Community Wi-Fi Grant Program Guidance

Connecticut Education Network (CEN)

ARPA-CPF Broadband Infrastructure Program

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Guidance

Release Date:	
Application Deadline	
Eligible Applicants	
Awards Announced	

Application Information	

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1.   About the Grant

1.1 Overview

The Community Wi-Fi program is a $10 million competitive reimbursement subgrant under the Connecticut Education Network (CEN) Broadband Infrastructure Program. It was approved under CT PA 22-118 as amended by PA 22-146 and administered by the US Department of Treasury under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Capital Project Fund (CPF), which is directly supported by Governor Lamont's Connecticut Plan for the American Rescue Plan of 2021. The Community Wi-Fi program will be referred to as "program" throughout the remainder of this document.

In line with goals for APRA funding, this program directly supports recovery from the COVID-19 public health emergency by strengthening and improving the infrastructure necessary for participation in work, education, and health and wellness.

This program was explicitly designed to build on the successful launch of the Community Wi-Fi component of Governor Lamont's "Everybody Learns" initiative in 2020.

Visit the Community Wi-Fi grant page to view the most current program information. For questions relating to the program or its requirements, contact CENwifigrant@cteducation.net.

1.2 Primary Objective

The primary objective of this program is to leverage existing infrastructure to expand high-quality, secure, 802.11-based wireless internet using access points employed through Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) within the state of Connecticut that will extend services to underserved, typically economically disadvantaged groups and communities in need across the state.

The program enlists applications for funding by community leaders who can best identify CAIs with the most reach for residents most in need. The network infrastructure and Wi-Fi access points must tie into CEN to ensure maximum performance and benefit from the CEN network's cybersecurity and content-filtering protections. The program will provide for the buildout of high-speed fiber and back-end network capacity to connect locations to the CEN network when necessary. Wi-Fi must meet or exceed the minimum 1 gigabit-per-second symmetrical download and upload speeds.

In addition, the program will provide an avenue to expand the adoption and reach of eduroam®, a global authentication platform that enables secure, authenticated Wi-Fi access at any participating location. Applicants who elect to offer the eduroam SSID are still required to offer other SSIDs, such as a guest network, in order to grant Wi-Fi access to non-eduroam-credentialed users.

 Information about eduroam® is detailed in Section 1.3.1 About eduroam®. Though the integration of eduroam® is not required, it is one of the project prioritization criteria listed in Section 1.3 Project Prioritization. Projects including the integration of eduroam® will have the opportunity to be awarded additional points during the application review process. A full list of project prioritization criteria is listed in Section 1.3 Project Prioritization.

1.3 Project Prioritization

This program will award additional points to projects that address the following project prioritization criteria in addition to the primary objective:

- Leverage community partnerships among schools, libraries, municipal service providers (e.g., senior centers), other CAIs, and private entities whose project shows a coordinated effort to streamline and expand reach within a single application

- Include a clear sustainability plan that describes how services will be managed and maintained after the funding period ends

- Integrate eduroam® and capability to install access points that broadcast the eduroam® service set identifier (SSID) in addition to other SSIDs for non eduroam credentialed users

- Exceed the minimum wireless internet speeds of 1 gigabit-per-second symmetrical download and upload

- Include in-kind contributions

NOTE: CEN will be solely responsible for reviewing, scoring, and making award decisions. In an effort to award funds equitably, CEN discourages any single application from requesting excessive amounts of available funds and reserves the right to issue as many or as few grants to as many or as few applicants as it determines fit.

1.3.1 About eduroam®

The global authentication platform 'eduroam®' (education roaming, www.eduroam.us) was developed specifically for the research and education community. It provides secure, worldwide roaming access services and detailed impact and usage data. Use of this authentication platform will simplify login authentication for all eligible and participating institutions, including more than 500,000 public school students, 50,000 public school teachers, 200,000 college students, and tens of thousands of faculty and staff – allowing authentication of users and visitors via their home institution credentials, rather than asking hosts to manage their own set of usernames and passwords.

1.4 Award Types

Ten million dollars ($10,000,000.00) are available in this grant funding pool. Actual funds awarded may differ depending on the volume of applications received, the need those projects have for grant support, and the requirements of the U.S. Treasury.

