

Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program

Frequently Asked Questions (August 17, 2021)

The below Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are for informational purposes only and are intended solely to assist potential applicants in better understanding the NTIA Connecting Minority Communities (CMC) Pilot Program and the application requirements set forth in the CMC [Final Rule](#) and [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO) for this program. The FAQs do not and are not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, or the specific application requirements set forth in the NOFO. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the NOFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in the below FAQs.

Program Overview

What is the NTIA Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program?

The Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program seeks to expand educational instruction and remote learning opportunities, spur economic development, and create opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship, by building the digital capacity of historically Black colleges or universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges or Universities (TCUs) and Minority-serving Institutions (MSIs) and furthering broadband access, adoption and digital skills within these anchor institutions and their surrounding anchor communities.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Division N, Title IX, Section 902, Public Law 116-260, 134 Stat. 1182 (Dec. 27, 2020) (Act) provides new sources of broadband and digital inclusion funding, including the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program. The Act authorized NTIA to administer grants to eligible anchor institutions (*i.e.*, the educational institutions mentioned above) for the purchase of broadband internet access service or any eligible equipment, or to hire and train information technology personnel: to facilitate educational instruction and learning, including through remote instruction; to operate a minority business enterprise (MBE); or to operate a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. The Act also authorizes grants to consortia that are led by an eligible anchor institution, that includes an MBE or a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

What type of assistance is available in the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program?

The Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program is a competitive grant program. NTIA will make up to \$268M available for Federal assistance. As required by the Act, NTIA will set aside at least 40% of funds for distribution to qualifying historically Black colleges or universities (HBCUs). As also required by the Act, NTIA will set aside at least 20% of funds for the provision of broadband access and/or eligible devices and equipment to students of eligible anchor institutions. Funding will be awarded based on a number of criteria guided by the statutory requirements to address the greatest unmet needs.

What is the target size of grant awards for projects?

NTIA expects to make awards under this program within the following funding range: \$500,000 to \$3,000,000. This range is not a required minimum or maximum. Eligible applicants requesting amounts for projects outside of this range must provide a reasonable explanation for the variance in their project size.

Eligibility

Who can apply for funding under the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program?

The following entities are eligible for funding under the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program:

- Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs)
- Tribal Colleges or Universities (TCUs)
- Minority-serving Institutions (MSIs) including
 - Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions (ANNHs)
 - Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)
 - Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)
 - Native American serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASNTIs)
 - Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs)
- Consortia led by an HBCU, TCU, or MSI that include a Minority Business Enterprise or Tax-Exempt 501(c)(3) Organization

The list of eligible HBCUs and TCUs can be found at National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) College Navigator website: <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>. The Eligibility Matrix for Minority-serving Institutions is also managed by NCES and is available on the U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education website:

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/itudes/eligibility.html#tips>.

An eligible consortium must conduct program activities within qualifying census tracts within the fifteen-mile radius of the eligible institution (*i.e.*, census tracts that have an estimated median annual household income of not more than two hundred and fifty percent (250%) of the poverty line). See Section III of the NOFO for additional information about the eligibility requirements.

Who must be the “lead” applicant for the grant funding?

An eligible higher education institution (*i.e.*, an HBCU, TCU or MSI) must serve as the lead applicant in a consortium application. The lead applicant would enter into the grant agreement with NTIA and assume primary operational and financial responsibility for completing the project should an award be made.

A Minority Business Enterprise or Tax-Exempt 501(c)(3) Organization can participate in the project as part of the consortium.

What are eligible projects under the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program?

Applicants may request funding for projects that have at least one of the following purposes:

- Builds the broadband and IT capacity of eligible HBCU, TCU and MSI institutions.
- Provides broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, and support to students and patrons at eligible institutions, MBEs and certain tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations in anchor communities.
- Provides subsidized broadband access and equipment to qualified low-income/in-need students and communities.

