



# **Digital Opportunity Department**

**South Carolina Digital Opportunity Department**

**Digital Workforce Initiative Notice of Funding Opportunity**

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**Notice of Funding Opportunity**

**SC Office of Regulatory Staff**

**Digital Opportunity Department**

**Digital Workforce Initiative Grant**

**11.032 State Digital Equity Planning and Capacity Grant Award Number 41-31-DS062**

**Key Dates:**

April 22, 2025: Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) released to the public

May 1, 2025: Grant Application and Interested Parties Form opens for submissions

May 16, 2025 at 11:59pm: Grant Application and Interested Parties Form closes

June 6, 2025: Conditional Notice of Award issued

June 13, 2025: Signed Grant Agreements due to ORS DOD Staff

November 30, 2025: Projected final date to receive NTIA approval of projects

January 1, 2026: Anticipated awarded project start work date

December 31, 2028: Expected project completion date

March 31, 2029: Final financial and programmatic reports due to ORS DOD Staff

\*Dates may change based on guidance from NTIA, NIST, or other administering entities.

**Application Submission Process:**

All applications must be submitted using the provided digital link. Paper applications, email applications, or any other form of submission will not be accepted for review. Application link will be made available [here](#).

**Funding Opportunity Description:**

The Digital Equity Act, administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) offers three funding streams (<https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/funding-programs/digital-equity-act-programs>): planning grant (completed and closed), capacity grant, and competitive grant. The funding opportunity in this NOFO is made available from the allocation to South Carolina through the 11.032 State Digital Equity Planning and Capacity Grant (Award Number 41-31-DS062). The Digital Opportunity Department (DOD) at the SC Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) is the designated agency to receive and implement the capacity grant. The grant is intended to implement the goals identified in South Carolina's Digital Opportunity

Plan, which was created during the planning grant period. The SC Digital Opportunity Plan is available here: [Digital Opportunity Plan](#)

Grant funds are available to support large scale projects that will address digital literacy, cybersecurity and cyberscam prevention, technology device access and use for purposes related to educational opportunity and employment and telehealth access, and digital workforce development.

All obligations of ORS and DOD, including, without limitation, the disbursement of funds, are contingent upon the actual receipt of funds by the ORS and DOD from the federal government under the capacity grant allocated to South Carolina, and in no event shall ORS and DOD be liable for any payments or disbursements in excess of such funds actually received.

In the event funds from the federal government become unavailable for any reason, DOD and ORS shall have the right to authorize the withholding of payment until such funds become available, if ever, and shall have the right to terminate this Agreement immediately upon giving the Subrecipient written notice of such termination.

#### **What is the Digital Workforce Initiative?**

- The DOD at the ORS designed the Digital Workforce Initiative to implement the Digital Equity Act Capacity Grant administered by NTIA.
- All projects must be approved by NTIA and aligned with the goals of the NOFO and SC Digital Opportunity Plan created in compliance with the Digital Equity Act Planning Grant.

#### **Eligibility:**

The scope of work outlined in the digital capacity grant application must meet the following needs:

- Work must be implemented across all 46 SC counties
- Applicants must be Day 1 ready with capacity to implement project deliverables related to the Digital Opportunity Plan
- Applicants must use established compliance practices for legal requirements and best practices related to cybersecurity
- Applicants must have the ability to work with smaller, local entities through established partnerships
- Applicants must demonstrate experience managing large federal contracts or grants and the associated compliance
- Applicants must be in good standing with the IRS, Department of Revenue, SC Secretary of State, or any other administering entity

- Applicants must have a UEIN with SAM.gov and a W9 filed with the DOD prior to the start of work and any issuance of funds. Registration must be maintained throughout the project period.
- Applicants with existing programs with demonstrated success at a statewide level are preferred.

### **Participation Opportunities for Ineligible Parties:**

Organizations in good standing with the IRS, Secretary of State, or any other administering entity who do not meet the capacity related requirements for eligibility may submit the Interested Parties Form. The Interested Parties Form may only be submitted using the online link. Paper submissions, mailed submission, or any alternate submission will not be accepted. The Interested Parties Form will become available alongside the grant application. Awarded entities are strongly encouraged to work with local partners and will receive the responses to the Interested Parties Form to ensure that all interested organizations in good standing are considered for partnership in program development and execution.

### **How is funding allocated in the grant award?**

Project categories include:

Digital Navigator: Up to \$2,000,000 will be awarded to a single organization, or organizations, to implement a digital navigator type program at a statewide level focused on utilization of telehealth.

Device Recycling: Up to \$2,050,000 will be awarded to a single organization, or organizations, to implement a device recycling workforce training type program that distributes the refurbished devices statewide at a low-cost, increasing access to technology.

Digital Education Learning and Literacy: Up to \$4,360,000 will be awarded to a single organization, or organizations, to implement a statewide certification and apprenticeship programs, or other similar programs, to prepare a digital workforce ready to support the development of broadband related infrastructure and adoption.