This program offers two types of awards for which applicants can apply: :

1) **Full program award:** This award is applicable for projects that do not currently have the necessary infrastructure to support an eduroam®-only award. This award can fund projects requiring new construction, renovations, or build-backs to establish wireless internet services at CAIs, which may or may not include integration with eduroam®.

2)   **Eduroam®-only award:** This award applies to projects with the necessary infrastructure to support an eduroam®-only prize. It can fund projects that may only need to add the hardware, software, or professional services required to implement access points that can broadcast the eduroam® SSID.

NOTE: CEN may grant partial awards in an effort to spread awards equitably across projects that make the best use of funds.

1.5 Funding Source

The U.S. Treasury launched the CPF in 2021, funded by ARPA. It provides ten billion dollars ($10,000,000,000.00) for eligible governments to carry out critical capital projects that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring, including remote options, in response to public health emergencies. The CEN program will provide ten million dollars ($10,000,000.00) of this amount.

All funding for the program will flow through the State of Connecticut Department of Administrative Services (DAS).

1.6 Release of Funds

The program is a reimbursement grant. Funds are paid to the subrecipients following the submission and approval of the Reimbursement Request Form (Appendix J) through the CEN online portal. CEN recognizes that some subrecipients may not have the initial capital to start their project. In this case, the applicant may request an advance of a portion of the grant award. CEN and DAS will have final approval on an advance and the amount of the advance.

For more information, reference the Capital Projects Fund Guide or FAQ.

1.7 Statutory Authority

The Connecticut Education Network (CEN) is Connecticut's non-profit Research and Education Network and was created by CT Statute CGS § 61a in 1999. CEN reports to the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology (Commission), which was established in 2000. Though the Commission is organizationally part of DAS, it is managed by the University of Connecticut Information Technology Services (UConn, ITS). For more information about CEN, visit https://ctedunet.net/history.

CEN will administer and manage the Community Wi-Fi grant program through this statutory authority. However, the Grant Agreement will be between DAS and the subrecipient.

1.8 Reporting Requirements

Subrecipients must cooperate with all federal reporting obligations for ARPA – CPF funding, including submitting all necessary reports detailed in this section.

Subrecipients must also comply with all federal statutes, regulations, and executive orders that apply to subrecipients of federal funds. Applicants should consider how and whether certain aspects of those requirements may apply to their project.

1.8.1 Data Points

Subrecipients must track the data points listed below for reporting purposes:

- Start date for construction/installation (planned/actual)

- Date of the initiation of operations (planned/actual)

- Date for completion of construction/installation (planned/actual)

- Project location (for Wi-Fi geospatial location data)

- Pre-construction/installation drawings

- Conceptual network design

- Speed, technology, and other related information for each served location

- Post-construction/installation as-built drawings

- Any 'in-field' modifications to the pre-construction drawings.

- Network performance

NOTE: This list is not comprehensive. Applicants should reference the Community Wi-Fi Reporting Template (Appendix H) for a comprehensive list of required information.

1.8.2 Post-Award Monitoring

Subrecipients must comply with any post-award monitoring requests from CEN to maintain continued eligibility for grant funds. This may include requests for information, field audits that program contractors may perform to verify completeness and quality, and/or providing as-built network documentation before the final closeout of the grant or site visits when requested.

1.8.3 Project & Expenditure (P&E) Report

The quarterly P&E Report demonstrates project-level information associated with approved CPF programs. Subrecipients submit this report by completing the Community Wi-Fi Reporting Template (Appendix H) and uploading it via the CEN online portal.

Subrecipients must submit the first project report as soon as expenses are incurred, then continuously within 15 calendar days of the quarterly reporting period's end date, up to the end of the period of performance when a final report is due. The final report must meet the criteria detailed in Section 1.9.7. All projects must reach project completion no later than June 30th, 2026. The final report due upon project completion

The P&E Report must be uploaded to the CEN online portal according to the following reporting periods and deadlines. These are applicable so long as the project's period of performance has overlap with the reporting periods listed below. However, all projects must reach final completion

no later than June 30th, 2026. Reference Section 1.9.7 to review requirements for the final P&E report.

