

**Connecting Minority Community Pilot Program  
Notice of Funding Opportunity**

**Moderator: Francine Alkisswani  
August 18, 2021**

1:32

Hello, and thank you for joining us today. We will begin shortly. Due to the format of our webinar, we do regret that dial-in audio is not available for this webinar for the first portion of it. If you would like to listen in to this webinar on your mobile device, you must download the GoToWebinar app on the Adroid or Apple store. If you are not able to download the app, rest assured this webinar will also be available for on demand viewing on broadbandUSA.gov no later than August 25<sup>th</sup>. Before we begin, please direct your attention to the slide on the screen. Note that if you are dialing in on the phone bridge line, you will not be able to hear the first portion of our webinar due to the format. If you would like to listen to this webinar on your mobile device, please download the GoToWebinar app in the Apple or Android store, whichever is suitable for your device.

2:38

Hello, and thank you for joining us today. We will begin shortly. Before we begin, please direct your attention to the slide on the screen. Note that if you are dialing in on the phone bridge line, you will not be able to hear the first portion of our webinar due to the format. If you would like to listen to this webinar on your mobile device, please download the GoToWebinar app in the Apple or Android store, whichever is suitable for your device.

3:14

If you are not able to download the app, rest assured this webinar will also be available for on demand viewing on broadbandUSA.gov/past-events on or before August 25th. Thank you, and we will begin shortly.

**3:23 – Francine Alkisswani**

Hello everyone.

3:24

My name is Francine Alkisswani and I am a member of the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program team and I will serve as your moderator today.

3:35

So, on behalf of the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program team, again, I bring you greetings, and I welcome you to today's webinar.

3:44

We've made it to this significant milestone in the project and are especially pleased to be able to provide this Notice of Funding Opportunity [NOFO] Webinar.

3:57

We aim in this webinar to familiarize you with the NOFO and provide you an opportunity to ask questions.

4:06

You will have an opportunity to have a Q&A session with us. So, we want you to type your questions in the Q &A box on the right-hand side of the screen. Question and answers will be available on the FAQ section of our website.

4:23

You'll also find on the website an overview of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act [of] 2021*, and that's at [[BroadbandUSA.ntia.doc.gov](http://BroadbandUSA.ntia.doc.gov)].

4:34

So this presentation, along with a transcript and recording, will be available on that website under events/past events on or before August 25th, 2021.

4:47

I'd like to mention also that all prior webinars, as well as the transcripts, are available to you for your review on BroadbandUSA under past events. Now, for our program today – it's very tight. We want to make sure we get all information to you that is available.

5:12

As I said, we aim for this webinar to familiarize you with the NOFO and to provide you an opportunity to ask us questions.

5:20

However, we are joined today by the Honorable Gina M. Raimondo who is the 40th US Secretary of Commerce. And we'll also have presentations by the full Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program team.

5:40

So, we'll have as our presenters: Kevin Hughes; Scott Woods, who's our Program Team Lead; Emy Tseng; Michell Morton; Karen Archer Perry; Pandora Beasley-Timpson; Janice Wilkins; and we're also fortunate to have our colleagues and partners from the NIST Grants office joining us.

6:02

So, now that you have a sense of who the team is, let's take a look at the agenda for today. We will have greetings and a special address brought to you by the Honorable Gina M. Raimondo, 40th US Secretary of Commerce.

6:22

We will have a program overview [by] Kevin Hughes.

6:26

Our team lead, Scott Woods, will bring an overview of the NOFO, the Notice of Funding Opportunity. And my colleagues Emy Tseng and Michelle Morton will provide some program examples for you.

6:40

The NIST Grants office will give a presentation and overview of the application submission process. You'll want to pay close attention there.

6:51

And next, we will have a review of the processes of the application and next steps, followed by your questions and answers.

7:02

I'd now like to turn this over to Scott Woods, our team lead for the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program, to introduce to you the Honorable Gina M. Raimondo. Scott, please.

7:20 – **Scott Woods**

Good afternoon, and good morning, everyone. It is my pleasure to introduce the Honorable Gina M. Raimondo, the 40th US Secretary of Commerce, who will provide opening remarks and a special address for those in attendance today. Secretary Raimondo has also made history herself as the 75th and first female governor of the State of Rhode Island. And again, now she serves as the US Secretary of Commerce, so please welcome the Honorable Gina M. Raimondo.

7:56 – **The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo**

Hello everyone. It's great to be with you today.

8:00

Welcome to NTIA's latest webinar on the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program. NTIA published the Notice of Funding Opportunity on August 3rd and we're excited to accept applications.

8:14

The CMC Pilot program comes at a critical time for our country. For far too long, minority communities across America haven't had access to high-speed broadband. When COVID-19 began schools across America quickly switched to online education, but too many children weren't able to have that education because they lacked access to broadband.

8:40

I met with leaders from Navajo Nation and heard the heartbreaking stories of children who had paper lessons delivered to them on a bus. We also heard stories of families who would have to drive to restaurant parking lots so their kids could do virtual schooling. I know that many of you can relate to this, and unfortunately, we know the impact isn't just on schooling. Communities that lack reliable broadband also have fewer economic opportunities, slower government services, delays in public services, and higher medical costs.

9:15

The Connecting Minority Communities Program recognizes that historically black, Tribal, and minority serving colleges are vital centers of learning and job creation. This program builds on NTIA's Minority Broadband Initiative.

9:32

The CMC program will provide \$268 million to help these institutions purchase broadband service or equipment, hire IT personnel, or create digital literacy programs. These investments will deliver immediate benefits to your campus's students and communities.

9:52

I know that Scott Woods and Francine Alkisswani and the CMC Program team have been engaging with many of you already on this program. NTIA will continue conducting stakeholder outreach and providing technical assistance, so please don't hesitate to reach out and make sure to get your applications in by December 1st.

10:16

Thank you for joining today. I look forward to our continued collaboration and a successful program.

### 10:25 – **Francine Alkisswani**

Thank you so much, Secretary Raimondo. We are honored to have had your presentation and presence and greetings to our group today. I'd now like to introduce you to Kevin Hughes, broadband program specialist, to bring you an overview of the CMC Pilot Program. Kevin, please.

### 10:52 – **Kevin Hughes**

Thank you, Francine. And I'm Kevin Hughes, a broadband program specialist here at NTIA, and a member of the CMC team. And it's my pleasure to give a brief overview of the CMC Pilot Program grant.

11:09

Through the CMC Pilot Program grant, NTIA will directly address the lack of broadband access, connectivity, adoption, and equity at our nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or HBCUs; Tribal Colleges and Universities, [or] TCUs; and Minority Serving institutions, [or] MSIs and their surrounding anchor community.

11:35

Congress has directed NTIA to provide these institutions with the ability to facilitate educational instruction and learning, including through remote instruction, which is very important, especially during these times of COVID.

11:50

And to consortia, including minority business enterprises, or MBEs, or tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations to operate that MBE or 501(c)(3).

12:03

So what can eligible recipients use grant funding for? Well, they can purchase broadband Internet access service, including the installation or upgrade of broadband facilities on a one-time capital improvement basis to increase or expand broadband capacity and/or connectivity at the eligible institution. They can purchase or lease eligible equipment and devices for student or patron use. And lastly, they can hire and train IT personnel who are a part of the eligible anchor institution, the MBE, or tax-exempt 501(c)(3).

