DEEP ConneCTed Communities Grant Program
Question Period: March 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024
Responses Posted: April 12, 2024

The questions have been organized by theme for clarity.

Number	Question	Response
1	If fixed wireless service is available at an address that is greater than 100 Mbps/20 Mbps but less than 100 Mbps/100 Mbps, is that address considered underserved?	Locations without access to 100 Mbps/20 Mbps are considered underserved for purposes of this program. Locations with access to 100 Mbps/20 Mbps or above, including those between 100 Mbps/20Mbps and 100 Mbps/100 Mbps, are considered served. *Please refer to page 34 in the Application Guidance for the list of program definitions.*
2	Would a Multi-Dwelling Unit (MDU) be considered a non-standard installation?	For the purposes of this program, a standard installation is defined as: a. the initiation by a provider of fixed broadband internet access service (within 10 business days of a request) in an area in which the provider has not previously offered that service, with no charges or delays attributable to the extension of the network provider; AND b. includes the initiation of fixed broadband internet access service through routine installation that can be completed not later than 10 business days after the date on which the service request is submitted. Any installation that falls outside of the parameters described would be considered nonstandard installations and must be described by the Applicant. An MDU would be considered a non-standard installation if it does not meet the parameters described in the definition above. Additionally, even if an MDU is identified as served on the FCC National Broadband Map, the individual units may be considered as underserved if they do not have service available that meets the minimum requirement of 100 Mbps/20 Mpbs. *Please refer to page 15 of the Application Guidance for information regarding non-standard installations.*

3	Are all applications required to include Connecticut prevailing wage rates?	Yes, to assist with ensuring a binding commitment to strong labor standards and protections each contract shall contain the following provision: "The wages paid on an hourly basis to any person performing the work of any mechanic, laborer or worker on the work herein contracted to be done and the amount of payment or contribution paid or payable on behalf of each such person to any employee welfare fund, as defined in as defined in subsection (i) of Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-53, shall be at a rate equal to the rate customary or prevailing for the same work in the same trade or occupation in the town in which such project is being constructed." Applicants that need assistance with determining the appropriate classification of labor or the appropriate prevailing rate of wages for the project should contact the Wage and Workplace Standards Division at the Connecticut Department of Labor. *Please refer to page 28 of the Application Guidance for more information.*
4	Can an applicant use a broadband feasibility study as evidence of an underserved area?	In order to demonstrate that the project area being proposed in an application meets the criteria of an underserved area, applicants are required to first consult the FCC National Broadband Map as of the application release date. They may also utilize any of the following additional resources to offer a holistic justification that an area has critical need for broadband infrastructure, including: • Connecticut State Broadband Map • American Community Survey • Survey Data • Speed test data • Distressed Municipalities • Other Data Feasibility studies may fall under the "other data" category but must demonstrate strong evidence in order to be considered. A description of other data can be found on page 14. *Please refer to pages 12 - 14 of the Application Guidance for more information.*

5	Do municipalities have to complete the CCGP application to qualify for the BEAD program?	No, a municipality does not need to apply to the ConneCTed Communities Grant Program for locations within their boundaries to be eligible for funding through the BEAD Program. These are two distinct programs with separate eligibility and program requirements. Details of the BEAD Program requirements and timelines will be made available on DEEP's website once available.
6	Will project areas be pre-defined?	Project areas will not be pre-defined in order to offer the greatest flexibility to program participants. However, the FCC National Broadband Map, as well as other data sources listed on page 13 and 14 of the Application Guidance, indicate which data types can be used to substantiate selection of project areas.
7	Does the program allow for applications from institutions of higher education?	In alignment with American Rescue Plan Act's Capital Projects Fund Guidance for States, eligible applicants for the ConneCTed Communities Grant Program include government entities, private for-profit entities, and non-profit entities, among others. Eligible entities must have the technical, managerial, and financial expertise to design, build, and operate high-speed broadband service infrastructure and must be eligible to receive Capital Projects Funds. DEEP encourages projects that involve broadband networks owned, operated by or affiliated with local governments, non-profits, and co-operatives—providers with less pressure to generate profits and with a commitment to serving entire communities.
8	How can vendors, like Wi-Fi companies, get involved in the program?	Applicants must be eligible to receive Capital Projects Funds. Eligible entities include: • Government entities: Tribal governments; local units of government (e.g., municipalities, counties, and other political subdivisions); 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. DEEP will consider partnerships consisting of one or more of the above entities and a provider of internet service. Vendors may apply independently, or in partnership with another entity, as long as the criteria mentioned herein applies. *Please refer to page 6 of the Application Guidance for more information.*

