

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Enhancing Digital Literacy for Older Adults Grant

### Application

**1) Q: What is the Enhancing Digital Literacy for Older Adults Grant?**

**A:** This grant is designed to provide American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding in the form of time-limited grants to Councils on Aging (COAs) to provide:

- Devices and internet access for older adults;
- Training and support to older adults in the COAs' service area and/ or older adults who access the COA with the goal of enhancing digital literacy.

The grantmaking process should result in supporting an estimated 30 COAs for an 18-month grant period. Devices (e.g., tablets, computers) will remain at the COAs after the grant performance period and the COA would be responsible for the cost of continued training and support.

Allowable expenses include devices (e.g., tablets, computers), internet (e.g., hotspots, stipends for individual consumers' internet if they do not qualify for the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC's) [Affordable Connectivity Program](#)), and training/support (e.g., a part- or full-time staff person to provide education and training, a contract with a non-profit digital literacy organization).

COAs will be awarded from \$5,000 to \$100,000 each to provide devices, internet, and/or training/support to older adults for the 18-month performance period.

**2) Q: How do I submit a grant application?**

**A:** Fill out the online application: <https://maanfgrants.force.com/s/loginpage>. See question 27 for step-by-step instructions on how to apply for the **Enhancing Digital Literacy for Older Adults Grant** using the MassGRANTS portal.

**3) Q: What is the deadline to submit the grant application?**

**A:** Grant applications will be accepted until May 22, 2023 at 5p.m. See the RFA posted on COMMBUYS ([www.commbuys.com](http://www.commbuys.com)).

**4) Q: Can I make changes to my application after it is submitted?**

**A:** No, your grant application is final once you submit it. You cannot make any changes to the application after that point.

**5) Q: Will there be another application in the future?**

**A:** We expect all funds for this digital literacy grant program to be distributed during this first round.

**6) Q: How will I know if my application was received?**

**A:** The persons designated as the primary and secondary points of contact in your organization's application should receive a confirmation email which states that your organization's application was received. If you did not receive a confirmation email, please contact [MassGrantsSupport@mtxb2b.com](mailto:MassGrantsSupport@mtxb2b.com).

- 7) **Q: What do I need in order to create an account on MassGRANTS?**  
**A:** You will need your Massachusetts Management Accounting & Reporting System (MMARS) vendor code and TIN to register for an account. The MMARS vendor code may also be referred to as the municipal vendor code because COAs will use the vendor code for their town.
- 8) **Q: How do I find my Municipal Vendor Code?**  
**A:** Your Municipal Vendor Code is an ID that your town uses to do business with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Vendor codes begin with “VC” followed by 10 digits. Your vendor code is the same code that you use to login to [VendorWeb](#). If you do not know, or are unable to remember your vendor code, please contact Adam Frank, at [adam.frank@mass.gov](mailto:adam.frank@mass.gov), at the Executive Office at Elder Affairs, and ask them for your VC (vendor code) number. The department will ask for your TIN number which was provided on the business’ Form W-9 or 1099 form.
- 9) **Q: Can my organization submit more than one application?**  
**A:** No. Each Council on Aging, or group of COAs, may only submit one application.
- 10) **Q: Can my organization use a subcontractor to conduct all or some of the initiative activities?**  
**A:** Yes, your organization can use a subcontractor to conduct all or some of the initiative activities. On the project application, you will be asked to identify and describe any subcontractor relationships with other organizations and to identify points of contact at the subcontracted entity.
- 11) **Q: Can my organization partner or sub-contract with another organization or municipality to submit a request for a geographic region?**  
**A:** Yes, COAs may partner and/or sub-contract with one or more COAs or other additional organizations to apply with a regional proposal. If the partnership includes multiple COAs only one application should be submitted by the COA who will be the financial agent for the grant.
- 12) **Q: If I apply in partnership with other COAs, what is the maximum amount of funding we can request?**  
**A:** Two COAs applying together can request from \$10,000 to \$200,000; three or more COAs applying together can request from \$15,000 to \$300,000.
- 13) **Q: What if a COA has already received Service Incentive Grant (SIG) or other state funding to do digital literacy programming?**  
**A:** This funding must not be used for the same scope as SIG or other state funding since this would be considered supplanting. COAs who received SIG or other state funding, however, may request funding through this grant for additional scope of digital literacy activities.
- 14) **Q: Can I use the funding to supplement an existing project?**  
**A:** Yes, you may propose funding to supplement an existing project. Awarded funding may not be used as a duplication of benefits with funding awarded from another federal program and cannot be used for programs and initiatives that overlap with CMS waiver extension proposals. Please refer to Question 13 for more information regarding projects funded by Service Incentive Grant (SIG) or other state funds.
- 15) **Q:** Our COA serves older adults enrolled in the State Home Care Program (including the

