2023 DIGITAL EQUITY FUND
REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS & GUIDELINES

Application Opens: April 10, 2023

Application Deadline: June 2, 2023, at 5:00PM EDT

Grant Application Portal:

https://baltimorecivicfund.submittable.com/

More Information:

https://www.baltimorecivicfund.org/digital-equity-fund

Applicant Information Sessions:

Education and Outreach Session 1: Wednesday, April 26th at 6:00PM EDT | RSVP

Planning and Mobilization Session 1: Tuesday, May 2nd at 12:00PM EDT | RSVP

Implementation Session: Thursday, May 4th at 12:00PM EDT | RSVP

Education and Outreach Session 2: Wednesday, May 10th at 8:30AM EDT | RSVP

Planning and Mobilization Session 2: Monday, May 15th at 6:00PM EDT | RSVP

BACKGROUND

The Digital Equity Fund (DEF) was established in 2022 with funds awarded through the American Rescue Plan Act. Baltimore City's Office of Broadband and Digital Equity (BDE), a program of the Baltimore City Office of Information and Technology (BCIT), was awarded $35 million to close the digital divide for the city's residents. BDE dedicated $5 million to seed the Digital Equity Fund. The Baltimore Civic Fund serves as the grant program administrator in partnership with BCIT.

PURPOSE

Digital equity is a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy. Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services (see **Appendix A** for definitions).

Digital inclusion activities are those intended to ensure all people and communities have the skills, technology, and capacity needed to reap the full benefits of our digital economy. If digital equity is the goal, digital inclusion is how we get there (see **Appendix A** for definitions).

BDE is now accepting applications for the Digital Equity Fund. The purpose of the DEF is to support community-led digital equity outreach, digital inclusion planning and implementation. These grants are meant to set the foundation with awareness, engagement, and education for Baltimore City neighborhoods on digital equity, how the digital divide impacts communities, and develop neighborhood-level digital inclusion plans. Implementation grants will support the execution of digital inclusion plans and activities.

BDE plans to grant up to $1M in the first cycle and up to $1.5M in the subsequent cycle. More information on future funding opportunities is forthcoming.

ELIGIBILITY

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS
The DEF will only fund Baltimore City-based organizations.

TARGET POPULATION
Program activities must address the needs of those left behind in the digital age, including:
  I.   People with disabilities;
  II.   Older adults;
  III. Immigrants and non-English speakers;
  IV.   Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group;
  V.   Returning citizens;

VI.   LGBTQIA+ Youth;
VII.   People experiencing homelessness; and
VIII. Families with children under five (5) years of age.

TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations (or their fiscal agents) serving Baltimore City residents that qualify as public charities under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and do not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, national origin, political persuasion, age, physical handicap, gender or sexual orientation, including:
   I.   A community anchor institution;
   II.   Schools and educational agencies;
   III. Neighborhood associations;
   IV.   An entity that carries out a workforce development program; or
   V.   A partnership between any of the entities above.

Potential grantees should:
   I.   Showcase a history or demonstrate an ability to reach and engage members from communities in priority zip codes; and
   II.   Have a plan for engaging the target populations.

GRANT TYPES AND TIERS

There will be three (3) types of grants: Outreach, Planning, and Implementation. The grant types and tiers are described below.

OUTREACH
   I.   *Education and Outreach Tier 1 – Up to $5,000*
         This tier of funding supports one-time or periodic activities to raise awareness of the digital divide and fund activities to address the digital divide. This level supports events, tabling, or other integration of digital divide related activities into existing programmatic activities of applicants.

   II.   *Education and Outreach Tier 2 – Up to $10,000*
         This tier of funding supports a sustained effort over the grant period that provides ongoing outreach, education, and technical assistance related to digital education and capacity building. This level could support ongoing operations within an organization to lead or coordinate digital equity work.

         Note: Funding will be limited to fifteen (15) Outreach grants.

PLANNING
   I.   *Planning and Mobilization Tier 1 – Up to $20,000*
         This tier of funding supports a community building effort to develop a neighborhood digital inclusion plan. Digital inclusion plans must be developed with community input; therefore, applications must contain a comprehensive community engagement plan. Digital inclusion plans must include at least three (3) of the eligible digital inclusion activities listed below, as well as up to three (3) additional digital inclusion activities proposed by the applicant (up to six (6) total activities).