- Improves use of broadband services by eligible MBEs and community-based organizations to deliver digital skills, digital inclusion, workforce development programs, and technology services in anchor communities.
- Stimulates the adoption and community use of broadband services for telehealth, remote learning, telework and entrepreneurship, economic growth, and job creation in anchor communities.
- Builds digital skills and IT workforce capacity in HBCU, TCU and MSI institutions, anchor communities, and MBE and tax-exempt consortia members, including STEM/STEAM, coding, cybersecurity, technician, and work-based learning programs.
- Assesses the needs of HBCU, TCU and MSI anchor institutions and surrounding anchor communities and conducts planning related to online education, digital inclusion, workforce, and digital skills development.
- Gathers data and conducts evaluation of the digital inclusion, broadband access and adoption, and professional development programs funded by the grant to determine their effectiveness and document best practices.

What areas are defined as “anchor communities” in the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program?

For the purposes of the CMC Pilot Program, the term Anchor Community means any area that is not more than 15 miles from a historically Black college or university, a Tribal College or University, or a Minority-serving institution; and has an estimated median annual household income (based on U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey data) of not more than 250 percent of the poverty line.

For more information on anchor communities, see Section III.C.2 of the NOFO and the CMC Anchor Community Eligibility Dashboard at <https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/cmcdashboard>.

How will NTIA determine which eligible institutions have the greatest unmet financial need?

To determine the eligible anchor institutions with the greatest unmet financial need, NTIA will assess the following information for each institution:

- Student population size
- Number and percentage of students that are eligible to receive Federal Pell Grants
- Number and percentage of students that receive other need-based financial aid from the Federal government, a State, or that institution
- Number and percentage of students that qualify as low-income consumers for the purposes of the program carried out under 47 C.F.R. Part 54, Subpart E
- Number and percentage of students that are low-income individuals as that term is defined in section 312(g) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1058(g))
- Number and percentage of students that have been approved to receive unemployment insurance benefits under any Federal or State law since March 1, 2020.

Each applying anchor institution must provide this information in its application to the extent that the information is reasonably available. NTIA will analyze submitted information for each of these criteria

and will develop an assessment of each institution's student-body-based unmet financial needs. These assessments will be compared across all submitted applications during the merit review phase and program eligibility determinations will be made based on an evaluation of the data provided and accompanying explanatory information. Final recommendations for project approval and grant funding will be made for those eligible anchor institutions that have demonstrated the highest unmet financial need.

Is there a limit on the number of applications an eligible institution may submit?

An eligible institution may submit only one application for the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program. If an institution has a project for its own institutional purposes and is also the lead applicant for a consortium that proposes a project in the surrounding anchor community, it should submit one application containing all required information about both projects.

Is there a matching requirement for the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program?

No, the Act authorizing the establishment of the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program does not contain a statutory cost sharing or matching funds requirement for this grant program. Therefore, NTIA will not require an eligible applicant to provide a cost match and NTIA will not give favorable consideration to applications proposing voluntary cost share. However, applicants may propose to contribute a binding, voluntary committed non-federal cost share amount (as described in the definitional section of 2 C.F.R. 200.1) and, if they do propose such non-federal cost share, must document their capacity to provide such matching funds in their applications.

What are eligible uses of Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program funds?

Grant recipients may only use Federal award funds and any non-Federal cost share committed to an award to pay for allowable costs under the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program. Allowable costs are determined in accordance with the cost principles identified in 2 C.F.R. Part 200, including Subpart E of such regulations for States and non-profit organizations, and in 48 C.F.R. Part 31 for commercial organizations, as well as in the CMC grant program authorizing legislation.

Based on the scope of the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program, below are non-exclusive examples of how an eligible institution and/or consortium may generally leverage grant funds to:

- Fund personnel costs, including salaries and fringe benefits for staff and consultants required for the implementation of the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program.
- Fund increases in broadband networking capability, hardware, software, and other digital technology for broadband services, remote education, and distance learning.
- Fund equipment and devices (such as laptops, tablets, and hotspots, but excluding mobile phones) to support connectivity for remote education.
- Fund, provide and implement affordable broadband programs that facilitate greater access to broadband services, devices, and equipment; including providing free or reduced-cost broadband service and preventing disconnection of existing broadband service.
- Fund, provide and implement digital training, education, technology support, outreach and awareness programs including workforce development and IT training.
- Fund access to broadband services including improvement of broadband services and equipment in eligible institutions.