programs under Frail Elder Waiver) to receive "Assistive Technology", which includes telecommunications devices like a tablet. How can we make sure we are not duplicating services?

**A:** Older adults enrolled in the State Home Care Program must first seek digital literacy support through their existing program operated by the Aging Services Access Point (ASAP). If the State Home Care Program cannot meet the needs of the enrolled older adult to enhance digital literacy via the "Assistive Technology" service, grant funding may be utilized.

## Eligibility Requirements

### 16) Q: Who is eligible to submit an application?

**A:** To be considered for a grant award, the applicant must be a Council on Aging (COA) located in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Applications should be submitted by those with the delegated legal authority to apply. All applications will require a primary and secondary point of contact, Detailed budget outlining the Direct and Indirect Costs associated with how the grant funds are to be used and an implementation plan.

### 17) Q: What are the minimum qualification requirements?

**A:** Grant proposals must include a clear plan on how the applicant will expand digital literacy to Massachusetts residents in their service area or who access their COA who are 60 years of age and older. Additionally, the proposed program from the Applicant must be designed to meet one or both of the following activities:

- **Technology Training and Support:** Applicants must use the funds to provide digital literacy training, education, and support to older adults who access the COA. This may include, but is not limited to, funding personnel (e.g., COA staff, interns), third party vendor(s), travel, and materials. These funds may be used for in-person and/or remote support, with a preference for in-person.
- **Technology Purchases:** Applicants must use funds to purchase devices and/or broadband for older adults and/or Councils on Aging with the objective of strengthening digital literacy of older adults in the COA's service area. Note that the emphasis of technology purchases should be for older adults, yet equipment for the COA to successfully facilitate digital literacy support is permissible.

### 18) Q: What activities are grant eligible?

**A:** Qualifying Programs must propose to use grant funds only for Eligible Expenses. An Applicant must propose to use grant funds only for Qualifying Programs, as defined in Section 4. Eligible expenses must increase an older adult's digital literacy and enable the older adult to utilize allowable devices in a meaningful way that strengthens, enhances and expands Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services. This may include, but is not limited to, older adults' ability to engage in telehealth, ability to access health care information through a patient portal, ability to participate in preventive services and programs, ability to find and access supports to age in community:

- Hardware:
  - i. Tablets
  - ii. Computers/Laptops
  - iii. Monitors
  - iv. Keyboards
  - v. Computer mice
  - vi. Headphones

- vii. Webcam
  - viii. Mobile hotspots for older adults without home internet and who are not eligible for the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program
- Software
    - i. Speech-to Text, Text-to-Speech
    - ii. Anti-virus
  - Data/ Broadband
    - i. Data Packages
    - ii. Stipends for individual consumer’s home internet if an individual does not qualify for the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program
  - Training/Support
    - i. Training/support staff time (e.g., a part- or full-time staff person to provide education and training, stipends for interns)
    - ii. Contracts for training and support with a third party

## Grant Priorities

### 19) Q: Will any activities be prioritized for funding?

**A:** Yes. Applications that include one or both of the following criteria will receive preference in final awarding of grant funds:

- Applications that provide in-person technology training and support in addition to purchasing devices and/or broadband access. “In-person” training should be person-centered and person-directed and may result in support provided at the Council on Aging, the person’s home, or an alternative community location, such as a library.
- Proposals from COAs that serve Gateway Cities or Rural Communities. Municipalities that fall into these classifications can be identified as follows: [Rural Definition Detail](#) and [Mass General Law](#).

