

DIGITAL EQUITY FOR ADULTS WITH BARRIERS TO ACCESS AND SERVICES –
Community Information Session on September 9, 2020

Questions and Answers (as of 9/10/2020)

1. Do you require equipment to be refurbished or is new equipment permissible?

There is no requirement that equipment be refurbished, but we encourage good fiscal and environmental stewardship.

2. Do the beneficiaries need to live in King County?

Yes, beneficiaries need to live in King County.

3. Does the target population include both people currently experiencing homelessness AND people who have experienced chronic homelessness in the past and are now housed in permanent supportive housing programs?

People who have been chronically homeless and are in a supportive program and who need digital access are eligible.

4. Are we limited to laptops or could we also use these funds to distribute smart phones to clients?

Smartphones that allow people to access the internet for needed services, benefits, commerce and information are eligible.

5. Are Veterans included in the target beneficiaries?

Yes, as long as the Veteran fits into one of the target beneficiary categories (seniors, limited-English proficient, experiencing homelessness, or unemployed)

6. Can you speak to the purpose of the tight timeline?

The expenditure deadline is in the CARES Act, the Coronavirus Relief Funds, must be spent by December 30, 2020 as provided by the law.

7. Can you confirm where to find additional form/reports associated with this grant: budget templates, self-certification, Federal Terms and Condition, etc.? Follow-up: So, these forms are not needed initially? Those that apply would need to be granted, and then use the exhibits, forms, reports for reporting?

The only forms that are required to apply are the RFA questions, the Excel file (all three tabs) and the KC-W9. Other forms will be provided to those who are awarded grants for reporting purposes.

8. What kind of beneficiary info will be reported? Demographics?

We will request the following information by zip code: unduplicated count of individuals served, which target category(s) they represent, race/ethnicity, gender, income, and what services they received. A reporting matrix will be provided to awarded applicants.

9. Can City of Seattle dept. apply as main applicant or would non-profit org team member be lead applicant?

The City of Seattle is eligible to apply as the main applicant or as a team member.

10. To confirm, we can include hardware, salaries, operating costs, etc. from August 1 through December 30 in our budget, correct?

Program costs (including hardware, staff time, etc.) from August 1 – December 30th can be included in the application budget if the organization currently provides a digital equity initiatives that fits with the grant objectives and is seeking funding to continue and/or expand a current digital equity initiatives that serves the target beneficiaries of this grant. If the organization is starting a new initiative with grant funds, only expenses incurred during the time the program was up and running can be reimbursed through the grant.

Only costs related to the target beneficiaries are eligible for reimbursement.

11. Would use of the services need to be restricted to people in the target categories only? We often design services for a particular audience, but usually don't require people to report on and fit into specific conditions for use.

No. The intent of the program is to increase digital literacy and internet access to the target populations. The applicant could provide the service in a COVID-19 safe environment with the intent of shared use of equipment. The applicant is not required to screen users of grant acquired equipment in public, community-use setting, but the applicant should collect the minimum beneficiary data for users of equipment or services provided through this grant. Reporting of beneficiary data is not required after the grant period has ended.

12. Will the presentation be available on the website?

Yes, the PowerPoint will be posted along with the written responses to the questions.

13. Could we include staff time for the distribution of technology? E.g. the time it involves contacting clients, set up contact-less pick up, tracking/collecting data, etc.?

Yes, staff time and expenses related to distribution of equipment and delivery of services covered in this grant are allowable costs.

14. What age does the target audience start at for adults? 18?

For limited-English proficient, unemployed, or adult experiencing homelessness, they must be 18 to be eligible for the program. Seniors must be older adults who identify as seniors.

15. Can the beneficiaries keep the devices when the program ends? Or would this be a loan?

The disposition of equipment should be defined on the grantee's program design. The grantee should propose how the devices used in their program will be handled after the program period. King County will not collect devices.

16. Could funds pay for data plans also? (for data enabled devices?)

For any internet service provided to data enabled devices, the grantee should follow the organization's purchasing policy. Only costs expended by the end of the grant period are reimbursable. If the grantee can demonstrate via historical records that their purchase policy is greater than monthly subscription, i.e. one-year subscriptions, then the one-year subscription is allowed. If the grantee purchase policy is monthly subscription, then only months thru the grant period are allowed costs. If a telecommunication provider offers 1 year subscriptions for internet services, the expenditure must be paid for by December 30, 2020, which is the deadline for using the Coronavirus Relief Funds. (also see answer to question 26)

17. *Would data plans and mifi devices be billable?*

Yes, see question 16 and 26 responses.