Frequency	Report Type	Period Covered	Due Date
Quarterly	P&E – 1st Quarter	January 1 – March 31	April 15
Quarterly	P&E – 2nd Quarter	April 1 – June 30	July 15
Quarterly	P&E – 3rd Quarter	July 1 – September 30	October 15
Quarterly	P&E – 4th Quarter	October 1 – December 31	January 15

1.8.4 Final P&E Report

At the close of the project, subrecipients must submit the following via the CEN online portal within 45 calendar days after the performance period ends:

- P&E Report: Community Wi-Fi Reporting Template (Appendix H)
- Signed Project Completion Affidavit (Appendix I)

The final P&E Report must report on the entire period of performance and outline all activities during the project, any equipment installed, installation locations, equipment and system capabilities, and specific outcomes and summaries of how the project benefited the community. This includes conducting and reporting results from post-construction benchmark speed testing to verify the newly constructed/installed locations' upload and download speeds have been attained.

NOTE: CEN, or its successors or designees, reserves the right to conduct location-based speed tests at project areas to be served through this grant program anytime within the first 5 years of deployment. CEN reserves the right to compel refunds of awarded funds if the speed tests do not reflect the upload and download speeds committed under this program.

2. Eligibility Criteria

2.1 Eligible Applicants

To be eligible to apply, the lead applicant must meet the US Code, Title 47, Chapter 16, Section 1702 (a)(2)(E) definition of a CAI:

3) "…an entity such as a school, library, health clinic, health center, hospital or other medical provider, public safety entity, institution of higher education, public housing organization,

or community support organization that facilitates greater use of broadband service by vulnerable populations, including low-income individuals, unemployed individuals, and aged individuals."

While the lead CAI will be the official applicant and party to the state's subgrant agreement, all partners must participate in the application process. All entities involved in the project must meet the following criteria to be eligible:

- Fall into one of the following sectors:

    o Government entities: Tribal governments; local units of government (e.g., municipalities, counties, and other political subdivisions); state and local agencies

    o Non-profit entities: Community organizations, healthcare, co-operatives, mutual organizations, etc.

    o Education (K12, higher education, libraries, cultural art institutions)

    o Private for-profit entities

- Be in good standing and not be prevented from receiving federal or state grants

- Be registered with SAM.gov and provide their UEI number

- Ability to produce a partnership agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) addressing:

    o Each partnering agency involved and associated qualifications

    o Financial terms of the partnership

NOTE: Designation as a CAI does not imply a funding commitment from this program. CEN reserves the right to require modifications to such agreements if they are found to contain terms that are unacceptable to the state of Connecticut.

2.2 Eligible Projects

For a project to be considered eligible, it must:

- Directly address the objective of the program

- Take place within the state of Connecticut

- Meet the CPF eligibility criteria outlined on page two (2) of the Guidance for the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (States)

- Align with one of the key areas outlined on page two (2) of Governor Lamont's ARPA Fund Allocation Plan

2.3 Eligible Use of Funds

Award funds are eligible only to supplement existing state or local funds. Supplanting* of state or local funds that have been appropriated or allocated for the same purpose for this program is

prohibited.

Costs must be directly related to upfront investment associated with installing or upgrading existing broadband facilities on the project on a one-time, capital improvement basis. Should the applicant request funds for administrative costs, CEN may approve the request per CPF guidelines.

Allowable costs are determined following the cost principles identified in [2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E.410](#). Federal funds committed to a subrecipient may only be used to cover allowable costs incurred during the period of performance and for allowable closeout costs incurred during the program closeout process. Cost sharing is not a requirement for the use of these funds.

Review eligible and ineligible project costs and expenses, which begins on page ten (10) of the [Guidance for the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (States)](#). When an entity reduces nonfederal funds for an activity specifically because federal funds are available (or expected to be available) to fund that same activity.

NOTE: Supplanting* occurs when an entity deliberately reduces state or local funds for an activity specifically because federal funds are available (or expected to be available) to fund that same activity. If concerns are raised about the supplanting of funds, the applicant or subrecipient will be required to substantiate that the reduction in state or local resources occurred for reasons other than the receipt or expected receipt of federal funds.

3. Application Requirements

3.1 Online Application

Applicants must complete and submit their application through the [CEN online portal](#). For a comprehensive list of what will be asked and requested of both the lead applicant and potential partner applicant(s), review the Online Application Overview (Appendix A).

3.2 Partner Agreements / MOUs

Applicants with multiple entities must upload a partner agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) clearly stating each partnering agency, associated qualifications, and the financial terms of the partnership.