- Conduct needs assessments and develop plans for increasing broadband adoption and access to remote education.
- Fund Program Evaluation and Data Collection activities to collect data and document best practices for replicable and sustainable programs.
- Fund subawards and contractual costs associated with carrying out programmatic activities of a Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program grant, including for program implementation and consulting services.
- Fund reasonable pre-application expenses in an amount not to exceed \$50,000.
- Fund other allowable costs necessary to carrying out programmatic activities of an award, not to include ineligible costs described below.

See Section IV.J.1 of the CMC NOFO for further information concerning the eligible uses of project funding under the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program.

What are ineligible uses of Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program funds?

Ineligible costs include those costs that are unallowable under the applicable federal cost principles. Please note that costs ineligible for the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program may not be paid for with non-federal cost share committed to an award. In addition, the following costs are specifically identified as prohibited under the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program.

The following cost prohibitions apply to all eligible recipients, including consortium members:

- a. **Prohibition on use of grant funds for certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment.** A recipient may not use grant funds, or voluntary cost share (if any) to procure, obtain or support certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment identified in 2 C.F.R. § 200.216.
- b. **Prohibition on profit and fees.** A profit, fee, or other incremental charge above actual cost is not an allowable cost under this program.
- c. **Prohibited uses of equipment.** The sale or transfer of any portion of the grant-funded equipment for a thing (including a service) of value during the life of equipment is prohibited.
- d. **Construction activities.** Activities related to construction are not allowable under this program.
- e. **Pre-award costs.** An eligible recipient may not use more than \$50,000 of grant funds to pay for the preparation of the grant.
- f. **Loan repayment.** An eligible recipient may not use grant funds to repay, or make any other payment relating to, a loan made by any public or private lender.
- g. **Loan collateral.** An eligible recipient may not use grant amounts as collateral for a loan made by any public or private lender.
- h. **Previously incurred costs.** An eligible recipient may not use grant funds to pay for previously incurred administrative costs (aside from certain pre-application expenses, as described above) or previously purchased equipment.
- i. **Duplication of funding.** An eligible recipient may not use grant funds to pay for the costs of providing broadband service or eligible equipment to any locations or individuals that are

already receiving funding for such services or equipment from other sources (including other Federal agencies).

See Section IV.J.2 of the CMC NOFO for further information about the ineligible uses of project funding under the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program.

How to Apply

When does the CMC application period open, and when is the deadline to apply?

NTIA is accepting applications for the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program from August 3, 2021 through December 1, 2021. Complete applications must be received by www.grants.gov **no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on December 1, 2021.**

Complete application packets must be submitted electronically through www.grants.gov. Complete applications or portions thereof submitted by postal mail, courier, email, or by facsimile will not be accepted. See Section IV of the NOFO for detailed information concerning application submission requirements.

What accounts and registration do I need to submit my application electronically?

Each applicant will need a Dun & Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number, registration with the System for Award Management (SAM), and an account with Grants.gov. Note that users who have registered with SAM now have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) within Grants.gov.

*Please note that the Unique Entity Identifier is replacing DUNS

([https://grantsgovprod.wordpress.com/2021/06/15/using-the-unique-entity-identifier-uei-in-grants\[1\]gov/](https://grantsgovprod.wordpress.com/2021/06/15/using-the-unique-entity-identifier-uei-in-grants[1]gov/)).

How do I get a DUNS number?

All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a DUNS Number from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). Applicants must enter the DUNS Number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational DUNS" on the SF-424 form. For more detailed instructions for obtaining a DUNS Number, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>. Applicants can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or via the Internet at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.

What is the difference between my Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and my Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS)?

The UEI is a 12-character unique number assigned to all entities (public and private companies, individuals, institutions, or organizations) who must register to do business with the federal government in SAM. This "SAM UEI" will phase out the nine-character Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number in April 2022. Grants.gov continues to work closely with SAM during the transition from the DUNS Number to the SAM UEI. Grants.gov now retrieves the UEI from SAM, and all users who have registered with SAM are now seeing their UEI when they log into Grants.gov.