12:46

When we talked about the federal award, NTIA expects to make awards under this program within the following funding range: \$500,000 to \$3 million. And that range is not a required minimum or maximum. I repeat, that range is not a required minimum or maximum.

13:08

Congress has appropriated up to \$268 million in total grant funding for the CMC grant, and there's a two-year period of performance. If necessary, eligible recipients may submit a request for an extension with its application.

13:27

And you can contact the CMC team for greater details on that issue. Program goals – what are the CMC Program grant goals?

13:39

Well, the pilot program is focused on building the broadband digital capacities of HBCUs, TCUs, and MSI educational institutions, and the surrounding communities to expand educational instruction and remote learning opportunity, hire technology personnel, and to spur economic development, employment, and entrepreneurship.

14:05

And the purpose for all of that is to build the broadband into digital technology capacities of eligible institutions and support broadband access, adoption, and digital skills within those institutions and their surrounding community.

14:22

There is no match required for the CMC grant and there are program evaluation and data collection requirements, of course, for all applicants and applications. When Congress appropriated the funding for the CMC grant, they included requirements and statutory-mandated set asides.

14:49

So at least 40% of grant funds awarded must be made to HBCUs, and at least 20% of all grant funds awarded must be used to provide broadband access and/or devices and equipment to students. These statutory set asides are not mutually exclusive. For example, if an HBCU wanted to provide broadband Internet access and/or eligible equipment to its students, this would be covered toward both set aside requirements, okay?

15:26

When we talk about the program's focus, the program's focus is really geared towards students in need.

15:34

Therefore, the provision of broadband Internet access service or eligible equipment to students must prioritize students who are in need per the needs criteria factors in the NOFO. And the provision or lending of equipment must prioritize students and/or patrons who do not have access to such equipment.

15:58

As we see here on this slide, this is the CMC Anchor Community Eligibility Dashboard, and we discussed the dashboard on previous webinars. And here we included it just as a reminder of what a great tool this is for interested applicants to view.

16:20

You can visit the link there at the bottom of the slide, and you would be able to see the eligible communities. So in a 15-mile radius surrounding each eligible institution and basically communities that the institution can help partner with and support utilizing funds from the CMC grant.

16:47

When we talk about the CMC Dashboard, we do have a few updates, and they are listed here on this slide. But the key point that I wanted to share with you is that the CMC Dashboard is in the process of being updated to reflect the Department of Education's 2021 Eligibility Matrix or MSI-designated status.

17:13

There are additions and deletions with the new update and the CMC team is currently validating the data. The other updates that you see here on the slide have all been completed, and you can view those at your leisure.

17:30

Well, that concludes my section, and now we will turn it over to our senior broadband program specialist Mr. Scott Woods, who will be talking to you about the notice of Funding Opportunity. Over to you, Scott.

## 17:50 – **Scott Woods**

Thank you, Kevin, for providing us with an overview of the CMC Pilot Program, and good afternoon, or good morning everyone, depending on where you are.

17:58

My name is Scott Woods and it's my pleasure to be with you today to discuss and provide an overview of the CMC Notice of Funding Opportunity, or the NOFO. So first, let's begin by going over some key information. As you all are aware, the NOFO was released on grants.gov on August 3rd, and it is currently available for access. Again, you have to go on grants.gov to view it. Complete applications must be received no later than 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time on December 1, 2021.

18:37

Again, I want to emphasize complete application, so it's not enough just to submit it. It has to be a complete application for consideration for the CMC Pilot Program by this deadline. So, again, who can apply? And Kevin did a good job of going over that, but I want to focus on just the MSIs, because in our outreach, there was some concern about not really knowing all the various subtypes of MSIs for the program.

19:10

So, the MSI institutions include: Hispanic Serving Institutions [HSI]; Native American serving Non-Tribal Institutions; Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions; Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions [AANAPISI]; and predominantly Black institutions. And again, these are delineated by the Department of Education.

19:37

There are some institutions that have several MSI categorizations, so they may be categorized as both an HSI and an AANAPISI school. The schools know this, but again for those of you who are seeing this for the first time, these are the various subcategories of MSIs for the CMC Pilot Program.

20:02

You all know about Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal colleges or Tribal universities, and then consortiums that include minority business enterprise, or a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations. And again, I want to emphasize tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations. There are some organizations that are not-for-profit designated 501(c)(3) by the IRS.

20:28

The tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization is another category or specialization as determined by the IRS. So again, make sure that for those consortium applications, it's a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

20:46

So let's talk about what you are here for, which is to find out about the specific purposes and activities that are allowable under the CMC pilot program. So your application for requests or requests for funding must have at least one of the following purposes in the application: so, one, it has to build the broadband and IT capacity of the eligible institution.

21:14

Right? So building that broadband infrastructure, building the capacity, building the bandwidth of those eligible schools. Two – building the digital skills and IT workforce capacity with HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs, the surrounding anchor communities, and again, in a consortium application, with the minority business enterprise, or the tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

21:43

But you can also provide broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, and the support necessary for those programs, or you can also provide subsidized broadband access and the equipment required.

22:01

For the planning standpoint, you can assess the needs of the schools or the institutions, and the surrounding communities, including planning activities. So, what does that mean?

22:12

So [for] a lot of you, this might be the first time that you are engaged in a digital inclusion [project] or improving of the broadband capacity of your institution, and that requires some type of assessment or planning to figure out exactly what's needed.

22:30

We specifically in the CMC Pilot Program, will cover those costs – will cover that activity necessary to conduct an assessment to conduct that plan, including strategic planning, as we move forward with the programmatic activities.

22:48

Six – you can also improve the use of broadband services by eligible consortium members, so the minority business enterprise, and those tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations, and then generally stimulates those programs that stimulate the adoption and community use of broadband services.

23:09

Getting into more specific use of funds, an eligible recipient may generally use CMC grant funds to fund personnel costs, including salaries and fringe benefits for both staff and consultants.

23:24

You can also fund increases, again, and broadband networking capability, including the hardware, software, and other digital technology and platforms. You can fund equipment and devices, but not mobile phones, to support connectivity for remote education, both for the students and in the community. You can also fund, provide, and implement affordable broadband programs, and we'll have examples of those coming up in the next few slides.

23:54

You can also fund, provide, and implement digital training classes, education classes, technology support, outreach, and awareness programs. And finally down here, you can also fund access to broadband services, including the improvement of broadband services and equipment. This generally means some type of contractual service with the service provider to provide broadband service for the community or for the students or the devices. So again, we will provide specific examples of activities here coming up in the next few slides.

24:30

So you may also generally use grant funds to conduct needs assessments and develop plans for increasing broadband adoption and access to remote education. We understand that [for] many of you, this may be the first time that you're doing this type of programming, or activity, both with your students and in the community. And so we will cover those costs to perform those planning activities and assessments to see exactly what's needed and how best to develop a plan of action to address the needs in those communities.

25:06

You may also fund evaluation and data collection activities to specifically collect data and document best practices to ensure this program can be replicable and sustainable across the portfolio.

