



OFFICE OF STATEWIDE BROADBAND

Connect Maryland:

FY23 Connected Devices Program Second Round Request

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Issued September 25, 2023



WES MOORE
Governor
ARUNA MILLER
Lt. Governor
JACOB R. DAY
Secretary
OWEN McEVOY
Deputy Secretary



Introduction

Office of Statewide Broadband Connect Maryland: FY23 Connected Devices Program

The State of Maryland has appropriated \$30 million for the Department of Housing and Community Development (“Department”) to support the Office of Statewide Broadband (“OSB”) in its efforts to assist in digital equity & inclusion efforts in Maryland. As part of Maryland’s plan to address the digital divide, the OSB is introducing the Maryland Connected Devices Program (“CDP”). The funding source for this budgeted expense is the American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”), State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.

The COVID pandemic has increasingly forced individuals to isolate themselves within their own homes and avoid public venues and services, placing a strain on households who do not have the technology to access the internet. Working in tandem with discounted and free internet services from the Maryland Emergency Broadband Benefit subsidy and Federal ACP subsidy, connected devices have become an additional necessity. Unfortunately, many Marylanders’ cannot afford the cost of a device. Maryland’s Connected Devices Program is intended to provide new, internet-enabled devices to families who are most at need.

The Department issued an Invitation for Bids (“IFB”) in order to procure approximately 145,000 devices over a period of approximately six (6) months. The device specifications included a minimum of: 13” screen, chrome OS, SD card reader, dual band Wi-Fi, 2 USB ports, headphone and video output jacks and a one-year manufacturer’s warranty. The approved bidder, HP, Inc., plans to provide model HP Chromebook 14 G7 or similar in accordance with their contract. During the first round of application request, OSB approved applications for 91,300 chromebooks. This second round of request will provide jurisdictions with the remaining allotment.

The OSB will facilitate the award of devices to the local jurisdictions for distribution by way of this grant program. The OSB will review applications to ensure that the information contained therein is complete and proposes a suitable distribution methodology. The OSB may coordinate with other State Agencies to verify and supplement the information provided in the Application. While the OSB and Department will purchase the devices, enable shipping and provide assistance and oversight, the local jurisdictions will be the responsible agent for the equipment upon receipt and will be responsible for the overall implementation and management of the device project.

Applicants may request a specific delivery schedule for their awarded devices after awards are announced. OSB will do its best to communicate any special requirements for delivery that the applicant may request and coordinate with the vendor to meet those requests. However, no guarantee is made that the requests will be honored.

Applications consist of several written sections with a number of required attachments. Applications must be prepared as described in this Guide.

Application Submission

When and Where to Submit Application:

Program applications must be submitted or postmarked by 11:59pm ET: **September 29, 2023**.

Applications Submitted Electronically:

Applications may be submitted electronically via email. If emailed, the message subject line should read “Maryland Connected Devices Program Application – *your jurisdictional name*”. Except for file formats specifically called out in this guide, files should be converted to pdf’s prior to sending. If there are multiple files, each file should be named to clearly reflect the information it contains. Emailed submissions may be sent to OSB.MD@maryland.gov.

While electronic submission is preferred, applications may be submitted via USPS or shipping:

Postmarked or shipped paper copy of a completed application, with original signatures (*OSB may request an electronic version in addition to paper submission*). Paper applications may be sent to:

Ronnie Hammond
OSB of Statewide Broadband
Department of Housing and Community Development
7800 Harkins Road
Lanham, MD 20706

Paper applications must show proof of mailing or shipping consisting of one of the following:

1. A legibly dated U.S. Postal Service (USPS) postmark;
2. A legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the USPS; or
3. A dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier showing the commercial carrier received the package on or before the application submittal deadline. Self-generated shipping labels where the actual pickup by the carrier occurs after the application submittal deadline are not acceptable.

If an application is sent through the USPS, the following will not be accepted as proof of mailing:

1. A private metered postmark; or
2. A mail receipt that is not dated by the USPS.

Applicants should note that the USPS does not uniformly provide a dated postmark. Before relying on this method, an applicant should check with its local post office.

Applicants that submit their applications after the deadline noted above will be notified that their applications will not be considered for review and their applications will be returned.

Technical Assistance: prior to official submission of applications, applicants may request technical assistance or other application guidance from the OSB, as long as such requests are made prior to, **September 22, 2023**. Technical assistance is not meant to create or edit an application, be an analysis or assessment of the quality of the materials submitted, a substitute for OSB review of completed applications, nor a determination of eligibility, if such determination requires in-depth analysis. The OSB will not solicit or consider scoring related information that is submitted after the application deadline. The OSB reserves the right to contact applicants to seek clarification on materials contained in the submitted application.