*Please note that the Unique Entity Identifier is replacing DUNS ([https://grantsgovprod.wordpress.com/2021/06/15/using-the-unique-entity-identifier-uei-in-grants\[1\]gov/](https://grantsgovprod.wordpress.com/2021/06/15/using-the-unique-entity-identifier-uei-in-grants[1]gov/)).

How do I register in SAM?

All applicants must register in SAM before submitting a complete application packet. Additionally, the applicant must maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. SAM registration must be renewed annually. For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>. Applicants can register for the SAM at <https://www.sam.gov/>. Note that the free annual registration process in SAM.gov generally takes between three (3) and five (5) business days, but can take more than three weeks. Please note that 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.

How do I create a Grants.gov account?

Applicants can register an account with Grants.gov by following the on-screen instructions or refer to the detailed instructions here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html>.

In addition, see the NOFO section IV.L.1.4-6 for additional information on navigating Grants.gov, including how to add a profile to a Grants.gov account, organization roles authorization and designation of the grant Authorized Organization Representative (AOR), how to track role requests, and AOR signature process (which is required for a complete application and is an often missed step).

Can applicants use the Grants.gov Workspace to submit an application?

Yes. Grants.gov applicants can apply online using Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different web forms within an application. For access to complete instructions on how to apply for opportunities on Grants.gov, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>. In addition, see Section IV.L.2 of the NOFO for additional information on using Workspace to submit your application.

How do I access the application?

Application forms and instructions are available on the Grants.gov website (www.grants.gov). To access these materials, go to www.grants.gov, select "How to Apply for Grants," and then select "Search for Opportunity Package." Enter the CFDA number (11.028) and/or the funding opportunity number (NTIA-CMCP-2021). Select "Grant Opportunity Package," and then follow the prompts. To download the instructions, go to "Preview Opportunity Package" and select "Download Instructions."

NTIA recommends that applicants visit Grants.gov prior to filing their applications so that they fully understand the process and requirements. Applications are accepted until the deadline and are processed as received. Late or incomplete applications and applications submitted by mail, courier, or by facsimile will not be accepted.

What information is required in the application?

Please see NOFO Section IV.B, Content and Form of Applications, for a detailed list of Standard Forms (SF) and related documentation required for submission. Items in Section IV.B.1 through IV.B.5 of the NOFO are part of the standard application package in Grants.gov and can be completed through the download application process.

Items in Section IV.B.6 through IV.B.11 and Section IV.C of the NOFO must be completed and attached by clicking on “Add Attachments” found in item 15 of the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance. This will create a zip file that allows for transmittal of the documents electronically via Grants.gov.

Applicants should carefully follow specific Grants.gov instructions at www.Grants.gov to ensure the attachments will be accepted by the Grants.gov system. A receipt from Grants.gov indicates only that an application was transferred to a system. It does not provide details concerning whether all attachments (or how many attachments) were transferred successfully. Applicants will receive a series of e-mail messages over a period of up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency’s electronic system has received its application.

Are there any additional application format restrictions or requirements?

Yes. Additional application instructions include:

- Applications only will be accepted electronically through Grants.gov. Paper, email and facsimile submissions will not be accepted.
- Any figures, graphs, images, and pictures should be of a size that is easily readable or viewable and may be landscape orientation.
- All documents must have an easy to read font (10-point minimum), however smaller type may be used in figures and tables but must be clearly legible.
- Applicants may use single spacing or double spacing and margins should be at least one inch top, bottom, left, and right.
- Application documents should be portrait orientation except for figures, graphs, images, and pictures.
- Paragraphs are to be clearly separated from each other by double spacing, paragraph formatting or equivalent.
- Page Limits:
 - The Project Narrative is limited to 20 pages single spaced (40 pages double spaced), noting the limit of two (2) pages for the Executive Summary.
 - Resumes and environmental and historic preservation review documentation are not included in the page count of the Proposal Narrative.
 - If resumes are included, resumes must be a maximum of one (1) page each.
- Ensure all pages are numbered sequentially.
- Application page size must be 8½ inches by 11 inches.
- Applications must be submitted in English.
- All applications, including forms, must be typed.