3.3 Statement on Organization & Experience

Applicants must upload a Statement on Organization and Experience that addresses the following:

- **Background:** Applicants and partner(s) must describe the organization and partners involved, including a brief history and how each serves their community

- **Project Team Organizational Chart:** Applicants must provide an organizational chart that shows the entire project team, and delineates the leadership and technical members

responsible for executing and managing the project with their titles

- **Project Team Personnel:** Applicants must provide a 1-page bio that addresses the items below for each member of the project team*:
  - o Name, title, organization, and role summary within their organization
  - o Title and role summary within the project team
  - o Demonstration that member will be committed for the duration of the project
  - o Demonstration of previous project experience and how it directly relates to the current project

NOTE: This requirement includes project team personnel from the lead applicant, partner(s) and any contractors or subcontractors working on their behalf. Replacement of key team members will not be permitted without prior consultation with and approval by CEN.

3.4 Executive Summary

Applicants must provide a detailed project summary describing:

- Why the project is needed
- What benefits it will bring to the community
- How the project meets the primary objective
- How the project aligns with the project prioritization criteria
- How many citizens it will serve

3.5 Budget

3.5.1 Requested Funding Amount

Applicants must provide the total funding amount requested and, if applicable, designate how much of it is allocated for administrative costs.

NOTE: In an effort to award funds equitably, CEN discourages any single application from requesting excessive amounts of available funds and reserves the right to issue as many or as few grants to as many or as few applicants as it determines fit.

3.5.2 Project Budget

Applicants must complete the Budget Template (Appendix C) and upload it with their application. Applicants should list all expense subcategories using a descriptive name under the correlating "administrative" or "project" expense categories.

3.5.3 Statement of Viability

Applicants must upload a statement of financial viability to attest to an Applicant's financial capability.

3.6 Project Timeline

Applicants must upload a detailed timeline for the project that meets the following criteria:

- Ready to begin construction within one hundred twenty (120) days following the sub-award
- Reach 'final completion' no later than June 30, 2026
- Include milestones and distinct accomplishments tied to each with associated costs
- Address the following factors, where applicable:
  - Project design
  - Equipment acquisition, installation, and provisioning
  - Contracting
  - Engineering
  - Permitting
  - Digital equity & inclusion
  - Affordability activities
  - Construction and connections
  - Any major contingencies

*The Grant Agreement between the subrecipient and DAS will include the final completion date for the project.

3.7 Implementation & Project Management Strategy

Applicants must provide a narrative describing the implementation and project management strategy that is specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic for the project's funding request and timeline. This narrative should also discuss why the applicant believes the selected strategies will be effective.

3.8 Technical Specifications

Applicants must upload the technical specifications that:

- Clarifies whether the project areas' facilities are currently connected to the CEN network, and if not, how the project plans to connect them to the CEN network

- Clarifies whether the project will meet or exceed the minimum wireless internet speeds of 1 gigabit-per-second symmetrical download and upload speeds

- Demonstrates how the technology being put into place will be easily able to enable the services at the scale proposed

- Lists systems, hardware, software, and their relevant specifications that are currently in use

- Lists capabilities of the following:

  - Access points (if multiple types, specify requested metrics by quantity in use and correlating locations)

  - SSID broadcasting capabilities

  - Authentication capabilities

- Currently collected usage metrics from a report covering at least 30 days within the last 180 days

3.9 Identified Risk and Mitigation Plan

Applicants must upload an Identified Risk and Mitigation Plan that addresses risks, associated summaries, and mitigation plans for each. Each mitigation plan should discuss the following items at a minimum:

- Future upgrade and scalability

- Cybersecurity

- Disaster recovery and business continuity

3.10 Project Impact

3.10.1 Project Impact Statement

Applicants must upload a Project Impact Statement that includes the following:

- Demographics of project areas and how they qualify as underserved, economically disadvantaged or communities of color

- Plan to address accessibility and equity during project implementation and post-project completion

- Project narrative that demonstrates community impact as it relates to the primary objective and any project prioritization criteria

- Project Area(s) and associated map (GIS file preferred)

- Anticipated number of citizens served

- Underlying sources for data sets used to identify project areas, establish community need and determine impact

NOTE: For a list of valuable data sources, reference the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) posted online at ctedunet.net/cwifi.