   II.   *Planning and Mobilization Tier 2 – Up to $50,000*

This tier of funding supports a community building effort to develop a neighborhood digital inclusion plan. Digital inclusion plans must be developed with community input; therefore, applications must contain a comprehensive community engagement plan. Digital inclusion plans must include at least five (5) of the eligible digital inclusion activities listed below, as well as up to five (5) additional digital inclusion activities proposed by the applicant (up to ten (10) total activities).

Note: Funding will be limited to ten (10) Planning grants.

IMPLEMENTATION

I. ***Implementation – Up to $75,000***
This funding is to support the implementation of digital inclusion plans. These grants may be used to implement digital inclusion plans created using Digital Equity Fund ***Planning and Mobilization*** grants (described above), or other eligible digital inclusion programming. All digital inclusion plans must include at least three (3) of the below eligible digital inclusion activities and have a comprehensive community engagement plan.

Note: Funding will be limited to ten (10) Implementation grants.

ELIGIBLE DIGITAL INCLUSION ACTIVITIES

Planning and Mobilization and ***Implementation*** grant applicants should select 3-5 activities from this list to incorporate into their project proposal:

I. Increasing community/neighborhood level connectivity;
II. Increasing resident confidence level with technological devices and/or internet use;
III. Providing digital education services;
IV. Integrating workforce development with digital education;
V. School-based or recreation center-based, before-school or after-school programs for students with digital education missions (excluding digital components of a traditional after-school program);
VI. Senior center-based programs with digital education focus;
VII. Providing anchor institution-based programs for digital education for adults, older adults, and other non-traditional students;
VIII. Visual or auditory art projects that center digital equity (social justice);
IX. Providing digital education programs to reduce online and telephone scams;
X. Introducing new technology to target populations in low digital inclusion communities (e.g., Older adults using virtual reality technology to learn a new skill or enjoy an activity);
XI. Increasing digital employment access; or
XII. Giving quality devices to or repairing devices for target populations.

GRANT DUPLICATION

An organization may submit ONE grant proposal for each grant type listed in the previous section. That means applicants can apply for one ***Outreach and Education*** grant, one ***Planning and Mobilization*** grant, and one ***Implementation*** grant. Applicants cannot have more than one application per grant type per grant cycle with the exception of independent, discrete entities with separate executive leadership which are linked only by sharing the same fiscal agent. Any such entity may submit a grant proposal in the same

year.

Organizations that receive *Planning and Mobilization* funding under this grant program may reapply to subsequent *Implementation* grant program(s) after the following conditions have been met: (1) the funds granted have been spent as specified in the grant application; and (2) the organization has complied with all other conditions of the grant, including participating in site visits and/or interviews, evaluations, and submitting reports and/or surveys.

RESTRICTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The following are *not eligible* for grant funding:

I.   Individuals, state or federal government agencies, or for-profit organizations or businesses.
II.   Requests for support that do not meet the eligibility requirements.
III. Activities that include reselling or monetizing products or services funded by the Digital Equity Fund grant award.
IV.   Proposed programming that has fees for participants.
V.   Activities that improperly discriminate as to race, gender, marital status, sexual preference, age, disability, creed or ethnicity, or grants for religious indoctrination or other religious activities.
VI.   Activities outside Baltimore City and not in support of Baltimore City residents.

GRANT AWARD AMOUNTS

Grant awards range from $2,500 to $75,000. Awards are made for one (1) year roughly from August 1, 2023 to July 31, 2024, with the exception of Tier 1 *Education and Outreach* grants, which will be for six (6) months from August 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024. All grant funds must be expended during their respective periods. Grant funds may be used only for the purpose stated in the grant application. If a funded program proposal or budget needs to be revised, the grantee organization must contact the Baltimore Civic Fund and request a modification. If grant funds are not spent by the end of the one-year grant period, the remaining balance must be returned to the Civic Fund, unless an extension has been requested and approved by the Civic Fund. If a program is discontinued during the grant period, unexpended funds must be returned to the Civic Fund.