Applying to the Program

Applicant Eligibility

Only entities legally recognized as one of the following are eligible for receiving the award:

1. A Maryland local jurisdiction;

Local Jurisdictions including counties and municipalities listed by the Maryland Manual On-Line website (<https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/locgov.html>) are recognized as having legal existence.

The following organizations are **recognized as eligible distribution partners** who may independently conduct distribution. However, any award will be made to the local jurisdictional entity who will be responsible for the project:

- a) Libraries/Library Systems;
- b) LEA (Local Education Agency);
- c) Local municipalities
- d) A foundation, corporation, institution, association, or coalition that is— (i) a not-for-profit IRS approved 501(c) entity and (ii) providing services within the State of Maryland; or
- e) Community based anchor institutions

If the applicant is seeking to partner with a recognized eligible distribution partner to operate the device distribution, an agreement or draft agreement to do so must be provided with the application. This agreement must identify the partner entity, the entities qualifications to manage the distribution and any financial terms of the partnership. Applications that rely on such a relationship but do not provide pertinent details may be rejected. The OSB may consider an application based on an agreement submitted with the application, but if the application is ultimately awarded, the OSB reserves the right to require modifications to such agreements if they are found to contain terms that are unacceptable to the State of Maryland.

If a municipal applicant is located in a county where the county is also an applicant, the entities must coordinate their efforts to ensure that they are complementary and not conflicting. This coordination must be discussed in the deployment portion of the narrative of both applications.

An important aspect of this discussion should focus on how households will be treated if the request a device from a municipality while residing outside of the municipality, but within the county. Will they be turned away, or will the municipality and county have a cooperative system in place to permit conveyance of the device? An alternative to municipalities being applicants may be for them to be distribution partners with their county.

Receiving Household Eligibility

Covered Population: a household with an income at or below 200% of the [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#).

Household Size	Household Income
1	\$27,180
2	\$36,620
3	\$46,060
4	\$55,500
5	\$64,940
6	\$74,380
7	\$83,820
8	\$91,260
For each additional person add:	\$9,440

The following covered populations are eligible to receive devices. Distributing entities must ensure the recipient of devices qualify under one or more of the below eligibility requirements (***only one device per address or recognized MDU unit is allowable***):

- households that show proof of income of less than or equal to 200% of federal poverty level;
- household enrolled in the federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP); and
- households participation in certain government assistance programs such as:
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps
 - Medicaid
 - Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
 - Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit
 - Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program, including at U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Community Eligibility Provision schools
 - Received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year

Project Information

The OSB will provide internet-enabled devices to local jurisdictions for distribution to qualifying households. The applicant must develop an eligibility verification process as part of the application. This process must be outlined within the application narrative and should include any partnership(s) with whom the applicant will work. Typical acceptable documents for income documentation fall into two categories:

- a) Proof of current enrollment in an income-based government assistance program OR

- b) Documentation from a government source of current household income below 200% of the federal poverty level (relative to household size).

The OSB will not be requesting the documentation directly, but will require the awardee to certify that documentation was provided and appropriately reviewed.

The Application must identify the number of households in the county expected to qualify for the program and how the number of requested devices was determined. The Application must provide a summary of any data collected as part of the Application process. The distribution method is designed by the local jurisdiction; however, record keeping of distribution must be retained. If requested, the local jurisdiction must be able to provide the OSB with household level data to whom the devices have been provided and the verification documentation reviewed.

The applicant must ensure that the bulk shipment receiver of the devices has loading/unloading capabilities for potential multiple shipments and the necessary secure storage space. Applicants must ensure that the received devices are inspected at the time of receipt and notify the OSB immediately upon discovery of damaged products. Failure to inspect and notify the OSB of damaged products may result in a reduction of devices for distribution by the jurisdiction.

The applicant must develop an outreach program as part of the application. The program must announce and explain their device distribution program and program eligibility to the targeted community and the public in general.

Department Device Tracking Portal

Department has developed an online tracking portal that must be used for address verification during distribution. The purpose of the tracking portal is to ensure that multiple devices are not provided to a household. The portal is accessed via the internet; therefore, distribution points must have internet availability, or other methods for connectivity. The distribution portal requires a primary contact be registered and the primary contact is then responsible for all other user registration. Additional information regarding the portal and its use will be provided to applicants receiving awards.

Use of funds

The application will identify the number of devices being requested by the applicant. This amount will be multiplied by the cost per device to arrive at the project cost for equipment. The OSB will provide an additional stipend of \$6 per device to the jurisdiction to help offset storage and distribution costs. The stipend may be used for the following:

- Cost of securing devices in storage;
- Cost of securing devices during distribution;
- Cost of distribution venue; and
- Personnel costs associated with distribution

The device cost plus the stipend will be the total project cost. A record of the use of the provided stipend should be maintained to support any required program auditing.