25:19

We'll have more information on this activity as we move forward with our subsequent webinars and our outreach to potential applicants.

25:30

You can also fund subawards and contractual costs associated with carrying out the programmatic activities of the CMC, including program implementation and consulting services. We understand in the execution of some of these projects, we will partner with the private sector, philanthropic organizations, not-for-profit organizations. Again, we understand that you can subaward, right? You can award [and] contract CMC funds to those organizations to carry out the programmatic activities, the goals, and [the] objectives of your program. We'll have more information on that as we move forward.

26:15

From the pre-application standpoint, you can fund reasonable pre-application expenses and the amount not to exceed \$50,000. Again, anything over \$50,000, [and] you're going to have to bear that expense or that cost. But we will allow you to fund pre-application expenses to prepare the application – maybe to hire a grant writer or a consultant to help you put your application together – again, in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 for that portion to be covered by CMC funds.

26:50

You can fund any other allowable costs that are necessary to carry out the programmatic activities. And again, we will have subsequent webinars with the grants office to talk about the allowable costs, what those look like, and how you have to document those.

27:06

Then finally, you can gather data, conduct evaluation of your digital inclusion programming, the broadband access and adoption programs, and your professional development and training program. So again, we're building in data collection and evaluation as a priority in this program, as we have specific reporting obligations to Congress. But overall, we want to document the successes of all of these programs. And so, we are going to ensure that you can cover the cost to ensure [that] proper data collection and evaluation can be conducted in [these] programs.

27:43

So in our outreach, many of you, particularly the institutions of higher education, talked about indirect costs. And so there is a provision in the NOFO – section four, paragraph B.8. of the NOFO talks specifically about indirect costs.

28:00

So if you have an indirect cost agreement, a negotiated indirect cost agreement, or cost rate with a cognizant federal agency, you can include that.

28:11

You have to document it in the budget. You have to attach it in your application, and we will recognize your ability to claim those indirect costs. The Department of Commerce has the financial assistance standard terms and conditions of Section B.06 talks about how we treat indirect costs. So again, I would bring your attention to that document in addition to the section here in the NOFO, and then we also

plan in conjunction with the grants office to provide more information on the treatment of indirect costs.

28:50

Now if you do not have an indirect cost agreement that has been negotiated with a cognizant federal agency, you can still elect to take the de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs. And again, that's contained in the NOFO. Either way, you have to elect this as part of your budget portion of the application and those costs. If any of you need any more information on indirect costs, please don't hesitate to reach out to the program team and/or the grants office. And we'll make sure we discuss this with you, and so you understand exactly what you do [and] what you have in terms of your indirect cost agreements.

29:34

We understand as institutions of higher education, many of you may have research grants with other federal agencies and may have already negotiated indirect cost agreements, rate agreements already in your possession. So again, let's make sure that we understand and talk through how you're going to attribute those to the CMC Pilot Program.

29:59

So next, we're going to talk about ineligible costs. Now these costs are specifically prohibited by the CMC Pilot Program. [I'm] not going to go through all of these, I just want to highlight a couple. The first three really deal with – or two of the three deal with the particular prohibited uses of equipment. And so we'll document that in the NOFO. It will be documented also in the citations in the NOFO, and those will be clear. I want to highlight here specifically about construction activities. So when we're referencing construction activities, we're generally talking about ground disturbance activities that require NEPA or SHPO some other external approval that's not allowed under this program.

30:45

We do understand though in some instances, in some proposals, you may want to wire a particular building. We don't consider that construction. You may want to maybe add a tower on top of the building or wireless access points. We don't consider that construction. We're generally talking about those ground disturbance activities.

31:06

Facilities-based construction planning to extend broadband facilities or a segment of a fiber or cable connectivity outside of the campus walls to the campus. Again, that would be prohibited.

31:23

Again, we talked about the pre-award cost greater than \$50,000. You can't use CMC funds as loan repayment to repay any of your external obligations or to provide for loan collateral. [That's] very important – any previously incurred cost prior to the CMC Pilot Program [is] specifically prohibited.

31:48

We talked about previously the duplication of funding for other federal programs for similar purposes, primarily from the Department of Education, perhaps the National Science Foundation, as well as the Federal Communications Commission. We'll have more information for you on that as we move forward here with our outreach. And then finally, as you heard from the grants office, no costs that are generally unallowable under the applicable federal cost principles. And again, the grants office will have more information on that.

32:20

So I know that's a lot of information, but I wanted to highlight those permissible activities that we are allowed under the CMC Pilot Program. And now for specific examples, I'm going to turn it over to team members Emy Tseng and Michell Morton, who will provide additional detail on the permissible activities that could be conducted under the CMC Pilot Program. So again, it's my pleasure to be here with you and I will turn it over to Emy and Michell. Thank you.

**32:55 – Emy Tseng**

Thank You, Scott. Hello, everyone, I'm Emy Tseng, and next, my colleague Michell Morton and I will discuss examples on how eligible entities might use grant funding to support programs within their institutions and in surrounding anchor communities.

33:14

Just as a reminder, eligible entities include HBCUs, TCUs, MSIs (Minority Serving Institutions), and consortia led by eligible educational institutions with MBEs and non-profit, tax-exempt organizations. Note that these examples are actually grounded in real life examples that we have heard about. However, they're not meant to be exclusive. I'm hoping that they give you ideas about the types of projects that you may want to undertake with CMC funding.

33:50

So, an eligible educational institution may choose to use funding to build out its own broadband and IT capacity. For example, an HBCU might choose to upgrade the Wi-Fi within their own dormitories.

34:05

A university may also use funding to deploy a new online course and learning management system to better enable students to register for courses, access their courses online, view their grades, and communicate with their advisors and faculty. Note that eligible funding includes the IT personnel and staff, as well as training needed to deploy and support these systems.

34:34

An educational institution may also use funding to ensure that their low-income and in-needs students can access and benefit from remote instruction and learning. For example, a community college may implement a laptop and Wi-Fi hotspot lending program for their students and faculty members. They may also choose [to] conduct outreach and help students subscribe to existing discount broadband programs.

35:05

An educational institution might also use funding to hire and train technology personnel, and to more broadly leverage your unique role in developing a more diverse and inclusive technology workforce. The funding can support all ranges of digital skills training, from basic to advanced skills, like STEM, coding, cybersecurity, etc. This training can be in a class, or it could be in partnership with businesses to implement work-based learning, apprenticeships, and internships. For example, a Tribal college might partner with a Tribal broadband provider on a fiber technician training program to provide local expertise and support of their own broadband network.

35:56

Next, we will hear from Michell Morton, who will provide examples about possible programs within anchor communities.

### 36:08 – **Michell Morton**

Thank you, Emy. Hello everyone, I'm Michell Morton, and the next three slides will discuss using grant funding to support programs and anchor communities. These eligible entities include HBCUs, MSIs, TCUs, and consortia led by eligible educational institutions with MBEs or 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations.

36:31

Eligible entities may use funding to support the promotion of broadband access, adoption, and digital inclusion with anchor communities. Some funded activities include tech support and IT services to residents, businesses, and community organizations.

36:48

Funding can also support digital skills; training for residents, businesses, and community organizations; as well as fund broadband awareness, adoption, and training programs, including digital connectors and navigators.