STARTUP COSTS AND PREPAYMENT
Grantees with budgets of $10,000 or less will be eligible to receive all grant funds upon execution of their grant agreement. Grantees with budgets over $10,000 will be eligible for up to 25% of their program costs upon execution of their grant agreement.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

Priority will be given to program proposals that:

I. Provide a demonstrated history of engaging target populations.
II. Demonstrate a plan to partner in collaboration with trusted, community-based, grassroots organizations.
III. Provide a language access plan, including providing access to written materials in more than one (1) language and/or oral translation services in more than one (1) language.
IV. Serve residents in one or more neighborhoods with very low digital inclusion in the following zip codes. For additional information and to view Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance's (BNIA) Maryland Digital Equity Scorecard Index Map, click here:

a. 21205
b. 21213
c. 21218
d. 21217
e. 21215
f. 21216
g. 21229
h. 21223
i. 21202
j. 21201

PERFORMANCE & EVALUATION

BCIT expects that grant activities will begin within 30 days of receipt of funding and according to the timeline provided in the grantee's proposal. BCIT strongly encourages grantees to develop their program work plans and timelines accordingly. Grantees must plan to fully expend grant funds during the period of performance while ensuring full transparency and accountability for all expenditures. After initial payment, grantees will be required to submit a progress report to receive the balance of their award; a final report will also be required at the end of the performance period. For the six-month performance period (Tier 1 *Education and Outreach* grants), progress reports will be due by November 30, 2023, with final reports due by February 29, 2024. For the one-year performance period (all grants, excluding Tier 1 *Education and Outreach*), progress reports will be due by November 30, 2023, February 29, 2024, and May 31, 2024, with final reports due by August 30, 2024. See **Appendix B** for timeline and key dates.

If a grantee has not made sufficient progress as evidenced by the reports, BCIT reserves the right to terminate their grant with Baltimore Civic Fund. If at any time BCIT finds serious issues, such as safety, misuse of funding, or inadequate insurance coverage, they have the right to immediately terminate the grantee's contract with Baltimore Civic Fund.

GRANT APPLICATION & PROGRAM PROPOSAL

The following items will be required in the grant application:

I. **ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND NARRATIVE:**
   a. Mission statement
   b. Brief history of the organization
   c. Current programs and activities

II. **ORGANIZATION FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**
   a. Copy of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) letter of determination certifying 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. For those applying with a fiscal sponsor, include a copy of the fiscal sponsor's IRS letter of determination.
   b. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) or DUNS Number. Organizations without a Federal Identifier at the time of application are still able to apply. If awarded, the organization must furnish a Federal Identifier within 15 days of being notified of the award or forfeit the award.
   c. Certificate of Good Standing from the Maryland Department of Commerce dated no earlier than January 1, 2023.
   d. Board-Approved Organization Budget
   e. Operating Revenue
   f. Operating Expenses
   g. Copy of most recent IRS 990 or most recent independent audit.
      i. For organizations with operating budgets $250,000 or less: an IRS 990 filing within the past 12 months OR an independent audit that is no older than calendar year 2021.
      ii. For organizations with operating budgets over $250,000: an independent audit that is no older than calendar year 2021. Applicants without an independent audit at the time application will still be eligible to apply and should provide an IRS 990. However, those grantees will be required to answer additional finance related questions in the application and provide an independent audit one year from the date of the executed grant agreement. *Note: Not all financial statements are audits.*

III. **PROGRAM NARRATIVE:**
   a. Program Overview
      i. Purpose of the Request
      ii. Describe the need specific to the population you propose to serve.
      iii. Provide the location and demographic information of the target population.
      iv. Specify the intended use and how this request addresses digital equity and inclusion.
      v. Program schedule
   b. Description of how individual digital equity and inclusion activities will be incorporated into their project.
   c. Completed Gantt Chart template showing the program timeline.
   d. Identification of partners and descriptions of how they will contribute to your program. *A partner is any named organization in the narrative other than the applicant, or any individual named who does not work for the applying organization.*
   e. Letter(s) of Commitment from program partners.
   f. Neighborhood(s) and zip code(s) where the project will take place.
   g. Language Access Plan.
   h. Description of program goals and anticipated results.

   i. For ***Planning and Mobilization*** and ***Implementation*** Grants: Completed SMART Goals template.

   j. For ***Planning and Mobilization*** and ***Implementation*** Grants: Sustainability Plan
     i. Specify plans for financing the organization or program at the end of the grant period.
     ii. List other financial resources or strategies you are developing.
     iii. Beyond financing, suggest what will be the long-lasting outcomes or mechanisms by which the change will be sustained.

