Connections for Classrooms

Round 5

A Grant for Rural, High-Need Districts to Invest in Networks or Devices to Enable Digital Learning

Grant Application Instructions & Program Procedures

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1.0 Executive Summary

Connections for Classrooms (CFC) originated in 2014 as a $36.7 million grant program joining multiple state agencies around the common goal of ensuring Georgia schools and classrooms have the high-speed broadband access required for digital and blended learning. Over the last three years, it has provided more than $80 million in grants to LEAs across the state for district and school network upgrades and digital devices.

Utilizing roughly $10 million in unspent grant funds from prior awardees, on September 21, 2017 CFC announced the creation of Round 5, which will enable eligible districts and schools to upgrade their digital networks or, if additional network upgrades are not needed in the next two years, purchase additional digital devices. Rural, high-need districts (defined in Section 2.2), state charter schools, state special schools, and locally authorized charter schools are eligible. Awards will combine CFC funds from the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, and funds will be available through March 31, 2020.

Due to limited funding, this round will include a competitive application submission and review process to determine awards. Strong applicants will clearly describe how this grant will enable them to upgrade and improve their digital networks to change instruction to implement digital learning, specifically facilitating learning with technology that gives students some control over time, place, path, and/ or pace. In addition, they will demonstrate their need for network equipment or devices, outline their equipment selection/deployment/maintenance plans, and explain how this investment ties into their current network.

Each application will be scored by at least two independent reviewers. Depending on the number and quality of applications received, applicants may receive full, partial, or no funding.

As in the past, GOSA will manage the grant award process in collaboration with the GaDOE. The following document provides guidelines to district and school representatives applying to the program and securing reimbursement funds should an award be made.

Additional information on the grant may be found online at GOSA's website (https://gosa.georgia.gov/2017-cfc-program-information), and questions may be directed to the grant program manager, Steve Korwan (skorwan@georgia.gov, 404-463-2399).

Thank you for your interest in this grant program!

1.1 Definitions and References

Applicant – An entity that submits a new application for the Connections for Classrooms – Round 5.

Awardee – An Applicant that has been approved for full or partial funding of a request made in Round 5 of the Connections for Classrooms Grant Program.

Connections for Classrooms –Round 5 – A fifth phase of grant funding under the Connections for Classrooms grant, which provides up to an additional $10 million to eligible districts and schools to upgrade their digital networks or, if additional network upgrades are not needed in the next two years, purchase additional digital devices.

Connections for Classrooms – Round 5 Website / CFC Website – A publicly accessible online area containing information related to Round 5 of the program, found at http://gosa.georgia.gov/2017-cfc-program-information.

End-User Digital Devices – Portable or desktop personal computing devices such as tablets, laptop computers, desktop computers, or other mobile devices used for instruction that also comply with Georgia Milestones minimum standards. Specifications available here.

USAC – Universal Service Administrative Company. This is the organization that administers the E-Rate Program for the Federal Government.

2.0 Program Overview

2.1 Program Intent

Despite the periodic availability of state and federal funding programs for education-based technology, some schools and districts are not able to access these funds because they often require supporting or matching dollars that they do not have allocated to this purpose. Round 5 intends to help schools and districts secure funds by providing its dollars to help cover the cost of needed broadband infrastructure or end-user digital devices.

This round intends to continue progress toward the goal to fund economically self-sustainable broadband facilities that:

- Serve districts/schools around the State of Georgia,
- Leverage technology to transform our educational system by providing students, parents, and educators more flexibility over the time, place, path, and pace of learning,
- Increase statewide broadband capacity to schools, ensuring that Georgia's schools are able to utilize 21st century technology in classrooms, and
- Increase districts'/schools' ability to expand wireless connectivity and device availability within schools, allowing them to fully leverage increased broadband capacity.

2.2 Eligible Districts and Schools

Round 5 will have two parallel application processes—one for rural, high-need districts and the other for state special schools and charter schools—as defined below.

Eligible Districts

A district is eligible to apply for Round 5 funding if it meets the following criteria:

1. Is located in a county that is in Tiers 1, 2, or 3 using the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' annual job tax credit tiers. These counties represent the counties with the highest unemployment rate, lowest per capita income, and highest percentage of residents whose incomes are below the poverty level in the state. In addition to being the counties with high student need, the economic conditions make it less likely that these districts are able to bridge the device gap with BYOD policies and local purchases. For more information on the tiers, click here.
2. Serves less than 25 students per square mile. These LEAs must spend proportionally more funds per pupil since they serve a more dispersed population and do not have the economies of scale of larger districts. In addition, students are more likely to spend more time on buses and have more limited opportunities for dual enrollment, making digital learning more important.

The map on the following page graphically shows the eligible districts in blue.