37:02

An example is an eligible entity forming a consortium with a non-profit to use the grant award to fund a health IT project. The project could focus on decreasing health disparities in underserved communities through digital skills training and encouraging broadband adoption.

37:18

In developing digital skills, community members can learn how to manage chronic diseases, such as diabetes, asthma, or heart disease, using online platforms and tools, as well as to conduct telehealth appointments with healthcare providers. Funding could also be used to support digital navigators as trainers in these communities.

37:40

Eligible entities may also use funding to support broadband and information technology-related operations of an MBE or 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization within designated anchor communities.

37:54

A grant award can be used to purchase broadband equipment [and] devices; technology support and IT services; purchase broadband Internet services; fund IT staff and personnel costs; as well as IT related professional development.

38:08

For example, an eligible entity can fund an MBE to support small business development and entrepreneurship for underserved residents like women or people of color.

38:18

Consortium could use the funding to provide technology skills training, devices, software, and Internet access to small business owners that represent underrepresented populations; training to focus on helping business owners learn how to use and develop online marketing tools and platforms; [and] for website development, we'll provide accounting software to improve their digital services.

38:41

Last, funding may be used to promote inclusive innovation, workforce and economic development, and entrepreneurship within designated anchor communities. Funds may be used to provide advanced digital skills training, including STEM or STEAM programs, coding, cybersecurity, networking, and smart technology.

39:01

Funds may also be used for IT-related business support, workforce and economic development centers, and business incubators. A grant award can also fund IT apprenticeship and internship programs.

39:15

The first example is of a rural community college that, in partnership with a non-profit, provides career employment training to underserved residents. The program offers apprenticeships and internships to enrolled students, as well as provides credits to participants.

39:32

The second example of an urban educational institution that can use funds to build a business incubator space and partner with an MBE to offer STEM or STEAM classes to youth from underserved communities. – an underrepresented group in the tech field.

39:48

These classes could introduce students to startup culture and small business development, such as design thinking principle, app development, and pitch competition.

40:00

Next, you will hear from Mercedes Martinez, a NIST grants officer who will provide more information about the application submission process via grants.gov.

#### 40:14 – **Mercedes Martinez**

Thank you, Michelle. I am Mercedes Martinez, a grants officer at NIST, and partnering with the CMC Program team. Today, I'll dive into the application submission process described in Section 4 of the NOFO. We'll walk through these sections of the NOFO and elaborate on some of the application elements, such as the SF-424A and the budget narrative. Finally, I'll share a table of resources available to you as you prepare an application for this program.

40:44

I want to reiterate that complete applications for the CMC Pilot Program must be electronically submitted through grants.gov. There are two phases to successfully apply in grants.gov.

40:58

First, ensure you're registered through grants.gov. Organizations must have a DUNS number and an active SAM registration. A federal assistance award cannot be issued if the designated recipient's registration in SAM.gov is not current at the time of the award. DUNS and SAM registrations may take several weeks. For SAM, the free annual registration process on SAM.gov generally takes between 3 and 5 business days, but can take more than three weeks. An organization's registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact the entity's ability to meet required application submission deadlines. Create a grants.gov profile account and add a profile. This profile is essentially the applicant organization you as a user represent.

41:47

You will need the organization's DUNS number to add the organizational profile to your user account. The e-business [Ebiz] point of contact will assign and authorize the appropriate roles to grants.gov user accounts associated with its organization. The Ebiz POC will authorize the AOR role.

42:09

This role will be able to submit your organization's application. You can track your role assignment's status in grants.gov, and I recommend you identify the Ebiz POC at your organization.

42:22

Next, to apply in grants.gov, you'll need to create a Workspace or be part of a Workspace. This is the environment that allows members to work simultaneously within an application.

42:33

This will also allow you to route the application through your organization for review before submitting. You will complete the Workspace and submit through grants.gov. Grants.gov recommends you submit your application at least 24 to 48 hours prior to the close date. You can track the Workspace submission with the tracking number automatically assigned to the application. A helpful tip about the electronic signature for you - when the application package is submitted through grants.gov, the name of the organization applicant with the AOR role that submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application serving as the electronic signature.

43:17

The Ebiz POC must authorize the individuals who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization as a user with the AOR role. Grants.gov offers 24/7 support by phone and email. Please contact them if you have any questions about any of this process.

43:39

Listed are the application components, standard forms, and additional requirements that will comprise your application. These are covered in detail in Section 4B, *Content and Form of Applications*, of the NOFO.

43:53

Standard forms include the SF-424, the SF-424A budget form, the SF-424B assurances for non-construction programs. This form is required for applicants that have not updated their sam.gov entity registration since February 2, 2019.

44:11

The SAM entity registration now includes the Federal Financial Assistance Certification and Representations, or Certs and Reps. The final Standard forms are the CD-511, certification regarding lobbying, and the Standard form LLL, or disclosure of lobbying activities, if applicable.

44:32

Additional requirements that will be attached to your application include the project narrative, the detailed project budget and budget narrative, [and] the indirect cost rate (as applicable). Letters of commitment are required for consortium applicant applications.

44:49

The certification regarding compliance is located in Appendix A of the NOFO and is required for all applicants.

44:58

Finally, the certification for minority business enterprises is required of all consortium applications that include an MBE. Refer to Appendix B for the certification. The SF-424 is the title page of your application package. Some fields to note for the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance Form [follows].

45:23

In line 8.D, make sure to include your zip code in the five-digit, plus four-digit format.

45:29

In line 12, list the NOFO numbers as NTIA-CMCP-2021. In line 18, list the total federal budget requested for the entire project.

45:46

This amount will also be used in the SF-424A budget form and your detailed budget and budget narrative. Pay close attention to line 21, and prior to selecting "I agree," review the Certs and Reps in SAM.gov (which I mentioned are part of your organization's SAM entity registration) and the Certification Regarding Debarment and Suspension as described in Section 4, paragraph F of the NOFO.

46:16

Here, you'll see the Authorized Representative section, and the line where the electronic signature will go at submission. Remember, this is the signature of the person with the AOR role in grants.gov.

46:29

Some fields to note when completing the SF-424A budget form [follows]. Section B is a place to insert budget totals by object class category or cost category. Cost categories include direct costs, such as personnel, fringe benefits and supplies, and also includes indirect costs.

46:51

The CMC period of performance is two years. When you complete this form, input costs associated with year one in column one, and costs associated with year two and column two. The totals fields are calculated as you complete the form.

47:08

Verify that the total requested reflects the same amount as Item 18 in the SF-424. The cost category amounts, total direct charges, and indirect charges will be reflected in the detailed budget and budget narrative you prepare.

47:25

As noted in the NOFO, the CMC Pilot Program does not contain a cost sharing or matching funds requirement. However, applicants may propose to contribute a binding, voluntary, committed, non-federal cost share amount. Make sure to complete section C, *nonfederal resources*, if you propose such non-federal cost share.

47:49

In the budget narrative, you will clearly relate each of the activities proposed in the project narrative to the relevant section of the project budget. Prepare a detailed project budget and budget narrative that adequately describe all proposed activities and costs for the proposed grant funded project. Format the detailed project budget as a spreadsheet, and the budget narrative as a Word document.