IV. **PROGRAM PERSONNEL (if applicable):**
  a. Plans to hire staff/contractor
  b. Plans to compensate volunteers
  c. Description of duties for personnel working on the program and percentage of time on program
  d. Resumes for key personnel involved in program management
  e. Job descriptions for all positions funded through the program

V. **BUDGET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE**
  a. Requested Grant Amount
  b. Summary of budget expenses including line-item descriptions
  c. Completed Budget Template
  The budget **must cover** one or more of the following items. The budget should cover all costs associated with your program even if you are not requesting funding for them under this grant. This includes products or services paid for by other sources of funding or in-kind contributions:
    i. Salary/fringe benefits breakdown per personnel (should have documentation of the duties of the personnel as it relates to the grant)
    ii. Contracts/Consultants
    iii. Technology (Digital assets, Laptops, Computers, etc.)
    iv. Other supplies
    v. Marketing/Communications
    vi. Event/Classes
    vii. Transportation
    viii. Payroll Service
    ix. Fiscal Sponsorship Fees
    x. Independent audit fees (for organizations with operating budgets over $250,000)

PROCESS

I. **DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY**: Review guidelines to confirm organization and expense eligibility.

II. **REGISTER FOR AN ACCOUNT IN THE GRANT PORTAL**: Register for an account on the Civic Fund's **online grant management portal**.

III. **ACCESS SESSIONS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**: We are committed to supporting tax-exempt organizations through the Digital Equity Fund process, through opportunities such as:

a. **Technical Assistance Requests**: Please submit all requests for technical assistance on the registration process to **submissions@baltimorecivicfund.org** before 5:00PM EDT on June 2, 2023 (date application closes). Please include "2023 Digital Equity Fund TA Request" in the subject line.

b. **Applicant Information Session**: Those interested in applying for this grant should plan to attend one of several virtual information sessions based on the grant type and tier for which you would like to apply (see dates below). The session will include demonstrations on how to register for and use the online grant portal, how to complete various templates, and an applicant Q&A. All questions posed during the meeting will be added to the FAQ and available to all applicants, even those that could not attend.

    i. Education and Outreach Formation Session 1: Wednesday, April 26, 2023 at 6PM
    ii. Planning and Mobilization Information Session 1: Tuesday, May 2, 2023 at 12PM
    iii. Implementation Information Session: Thursday, May 4, 2023 at 12PM
    iv. Education and Outreach Information Session 2: Wednesday, May 10, 2023 at 8:30AM
    v. Planning and Mobilization Information Session 2: Monday, May 15, 2023 at 6PM

c. **Request For Information/Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**: From the opening of this Request for Application on April 10, 2023 through Friday, May 19, 2023, potential applicants can submit questions about the application to **submissions@baltimorecivicfund.org**. Please include "2023 Digital Equity Fund Application Question" in the subject line.

    An FAQ with all questions and answers will be posted on our website and updated regularly. A final updated FAQ will be posted to our website by 5:00 PM EDT on Monday, May 22, 2023.

IV. **SUBMIT APPLICATION BY 5:00 PM EDT ON FRIDAY, JUNE 2, 2023:** It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the submitted grant proposal is complete and fully responsive to all RFA requirements and that the funding amount requested is consistent across all parts and sub-parts of the proposal. The Civic Fund reserves the right to deem any proposal that is incomplete or nonresponsive, ineligible for competitive review. Please closely follow the guidance outlined above to ensure that the proposal package is fully responsive to RFA requirements and eligible for review.

a. **Cost of preparing proposals**: Costs for developing, preparing, and submitting the proposals are solely the responsibility of the applicants. The Baltimore Civic Fund and City of Baltimore will not provide reimbursement for such costs.

