

## **Blair County Broadband Deployment Grant Program**

A lack of reliable broadband in Blair County has negatively impacted children attending virtual school, workers and employees teleworking, farmers looking to utilize technology to improve slim profit margins, high risk individuals needing continuous medical attention through telehealth, and the general public as they look for the most up to date information related to COVID-19 and its effects. In an effort to respond to, mitigate, and facilitate compliance with COVID-19 related health measures, the Blair County Commissioners have established the Broadband Deployment Grant Program that reimburses providers for the cost to provide reliable broadband internet to rural communities that are currently unserved or underserved. You should reference the County's broadband plan online at: [www.blairco.org](http://www.blairco.org). The Program is intended to provide financial assistance to construct infrastructure, which is necessary to provide broadband service in communities where broadband service does not currently exist and in certain areas where internet service is limited. Grants may be awarded on a competitive basis for entities to serve unserved and underserved rural areas and ensure that Blair County's rural consumers enjoy the same quality and range of broadband services as are available in non-rural communities.

Funding for this grant will come from The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The Program will provide grants for the capital construction costs for broadband infrastructure projects within the County. Projects applied for are expected to serve significant areas of Blair County's unserved and underserved households and businesses. In order to be eligible for Act 24/County Relief Block Grant/CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund money, a project must be operational by December 30, 2020. Operational means that the project has actually expanded broadband capacity to a significant extent in order to enable individuals to engage in the online activities of telework and distance learning and that the service is realistically available to and can actually be used by customers or subscribers in the County for those purposes. (Please note that residents within the expanded broadband territory will not be required to purchase the service.) Only costs relating to the portion of the project that are operational by December 30, 2020 are eligible expenditures. Applicants may be any legal entity, including a private corporation, a cooperative, or a limited liability company. Applicants may not be an individual or partnership. Applicants must have the legal capacity and authority to own and operate the broadband facilities, as proposed in the application, to enter into contracts and to otherwise comply with applicable state statutes and regulations.

Applications will consist of several written sections with a number of required worksheets and attachments. The application should be prepared as described in this guide.

Grant applications should be submitted as soon as possible keeping in mind the grant application must be reviewed, approved, the applicant must be operational by December 30, 2020. Grant applications will be processed and considered for approval at a Commissioner's meeting as soon as the County staff is able to complete review of the application and any necessary follow up with the applicant. A paper copy of the application must be provided and may be mailed, or hand-delivered (by appointment) to:

Blair County Courthouse  
Attn: Chief Clerk – Broadband Grant Application  
423 Allegheny Street  
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

The County may choose to grant an entire project, no project, multiple projects or any portion of any project submitted. Applicants which are allocated grant funds for any proposed project will have seven (7) days from the notice of fund allocation to accept and execute a grant agreement with Blair County.

**ALL APPROVED PROJECTS MUST BE COMPLETED AND IN OPERATION BY DECEMBER 30, 2020.**

### **Completing the Grant Application**

This section addresses all of the information that must be submitted in order for an application to be deemed complete and considered for funding. Please make sure that all the necessary information is included in the appropriate section.

- A. Broadband Grant Application Form**
- B. Executive Summary of the Project**
- C. Scoring Criteria Documentation**
- D. System Design**
- E. Service Area Map and Demographics**
- F. Scope of Work**
- G. Financial Information and Sustainability**
- H. Statement of Experience**

## Broadband Grant Application Form

Project Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Applicant Information**

Primary Applicant Legal Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Federal EIN Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Entity Type: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Contact Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Total estimated project cost:                      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Funds from Applicant or other sources:                      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of grant money requested:                      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## **Executive Summary**

The Executive Summary shall provide the County an overall view of the area to be served. This is the applicant's opportunity to discuss the core aspects of the project and to succinctly articulate why the project deserves funding. Please provide clear links between the project and the benefits to the Proposed Funded Service Area (PFSA). The Executive Summary must provide a general project overview covering the following six categories:

1. A description of the PFSA and why the project is needed including the number of households and businesses served.
2. A description of the applicant that includes, but is not limited to, the history of the organization and any past or current projects and community related activities or awards.
3. An explanation of the total Project costs.
4. A general overview of the broadband system to be constructed, including the types of equipment, technologies, and facilities that will be used.
5. Documentation describing the procedures used to determine the lack of existing Broadband Service in the PFSA.

