

DEEP ConneCTed Communities Grant Program: Round 2

Question Period: October 1, 2024 – November 1, 2024

Responses Updated: December 18, 2024

The questions have been organized by theme and may have been edited for clarity.

Number	Question	Response
1	Will DEEP consider out-of-state applicants?	Yes, DEEP will consider out-of-state eligible applicants so long as they meet the financial, managerial, and technical requirements outlined in the application guidance.
2	What will be considered acceptable as evidence of partnership agreements?	Acceptable evidence of partnerships might include formalized partnership agreements, memoranda of understanding (MOUs), and/or letters of commitment from partners outlining their roles, contributions, and responsibilities. Such documentation should be signed and dated by all parties involved, where possible.
3	Where can information regarding the winning applications and awardee contracts from Round 1 of the ConneCTed Communities Grant Program be found?	Information on Round 1 awards and awardees, including a map of project areas, award amounts, and the press release can be found on DEEP's website: https://portal.ct.gov/deep/energy/broadband-deployment/connected-communities-grant-program . Application materials are currently being reviewed for confidential information and awardee contracts from Round 1 have not yet been executed.
4	Can DEEP share whether locations on a specific street are included in an awarded Round 1 project area?	In order to protect personally identifiable information, DEEP is only able to share CostQuest Location IDs for Round 1 projects. If an entity does not have a CostQuest license, they are encouraged to apply and/or work with a licensed entity. For additional information on CostQuest location IDs and licensing, please visit their website:

		https://www.costquest.com/resources/articles/about-fabric-licensing-for-federal-broadband-granting-programs/
5	Can you please explain under how “underserved” definition is applied to Multi-Dwelling Units (MDU)?	<p>Applicants proposing to serve an MDU, whether to the premise or inclusive of inside wiring, should first consult the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) National Broadband Map but are strongly encouraged to utilize the additional resources listed in the Application Guidance (p. 14-15) to offer a holistic justification that an area or single location has critical need for broadband infrastructure, and is therefore “underserved”.</p> <p>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 and further details can also be found on pages 14-15 of the Application Guidance.</p> <p>Applicants proposing inside wiring projects should also coordinate with the building owner(s) to evaluate any inside wiring issues, which may be considered for funding on a case-by-case basis. If such cases are identified, applicants must include details on the specific issue(s) and proposed solution.</p>
6	Are community organizations and small businesses considered eligible locations under the program?	Generally, yes, community organizations, small businesses, and other similar locations may be considered eligible.

7	Which locations are eligible for round 2 funding? Is there a .csv file of eligible Broadband Serviceable Locations (BSLs)?	<p>DEEP does not have an exhaustive list of all eligible locations because applicants may utilize any of the resources as listed on page 14 of the Application Guidance to offer a holistic justification that an area or single location has critical need for broadband infrastructure beyond FCC data. See #5 above for more information on “underserved locations”.</p> <p>To help applicants visualize potentially eligible underserved areas, DEEP has published a map of unserved and underserved locations according to the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) National Broadband Map (collectively called ‘underserved’ for the purposes of this program), with locations awarded in Round 1 removed. The locations have been aggregated into larger areas to protect personally identifiable information, but applicants can download a .csv of corresponding CostQuest Location IDs from DEEP's website. However, as noted, this map provides only a baseline of potentially eligible locations and does not incorporate locations or areas that may qualify as underserved for purposes of the program via other allowable resources and/or datasets (see FAQ #5 above).</p> <p>For additional information on CostQuest location IDs and licensing, please visit their website: https://www.costquest.com/resources/articles/about-fabric-licensing-for-federal-broadband-granting-programs/</p> <p><i>Additional details on project areas and underserved locations can be found on pages 13 and 14 of the Application Guidance.</i></p>
8	What fabric version is DEEP using for Round 2?	<p>To help applicants visualize potentially eligible underserved areas, DEEP has published a map of locations using FCC data (Fabric version 3.2) with locations awarded in round 1 removed. As discussed in #5, applicants are not limited to FCC data when determining what may constitute an underserved location and/or area in their project area.</p>