### 20) Q: Are there any exclusions on spending?

**A:** Grant funds may not be used for any of the listed ineligible activities. Applications proposing to use grant funds on such impermissible expenses may be rejected in whole or in part, and under no circumstances will grant funds be approved for such impermissible expenses.

Grant funds can be used to supplement, but **not** supplant, existing Medicaid HCBS or any other state-funded initiatives. These grant funds also must not overlap with any Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) waiver extension proposals.

Expenses that occurred before the contract start date or after the contract end date will not be reimbursed. Awardees must expend funds by no later than January 30, 2025, unless otherwise directed by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). EOEA may extend the date by which funds may be expended, in its discretion, by providing notice to the Awardees and without requiring an amendment to the Contract.

Additional ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- a. Internet, hot spots, or data plans for individuals who qualify for the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program
- b. Televisions
- c. Television subscription services
- d. Television streaming services (e.g., Netflix, Hulu, Disney Plus)
- e. Smartphone, tablet, and internet app fees
- f. Personal Emergency Response Systems
- g. Durable Medical Equipment
- a. Any pet related technology fees or fees
- b. Appliances
- c. Home automation devices
- d. Home security systems
- e. Robotic or electronic comfort pets
- f. Voice activated hardware and software (*with exception that this is an eligible expense for older adults who are blind or visually impaired*)
- g. Smart watches
- h. Audio books

## Grant Award

### 21) Q: How will I know if I am chosen to be awarded funds?

**A:** Selected Applicants will be notified via email that their project has been chosen to be funded. The selected Applicant must complete, sign, and return any attached required forms, and comply with any conditions for receipt of award included in the notice. Upon completion of all required forms and conditions, EOEA and the selected Applicant will execute a grant agreement which, accompanied by the Commonwealth Standard Contract Form, will serve as a Contract between EOEA and the selected Applicant. The Contract will specify the portion of funds that support the project as well as any proposed and approved reasonable direct costs associated with the program(s) and activities.

### 22) Q: How soon can I expect award funding to arrive?

**A:** Provided you have approved spending and metrics plans, funds will be released when your organization: (1) completes all required documentation, including an executed Contract; (2) has an active SAM.gov account; and (3) has a Municipal Vendor Code account.

### 23) Q: Will our organization receive all funding up front?

**A:** Yes, your organization will receive all obligated funding for your project up front. All funds must be spent by January 30, 2025.

### 24) Q: How will my organization receive funding from this grant?

**A:** Your program should already have a vendor code registered through MMARS. Upon receipt of all required documentation, including the signed and completed grant agreement, funds will be electronically transferred into the provided account.

### 25) Q: Does our organization have to repay funding if data shows that the funding is not meeting the project purpose? How do we repay funding?

**A:** Funding will need to be repaid if:

- i. The awardee does not complete the approved scope of work.

- ii. The awardee does not follow program guidelines, such as failing to comply with reporting requirements.
- iii. The awardee completes their scope of work for less than the obligated amount, the cost underrun would need to be returned.

If any of the above occurs, funding will need to be returned in the manner directed by EOEA within 4 weeks of written notification.

**26) Q: What are the reporting requirements?**

**A:** Grantees will be required to provide interim and final reports across an established set of metrics. A sample reporting template is included in the RFA but is not required to be submitted as part of the application.

- *Interim report:* An interim report covering the first year of the grant period will be required on January 31, 2024 covering the first six months of the funding period.
- *Final report:* A final report will be required on March 31, 2025, which is ninety days following the contract closing period.

**27) Q: For how long does our organization have to retain program documents?**

**A:** Per Section 7 of the Commonwealth Terms and Conditions, grant recipients are required to retain program documents and records for six years from the date of submission of the final expenditure report.