How will I know if I successfully submitted my application in Grants.gov?

Applicants will receive e-mail notifications from Grants.gov over a period of up to two (2) business days as the application moves through intermediate systems before the applicant learns via a validation or rejection notification whether a Federal agency's electronic system has received the application. (See [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for full information on application and notification through Grants.gov). This email notification interval should be taken into consideration in the grant application timeline.

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant with the AOR role who submitted the application will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of the application. This applicant with the AOR role will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of the timely submission.

When NTIA successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role who submitted the application. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by NTIA.

Applicants using a slow Internet connection, such as dial-up, should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Again, Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role attempting to submit the application. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

Will NTIA offer trainings or other resources to help with the application?

NTIA will continue to conduct CMC [webinars](#) and pre-application technical assistance for the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program. [Sign up for BroadbandUSA updates](#) for the most up-to-date information.

Evaluation of Applications

How will applications be reviewed/evaluated?

The review process will be divided into three stages: (1) Initial Administrative and Eligibility Review of complete application packets; (2) Merit Review; and (3) Programmatic Review. Not all applications will necessarily proceed through all three review stages depending on the results of the review process. Please see Section V of the NOFO for more information.

What is the process for the Administrative and Eligibility Review?

NTIA will perform an initial Administrative and Eligibility Review of applications received on time through Grants.gov to determine eligibility, completeness and responsiveness to the programmatic requirements of the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program, including a review of the project narrative and budget justification. Applications submitted by other than an eligible applicant will be eliminated from further review. NTIA may continue the initial administrative review process for an application that is timely submitted by an eligible applicant, but that is missing certain information or documentation required by the NOFO. NTIA will request missing or incomplete information from the applicant as needed.

What is the Merit Review process?

Applications satisfying the Initial Administrative and Eligibility Review will move to the Merit Review Process and will be evaluated by at least two objective reviewers who have demonstrated expertise in the programmatic aspects of the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program. They may be Federal employees or non-Federal personnel. During the merit review process, the reviewers may discuss the applications with each other, but scores will be determined on an individual basis.

How will the Merit Review evaluators score my application?

Reviewers will evaluate applications according to the evaluation criteria provided in Section V.A of the NOFO and independently score each application based on a scale of 0-100. The evaluation criteria are grouped into five categories: (1) Project Purpose (25 points); (2) Project Needs and Benefits (35 points); (3) Project Viability and Innovation (20 points); (4) Project Budget (15 points); and (5) Project Evaluation (5 points).

NTIA will evaluate those eligible applications that satisfy the statutory purposes and funding requirements set forth in the Act and in the NOFO against objective evaluation criteria to determine whether an application merits an award. Applications that satisfy the statutory purposes and funding requirements of the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program will score highly when evaluated against the objective evaluation criteria during Merit Review and will advance to the Programmatic Review stage. From this pool of applications, NTIA will select awardees based on the results of the Merit and Programmatic Reviews, and by applying the Selection Factors listed in this NOFO.

What if NTIA or Merit Review evaluators have questions about my application?

NTIA and reviewers may request additional clarifying information or corroborating documentation from an applicant during the course of the Merit Review and may suggest revisions be made to an application to resolve perceived material programmatic or financial weaknesses or deficiencies and may factor such additional materials into their assigned scores for an application. In such cases, NTIA will review the feedback from the Merit Reviewers, and will contact the applicant and provide the applicant with an opportunity to respond to the Merit Review feedback. NTIA may use its sole discretion to terminate the Merit Review revision process for an applicant if NTIA determines that the applicant is not sufficiently responding to requests for additional information or remedying application deficiencies.

What applications will pass onto the Programmatic Review part of the application review process?

Based on an average of the reviewers' scores, applications will be assigned adjectival ratings for each priority group in accordance with the following scale:

- Qualified for Funding – (70-100 points)
- Unqualified for Funding – (0-69 points)

What is evaluated in the Programmatic Review of applications?