At the end of the Executive Summary, please provide a section labeled "Publicly Releasable Project Description" that contains the following information:

1. Title of Project
2. Proposed Funded Service Area Description
3. Brief Description of Project

Any information included in this section may be released to interested parties inquiring about the application including news media and the public, so please provide an adequate description of the project, but do not include any information that should not be made available to the public. Clearly denote the section the applicant agrees is publicly releasable, including where the releasable description begins AND ends.

This Application and the final grant agreement will be subject to the Pennsylvania Right to Know Law; additionally, some and/or all of the supporting documents you provide may also be subject to the Right to Know Law (for more information, see <https://www.openrecords.pa.gov/>). If you believe some information in a support document or the entire supporting document is exempt under the Right to Know Law, you should physically mark the document as such (separately identifying any information within a document that is not entirely exempt) and the Right to Know Law basis for such exemption.

## **Grant Award Considerations**

Proposed projects will be considered based upon the issues set forth below. Provide detailed answers to each of the following items, specific to how the project relates to the existing pandemic. The County reserves the right to use any of the information provided that the County deems appropriate when considering applications and/or comparing applications to other applicants. Due to the limited time period for this grant and the desire to increase the availability of broadband to those underserved areas, the issues will not be used for purposes of strictly scoring an application.

1. Describe how the proposed project would respond to, mitigate and facilitate compliance with COVID-19 related health measures.
2. Provide the City and State of the Applicant. Include local office addresses as well as corporate, main office and headquarters.
3. Does the Applicant have fewer than 100 employees?
4. Describe the end-user's download, upload and latency speeds as a result of the proposed project.
5. Describe the upstream internet, middle-mile, last-mile and customer premise technologies for the proposed project.
6. Explain how the project addresses unserved or underserved portions of the county? Describe methods used to determine this.
7. Are the proposed service areas considered low- and medium-income?
8. Describe how the proposed project will support local municipalities within the county.
9. Describe how the proposed project will facilitate distance-learning in connection with school closings.
10. Describe how the proposed project will provide solutions for tele-work, remote office and work from home needs.
11. Describe how the proposed project will provide broadband, technology and/or communication solutions for remote medical, healthcare and/or tele-medicine within the county.
12. Describe how the proposed project will provide broadband, technology and/or communication solutions for police, fire and/or EMS organizations and facilities within the county.
13. Describe how the proposed project may provide increased broadband capacity for county offices to support demand for county workers when required to work remotely.
14. Describe how the proposed project will improve telework capabilities for residents and businesses.
15. Describe how the proposed project may sustain and/or promote tourism within the county.
16. Describe how the proposed project may support economic development within the county.
17. Will the Applicant be able to complete the building and construction of the proposed project by December 30, 2020? Include any potential risks and specific conditions that should be considered. Projects will only be funded upon completion if operational by December 30, 2020.
18. Describe how the Applicant intends to support, operate and maintain the completed project.
19. Provide any other criteria that the applicant believes the county may deem valuable in comparing applicants or proposed projects.

## **System Design**

The system design contains all the technical information on the applicant's existing (if applicable) and the proposed system.

## **Service Area Map and Demographics**

Provide maps of the proposed project service areas.

## **Scope of Work**

The scope of work must include the following:

1. A description of the specific activities and services to be performed under the project.
2. Who will carry out the activities and services? Indicate whether construction will be performed by in-house or contracted services.
3. A construction build-out schedule and project milestones showing the time frames for accomplishing the Project objectives and activities. All projects must be completed and operational by December 30, 2020 to be eligible for reimbursement.
4. A detailed budget of all expenditures related to eligible Grant purposes. The budget should include a descriptive name for each capitalized item or group of items in each category.

## **Financial Information and Sustainability**

The applicant must provide a narrative description demonstrating sustainability of the project from the commencement of the construction to completion and operational; the sufficiency of resources; and the expertise necessary to undertake and complete the project.

## **Statement of Experience**

Applicants must provide a written narrative describing their demonstrated capability and experience, if any, in operating a telecommunications system, or any project similar to the proposed project. The applicant must include the owner and principal employees' relevant work experience that would ensure the success of the project. If the applicant is seeking to partner with another entity to operate the system, an agreement or draft agreement to do so must be provided with the application. This agreement must address the specific financial terms of this partnership and the specific entity/entities must be identified, along with their qualifications to assist in operating the system. Applications that rely on such a partnership but do not provide pertinent details will be rejected, as the County cannot determine the technical and financial feasibility of the project lacking such information. The County will consider such an application on the basis of the submitted agreement but may require modifications if an award is ultimately made and any terms of the agreement are found to be unacceptable to the County.