18. *Is it possible to see what King Co. or local government public buildings have wifi that is or could be made available to the public even if they are outside the building's physical walls? Libraries are an obvious example, but schools or other buildings could be important for access, esp. after hours.*

We are not sure if this is possible, but may be. We will look into it. If an organization would like to use funds to expand broad signal installations, where there are gaps that would be an eligible expense and activity.

19. *Would it make sense to have a session among us considering applying to see what kind of overlap there is/additional questions?*

The King County Digital Equity grants planning team will review and determine if an awardee conference would be feasible in the short timeframe.

20. *Can we bulk buy items and then identify program participants afterward?*

Yes, if this is the usual way you operate, this would be fine. You can purchase items based on your budget and your expected number of program participants. Please estimate how many individuals your program will serve when you submit your application.

21. *Might we be able to use these funds to purchase burner phones and minutes cards for our clients to be able to access telehealth resources?*

Applicants should define their priorities for the use of funds and the method of accessing the target population beneficiaries. Data-enabled devices and the provision of data services is an allowed cost within program priorities.

22. *Can we request funds to cover two different projects? Or should we focus on just one of these?*

Applicants may include multiple digital equity programs/projects in the single application to address the unmet need of the target beneficiaries. Please specify which need the groups has and how each project will fulfill that need.

23. *The timeline says that applicants will be notified on Oct 2, but the program period is listed as Aug 1 - Dec 30. Could you please explain how that would work?*

Answer: We acknowledge that some agencies are already providing these or similar services. Program costs (including hardware, staff time, etc.) from August 1 – December 30th can be included in the budget if the organization already provides a digital equity program that fits with the grant objectives and is seeking funding to continue and/or expand a current digital equity program. If the organization is starting a new program with grant funds, only expenses incurred during the time of setting up the program and while it was up and running can be reimbursed through the grant.

24. *Is the duration of the program that the grant provides for fall quarter only? We can spring into action in October and begin serving our targeted community, but if the funding is only for one quarter, what happens to the program in January 2021, or am I reading this timeline incorrectly?*

CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF), is the funding source for this grant, the law states that the funds must be expended by December 30th. No staff time, subscriptions, or other services can be expended using this grant after this period*. The grantee should provide a description of the use of any hardware purchased through this program after the grant period ends.

*If Congress changes rules about the timeline for the use of CRF, this may change, but we are funding based on current requirements of the CRF.

25. *Can we hire digital literacy technical assistance, via subcontractors or youth as providers, with the funds? Can we use funds to provide in-language technical assistance?*

Yes, a program like this can be proposed. CBOs/applicants must be serving one or more of the defined beneficiaries (seniors, homeless, Limited-English Proficiency, unemployed). Staff costs (or fee for service) for translation services and technical support in the use of data enabled devices, such as laptops or tablets is an eligible use of the CRF funds under this program.

26. *Can we pre-pay contractors or put them on retainer to do work throughout a period, like a school year?*

You cannot change your normal course of business to make pre-payment CRF eligible. If the recipient's normal course of business is to pay for services in advance, a "retainer-like" arrangement, then it may be an allowed cost. The recipient would need to demonstrate that pre-payment is a normal financial method for those types of service, and pre-payment routinely occurs in their normal course of business, otherwise pre-payment is not an allowed activity and the costs are not eligible.

Example: The recipient normally pays data plans on a monthly basis.

A subrecipient cannot buy annual plans with CRF funding and monthly plans for a different funding, in order to force an expenditure to occur during the grant period but actually fund the activity beyond the grant period. This is explicitly not allowed.

Alternately, if the recipient routinely buys annual plans and is not changing their normal business practice to secure additional CRF funds, this would be allowed.

27. *Was the Community Information Session recorded?*

Answer: the session was not recorded, but this is a log of the questions that were asked and answered during the call. We read through the PowerPoint presentation, which was pulled directly from the RFA and answered questions. The session ended 15 minutes early.