9	Can municipalities assist with identifying MDUs that may be in need of infrastructure upgrades?	Yes, municipalities (and others) are encouraged to submit information regarding inside wiring issues in MDUs via DEEP's intake form , which is available on DEEP's website.
10	Will DEEP post a list of all eligible MDUs?	<p>While DEEP is actively working to identify eligible MDUs, applicants are also encouraged to seek out eligible locations. An online intake form has been posted to DEEP's website to gather information from Distressed Municipalities and other interested parties, particularly MDU property owners, about MDUs that could benefit from these upgrades. As these locations are identified and determined to be eligible, DEEP will post them to its website with additional instructions, as needed.</p> <p><i>Please see pages 16-17 of the Application Guidance for more information on MDU inside wiring retrofit projects.</i></p>
11	Will applicants have to submit an application for MDU projects?	Yes, an application will be required from any applicant seeking to serve an MDU. Please note that more than one MDU may be included in a single application, and MDU projects may be included as part of a larger project area.
12	Will there be the opportunity to survey communities where MDUs are located before or during the application process to help ensure that designs and budgets are accurate?	Round 2 of the ConneCTed Communities Grant Program has a rolling deadline, so applicants may utilize the additional time to collect information as needed. Please note that any MDUs identified by DEEP will be posted to its website, initiating a two-week application deadline, during which all submissions will be held for review after the deadline. If no qualifying applications are received within the two weeks, the location(s) will remain open, and applications will then be reviewed on a rolling basis. The two-week deadlines for MDU projects will be posted in detail on DEEP's website.

<p>13</p>	<p>Related to open access, if one company builds the internal infrastructure required to serve an MDU, is it a requirement that other Internet Service Providers (ISPs) must be allowed to use that same internal infrastructure?</p>	<p>No, commitments to open access are optional but may earn additional points under the Performance Factors scoring criteria. For purposes of scoring MDU projects, DEEP will also consider any commitments up to the point of demarcation.</p> <p><i>Please see page 24 of the Application Guidance for more information on the impact of commitments to open access on scoring.</i></p>
<p>14</p>	<p>Are projects building free Wi-Fi for all residents in apartments eligible in Round 2?</p>	<p>Eligible projects must result in the availability of service to each end user at a standard installation. This is a requirement of the CCGP’s funding source, the Capital Projects Fund, and therefore building-wide Wi-Fi solutions are not fundable as a standalone project. Please note that community Wi-Fi solutions may be included as an ancillary cost in larger projects that also reach end users.</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Are Letters of Intent an adequate substitute for an MOU as part of an application to serve one or more MDUs if the applicant is in active negotiations (which can take months-to-years to finalize terms) with ISPs?</p>	<p>DEEP may waive the requirement to submit an MOU at its discretion. If unable to provide an MOU, applicants should provide as much detail and context as possible in its place, keeping in mind the 12/31/2026 project deadline.</p>
<p>16</p>	<p>Is a letter of support from the leadership of the community(s) in a project area required?</p>	<p>The requirement to submit a letter of support from the leadership of the community(s) in a project area may be waived at DEEP’s discretion. Submission is still encouraged as all letters of support will contribute to the community impact scoring criteria. If any such letters are missing at the time of submission, DEEP may reach out to the applicant for more information.</p>