Requesting Devices

When determining the number of devices to request, the applicant should bear in mind that they will have six months from the delivery of their first allotment to complete their distribution. The awardee is responsible for receiving and securely storing and transporting the devices for distribution. Any devices not distributed at the end of the six months must be returned to the Department at the awardee's cost. In order to award devices equitably across the State, jurisdictions who did not receive devices in the first round of applications will receive priority review over returning applicants. If the number of devices requested by all eligible applications exceeds the number of devices available, an equal percentage reduction will be made across all applications.

Application Criteria

The Application includes several items of information in narrative form as well as the Application form itself. While there is no minimum or maximum length of the required response, please be concise and limit your Response to the information requested. If some of the information requested is not available at this time, please state this in your response.

Application Form

Complete the attached application form for the Maryland Connected Devices Program. Applications must be submitted by the specified date and time in order to be eligible. The application form must be completed in its entirety. Any missing information may result in the application being deemed ineligible. Instructions for the application form are provided to help guide applicants.

Project Narrative

The project narrative must identify specific tasks, measurable milestones and performance outcomes resulting from the proposed project activities. The project narrative should include the following information:

- a) **Executive Summary:** an executive summary of the project not to exceed two (2) pages. Please note, if an applicant's application is selected for funding, OSB may use all or a portion of the Executive Summary as part of a press release issued by OSB, or for other public information outreach and reporting purposes. The Summary should provide an overview of the households being served, information on the covered population and what problems the residents in the community face. It should include how providing the devices will help alleviate those problems. The Summary should also address any income or other restrictions used to determine the households that will be provided devices.

Each applicant must provide the following information for the covered population in their application for funding (or as much of the information as is reasonably available to the jurisdiction) and include any supplementary information to explain the data:

- Covered Population average household size;
- Number and percentage of households that are eligible to receive Federal Pell Grants;
- Number and percentage of households that receive other need-based financial aid from the Federal government, the State, or that jurisdiction;
- Number and percentage of households that qualify as low-income consumers; and
- Number and percentage of households that are within the covered population.

- b) Verification and Distribution: the applicant must describe their eligibility verification process and distribution process. If both a municipality and its overlying county are applicants, a discussion of how the distribution efforts of the two will be complementary and not conflicting must be provided. It is recommended that an applying municipality contact their county to confirm the county's intentions regarding the program.

Receipt of Devices: devices can be received at a maximum rate of one shipment per month over a five month period. You must provide a shipping schedule as part of your distribution plan based on receiving devices by the 15th of each month. For instance, your distribution plan may require 50 devices month one, 200 devices month two, 500 devices month three, etc. This should be discussed and highlighted in your distribution plan. There will be an opportunity to modify this plan prior to the execution of the MOU. All requested devices will be delivered within five months of execution of an MOU with the Department.

- c) Scope of Work: provide a scope of work detailing how the device project will progress from beginning to end. This scope of work should describe in detail each of the following key processes:
- i. Establishment of partnerships;
 - ii. Collection of data regarding eligible households in need of devices;
 - iii. Storage of received devices;
 - iv. Distribution method and how devices will be distributed to eligible households;
 - v. Eligibility verification and how data will be stored for households receiving devices; and
 - vi. Methodology to ensure that only one device per eligible household is provided.
- d) Outreach: the applicant must describe their outreach program designed to inform the targeted population of the program. At a minimum, this program should inform the eligible receiving community of the program, terms for receiving a device and the location and times of the distribution event(s). If the applicant plans to provide any digital inclusion or equity services, such as Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) enrollment, at the distribution events, that should also be discussed.
- e) Potential Barriers: discuss any barriers that might be encountered and how they will be overcome.
- f) Partners and Local Engagement: applicants should include a list of community partners and describe their involvement in the distribution process and/or their support of digital inclusion more broadly. Partners may include, but are not limited to:
- i. entities of local jurisdictions (city and county personnel);
 - ii. educational institutions (K-12, community colleges and universities);
 - iii. libraries;
 - iv. businesses;

- v. nonprofit organizations;
- vi. internet service providers; and
- vii. faith based organizations.

g) Intended Outcomes and Metrics: Please provide details about the specific grant-funded activities you plan to carry out; who will plan, implement, and manage your device distribution project, including the organization and partner organizations; and a project schedule, including significant milestones that describe when and in what sequence your project activities will occur. Include a description of the primary goals of your project, a description of the covered population needs and challenges that your proposed project will address and who will directly benefit from your project.

