

DIGITAL EQUITY FUND: APPLICATION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

For any additional questions, please email digital.equity@boston.gov

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Broader grant questions:

- **Question:** What is the grant size for this mini-grant program?
 - **Answer:** The City expects to award grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$35,000.
- **Question:** My organization serves the Boston community but that community does not fall under one of the specific populations mentioned in the application (older adults, persons with disabilities, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) or English Language Learner (ELL) students, residents of Public Housing or rental voucher holders, adult residents who have lost employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic). Should we still apply?
 - **Answer:** Yes! The goal of the Digital Equity Fund is to support the Boston community by providing the technology equipment required to keep us connected. Although we encourage nonprofits serving the above mentioned populations to apply, any organization that directly serves the Boston community is eligible for the grant.
- **Question:** My non-profit is headquartered somewhere other than Boston, but we directly serve the Boston community. Are we eligible?
 - **Answer:** To be eligible, an organization must serve Boston residents. If your non-profit serves folks in the Boston community and surrounding areas, dollars and programming supported by the fund can only support Boston residents (so if you have programs in Boston and other communities, the funding would be limited to the Boston-specific program).
- **Question:** Can a previous Digital Equity Fund applicant apply for another round?

- **Answer:** Yes! Applying for a previous round does not disqualify you. We encourage any nonprofits serving the Boston community to apply.
- **Question:** Can a previous Digital Equity Fund recipient apply again?
 - **Answer:** Yes! However, if you do submit for a similar project, please articulate progress around the previously funded project and the rationale for additional funding.
- **Question:** Is overhead allowable?
 - **Answer:** There's nothing specifically barring overhead, but just keep in mind that the Digital Equity Fund is a mini-grant program designed for gap funding, not big grant funding. Try to keep overhead costs under 10 percent.
- **Question:** What age range qualifies as older Bostonians, for purposes of applying for the Age Strong grant funds?
 - **Answer:** The Age Strong Commission serves Boston residents ages 55 and over.
- **Question:** What is the maximum amount awarded to past participants?
 - **Answer:** The maximum amount we have awarded is \$35,000.

Project-specific questions:

- **Question:** Some software programs that are designed to engage isolated elders require a monthly subscription fee. Can funds from the Digital Equity Fund be used to offset those fees?
 - **Answer:** There's nothing that prohibits funds from going towards subscription fees, but the Digital Equity Fund is designed to be a project-based grant, so please indicate how the subscription fees fall within the larger project (as opposed to just being an operational cost).
- **Question:** Can grant money go towards internet fees for a year?
 - **Answer:** Yes! This would fall under the Digital Equity Fund's goal of increasing technology access for Bostonians.
- **Question:** Can grant money go towards a facilitator or trainer who works with Bostonians to improve technology skills?
 - **Answer:** Yes! This would fall under the Digital Equity Fund's goal of providing training to empower Bostonians with the tools they need to utilize technology.

- **Question:** Can an organization request funding for different parts of multiple programs?
 - **Answer:** The Digital Equity Fund is intended to support a project that solves technology equipment, access, and training gaps. In your application, please specify how your funding request supports those overall goals.
- **Question:** Would a project involving technology support in the workforce development field be eligible for funding?
 - **Answer:** Yes! Any project that provides technology equipment, access, and training to Bostonians is eligible for funding. It is fine if the project scope expands beyond technology, but please indicate how the project will move forward those three digital equity goals.
- **Question:** Do computer system installation fees fall under what would be covered by the Digital Equity Fund?
 - **Answer:** It could! If your proposal articulates how the costs would help move forward a digital equity initiative, then it should fall under the goal of improving access to technology equipment.
- **Question:** Can grant funds cover buying equipment for participants?
 - **Answer:** It could! The application does not specify how you can get equipment to Bostonians, so if your application proposal clearly moves that goal forward then funds could cover it.
- **Question:** Can grant funds cover an educational social media campaign?
 - **Answer:** If you can articulate how the campaign would push forward one of the Digital Equity Fund goals, it could be covered.
- **Question:** Can grant funds go towards a shared community platform that would help non-profits better serve the technology needs of the community?
 - **Answer:** This could be a trickier one as it could be viewed as an operational cost, but if you can articulate how this project links to an end goal of providing technology equipment, access, and training to the community, then it could be considered. As a reminder, the Digital Equity Fund covers one-time, project-based costs.
- **Question:** When will funds be released?
 - **Answer:** We currently plan to award the grant money mid-June.