No cost share is required. Up to 10% of the total award may be issued at the project start. Remaining funds will be available on a reimbursable basis at 6-month intervals based on satisfactory compliance with programmatic and financial reporting. Funds may only be used on allowable costs based on the approved project budget and in compliance with any affiliated NTIA, Digital Equity Act, or State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity requirements.

DOD staff will provide awarded entities with ongoing guidance from NTIA as it becomes available to determine eligible and ineligible expenses prior to incurrence.

**Project Management:**

Awarded entities are expected to maintain regular contact with the DOD staff and should immediately communicate any project related changes or significant events in writing to DOD staff should it occur. Project plans and budgets amendments can be requested in writing with no fewer than 30 days' notice provided to the DOD.

**Project Intervention:**

If organizations are noncompliant or noncommunicative or engage in activities inconsistent with the SC Digital Opportunity Plan, DOD, and ORS mission, regarding project execution, funding may be frozen until compliance is achieved. Per federal requirements, ORS may use claw back provisions to recover non-compliant or fraudulently expended funds. Projects may be terminated due to noncompliance, misuse of funds, or any violation of the signed grant agreement.

All obligations of ORS and DOD, including, without limitation, the disbursement of funds, are contingent upon the actual receipt of funds by the ORS and DOD from the federal government under the capacity grant allocated to South Carolina, and in no event shall ORS and DOD be liable for any payments or disbursements in excess of such funds actually received.

In the event funds from the federal government become unavailable for any reason, DOD and ORS shall have the right to authorize the withholding of payment until such funds become available, if ever, and shall have the right to terminate this Agreement immediately upon giving the Subrecipient written notice of such termination.

**Allowable Uses of Grant Funds:**

Grantees may only use federal award funds to pay for allowable costs under the Digital Equity Capacity Grant 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 and in the grant program's authorizing legislation. In addition, costs must be reasonable, necessary, allocable, and allowable for the proposed project, and conform to generally accepted accounting principles. Any cost must comply with applicable, law, regulations, and guidance on what is allowable. Allowable costs include salary and fringe of employees, contractor services, travel, project proportional audit fees, communications and marketing, equipment or technology, office supplies, stipends for volunteers, incentives for community participation, etc. as defined in 2 CFR 200 and NTIA guidelines.

**Unallowable Uses of Grant Funds:**

Grant funds cannot be expended on the following purchases or activities: capital projects or land purchases, human subject research, unrelated program expenses, alcoholic beverages,

illegal substances, unrelated travel or training, entertainment, goods or services for personal use, debt related expenses or consolidation of debt, fundraising costs or activities, lobbying costs or activities, fines and penalties, memberships, patents, severance pay, pre-award costs, etc. Costs not directly related to the project are not allowed. All costs must comply with 2 CFR 200 and NTIA guidance on allowable and unallowable costs. Awardees are expected to use good judgment in determining eligible costs and to work with staff of the DOD and ORS Financial Management to ensure that unallowable costs are not unintentionally incurred. Funds can supplement but cannot supplant state, local, or private funds.

#### **Application Review Process:**

DOD staff will complete an initial review of applications for eligibility and completion. DOD staff will evaluate applications and provide a funding recommendations report to the Executive Leadership Team for review and final approval.

#### **Cybersecurity Best Practices:**

Recipients and subrecipients must ensure that the planning, design, and project oversight phases of the programs and activities funded through the Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program are consistent with current industry best practices for cybersecurity, such as the NIST Cybersecurity Framework and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Cybersecurity Performance Goals (CPGs). These performance goals provide a baseline set of cybersecurity practices that are broadly applicable, with known risk-reduction value. DOD and ORS are required by NTIA to review an awarded entity's cybersecurity framework.

#### **Programmatic Reporting:**

Awarded entities are expected to provide programmatic reports quarterly. Programmatic reports will include data on number of SC residents served, number of program services delivered, information on program development activities, information on lessons learned during the reporting period, and other fields to ensure that programs are on track to meet deliverables. Reporting requirements may change during the award period based on guidance and/or requirements from NTIA.

#### **Financial Reporting:**

Any funds awarded through the Digital Equity Capacity Grant SC Digital Workforce Initiative are reimbursable. Costs must be incurred and documented before any reimbursement is issued. Funded entities are expected to use Generally Accepted Accounting Practices (GAAP) to monitor and track expenses related to the project. Entities will be required to submit receipts, payroll reports, and other documentation. Submitted materials should clearly show the vendor's name, date, description of the expense, and total amount of the expense. Entities are

eligible to receive up to 10% of the award amount to ensure timely start to work at the beginning of the activity period. Any funds issued as start-up costs will not be considered awarded until documentation of related expenses are issued. Grant and financial management staff at ORS will review all financial reporting. Documentation must be sufficient for funds to be approved for reimbursement. Financial reporting and procedures training will be offered before the start of the performance period. Reporting requirements may change during the award period based on guidance and/or requirements from NTIA. DOD and ORS reserve the right to audit programs and financial materials.

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