V. **TECHNICAL REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS:** Applicants will be assessed for their ability to meet eligibility requirements and application completeness. If an applicant lacks proper documentation, they will be allowed at least **five calendar days** to provide information. If the applicant fails to provide the proper documentation, the application will not move forward in the review process.

VI. **PANEL REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS**: A group of panelists with diverse expertise and backgrounds will review applications using a standard rubric and consensus discussions to recommend awards.

VII. **GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT:** All applicants will receive an application update by **mid-July 2023.** If awarded, grantees will receive an email with a link to the Grant Agreement.

VIII. **REPORTING:** This grant program has several reporting requirements and deadlines. Reports will include a brief narrative and a budget. These reports are mandatory, and the deadlines are firm.
   a. Grantees of the Tier 1 *Education and Outreach* Grant will submit a progress report by Thursday, November 30, 2023 and a final report by Thursday, February 29, 2024.
   b. Grantees of all other grant types will submit quarterly progress reports by Thursday, November 30, 2023, Thursday, February 29, 2024, and Friday, May 31, 2024, with final reports due by Friday, August 30, 2024.

IX. **GRANT PAYMENTS**: There will be up to four opportunities for payment during the grant period depending on the type and tier.
   a. For Tier 1 *Education and Outreach* Grant: A single payment for the full amount of the grant request will be issued upon grant agreement execution and within the first thirty (30) days of the beginning of the grant period.
   b. For all other grant types and tiers: Startup installments of one quarter of the grant request will be issued upon grant agreement execution and within the first thirty (30) days of the beginning of the grant period.
   c. Second installments of one quarter of the grant award amount will be paid within 14 days of approval of the first progress report.
   d. Third installments of one quarter of the grant award amount will be paid within 14 days of approval of the second progress report.
   e. Fourth and final installments of one quarter of the grant award amount will be paid within 14 days of approval of the third progress report.

APPENDIX A

Glossary of Terms

Digital Equity - Digital Equity is a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy. Digital Equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.

Digital Inclusion - Digital Inclusion requires intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional and structural barriers to access and use technology. If Digital Equity is the goal, we will get there through Digital Inclusion.

Target Population – Target population is the group of individuals that the program services are intended to benefit. For purposes of the DEF target populations include:

I.	People with disabilities;
II.	Older adults;
III.	Immigrants and non-English speakers;
IV.	Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group;
V.	Returning citizens;
VI.	LGBTQIA+ Youth;
VII.	People experiencing homelessness; and
VIII.	Families with children under five (5).

Connectivity – Connectivity refers to the way residents are connected to the internet. This can include wireline connections or wireless internet.

Digital Education – Digital education Is the use of technology and digital tools to teach and learn. Digital education can include digital skills training – digital literacy, data management, collaborative work, communication skills, content generation, and the ability to solve problems in virtual environments.

Anchor Institution – Anchor institution refers to organizations which have an important presence in a place, through ties by their mission, history, physical location and local relationships.

APPENDIX B

Timeline and Key Dates

Request for Applications and Request for Information Opens	**Monday, April 10, 2023**
Applicant Information Session – *Education and Outreach*	**Wednesday, April 28, 2023** **Wednesday, May 10, 2023**
Applicant Information Session – *Planning and Mobilization*	**Tuesday, May 2, 2023** **Monday, May 15, 2023**
Applicant Information Session – *Implementation*	**Thursday, May 4, 2023**
Request for Information Closes	**Friday, May 19, 2023**
Applications Due	**Friday, June 2, 2023**
Technical Review	**Begins Monday, June 5, 2023**
Cure Period	**Begins Monday, June 12, 2023**
Panel Review	**Begins Monday, June 19, 2023**
Award Announcements	**Mid-July**
Progress Reports Due	**Thursday, November 30, 2023** **Thursday, February 29, 2024** **Friday, May 31, 2024**
Final Reports Due	**Thursday, February 29, 2024 (Tier 1 *Education and Outreach* grant)** **Friday, August 30, 2024 (All other grants)**