NTIA Program Staff will review applications determined to be qualified for funding during the Merit Review process for conformity with programmatic objectives, requirements and priorities as a part of the Programmatic Review. Additionally, NTIA Program staff will verify the anchor institution’s eligibility status and the qualifying census tracts within the 15-mile radius of each eligible institution utilizing the CMC Anchor Community Eligibility Dashboard and/or supplemental information provided by the applicant.

During Programmatic Review, NTIA may ask applicants to submit additional information to clarify or to further substantiate the representations made in their applications. NTIA Program Staff will review the supplemental information, along with all information submitted with the application, to confirm eligibility and evaluate the applications with respect to the requirements and priorities of the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program.

Can NTIA ask for changes in my application during the review process?

NTIA reserves the right at any time during the Application Review process to negotiate with the applicant relative to specific modifications to the application, including but not limited to the resolution of any differences that may exist between the applicant’s original request and NTIA’s determination of eligible census tract areas, eligible costs, and Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program funding priorities.

How are final awards decided in the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program?

At the conclusion of the Programmatic Review, NTIA Program Staff will summarize their analysis for each application reviewed. The Associate Administrator for NTIA’s Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth (OICG Associate Administrator) will prepare a rank order of applications within a particular priority grouping and present a package or packages of recommended grant awards to the Selecting Official for review and approval. The OICG Associate Administrator’s recommendations to the Selecting Official will consider the following selection factors:

1. The scores and technical comments of the objective expert reviewers during Merit Review;
2. The analysis of NTIA Program Staff during Programmatic Review;
3. Satisfaction of the statutory purposes of the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program as set forth in Section 902(c)(1) of the Act, especially considering which eligible recipients in anchor communities have the greatest unmet financial needs;
4. Avoidance of duplication with the initiatives of other federal agencies, including the Department of Education, the National Science Foundation, and the Federal Communications Commission; and
5. The availability of funds.

How will I be notified if my application is selected for an award?

A grants officer from the NIST Grants Office will serve as the Grants Officer for awards issued pursuant to this NOFO. Applicants will be notified in writing by the NIST Grants Officer if their application is selected for an award. (Unsuccessful applicants will also be notified in writing.) If the application is selected for funding, the NIST Grants Officer will issue the grant award (Form CD-450), which is the authorizing financial assistance award document. By signing the Form CD-450, the recipient agrees to comply with all award provisions, terms, and conditions.

Grant Award and Reporting Requirements

What rules or requirements will the grant award be subject to?

Grant recipients must comply with all applicable statutes and regulations contained in the NOFO. These provisions include, but are not limited to the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program Regulations (47 C.F.R. Part 302), the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements (2 C.F.R. Part 200), Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, Pre-Award Notification Requirements, and Property Trust Relationship and Public Notice Filings for Grant-Acquired Property.

What are the reporting requirements for awarded projects?

Grant awardees will be required to submit financial and programmatic/technical reports on their project on a semi-annual basis. Grant awardees will be required to submit an annual report and specific project data to NTIA, as specified in section VI.E.2 of the NOFO. Section VI.E of the NOFO provides additional details on grant awardee reporting requirements.

What is the grant award period of performance and by when must awarded grant funds be expended?

NTIA has set the initial award period as no more than two years from the receipt of grant funds.

Will NTIA allow a grant period of performance extensions?

Yes, NTIA may extend the initial two-year award period for an eligible recipient that proposes to use the grant funds for program purposes if the eligible recipient certifies that: (i) the eligible recipient has a plan for use of the grant funds; (ii) the execution or implementation of the project is underway; or (iii) extenuating circumstances require an extension of time to allow the project to be completed.

How are grant periods of performance extensions granted?

The eligible recipient may submit a request for an extension of the two-year award period with its application or not later than ninety (90) calendar days before the end of the award period.

What happens if the grant recipient does not expend all of its CMC grant funds at the end of its grant period of performance?

If necessary, the Assistant Secretary will reallocate any funds that remain available after awarding grants to eligible recipients that submitted approved applications during the initial round of funding for the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program, or any unused funds that are returned by recipients, through a subsequent NOFO. Any subsequent NOFO will be published by NTIA and publicly accessible via www.grants.gov.