<p>17</p>	<p>Can the applicant use letters of support submitted in Round 1 of the program for its proposal(s) in Round 2?</p>	<p>Yes, applicants may use letters of support received in Round 1 so long as the letters did not limit their support to a specific project, timeline, or other details that do not align with their Round 2 submission.</p>
<p>18</p>	<p>If a municipality has a verbal commitment for matching funds, is that considered sufficient for evidence of matching funds?</p>	<p>No, a verbal commitment will not be considered sufficient. Applicants must provide documentation to DEEP sufficient to validate the availability of matching funds. Examples of appropriate documentation may include: a letter of credit; a letter confirming funds from a bank; a board resolution committing funding; or loan documentation. If the application has additional financial partners contributing to the matching funds, the application must also identify the financial partner(s) and document the amount and availability of each partner's financial match, including grant commitment letters or agreements, as applicable.</p>
<p>19</p>	<p>Please explain the difference between a high-level and low-level design. What will be considered acceptable as far as required design documentation?</p>	<p>At a minimum, the high-level design required in the application must include any fiber routes, interconnection with existing networks, method of deployment, and all locations to be served. Applicants are encouraged to include additional information, especially for new networks or significant expansions of existing networks. The design must clearly identify the fiber routes and must include fiber strand count as an attribute. The design submitted, while not final, must demonstrate that the project is sufficiently advanced that it can proceed to construction in a timely fashion in consideration of the 12/31/26 deadline. The narrative must include a description, planned technology (e.g., GPON (Gigabit Passive Optical Network), EPON (Ethernet Passive Optical Networks), Active Ethernet, etc.), proposed fan-out if using a passive optical network (PON) technology, network demarcation points, planned locations for points of interconnection with middle-mile networks, the number of fiber miles if applicable, and any proposed locations for points of presence/network connections for last mile service delivery.</p>

<p>20</p>	<p>What source does DEEP suggest using for property values when reporting on non-standard installation expenses?</p>	<p>DEEP has not specified a preferred source for determining property values but has posted a list of potential eligibility on its website based on the categorical thresholds outlined in the guidance to assist applicants in applying the program criteria. Applicants may use an alternative source if they can justify that it accurately reflects property values for any such location(s) in their project area. DEEP will follow up with the applicant, if needed, for further documentation and/or justification.</p>
<p>21</p>	<p>Under “Affordable Service Plans” in the ConneCTed Communities Round 2 guidance, information regarding “sustained and affordable access to speeds at or above 100 Mbps/ 100Mbps” is required. Does “sustained” relate to the broadband speed tier offered or the rate at which the broadband speed tier is offered?</p>	<p>"Sustained" generally refers to the ongoing, long-term provision of access to broadband services that remains available, reliable, and affordable for low- to moderate-income households at the speeds and performance advertised and required by the program. This implies that the efforts outlined in the project will not only provide initial access to high-speed internet but will also ensure that this access continues over time, without significant barriers such as substantial rising costs, service interruptions, or performance degradations.</p>
<p>22</p>	<p>Where can applicants find details on the prevailing wage rate by municipality?</p>	<p>Connecticut's prevailing wage requirements and latest rate schedules by municipality can be found on the Department of Labor’s website.</p>

<p>23</p>	<p>If no qualifying applications are received for an MDU inside-wiring retrofit project posted by DEEP within the two-week initial window from the date it's posted, what is the deadline for applications?</p>	<p>If DEEP posts an eligible MDU inside wiring project to its website, and no qualifying applications are received within the initial two-week period, the project will remain available until a qualified application is received.</p>
<p>24</p>	<p>Can applications for MDU inside-wiring projects be revised if new information is provided (i.e., asbestos remediation required) that was not available within the initial two-week application window?</p>	<p>Project revisions will be limited to issues that could not have been reasonably identified in the original application, subject to funding availability. While DEEP strives to support applicants in managing unforeseen issues, additional funds cannot be provided for cost increases that could have been reasonably anticipated in the original budget, such as increases in the price of materials.</p>
<p>25</p>	<p>When and how can applicants provide comments or edits on the proposed grant agreement?</p>	<p>If selected for funding, provisional awardees will have the opportunity to address any questions and/or concerns during contract negotiations with the State of Connecticut.</p>
<p>26</p>	<p>Can an applicant use existing, new, non-depreciated equipment and materials as part of their matching contributions or otherwise account for the actual costs of such equipment and materials?</p>	<p>In-kind contributions such as equipment will not count toward the match requirement.</p> <p><i>Please refer to page 10 of the Application Guidance, for information on match requirements and match waivers.</i></p>