**How to Apply for the Grant**

**28) Q: How do I apply for the grant?**

**A:** Log in to the MassGRANTS portal using the following link:

<https://maanfgrants.force.com/s/loginpage>

- If you do not have an account, you can create one by clicking “Register for an account” on the left-hand side of the page (Figure 1).
- To create an account, you will need both your Vendor ID and the last four digits of your Tax Identification Number (TIN). If you do not know your Vendor ID, contact one of the Commonwealth departments that you do business with.
- After you log in, select the Grants Management tab on the left-hand navigation bar (Figure 2).
- Search for “Enhancing Digital Literacy for Older Adults” using the search bar in the upper right (Figure 3)
- Click on the title of the grant program you wish to apply for, in this case “Enhancing Digital Literacy for Older Adults”
- On the next screen, click “Apply” in the upper-right corner to begin your application (Figure 4).
- Fill in the appropriate information and click Submit when finished your application.

**NOTE:** *You cannot make any changes to your application after you submit it.*

For more detailed applications instructions, see the MassGRANTS App Guide posted on COMMBUYS.

**29) Q: How do I pause and save an application in progress?**

**A:** At any point, you can pause and save an application in progress by clicking the Home button in the upper-left corner (Figure 5). This will automatically save your progress and return you to the MassGRANTS home page.

When you are ready, or the next time you log in, you can resume any application by navigating to the Home tab, selecting the Draft section, and clicking Resume on the relevant application (Figure 6).

**30) Q: Who should I contact if I need technical assistance with the Grant Portal?**

**A:** For technical assistance, please email: [MassGrantsSupport@mtxb2b.com](mailto:MassGrantsSupport@mtxb2b.com).

**31) Q: Who should I contact if I have questions about the program and eligible uses of funds?**

**A:** For questions about the program and eligible use of funds, please email [MAHCBSGrants@pcgus.com](mailto:MAHCBSGrants@pcgus.com).

### **Responses to Questions Submitted During the RFA Question Period**

#### **Application**

**31) Q: Is there a page limit, word or character limit on the application?**

**A:** Yes, there is a 7,500-character limit on all narrative sections.

#### **Eligibility for Use of Funds**

**32) Q: Can I use funds to provide WiFi services to those who do not have access?**

**A:** Yes, grant funds can be used to provide WiFi to those who do not have access, if that person is not eligible for the Federal Communication Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program.

**33) Q: Can broadband be installed in a senior housing community room for access to WiFi by multiple senior residents?**

**A:** Yes.

**34) Q: If funds are used to expand WiFi services in a municipality for seniors, does it have to be for a senior housing complex or can it go towards individual households as well?**

**A:** Grant funds can be used to purchase WiFi for both communities of older adults and individual households, if those households are not eligible for the Federal Communication Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program.

**35) Q: Would the purchase of an iPhone be allowed under the grant? Our experience working with residents with low vision and/or blindness has found the most important full-service device is an iPhone. Many moderate to low-income residents find this option cost prohibitive.**

**A:** Yes, as long as the smartphone will help the older adult engage in telehealth, access health care information, participate in preventative services and programs, or find and access supports to age in the community, smartphones are an eligible expense. However, you cannot use grant funds for any smartphone app fees.

**36) Q: Would a tablet that comes with a cellular data subscription be eligible?**

**A:** Yes, both tablets and data packages are eligible subscriptions provided those expenses meet the other grant requirements listed in the RFA.

**37) Q: I was wondering if the grant money could be used to purchase a portable microphone/speaker combo system to be used during presentations?**

**A:** Applicants can use funds to purchase devices and/or broadband for older adults and/or Councils on Aging with the objective of strengthening digital literacy of older adults in the COA's service area. Note that the emphasis of technology purchases should be for older adults, yet equipment for the COA to successfully facilitate digital literacy support is permissible.

**38) Q: Can I use grant funds to buy printers, scanners, or copiers?**

**A:** No, printers, scanners, and copiers are ineligible expenses.

**39) Q: Would digital game boards be an eligible item? The concept is to introduce touch screen technology in a fun and non-intimidating approach.**

**A:** Yes, digital game boards are an eligible expense, so long as these game boards are coupled with additional devices and/or training to ensure older adults develop more comprehensive digital literacy.

