</li></ul> <p>The construction and deployment of broadband infrastructure projects is eligible for funding under the Capital Projects Fund program if the infrastructure is designed to deliver, upon project completion, service that reliably meets or exceeds symmetrical download and upload speeds of 100 megabits per second (Mbps). Treasury encourages Awardees to focus on projects that will achieve last-mile connections. Applicants considering funding middle-mile projects are encouraged to have commitments in place to support new and/or improved last-mile service.</p> <p>The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection will administer this Program in accordance with U.S. Treasury guidelines.</p>
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# ONGOING SUPPORT

- **Please submit program questions** to [DEEP.Broadband@ct.gov](mailto:DEEP.Broadband@ct.gov). DEEP will post an initial FAQ on November 15.
- **An office hour will be held** on November 20. Additional times may be scheduled as needed.
- **A survey to collect information on MDUs** with service issues has been posted to DEEP's website and will be used in discussions with Distressed Municipalities.
- Following a validation process on MDU locations, DEEP will help applicants **identify qualifying MDUs by posting them to its website**.
- As grants are awarded, **DEEP will update its website to reflect the remaining funds** available.

# SCORING & REVIEW PROCESS



# SCORING

Category	Summary	Criteria	Points
<b>Experience &amp; Qualifications</b>	Applicants will be scored based on their demonstrated capacity to effectively support and sustain their broadband infrastructure proposal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experience</li> <li>- Scope</li> <li>- Supply chain management</li> <li>- Timeline</li> <li>- Professional workforce</li> </ul>	23
<b>Performance Factors</b>	Applications will be scored based on the project’s adherence to program priorities including performance standards, appropriateness of technology, commitment to open access infrastructure, and project readiness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Network performance</li> <li>- Quality of service</li> <li>- Commitment to open access</li> <li>- Project readiness</li> </ul>	22
<b>Budget &amp; Cost Appropriateness</b>	Applications will be scored based on their cost efficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cost efficiency</li> <li>- Matching contributions</li> </ul>	25
<b>Community Impact</b>	Applications will be scored on their benefits to and coordination with the communities they propose to serve, especially low-income and economically distressed communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community benefit</li> <li>- Affordability</li> </ul>	30
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>/out of 100</b>
<b>Other Considerations</b>	In reviewing data submitted in an application DEEP may consider additional factors as outlined in the guidance.		+/- 10 points
<b>Total</b>			

# REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

# MONTHLY, QUARTERLY, AND ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS

**Awardees will be required to cooperate with DEEP's federal reporting obligations for ARPA funding.**

- Awardees should expect to comply with requirements of other applicable federal statutes, regulations, and executive orders applicable to recipients of federal funds used by DEEP for awards made under CPF.
- Awardees will be required to submit monthly, quarterly and annual progress reports.
- Awardees must comply with post-award monitoring and reporting requirements to maintain continued eligibility for disbursement of grant funds.

# FINAL REPORT

Successful applicants will be required to provide a final report three months after project completion.

## This final report will outline:

- the activities that took place during the project
- what facilities were installed and their service capabilities
- total costs for the project
- a map detailing the location of infrastructure and equipment that was installed
- a summary of how the project addressed affordability within the service area

# HIGHLIGHTED CHANGES FROM ROUND 1

Round 2	Round 1
<p><b>A map of eligible project locations will be available</b> with round one awarded locations removed. Keep in mind that there are additional ways to justify classifying locations as underserved and this map serves only as a starting place.</p>	n/a
<p><b>MDU retrofit inside wiring projects are encouraged.</b> DEEP will work to help identify qualifying locations and post them to the website.</p>	n/a
<p><b>Applications will be accepted on rolling basis</b> until funds are expended or DEEP determines there is insufficient time remaining to pursue additional projects before the December 31, 2024 deadline (whichever occurs earlier).</p>	Limited application window
<p><b>Retroactive reimbursements may be allowed</b> for projects partially or fully completed if applicant is a municipality <u>and</u> can provide documentation that the project was undertaken in consideration of ARPA CPF guidelines and requirements.</p>	Retroactive reimbursements were not permitted
<p><b>The list of Distressed Municipalities has been extended</b> to include those within a 10-year grace period, which affects eligibility for match waivers and MDU projects.</p>	Distressed Municipalities were extended to a 5-year grace period

# Q&A



**Thank you!**

Contact Us  
**[DEEP.Broadband@ct.gov](mailto:DEEP.Broadband@ct.gov)**