48:15

In the project budget, provide a detailed and itemized breakdown of each line item within the cost categories used in the SF-424A. For example, in personnel, list the anticipated staff or positions needed for the proposed budget. Specify the level of effort and the total amount budgeted for each staff.

48:37

Another example: in supplies, [list] itemized supplies, materials, perhaps devices, needed to implement the proposed project. Include the estimated quantities and unit costs to support the proposed amount. The budget narrative is your opportunity to fully describe the necessity and basis for all costs. Again, by mirroring the SF-424A cost categories and the information from the spreadsheet, you will offer an extra level of clarity.

49:07

All costs proposed must reflect only allowable costs that are consistent with the project scope.

49:14

Information on cost allowability is available in the uniform administrative requirements, cost principles, and audit requirements for federal awards at 2CFR, Part 200, which apply to awards in this program.

49:29

We covered general principles for cost allowability during our last webinar. If cost sharing or matching funds are included in the budget, identify the non-federal source and distinguish the non-federal and federal portions of the budget in the detailed project budget narrative.

49:50

The project narrative is an additional requirement and component of your application package. This is a narrative that describes a clearly defined project that best achieves the purpose of the CMC Pilot Program. It will identify specific tasks, measurable milestones, and performance outcomes resulting from the proposed project activities.

50:11

These are the components of the project narrative as described in section four of the NOFO: the executive summary (note it cannot exceed two pages); the eligibility and qualifications section, which includes a table of funded project participants and unfunded informal collaborators and resumes for key personnel (note that your application cannot include more than five resumes and each one cannot exceed one page in length); also within the narrative, incorporate the project justification, proposed project activities, and anticipated project results in evaluation planning.

50:51

Now that we've walked through the application package, I want to highlight this step attaching the required documents. It's easy to miss. The forms listed on the left side of the table I shared earlier are part of the standard application package and can be completed through the download application package process in grants.gov.

51:13

The attachments you prepare, such as the budget and project narratives, you'll have to add to your application package. You will do this through the SF-424 form. Specifically in item 15 of this form, there's an "Add Attachments" button. This is for the items listed in section four, paragraph B.6 through paragraph B.11, and section four, paragraph C.

51:40

Finally, we've reviewed multiple elements of your application package. Pay close attention to the formatting of the documents you submit with your application. I'll reiterate: applications must be submitted through grants.gov.

51:54

Paper, emailed, [and] fax submissions will not be accepted. There are page limits for the project narrative, executive summary, and resumes.

52:04

Make sure documents are easy to read and 10-point minimum. With the exception of figures, graphs and images, the page layout must be portrait orientation. All applications and forms must be typed and in English. This is all laid out in section four, Paragraph E.

52:25

I've included here a table of helpful resources, which includes information or links on how to obtain a DUNS, the SAM.gov system, grants.gov training resources, and the grants.gov applicant support. Thank you for your time today. Please direct all grants management inquiries to the NIST Grants Officer Yongming (Ming) Qiu.

52:50

Now, to discuss the application review process, I turn it over to you, Karen.

52:59 – **Karen Perry**

Thank you, Mercedes. While Mercedes focused on the application submittal process, Janice Wilkins, Pandora Beasley-Timpson, and I are going to take you through the next process, which is the application review process. Janice?

53:17 – **Janice Wilkins**

Thanks, Karen. Today, I will give a broad overview on the grant process and the application timeline. There are four steps in this process. The pre-application portion, submission of your full application, the application review process, and the selection process.

53:35

The first two are the applicant's responsibility. The last to refer to NTIA's action to further the process of your grant application. I want to highlight a couple of key elements for the pre-application submission phases. Applicants must register in SAM.gov and assure your grants.gov account is active. Submit a completed application on or before December 1, 2021, at 11:59 PM in grants.gov.

54:13

Upon receiving your grant application, NTIA will review applications according to NOFO rules and select application process.

54:25

On the next slide, Karen Perry will give you a little information about the evaluation and review process. Karen?

54:38 – **Karen Perry**

Thank you, Janice. Let's dig into the review process. There are three phases to this process: initial administrative review, the merit review, and then a programmatic review. The things that we're going to be looking for in the initial administrative review are really the completeness of the application, basic eligibility, and consistent with a high-level structure of the program.

55:00

The merit review is conducted by our expert reviewers, and they will also be looking for similar criteria. They will be scoring each of the applications on a scale of 0 to 100, and all applications that receive 70 or greater will advance to the next level.

55:18

The next level is our programmatic review, which NTIA does. We prioritize the reviewed applications, and we make sure that each of them meets the statutory guidelines for the program and the programmatic objectives.

55:33

So, what are the merit reviewers and NTIA going to be looking for as they go through your applications? The first 25 points of the evaluation criteria is associated with the project purpose. Does it fit in with the statutory guidelines and the purpose that was covered by Kevin earlier in this presentation? The next 35 points goes to greatest unmet financial need and the benefit of the project.

55:59

Then we have 20 points assigned for project viability and innovation. That's really looking at the feasibility of the project innovation as well as your organizational capability. Fifteen points are assigned to the budget and the reasonableness of that budget, and another five points are assigned to project evaluation.

56:17

Do you have an evaluation plan such that both you and we can learn from this project? As I noted, there's 35 points assigned to need, so I want to go into that in a little bit more detail.

56:32

We've shown you this slide before in other presentations, but I wanted to highlight it one more time because it is an important part of your application. We do need to award grants based on the greatest unmet financial need and we're looking for you to provide us information that will help us make that determination. The information we've asked for is information on your student population size, the number and percent of students that are eligible to receive [Federal] Pell Grants, the number and percentage of students who get need-based financial aid, and other indications of need based on your student population.

57:07

During the merit review phase, NTIA will analyze the submitted information for each of the criteria above and will develop an assessment of each institutions' student body-based unmet financial need. These assessments are ranked and compared, and then final recommendations for project approval and grant funding will be made for those eligible anchor institutions that have demonstrated the greatest unmet financial need.

57:34

NTIA's recommendations are based on five important factors. First, the scores and the technical comments that come out of the merit review process. Secondly, the analysis that is done by the NTIA program staff during the programmatic review phase.

57:51

Third, we need to, as indicated before, make sure that the statutory requirements of the program are set forth as it relates to all elements of the program, but particularly greatest financial need.

58:04

Fourth, we're going to look across other programs to avoid the duplication of funding with other investments.

58:11

And fifth, obviously, the availability of funds.

58:16

If perchance you are submitting an application that includes community-based programs and you based your analysis on the CMC dashboard (which lists eligible tracts), if you feel that you have tracts that are

eligible that are not listed on that dashboard and you would like to contest that analysis, we do welcome your input. And this is where you would give us that information.

58:43

All of our work is guided by federal guidelines and laws. You can expect that we will issue federal award notices [and] notifications to both successful and unsuccessful applicants. We will retain all of the applications, and we will meet other administrative and national policy requirements, including the uniform administrative requirements, cost principles, and audit requirements.

59:07

But wait, there's more.

59:09

We also need to comply with a number of reporting requirements, both related to the financial reports, performance reports, and certification of the program. We need to meet audit requirements, close out the program, and do all of this in accordance with the *Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006*.