<p>27</p>	<p>Is there a prequalification process for this program whereby an applicant can submit certain materials once for multiple projects?</p>	<p>No, there is no prequalification process for the ConneCTed Communities Grant Program, but applicants can copy text and documents from previous and/or current applications in the application portal and resubmit them with subsequent submissions.</p>
<p>28</p>	<p>Are match waivers available for projects in Distressed Municipalities?</p>	<p>Yes, the entire matching contribution requirement may be waived if at least 75% of the addresses the project proposes to serve are located in one or more Distressed Municipalities (either current or within ten years subsequent to the date of the determination that such municipality failed to meet such thresholds).</p> <p><i>Please refer to pages 10-11 of the Application Guidance for more information on matching contributions and waivers.</i></p>
<p>29</p>	<p>Are applicants only required to have Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) for Multi-Dwelling Units (MDUs) which qualify as underserved?</p>	<p>To help ensure all funds are expended by the December 31, 2026 deadline, DEEP requires that all projects proposing to build within an MDU submit an MOU that outlines the agreement between the applicant or applicant partner providing service and the property owner(s). However, this requirement may be waived at DEEP's discretion. If an applicant is not able to submit an MOU, they should instead submit a narrative describing the circumstances for DEEP's consideration.</p>
<p>30</p>	<p>When a project area includes an MDU such as a condominium with multiple owners, is the applicant expected to collect signatures from each owner?</p>	<p>The primary purpose for the requirement to submit an MOU is to help ensure the awardee(s) will be able to meet the December 31, 2026 deadline, as negotiations with property owners for projects that require construction in or on private property can be a lengthy process. Therefore, if an applicant is unable to provide an MOU(s) with all relevant property owners, they are encouraged to submit a narrative describing the circumstances, including how they intend to meet the December 31, 2026 deadline.</p>

<p>31</p>	<p>Would the most competitive application have MOUs for as many MDUs in the project area as possible?</p>	<p>Applicants are required to submit MOUs for MDU projects. This requirement may be waived if the applicant supplies a sufficient explanation for its absence, at DEEP’s discretion. Please note that even if a waiver request is approved, the application’s score may be negatively impacted if the applicant cannot provide a sufficient explanation in lieu of the MOU(s) regarding to their ability to meet the deadline for project completion as well as their plan to overcome obstacles that may hinder on-time completion.</p>
<p>32</p>	<p>If an entity applied to round 1 of the ConneCTed Communities Grant Program, can the information previously submitted in the application portal be carried over to a new application in round 2?</p>	<p>If an applicant created an account in the application portal during round 1, they are able to access those files and resubmit them, as applicable, in a round 2 application. There is no way to automatically carry over information between applications in the portal at this time.</p>
<p>33</p>	<p>Section 3A asks for a narrative on deployment strategy. What should that narrative include?</p>	<p>The narrative on deployment strategy should at least include a detailed description of the deployment strategy and explanation for why the applicant believes the selected strategies will be effective, and, if applicable, any plans to provide nondiscriminatory access to and use of its network on a wholesale basis to other providers seeking to provide broadband service to end-user locations at just and reasonable wholesale rates for the useful life of the subsidized network assets.</p> <p>Applicants should include as much information as needed for DEEP to gain an understanding of the proposed deployment strategy and score accordingly. Applicants may choose to include details such as a justification for the chosen technology, including how it meets the needs of the affected community(s) and aligns with grant program requirements; highlights of any innovative aspects of the deployment and how the network will accommodate future growth; strategies for cost management and efficiency; plans for securing necessary permits and adhering to regulatory requirements at local, state, and federal levels; planned efforts to engage residents and businesses to drive adoption; and/or</p>

		efforts to involve the community in the planning and implementation phases, ensuring that the project meets local geographic and demographic needs.
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