nrtc FUNDING ALERT!

Professional Assistance for Today's Unprecedented Funding Opportunities

Program Name

Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) Program

Funding Amount

- Up to $49.7 million, pending adoption of the final state budget

Virginia

$49.7 Million

Key Dates

- **April 1** – Draft Guidelines Released for Opening of Public Comment Period
- **April 7, 2-4pm & April 19, 12-2pm;** Public Input Sessions on Draft Guidelines
- **May 2** – Public Comment Period on Draft Guidelines Closes
- **May 20** – DHCD releases Final Guidelines for the FY2023 VATI Round
- **June 2, 12- 2pm** – VATI How-to-Apply Webinar
- **June 2** – Applications Open
- **June 2 – August 25** – VATI Technical Assistance and Project Development Sessions
- **July 7** – Notice of Applications Due
- **July 14** – DHCD Posts Notices of Application on VATI website
- **August 25** – Applications Due by 11:59PM EST
- **September 1** – DHCD Posts Applications on VATI Website
- **October 6** – Challenges Due
- **October 13** – DHCD Notifies Challenged Applicants
- **November 3** – Deadline for Challenge Rebuttals
- **December 8** – DHCD Notifies All Parties of Challenge Determination
- **Late December** – Anticipated Announcement of Award

Eligible Applicants

- Unit of government with a private-sector provider as a co-applicant
  - Unit of government: Towns, Cities, Counties, Economic Development Authorities/Industrial Development Authorities, Planning District Commissions, School Divisions
  - A private sector internet service provider should be a co-applicant
  - Publicly owned networks are eligible when partnered with a private sector co-applicant (private sector applicant must be serving as the customer-facing internet service provider)
  - Public broadband authorities may apply directly without investment from private sector (notwithstanding program requirements that applications include a private-sector internet service provider as the co-applicant)
- Multiple applications: units of local government may submit multiple applications with different service providers including project areas that cross jurisdictional boundaries
  - No more than one last-mile internet service provider may be included in an application
  - Units of local government must submit an application with each last mile internet service provider
  - Service providers may submit an application with more than one unit of local government

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Eligible Areas

- **Unserved Areas** having broadband speeds below 100/20 Mbps
  - Areas lacking 25/3 Mbps will be given significant priority in scoring
- Federally and state funded areas with existing agreements to build service to, or are currently served with, access to internet at speeds less than 100/20 Mbps are eligible for funding under the VATI program
  - Federally funded areas with service obligations at or over 100/20 Mbps will not be considered for funds managed or awarded through the VATI grant making process

Eligible Projects

- **Wireline project** – 20% or fewer of serviceable units have access to service with no special construction costs from any provider as to date of the application
- **Wireless project** – a proposed area is considered eligible if 25% or fewer of serviceable units have access to service with no special construction costs from any provider as of the date of the application
  - Passings with Received Signal Strength Indicator (RSSI) below -90dbm are not eligible
- Must be owned and operated by a private sector co-applicant
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to include passings in areas with special construction costs for low to moderate income residents
- Applicants must demonstrate that projects will be completed within 18 months
  - The project timeline begins with the contract execution between the applicant and DHCD

Mapping Issues

- Map(s) of project area and proposed infrastructure should include:
  - Point and Polygon shapefiles showing proposed passings and project area
  - Point shapefiles show each proposed passing in the application area as a singular mapped point containing attribute data showing the addresses of each point
  - Polygon shapefiles delineating the general challenged area(s)
  - For wireless providers: Shapefiles displaying heat maps indicating RSSI in the application area accounting for terrain and vegetation
- DHCD discourages the sole use of broadband availability maps when determining unserved areas to be included in an application
  - Mapping efforts, regardless of the level of detail should not replace further evaluation of broadband availability (i.e. fiber, cable, vertical assets)
  - For best practices regarding drawing a project area, contact DHCD staff

Application Contents

Response to questions for under each of the following sections and required attachments
- Project Description and Need
- Project Readiness
- Budget and Cost Appropriateness
- Commonwealth Priorities
- Additional Information

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Scoring

This is a competitive application process focusing on the applicant's broadband need, ready-to-construct project(s) needing financial assistance, readiness to proceed with an awarded project in a timely manner, and provision of 100/20 Mbps

- Evaluation Criteria
  - ◦ Project Description and Need **(85 points)**
  - ◦ Project Readiness **(40 points)**
  - ◦ Project Budget and Cost Appropriateness **(135 points)**
  - ◦ Commonwealth Priorities **(40 points)**

Middle Mile

DHCD will award funding to provide last-mile services, including middle-mile networks, equipment, or other investments required to deliver last-mile service to unserved areas

Budget Categories

- Derivation of costs and documentation of cost estimates, delineated by each service area
- Information to calculate the Cost Benefit Index score
- Number of serviceable units passed and the breakdown of those passings
- Breakdown of matching funds and in-kind resources

Links & Emails

- Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) | DHCD
- 2023 VATI Guidelines and Criteria (virginia.gov)
- Virginia DHCD Broadband Toolkit
- Please submit questions to vati@dhcd.virginia.gov