59:28

Now, let's take it up a level and I'll ask Pandora to wrap up and tell you where we are in the program right now and what you can expect from us next. Pandora?

59:39 – **Pandora Beasley-Timpson**

Thank you, Karen.

59:41

So, the next thing that you can expect from us is the release of FAQs.

59:46

Then in March 2022, we will announce [the official notification of grant award approvals], after that, you can launch your CMC projects. A little about the second call for merit reviewers. This call is specifically for CMC candidates – we're looking for people like you with strong backgrounds in academia [and] experience with universities, mainly minority serving universities.

1:00:09

We're looking for our distance and remote learning experts. Anyone with experience working with under-resourced colleges, or anyone with experience with minority serving communities in general, as well as IT professionals with strong backgrounds in information technology and our leaders, our IT leaders, we're looking for you.

1:00:32

And we want to make sure that these professionals have a strong background in infrastructure and network expansion. We would love to have you join our team of merit reviews, so please get your resumes in.

1:00:46

And we'd like to see those resumes as soon as possible because the actual merit reviews for the CMC Program will take place between December and January – December of 2021 and January of 2022.

1:01:05

Again, we are committed to ensuring that reviewers come from diverse backgrounds and from all across the United States. So, if this interests you, we need your resume.

1:01:14

And we need your resume no later than September 30th, 2021. Please send it to [grantreviewer@ntia.gov](mailto:grantreviewer@ntia.gov). We extend our sincerest thanks to all merit reviewers for their willingness to support our grant programs. We are greatly appreciative to their commitment and significant contribution to our grant expansion goals. We thank you!

1:01:36

Now, I'll hand it off to Francine to open Q&A. Thank you.

1:01:56 – **Francine Alkisswani**

Well that completes our program for today.

1:02:00

And I am sure everyone is sitting around with bated breath saying, how are my questions going to get answered? Let me assure you they will not all get answered today, but we will make every effort to answer as many of them as we can.

1:02:19

But before moving to that, let me say a special thanks to all of my CMC Pilot Program colleagues who have done a fantastic job in making these presentations.

1:02:33

And a thank you to Ming and Mercedes for their expertise and help in explaining what the requirements are from the NIST grants office.

1:02:47

Without any further ado, I'm going to start trying to field some of the questions that came our way today, and let me tell you, there are many of them.

1:02:57

Sometimes I think some of you just sat around and waited and said, I am going to wait for today to get to you.

1:03:05

But let me say answer the first question. First one I want to answer: if an applicant, or any one of you attempts to reach the Connecting Minority Communities team staff by email, and you have not received a response, what should you do?

1:03:26

Well, first of all, many apologies if that has indeed happened.

1:03:30

We will make every effort to get back to each and every one of you that contacts us. You see the whole team on the call today – one or the other of us will, indeed, get back to you.

1:03:44

And if by chance, we miss it, then it's simply send an email and say, hey, folks, you haven't answered me. And we will get back to you.

1:03:52

So, I just want to put that out there, first of all. So, we don't have all that long. So, let's jump right into it.

1:03:59

And I'm going to try and do these by categories. Colleagues, if I miss something or miss an important question that you heard that I haven't answered or brought forward, please make sure that you do that.

1:04:13

The first question I'm going to throw out there to you and that's to you, Karen.

1:04:19

The question is: as an MSI (Minority Serving Institution), we don't have the ability to determine the following measure, namely students who have not approved or been approved to receive unemployment insurance benefits under any federal or state law since March 2020. Can you give some suggestions for obtaining this information?

1:04:46 – **Karen Perry**

I think that's a great action item for us to see if we can give some suggestions.

1:04:50

Usually, when we present the page on identifying financial need, we clearly admit that the first three elements about student enrollment, low-income enrollment, [Federal] Pell Grants, and financial aid are things that our universities usually track.

1:05:08

For the other elements, which are much more esoteric and are a little bit more difficult for you as a community, as a university, among other reasons, because of privacy, we're just asking for your best efforts. So, you could provide unemployment information for your community, and that would not be specific, but it would be a best effort guess, at what the level of need is in the community.

1:05:33

So, we recognize fully that the last three items on that list are not regularly tracked, and we're really just asking for your best effort view of the data. If we can come up with any specific source, we will let you know, but I think we know what you know, which is that data is pretty hard to get.

1:05:53 - **Francine Alkisswani**

Thank you. I have another one for you. Will grant awards be released as lump sums or on an annual basis for each of the two years?

1:06:06 – **Karen Perry**

I'm going to punt that one over to Ming and Emy.

1:06:11 – **Ming Qiu**

Ok let me try to answer that question. I think that's a great question. So, generally, you know, depending on the funding availability, we will make an award to fully fund the award.

1:06:21

Once we fully fund the award, unless there is any specific award conditions in the award, advanced payment will be basically authorized to another entity in advance through ASAP, and the recipient will be able to draw down funds as needed on that, not to exceed 30 days cash on hand, for allowable expenses. So, the payment will be preauthorized to ASAP.gov and the lead applicant recipient will be able to draw down funds [on a] as needed basis.

1:07:02 - **Francine Alkisswani**

Great, Thank you, Ming. Kevin, are you ready? There are three questions sort of lumped into one going your way. How can service providers be involved, number one. Number two, do ISP owners have to be minorities? And can a wireless ISP apply?

1:07:25

Let's take the first one, how can service providers be involved?

1:07:31 – **Kevin Hughes**

Well, I think service providers can be involved with regards to providing connectivity to the students. A lot of the CMC grant is focused towards students, and of course with those with the greatest need. So, when we talk about providing connectivity to those students with the greatest need, that can be done using equipment, laptops, and tablets that are Wi-Fi enabled and so forth. So, connectivity can be provided that way and an ISP can be utilized in that fashion to perhaps lease the equipment that could go to students and things of that nature.

1:08:22

What was the second one, Francine?

1:08:46 - **Francine Alkisswani**

Do ISP owners have to be minorities? Or may they be minorities?

1:08:49 – **Kevin Hughes**

Well, they certainly can be minorities. But I think the thrust of the program is to really benefit those minority students and the surrounding communities within a 15-mile radius of the anchor institutions that fall under that category.

1:08:55 - **Francine Alkisswani**

Thank you. The next part of that question I'm going to toss back to Karen, and perhaps you could also shed some more light on the question. There are several questions about the eligibility issue. Can a wireless ISP apply?

1:09:16 – **Karen Perry**

Well, the primary applicant does need to be the university or the college. And so, in general, no, a wireless ISP cannot be your primary applicant.

1:09:29

If you did have a consortium application in which that wireless applicant was either a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit or a minority owned business, then they could be a part of that consortium application. But I also want to add to the point that Kevin made, which is that, by statute, we do have two kinds of obligations in terms of how the grants are administered in the end, that 40% of the funds need to go to HBCUs, and 20% of the funds need to directly go to support low-income students. So that would be with things like Kevin mentioned, broadband subscription support and computer support, as well.

1:10:11 – **Francine Alkisswani**

Just to follow on that, there was quite a lengthy set questions with respect to whether or not we provide data in the same vein as the FCC provides spreadsheets that complement the dashboard data.