- **Question:** Can we use the funds to hire a temporary trainer who can provide training in a language other than English?
 - **Answer:** Sure! It sounds like that aligns well with the technology training goal of the Digital Equity Fund.
- **Question:** Can the funds go towards opening a small computer lab in partnership with a housing development?
 - **Answer:** They could! The Digital Equity Fund would probably support the technology equipment piece of the computer lab, so just be targeted in your proposal about the technology impact of the project.
- **Question:** When budgeting for the Digital Equity Fund grant, is there a cap for overhead costs?
 - **Answer:** The Digital Equity Fund is meant to go towards a specific project, so please keep any overhead costs to 10 percent or less.
- **Question:** Can the funds go towards research or experimenting with new technology?
 - **Answer:** Research costs are trickier, but if you could clearly link it to one of the Digital Equity Fund goals then it doesn't have to be ruled out. And funds can go towards new technology! Please just articulate how the new technology would go towards pushing forward the Digital Equity Fund goals of providing technology equipment, access, and training to the community.
- **Question:** Our proposal is dependent on receiving a separate grant. If we do not receive the other grant, can we change our proposal?
 - **Answer:** The review committee will be evaluating the proposal as submitted by the deadline on April 30th, so it would be tricky to support a proposal change. Please be sure to clearly indicate your timeline if you are submitting a proposal that could be contingent on other funds, as the goal is to have this round of Digital Equity Fund grant money spent by July 2022.
- **Question:** Has the Digital Equity Fund continued to fund previous grantees?
 - **Answer:** No, the Digital Equity Fund has always been designed as a one-time grant.
- **Question:** If an organization was going to provide basic computer training, would it be more advantageous to purchase equipment for something like a computer lab, or purchase equipment directly for residents?

- **Answer:** One of the goals of the Digital Equity Fund is to provide technology equipment for the community, but we don't specify how that has to be done. We believe that you know your community best, so please just articulate how the proposal will move forward the goal for your identified community.
- **Question:** Does the proposal need to focus on technology as the main component of the application?
 - **Answer:** We recommend focusing your proposal on how you will be providing Bostonians technology equity, access, and training. It's okay to have your project be a function of a larger initiative, but for the purpose of the grant, please focus on the technology aspect as much as you can.
- **Question:** What are the reporting requirements?
 - **Answer:** Digital Equity Fund grant recipients will be asked to share an impact report with the City within 6 months of the end of the grant period (July 2022). The City will provide an impact report template to grant recipients, which may include short answer questions and a financial summary template with a space to attach receipts from purchases. The impact report template may also include a space for photos and testimonials that display the impact of the project.
- **Question:** Can grant money go towards fundraising costs?
 - **Answer:** This would be out of scope, please focus your proposals on costs that will provide technology equipment, access, and training to the community.
- **Question:** Can grant money go towards training for a smaller non-profit, which in turn will provide training to the community?
 - **Answer:** It could! Please just articulate how the project will ultimately support technology training for the community.
- **Question:** Will sustainability of the project be taken into account?
 - **Answer:** The funds are intended to be spent before July 2022. We want to see what you will be doing over the course of the year to move forward the goals of supporting technology equipment, access, and training for the Boston community. While the grant period ends in July 2022, it would be great to see applications explain what the long term impact of the project would be on the community.

- **Question:** Can our proposal be geared towards solving technology isolation caused by COVID-19?
 - **Answer:** Yes! It is more important than ever to have the ability to connect digitally. Just make sure your proposal articulates how you are moving forward the goals of supporting technology equipment, access, and training for the Boston community.
- **Question:** Can a nonprofit submit two applications if there are two distinct projects that serve older Bostonians and then a separate population?
 - **Answer:** Yes! A nonprofit may submit two applications if one of the proposals is geared towards older Bostonians.

Application-specific questions:

- Please note: a few questions were brought up about a field in the application template around identifying what population you are serving that only listed one option. This should be fixed!
- **Question:** Do you have to be a non-profit to apply?
 - **Answer:** To qualify, an organization must have non-profit status or have a fiscal sponsor.
- **Question:** Are there character limits to questions on the application where there isn't a limit specifically indicated?
 - **Answer:** Not on our end, but it's possible Google Forms may limit you to a certain number of characters. If you run into an issue with character limits, please let us know.
- **Question:** Does a non-profit have to request proof of Boston residency from program participants?
- **Answer:** Digital Equity Fund grant funds must go towards supporting Boston residents, and we hope that submitted proposals will have a low barrier of access for program participants. You know your community best, and participants do not need to submit any proof of Boston residency. **Question:** If an organization's operational budget is over \$700,000, can they still apply?
 - **Answer:** There is no specific cap on operational budgets, so we encourage you to apply.

- **Question:** Can my organization submit a different budget form than the template provided?
 - **Answer:** You can use a different budget format, but it should still be a project budget (not a full organizational budget) that shows a breakdown of how the mini-grant funds would be used.

Information on past recipients:

- The first round of the grant offered \$35,000 in funding and went to [Castle Square Tenants Organization](#) to fund its work with local students.
- The second round of the grant offered \$100,000 between three recipients: La Alianza Hispana, Mujeres Unidas Avanzando, and South End Technology Center. The second round of grants opened in January 2019 and were awarded in October 2019 ([learn more about the 2019 recipients](#)).