- a. Project Performance Period: The project will have a performance period of six months from the delivery of the first device shipment. All devices must be distributed by the end of the performance period.
- b. Project Schedule: the project schedule should outline specific milestones for the project such as, start of outreach, start of distribution, anticipated distribution events, and end of distribution. It should complement the required scope of work.

Additional Information

1. The OSB reserves the right to waive any formalities of the RFA process, to re-issue the RFA, to amend the RFA, to extend the dates provided herein, or to suspend the RFA as the OSB may determine, at its sole discretion, is in the best interest of the OSB.
2. No reimbursement will be made by the OSB for any costs incurred in responding to this RFA, developing or submitting responses to the RFA, or attendance at meetings or interviews.
3. Applicant's and/or recipient of funding are required to: (i) be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting a complete application packet; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active state award or an application, unless otherwise excepted from these requirements. OSB will not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time that OSB is ready to make an award pursuant, OSB may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award.
4. All applicants must supply a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number.
5. The OSB reserves the absolute right to conduct such investigations as it deems necessary to assist in the evaluation of any response to the RFA, to establish the claimed participant experience, the responsibility, reliability, references, reputation, business ethics, history, qualifications and financial ability of the applicant, proposed partner(s), independent consultants and suppliers.
6. Successful applicants will be chosen based on qualifications, evaluation of Responses, and a possible interview. The OSB reserves the right to conduct such discussions or negotiations with Counties or other entities, as it deems necessary to assist in the evaluation of any proposal, to secure maximum clarification and completeness of any proposal, and to select the Responses that best meet the requirements of the OSB and the public interest.
7. All awardees will be required to execute a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") that outlines the obligations of the awardee and State to the Project.
8. Questions should be addressed to Ronnie Hammond, Program Manager, Office of Statewide Broadband at ronnie.hammond@maryland.gov or 301-429-7514.

Application Form Instructions

Maryland Connected Devices Program

Instructions for completing the Connected Devices Program application:

1. Applicant Name: this is the name on your W-9 form.
2. Federal EIN Number: the Employer Identification Number assigned by the IRS.
3. DUNS Number (if applicable)
4. SAM.gov unique identifier
5. Identify type of entity applying.
6. Address: this is the physical address of the applying entity.
7. Partnership: Please identify any partnering organizations (you may add supplemental pages, if necessary).
8. Contact Information: please provide a contact for the application.
9. Project Information: enter the household information for eligible households, households needing devices
10. Estimated funding: enter the number of devices, the value of the devices, the related stipend and total value of the request.
11. Receiver: identify the name of the organization and address of who will receive the shipment of devices and how the shipment will be stored and secured.
12. Security: Identify if the devices will be stored in a secure facility.
13. Logistics: Identify if the storage facility has a loading dock. The availability of a loading dock does not affect the viability of the application.
14. Distribution: Briefly describe the distribution method.
15. Sign and date the application. Signatory must have the authority to sign on behalf of the jurisdiction.



WES MOORE
Governor
ARUNA MILLER
Lt. Governor
JACOB R. DAY
Secretary
OWEN McEVOY
Deputy Secretary





Application Form Maryland Connected Devices Program

Applicant Information

Legal Name of Applicant (must match W9):

Please attach a copy of your most current IRS W-9 Form

Federal EIN Number: _____ DUNS Number: _____

Unique Entity ID (SAM.gov) number _____

Please identify the type of applying entity:

County

Incorporated Municipality

Address

Street: _____

City: _____ County: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

If applying in partnership with other organization(s) please identify the organization(s) below:

Contact Information

This is the primary contact for the person coordinating all elements of this application. This is the person the OSB will contact with any questions regarding the application.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____





Project Information

Project Information: Estimated Households

Estimated Eligible Households: _____ (How many households in your jurisdiction are eligible?)

Estimated Households in Need: _____ (How many eligible households need a device?)

Is stipend being requested for security & distribution of devices? Yes No

Estimated Funding:

Number of Devices: _____ @ \$198.75 per device: _____

Stipend @ \$6.00 per device (if not requesting, leave blank): _____

Total project value: _____

Please identify the organization who will receive the shipment(s) of devices for distribution:

Address:

Street: _____

City: _____ County: _____

Zip: _____

Does the receiver have secure storage? Yes No

Does the receiver have a loading dock? Yes No

Please briefly describe your method for delivery to distribution site(s):





Other Required Information

The following should be attached to your application form:

1. Written Project Narrative
2. Scope of Work
3. Schedule
4. Monthly Device Delivery Request
5. Federal Form W-9

Certification

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the information contained in this application is true and correct and I have the authority to sign this document on behalf of the applying jurisdiction.

Authorized Representative Name: _____

Title: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Signature

Date: _____