1:10:28

But I think we will address that in more detail.

1:10:32

It's very good information – the basis for some FAQs which we are working on, so we'll address those to whoever the questioner was. We will address them. We thank you for those, and we will take those into account in developing our next batch of FAQs. Sort of a summary of what was being brought up there pertains to whether we will be publishing a definitive list of eligible institutions.

1:11:02 – **Karen Perry**

One of the things that happened, really almost coincident with us issuing the NOFO, is that the US Department of Education, Post-Secondary Office also updated their list of eligible entities associated with both the Title III and the Title V programs.

1:11:21

So, both of those programs are specifically designed to support universities and colleges that have a low-income population or minority population and the programs give them a number of opportunities for additional funding.

1:11:38

Within that listing, we are looking specifically at organizations that are listed on the MSI list as category five or six.

1:11:51

Six being you've gotten the grant, and five meaning you're eligible. But there is one constraint, and this was another question that was asked: if you're on the list, do you qualify?

1:12:01

If you're on the list, you're either eligible or potentially eligible, but we still need to look at that need question. And so, if you do have a large minority population, but that population is generally not low-income, you likely would not meet that means test.

1:12:18

So, you're technically eligible, but you need to look at the second element around greatest need. And I think the other question was, when are we going to get that dashboard updated with the new 2021 data?

1:12:31

And that the answer is soon, I expect within a week or 10 days. I'm working with Lindsay on it right now and will we have a separate downloadable spreadsheet. That's going to need to be approved.

1:12:45

But we've developed it, and we're hoping we can offer that as well to complement the dashboard.

1:12:52 - **Francine Alkisswani**

Great. Thank you.

1:12:53

Emy, could you be so kind as to explain the role of the MBE or 501(c)(3) organization in the project and maybe give some examples? I think you touched on this. You and Michell highlighted some of that, but still a question out there, so could you shed some light on that, please?

1:13:15 – **Emy Tseng**

So the important [role] with the MBEs and non-profit organizations are really in the consortia projects. So, the hope is that at least some institutions choose to partner with minority business

enterprises and non-profits within the anchor communities. So, the MBEs and non-profit organizations can be both. They can carry out parts of the program activities, whether it's training, or technical support, or outreach, and those types of activities in the anchor communities. At the same time, according to statute, funds can be used to build the capacity of MBEs and non-profits – basically their technology capacity to carry out these types of activities.

1:14:08

So, I'll give them - I think Michelle did highlight an example, but, for example, if a program, like [a] university wanted to work with minority business enterprises in terms of entrepreneurship and providing them with training, and some equipment and such.

1:14:30

So, if there are, again, programs that strengthen the capacity of organizations and MBEs related to digital inclusion and broadband, that may be an eligible program.

1:14:52 - **Francine Alkisswani**

Thank you, Emy.

1:14:55

Now, will a consortium or any consortia, submission be given a preference in this grant process?

1:15:05 – **Emy Tseng**

There's no preference in terms of a consortia or institutional – it's really up to the institutions' choices. I'll go ahead and answer another question that's often asked: if an institution decides to both lead a consortium and also has a project that addresses its own capacity, that they should just submit one application and describe both types of roles.

1:15:43 – **Karen Perry**

Let me just highlight that, remember, 25% of the evaluation points are to project purpose, then the next 35%, I think goes to the need question. But on the project purpose – the project purposes are broad/ They are not only about the community, they are about that institutional capacity – building your IT capacity, building programmatic capacity – so you could meet the program purchase goal without doing a community project. It is the choice of the applicant.

1:16:18 - **Francine Alkisswani**

Excellent point.

1:16:19

Yes, Ming you're sitting there very quietly. You don't get off the hook. For you, please – I have several, if you don't mind. I'll just take them one at a time, if I may. Do subawardees need to have a DUNS number?

1:16:40 – **Ming Qiu**

You know, that's a great question. Subrecipients basically do not have to complete a full SAM registration. However, per the 2CFR 25.300, and the July 25, 2019 GSA guidance, the grant recipient must ensure the subrecipients have a DUNS number, or a unique entity identifier (UEI). Subrecipients are required to provide that to the recipient, the UEI, that are obtained from the SAM.gov. Subrecipients must have and provide the UEI number to the recipient before the subaward can be made by the recipient. So, the recipient must notify any potential recipient as such. So, they do not need to have a

SAM registration, a DUNS number in terms of submission, but they do have to have a SAM DUNS number registered in order for them to receive a subaward.

1:17:48 - **Francine Alkisswani**

Thank you.

1:17:49

Right. I have a couple of other questions. I actually have several, but time's limited. So, I'm going to ask you: is there a cost sharing or matching funds requirement? What will cost share be considered – is it considered favorably? In other words, is there a match requirement, is there a cost sharing requirement, and how is it considered?

1:18:15 – **Ming Qiu**

Thank you for that question. I think throughout the presentation, several presenters have mentioned about this program, the CMC Pilot Program, has a no-cost share requirement. And NTIA will not require cost share for this pilot program. NTIA will not give a favorable consideration to the application-proposed voluntary cost share.

1:18:37

However, that does not have to prevent you to provide in a proposal voluntarily cost share to the award. If you do propose voluntary cost share to the award, that must be documented in the capacity that provide matching funds in the application. Now a voluntary cost share committed to the award by the recipient or applicant will be treated as voluntary, committed cost sharing and will be a binding commitment under the award. So, there's no cost share required. If you do propose cost share, that needs to be documented and justified in the proposal. Also that becomes binding to the award.

1:19:30 - **Francine Alkisswani**

[Crosstalk] I'm sorry, Karen, go ahead. I'm sorry.

1:19:32 - **Karen Perry**

I was gonna say, I always think that Kevin's favorite slide is the one where he says and there's no match requirement.

1:19:41 – **Francine Alkisswani**

Right.

1:19:45 – **Kevin Hughes**

If I may Francine, that's one of the things that makes the CMC grant really stand out, is that there is no match required.

1:19:54

And if I may, this grant is really such a great one – not only because applicants will have the opportunity to work with such a distinguished team reflected here in my colleagues. But also, because I think when Congress put together the Act, they really intended for this to have long-reaching effects within the minority universities and the 15-mile radius surrounding those universities.

1:20:29

So in that regard, I really encourage all potential applicants on this webinar to really look at the final rule, look at the NOFO, examine it carefully, and really put together a compelling narrative as to why your university has the greatest need for this awesome opportunity in the CMC grant. Francine?

1:20:56 - **Francine Alkisswani**

Yeah. Thank you.

1:20:57

And actually, you just opened up a segway for so many things. But you're right, and it's an opportunity as we've all been through the BTOP program, but an opportunity to look at what problem – a unique situation exists within your institution and how this grant and its funds will help you to solve that. And perhaps to even come up with an innovative and unique way or solution to that problem that is in the long-run the steppingstone to bigger and greater things.

1:21:38

And the other comment I wanted to make with respect to the matching since we've been engaged for so many years in working with HBCUs, TCUs, and other minority serving institutions. I think this was wise on the part of Congress perhaps, it has been a known fact that over the years, matching funds has been a difficult hurdle for many minority serving institutions when it comes to being competitive with respect to federal grants. So, in their wisdom, it was made claim that there would be no matching funds as a requirement for this grants program. But we have gone on long enough about that.

