

# Assessing Digital Inclusion Mini-Grants: Applicant Questions

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Contact: Hannah Buckland, Digital Equity Program Lead, [hannah.buckland@state.mn.us](mailto:hannah.buckland@state.mn.us)

## Eligible Applicants

**1. Can individuals receive grants?**

No. We cannot award grant funds to individuals.

**2. Can for-profit businesses receive grant funds?**

Yes, with restrictions. For-profit businesses serving a population or clientele comprised at least 50% of any of the following covered populations are eligible: (a) individuals from low-income households; (b) individuals 60 years of age or older; (c) veterans; (d) individuals who are incarcerated or re-entering; (e) individuals with disabilities; (f) individuals facing a language barrier (such as limited English language proficiency or limited literacy); (g) individuals identifying with a racial or ethnic minority group; and (h) rural individuals.

**3. My organization is based outside Minnesota. Can we receive grant funds?**

No. All states are preparing digital equity plans. To find contact information for your state, use this [map and directory](#) prepared by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

**4. What counts as an anchor institution?**

Anchor institutions include public schools, public libraries, workforce agencies, institutions of higher education, medical or healthcare providers, public housing authorities, and faith-based organizations.

## Allowable Costs

**5. Can we use grant funds to purchase giveaway items, swag, or other incentives to encourage people to participate in an activity?**

No. Incentives cannot be provided ahead of an activity.

**6. Can we use grant funds to provide people who took a survey, attended a meeting, etc. with compensation for their time?**

Yes, this is allowed, as long it is reasonable and necessary. The difference between this and the unallowed cost in question #5 is that compensation *reimburses* a person for the time and energy they have put forth. Incentives, on the other hand, do not guarantee this reciprocity.

**7. Can we use grant funds to purchase refreshments?**

No. Food and beverages may not be purchased with grant funds, even if as a form of compensation.

**8. Can we use grant funds to purchase t-shirts or other clothing items for our committee?**

In most cases, no. T-shirts and other clothing items are only allowed when they serve a purpose that is essential to the purpose of the grant. Allowable clothing costs could include identifiable uniforms for committee members to wear while conducting a door-to-door survey or a functional accessory – like a baseball cap – to protect committee members’ eyes while they’re tabling at an outdoor event.

**9. Can we use grant funds for marketing?**

It depends on what is being marketed. Specific activities necessary to the grant work can be marketed using grant funds. An example of this is paying to run a radio advertisement about an upcoming listening session happening held during a community festival. General activities and/or activities not necessary to the grant work cannot be marketed using grant funds. An example of this is paying to run a radio advertisement about a community festival which just so happens to include a listening session.

**10. We want to buy internet-enabled devices and distribute them to our community. Is this allowed?**

It depends on the purpose of the devices. The purpose of this grant is to support assessment of digital inclusion. The devices must be directly used in carrying out assessment activities. Purchasing a tablet to use while conducting digital inclusion surveys is allowed. Purchasing a tablet to use for non-grant work is not allowed.

**11. Our organization has a meeting space that we rent out to other groups for \$50/hour. If we hold committee meetings there, can we request reimbursement at that rate?**

No. Grantees may not use grant funds to reimburse themselves for spaces they manage.

**12. Can we pay someone to provide childcare while parents attend a digital inclusion townhall?**

Yes. This would be considered reasonable and necessary in order to have the parents participate fully in the townhall. The service would need to be provided on-site. You would use the “contractual services” cost category on the budget worksheet when documenting this cost.

## Moving Money

**13. When do we receive our funds?**

Funds will be disbursed in one lump sum within 30 days AFTER the grantee’s final report has been received and approved. Final reports will be due to Office of Broadband Development by July 30.

**14. How do we receive our funds?**

Funds are either disbursed through electronic transfer or provided via a mailed check. It depends how your SWIFT account it set up.

**15. What is a SWIFT ID? Do we really need one?**

SWIFT is the state of Minnesota’s online accounting system. Vendors and grantees need to have a SWIFT ID before they can conduct any business with or receive a fund commitment from the state. [A SWIFT ID is required.](#)

Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) is the state agency responsible for SWIFT. For assistance creating a SWIFT ID or accessing an existing SWIFT account, contact MMB’s SWIFT hotline at 651-201-

8106 or [efthelpline.mmb@state.mn.us](mailto:efthelpline.mmb@state.mn.us). If you are registering for a new SWIFT ID, you can also use this [instruction sheet](#) for registering as a supplier.

**16. When can we start spending grant funds?**

Grant costs can be incurred beginning April 3. Costs incurred prior to this date are not eligible for reimbursement. Do not incur grant costs prior to April 3.

**17. When do we stop spending grant funds?**

June 30 is the final day that grant costs can be incurred. Costs incurred after this date are not eligible for reimbursement. Do not incur grant costs after June 30.

**18. We want to spend funds differently than we had proposed in our initial application. Is this okay?**

Budgets modifications can be requested throughout the duration of the grant period. Requests must be made in writing to Hannah Buckland at [hannah.buckland@state.mn.us](mailto:hannah.buckland@state.mn.us) and require approval. Modified expenses incurred prior to approval will not be reimbursed.

## Additional Requirements

**19. Do we need to register a Digital Connection Committee in order to receive the grant?**

Yes. The four deliverables associated with this grant opportunity and its timeline align perfectly with the Digital Connection Committee scope of work.

**20. What are the deliverables for this grant?**

Grant deliverables are listed in the RFP posted on OBD’s digital inclusion webpage. They include the following and are required:

- Evidence of having established a Digital Connection Committee
- Quantitative digital inclusion data
- Qualitative digital inclusion data
- An asset inventory identifying any existing digital inclusion resources supporting the grantees’ geographic and/or service populations

**21. What is the timeline for this grant?**

Date	Activity
March 3	Assessing Digital Inclusion Mini-grant applications due by 3:00 p.m.
March 10	OBD confirms via email the amount of funding each grantee will receive
March 15	OBD hold orientation webinar for grantees (time TBD)
March 31	OBD sends out updates, templates, guides, and other resources
April 3	Start of grant performance period; grant costs can begin being incurred
April 12	Virtual networking session for Digital Connection Committees (optional)
May 1 – 31	OBD holds 1:1 check-ins with grantees (required) and non-grantees (optional)
June 14	Virtual networking session for Digital Connection Committees (optional)
June 30	End of grant performance period; last day to incur any grant costs

Date	Activity
July 1 – August	OBD develops a draft of the Digital Equity Plan
July 30	Grantee final report due to OBD
30 days after final report approved	Grant funds disbursed to grantee using electronic transfer or a mailed check

Dates and activities are subject to revision and will be communicated by OBD.

**22. Can we get an extension?**

The grant period ends on June 30. This deadline is firm. No extensions will be made.

**23. What does the final report require?**

The final report will require a summary of how grant funds were spent using a budget chart very similar to the budget chart in the grant application. The final report will also require a brief narrative summarizing one insight the grantee gained from this grant program.

**24. What happens during the 1:1 virtual check-ins during the month of May?**

This is an informal conversation between OBD staff and each organization receiving a grant. OBD will be making sure grantees are on track with their grant work and will be able to answer any individual grantee questions at that time. We estimate this will take no more than 30 minutes per grantee. A sign-up form will circulate in April.