3.10.2 Community Support

Applicants should upload any evidence that demonstrates community support. This may include letters of support that discuss specific needs and anticipated benefits to the impacted community as a result of the project.

This may include:

- Letter(s) of support from the leadership of the affected communities, such as the first selectman, mayor, town manager, council, or other appropriate government official. For education, the letter of support would come from the board of education, superintendent, board of regents, or executive leadership of the organization

- For any applicant proposing to provide service on tribal lands, a certificate of consent from the appropriate Tribal office is required.

- Documents demonstrating local involvement in non-financial aspects of the project

3.11 Project Prioritization Alignment

- Include a clear sustainability plan that describes how services will be managed and maintained after the funding period ends

- Integrate eduroam® and capability to install access points that broadcast the eduroam® service set identifier (SSID)

- Exceed the minimum wireless internet speeds of 1 gigabit-per-second symmetrical download and upload

- Include in-kind contributions

3.11.1 Leverage Community Partnerships

Applicants will have an opportunity to provide a brief description of how their project leverages community partnerships among schools, libraries, municipal service providers (e.g., senior centers), other CAIs, and private entities whose project shows a coordinated effort to streamline and expand reach within a single application

3.11.2 Sustainability Plan

Applicants will have an opportunity to provide a brief description of how their project's services will be managed and maintained after the funding period ends. This description must address the following:

- Ongoing funding source(s)

- Transition from grant to independent funding

- Service management and maintenance

- Equipment refreshes

- Data collection and reporting

- Community engagement/outreach

3.11.3 eduroam® Integration

Applicants will have an opportunity to provide a brief description of how their project will ensure integration with eduroam®. This description must address the following:

- Access points are configured to broadcast the eduroam® SSID.

- Users can authenticate using their home institution credentials.

- Usage data is collected and reported to CEN.

- Location is added and available on the [eduroam® US Locator Map](#)

3.11.4 Exceed Minimum Wireless Internet Speeds

Applicants will have an opportunity to provide a brief description of how their project meets this project prioritization criteria.

3.11.5 Include In-Kind Contributions

Applicants will have an opportunity to provide a brief description of how their project meets this project prioritization criteria.

3.12 Applicant Affidavit

Applicants must upload the Applicant Affidavit (Appendix D) with signatures from all involved entities.

4. Submission Instructions

Applicants must apply online via CEN's Online Portal to complete the application process. Applicants can review the Online Application Overview (Appendix A) to prepare. Applicants will have the option to save their progress.

5. Project Selection

CEN will review and score all applications against the Evaluation Rubric (Appendix C). Applications with higher point values will be prioritized for funding.

Applications will first be reviewed against mandatory requirements and scored as pass/fail. Only applications that receive a passing score on all mandatory requirements will move forward in the review process. The second review is on scored criteria, which assesses the project as it relates to the eligibility criteria and project requirements. The final evaluation assesses the project as it aligns with prioritization projects that receive favor during the scoring process.

In addition to the above scores, CEN may also consider adherence to the program objective, prioritized project criteria, and any disclosure or discovery of violations about any entity involved in the application that may be detrimental to the project's success or reputation. Other projects may be considered to the extent that funds are available.

6. Resources

1) [Department of the Treasury Capital Projects Fund](#)

2) [Connecticut's Plan for the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - A Roadmap for a Transformative, Equitable and Healthy Recovery for our State](#)

3) [Recipient Compliance and Reporting Responsibilities](#)

4) [Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund Guidance for States, Territories, and Freely Associated States](#)

5) [Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund Compliance and Reporting Guidance for States, Territories, and Freely Associated States](#)

6) [Project & Expenditure Report User Guide Capital Projects Fund](#)

7) [Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund Frequently Asked Questions](#)

8) [Treasury's Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund Environmental Checklist](#)

9) [Federal Communications Commission Broadband Speed Guide](#)

10) [Connecticut Department of Labor – Prevailing Wage Information](#)

11) [Capital Project Funds Best Practices](#)

12) [CPF Compliance & Reporting Resource Website](#)

13) DOJ – Supplant Guide Sheet

7. Appendices

- [Appendix A – Online Application Overview](#)

- [Appendix B – Budget Template](#)

- [Appendix C – Evaluation Rubric](#)

- [Appendix D – Applicant Affidavit](#)

- [Appendix E – Application Terms and Conditions](#)