1:22:27

There is a question here with respect to pre-application fees being reimbursable. Who would like to address that? Ming – would you want to take a stab at it first?

1:22:40 – **Ming Qiu**

Sure. Yeah.

1:22:42

As Scott mentioned in his presentation earlier, and also stated in NOFO as well – so the CMC Pilot Program allows pre-award application expenses in an amount up to \$50,000 as eligible to use to fund the CMC Pilot Program. So according to the NOFO, the pre-application expenses may be reimbursed if they incur after the publication date of the NOFO and prior to the issuance of the grant from NTIA, except lobbying causes and then contingency fees are not reimbursable from the grant funds. Pre-award application should be fully justified and clearly identified in the proposal, budget, and budget narrative. Additionally, pre-award application costs are incurred at the sole risk of the applicant if the award is not made. Which means that [if] it was not made, if your application is not selected, basically the costs incurred you're not guaranteed reimbursement money. The cost will be reimbursed if your award is selected and awarded. At that time, you will be able to reimburse the pre-award expenses up to \$50,000.

1:24:05 - **Francine Alkisswani**

Very good, thanks.

1:24:06

Another question with respect to costs that extend beyond the period of performance, or beyond the grant award project.

1:24:18

As you know, the grants are intended to provide Internet access, Internet service, Wi-Fi hotspots, loaning of equipment and devices, but I think this pertains primarily to services. That is, what is the intent, or the law, with respect to these grants paying for Internet service that extends beyond the period of performance for the grantees?

1:24:56

In other words, there are many programs that will provide services and subsidies, and they turn off at a certain point, which has, in turn, leave the recipients high and dry. And I don't think that's the intent of this, but the point is, what is the requirement vis-a-vis NIST in terms of those grant funds?

1:25:20 – **Karen Perry**

I think Emy's got an answer too.

1:25:21 – **Emy Tseng**

Yes, that funds need to be used for services that are provided only during the term of the grant. And so, things like subscriptions to licensing fees would need to be prorated depending on when the grant ends.

1:25:49 – **Francine Alkisswani**

OK.

1:25:50 - **Ming Qiu**

Right, so, just federal funds and non-federal funds [that] are committed to the award may only be used or incurred during the period of performance of their award, and include maybe for some allowable closeout expenses, administrative expenses incurred during the closeout process. Generally the funds are only allowable when the costs incurred during the period of performance of the award.

1:26:15 – **Francine Alkisswani**

We brought that up, and – a question that was asked and that has to do with how budgets are prepared and what plans do schools make with respect to the end or closing of an award period, that there is an end to the service that has been subsidized during this project period.

1:26:38

We are closing in on the end of our time. There are several questions here that pertain to the mapping tool. We will reserve our responses to that for the FAQs and have a very extended and expansive response to that that we hope will be helpful. I'd like right now, though I do have questions here, I want to check with each of you to see if there is an outstanding question in your minds that you'd like to both ask and answer. Karen?

1:27:19 - **Karen Perry**

Well, I'm going to tackle a couple of them related to the mapping tool. One is that, as noted, the 2021 data from the Department of Education just came out, and we will have updates very soon, but within a couple of weeks. The second one is number of people – one person particularly asked about if they are from an area where we don't have American Community data, such as the US. Virgin Islands, what should they do? And the answer is talk to us sooner rather than later. You will need to justify the data you provide in your application. But talk to us now, and let's just talk it through ahead of time. So, feel free to contact me or anybody else on the team. Our information will be at the end, and/or just send it to BroadbandUSA and we will respond and have a pre-conversation with you about it.

1:28:16

And then another comment noted that our map doesn't do everything. So, our CMC dashboard is really a very limited function around looking at the eligibility for the institution and the surrounding area. That's one of the reasons why we showed you the Indicators of Broadband Need map [in the] last webinar, and there are other tools out there. And I do want to mention one that's specifically designed to be helpful and that's the Tribal and Minority Toolkit. So, if you Google that, that's another for fee tool, but there's other tools out there that are specifically designed and that might also be helpful.

1:28:57 - **Francine Alkisswani**

Great. Emy? Burning question that's not been asked.

1:29:03 – **Emy Tseng**

Well, I'll just go ahead and answer a couple questions I think from the chat. One is around the – let me pull this up – can funding be used to do a subcontractor professional services for installation of equipment? And, yes, for those kinds of professional IT services, those are allowable costs. And whether you structure it as a contractor – that will depend on the grant [and] how you structure the grant and contracts within your grant. The other question was about a reimbursement of – let me pull that up, let's see – can funding be used to reimburse employers who hire apprentices and interns, I assume. And I think in some ways, that might be more of a grants office [question], but I would maybe suggest that you think about structuring a stipend, because things like – it would probably depend on the contract, probably, whether or not that employer was a MBE, things like that. So, you know, I would put this under the category of think about stipends for internships and apprenticeships.

1:30:28 - **Francine Alkisswani**

To add to that, Emy, as the category of examples. We've run across some MSIs [and] a few HBCUs, and this falls into the category of IT training and professional development at the schools. And that is they have engaged the students in their computer science programs or other programs, and continue and further their training as interns and apprentices within the IT shop of the school itself. So that has expanded their capacity on campus, as well as helping to train them as professionals in that field. I'm glad you brought it up.

1:31:10 – **Emy Tseng**

We've explicitly allowed stipends for those types of programs.

1:31:15 - **Francine Alkisswani**

Right. Kevin, and then Ming. And I only have one minute.

1:31:20 - **Kevin Hughes**

Really quickly for those who have questions, I think the webinar will be available online. But in the section that Scott narrated, he lists the eligible and ineligible uses and purposes for the grant funding. And I think that that will be very helpful for those of you who need clarity in terms of what you can do and what you can't do with the grant. Ming, I'll turn it over to you.

1:31:45 – **Ming Qiu**

Thank you, Scott, I mean I'm sorry. Thank you, Kevin.

1:31:48

So yes, I just had one thing to add to that. I think we saw a question about indirect costs for the applications. So, I think Scott went through very thoroughly in his presentation regarding indirect costs that is allowable to be charged to the CMC Pilot Program and in the NOFO there is a section detailed out how to apply indirect cost rate, if you don't have one. If you have a negotiated indirect cost rate, make sure you include that into your budget, [and] also include the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with your application. Also, if you do not have an indirect cost rate, and you don't have a currently negotiated rate, you can also use the 10% de minimis rate which is available as well. So, I refer you to the NOFO for more detailed information and the 2CFR200 also provides that information. Thank you.

1:32:44 - **Francine Alkisswani**

Thank you, Ming. Thank you, all of you. We have gone one minute over and we could go another hour, I'm sure. We appreciate everybody's attendance in today's session. I think you will find on the – you see here dates for our next webinars. And make sure you put them on your calendar and join, and just immerse yourselves in this and be prepared to give us a first-rate application, which I know you all will. And you really can reach us – I suggest you reach one of us through the direct email addresses that you do have, and we look forward to hearing from you, and we look forward to seeing you next time, and we look forward to seeing your applications. And I think that is it for today. And thank you, everyone.