9	Does this program offer subsidies to residents in the state for internet service plans?	No, the ConneCTed Communities Grant Program is a competitive grant program that will fund construction and deployment of broadband infrastructure designed to deliver service that supports the goal of universal access to affordable, resilient, and reliable broadband.
10	How does this program "nest" with BEAD?	The Biden Administration's Internet for All Initiative, which includes both BEAD and CPF-funded programs, focuses collectively on infrastructure deployment, skills training, and access to technologies essential for Americans to connect with their communities, their democracy, and one another via state-based funding programs designed to improve internet access and reliability. DEEP is aligning where recommended and possible with this initiative in priority areas like affordability, focus on fiber technology, and on under-represented communities, to the benefit of Connecticut residents and stakeholders.
12	Do municipalities have to partner with an Internet Service Provider in order to submit a project application?	Municipalities are not required to partner with the existing Internet Service Provider (ISP). However, applicants must demonstrate that they have the technical, managerial, and financial expertise to design, build, and operate high-speed broadband service infrastructure. *Please refer to page 6 of the Application Guidance, for information on applicant eligibility.*
13	Can in-kind contributions count toward the match requirement?	In-kind contributions will not count toward the match requirement. Per the Application Guidance, each applicant shall provide matching funds of at least twenty-five percent (25%) of project costs. *Please refer to page 10 of the Application Guidance, for information on match requirements and match waivers.*
14	Can an applicant use existing, new, non-depreciated equipment and materials as part of their Funding Match or otherwise account for the actual costs of such equipment and materials?	Please refer to answer 13.

15	Will the submission of annual 10-Ks be sufficient to validate the availability of matching funds for applicants who are public companies?	The Applicant 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. As a Form 10-K provides a comprehensive overview of a company's business and financial condition, and includes audited financial statements, it may be used to validate matching funds. *Please refer to page 10 of the Application Guidance for more information on application requirements.*
16	Can standard installation costs count toward the match requirement?	*This question is under review. DEEP will provide a response in an update to the FAQ by April 14, 2024.*
17	Will the FCC National Broadband Map be updated when the ConneCTed Communities grants are awarded so BEAD applicants will not also plan to complete service to those awarded areas?	Yes, grants awarded through the ConneCTed Communities Grant Program will be considered during the BEAD Challenge Process's deduplication process, which will be completed after the final determination phase and before the NTIA's review and validation of Challenge Process results.
18	Will ConneCTed Communities have a challenge process (similar to BEAD)?	No. A challenge process is not required per U.S. Department of the Treasury's guidance for Capital Projects Fund projects. The classification of broadband serviceable locations (BSLs) on the FCC National Broadband Map as underserved is one pathway to determining a project area, but the program allows for the submission of other data to support the eligibility of locations. In determining what may constitute an underserved area, applicants are required to first consult the FCC National Broadband Map as of the application release date but may utilize additional resources listed on pages 13-14 of the Application Guidance to offer a holistic justification that an area has critical need for broadband infrastructure. Applicants must explain why the communities they have identified to serve have a critical need related to internet access, affordability, reliability, and/or consistency.

19	Concerning eligible project areas; can clarification be provided about what "additional locations" may be built to?	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 OR 2. Projects proposing service to 100% of underserved locations in one or more census blocks OR 3. Projects proposing service to an area in which not less than eighty percent (80%) are underserved locations as determined by the eligible sources of data described below 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 so long as no less than eighty percent (80%) are underserved locations as determined by the eligible sources of data described below. In Distressed Municipalities, no less than fifty percent (50%) may be underserved locations. The 'additional locations' referenced in the guidance may include locations that do not fit the program's definition of an underserved location. *Please refer to page 12 of the Application Guidance for information regarding project requirements.*
20	If a location is underserved by the speed requirement, what happens if the ISP says it is available, but the subscriber has to pay more to be able to access that speed?	A location's designation as served or underserved on the FCC National Broadband Map is determined by service availability rather than adoption. Therefore, if a plan is available that meets the threshold for "served", that location is considered served whether or not the plan is adopted by a subscriber. The ConneCTed Communities Grant Program allows applicants to submit additional evidence to substantiate that a location should be considered underserved, however, including information on affordability.
21	Can the program fund broadband infrastructure build out on private property?	The program may fund eligible activities, including on private property with the permission of the property owner. 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, 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 along with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) dated in 2023 or 2024 between the ISP and property owner(s).

22	Will a sample grant agreement be posted on DEEP's website prior to the application deadline?	Yes, applicants can locate a sample grant agreement, along with other relevant application materials and a link to the application portal, on DEEP's website.
23	Will the grant be disbursed as a fixed amount award pursuant to Treasury's Supplementary Broadband Guidance, as of May 17, 2023?	*This question is under review. DEEP will provide a response in an update to the FAQ by April 14, 2024.*
24	Will expenses incurred before the award date be eligible for funding?	DEEP will only provide reimbursement for eligible expenses incurred after the execution of a grant agreement between DEEP and an awardee.
25	Could DOCSIS3.1 network qualify for funding?	DEEP would consider projects employing DOCSIS3.1 as it is considered capable of delivering 100 Mbps/20 Mbps. However, preference will be given to project proposals using end-to-end fiber-optic which will be the default winner if there are competing proposals for the same location(s) that satisfy all other program requirements. Additionally, although DOCSIS3.1 would be considered, the project proposal must ensure that the network built can easily scale speeds over time.
26	How and where would applicants submit estimates from internet service providers regarding running lines?	All applicants are required to submit an application and attachments which meet requirements listed in the Application Guidance on page 16 through 21. One of the components in the application requires the inclusion of a project budget. Estimates from internet service providers should be included in this documentation.