**40) Q: I'm writing to see if the GrandPad tablet is grant eligible. This is a tablet designed specifically for older adults with little to no computer experience and comes with a subscription pricing model. The subscription simply includes built-in 4G LTE connectivity and 24/7/365 video support at a click of a button – the subscription does NOT include any app fees. Please note that the GrandPad tablet has been used for virtual care programs very successfully at other agencies in the state.**

**A:** Yes, both tablets and data packages are eligible subscriptions provided those expenses meet the other grant requirements listed in the RFA.

**41) Q: Can funding be used to market digital literacy programs?**

**A:** Yes.

#### **Indirect Costs**

**42) Q: Is there a cap on indirect costs? What indirect costs are allowable?**

**A:** Indirect costs related to program expenses (e.g., coordination costs, administrative salaries, etc.) are allowable in proposed budgets. There is no cap on indirect costs, however applications that limit their indirect costs to at or below 10% of the overall project budget will be more competitive during the review process. Projects that include more than 10% of the overall budget as indirect expenses need to provide a detailed breakdown of those costs in the application budget.

**43) Q: If a number of COAs in a region apply together, is it possible to use some of the award to fund administration/coordination of a larger grant with a number of partners?**

**A:** Yes, grant funds can be used to administer or coordinate a grant. However, these expenses are considered indirect costs.

**44) Q: If a number of COAs apply together, do you anticipate contracting with the lead applicant who would then subcontract with the others? If so, can funding be used for this coordination?**



**A:** EOEA will contract with the lead applicant, who will act as the fiscal agent for this grant and be responsible for coordinating with their project partners and/or subcontractors. Grant funds can be used to administer or coordinate the grant. These expenses are considered indirect costs.

## **Administrative**

**45) Q: Are Level 2 Rural Communities prioritized?**

**A:** EOEA will prioritize all Rural Communities or Gateway Cities when awarding grant funding. Municipalities that fall into these classifications can be identified as follows: [Rural Definition Detail](#) and [Mass General Law](#).

**46) Q: Is there any limitation on partnerships, for example can a COA partner with a local library?**

**A:** COAs are encouraged to partner with any other organizations to complete their project. Note that if a COA partners with an organization that is not a COA, like a local library, the grant award remains capped at \$100,000. The grant award only increases if two or more COAs partner on a project.

**47) Q: Could Gateway Cities work with surrounding Rural Communities, if they meet the definition?**

**A:** Yes, COAs are encouraged to partner with any other organizations to complete their project.

**48) Q: Is the limit \$100,000 per COA or per Senior Center?**

**A:** Award limits are determined by the number of COAs partnering for an application. Award limits by partnership are listed in the RFA.

**49) Q: Is there a match required? If so, what is the percentage?**

**A:** No, grantees are not required to match funds for this grant.

**50) Q: What are the reporting requirements and frequency?**

**A:** Reporting requirements are listed in the RFA in Section 6.2.

**51) Q: Is the COA responsible for checking/verifying a participant's Federal Communication Commission (FCC) Affordable Connectivity Program eligibility?**

**A:** Yes, the COA should confirm if older adults are eligible for the Affordable Connectivity Program or any other funding for digital literacy prior to using grant funding.

## **Purchasing**

**52) Q: Does EOEA have a list of training vendors?**

**A:** No, EOEA does not have a list of preferred training vendors. Grantees are responsible for sourcing their own training providers to support their project.

**53) Q: Is there any way to simplify the purchasing process? For example, can you provide a standard pricing list?**

**A:** No, EOEA does not have a standard pricing list for equipment. Applicants are encouraged to consult municipal purchasing agents and prevailing market prices when creating their budgets.

**54) Q: Any possibility of buying devices in bulk to be accessed by all COAs that are applying? Or is each grantee responsible for sourcing equipment?**

**A:** Grantees are responsible for sourcing their own equipment. Grantees can work together to purchase in bulk.

**55) Q: Do we have to purchase equipment through a designated supplier?**

**A:** No, grantees are responsible for sourcing their own equipment. There are no designated suppliers for this grant.