Eligible Schools

Schools in the following categories are eligible to apply:

- Locally authorized charter schools that have not been included in their LEA's E-Rate application,
- State Charter Commission authorized charter schools, and
- State special schools

Connections for Classrooms Round 5 Eligible Districts
State special schools, state charter schools, and locally authorized charter schools are also eligible to apply.
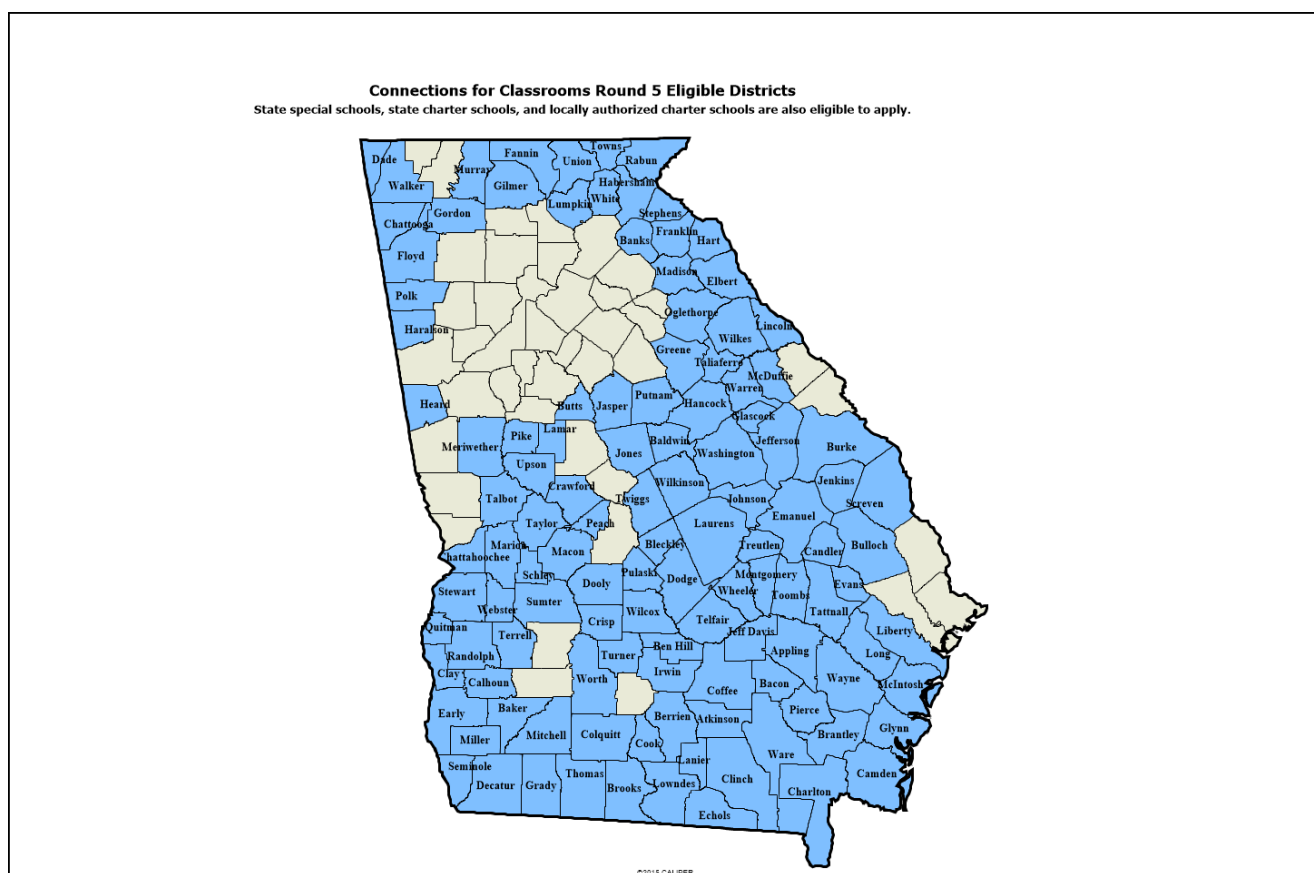
2.3 Grant Priority Areas

Priority 1: Local match funding for FY2018 E-Rate Category 2 school network infrastructure costs

Priority 2: School or district network infrastructure up to $50 per student

> *Only equipment and services that would be Category 2 eligible will be available for request.*
> *To be eligible for this Priority, districts/schools must have previously applied for E-Rate Category 2 in 2015, 2016, or 2017 and meets <u>one</u> of the following criteria:*
>
> - *Total remaining E-Rate Category 2 eligible funds for this funding cycle (inclusive of federal E-Rate funds and local match) for the district are less than the maximum of Priority 2 eligibility ($50/student) for the district as a whole, or*
> - *Total remaining E-Rate Category 2 eligible funds for this funding cycle (inclusive of federal E-Rate funds and local match) for the schools in which Priority 2 network investment is planned less than maximum of Priority 2 eligibility ($50/student) for the district as a whole.*

Priority 3: Digital devices up to $50 per student

> **To be eligible, districts must have utilized all Category 2 E-Rate eligibility or can commit in writing that no E-Rate eligible network upgrades will be done over the next two years. See Grant Guidelines document for list of eligible equipment.*

For Priorities 2 and 3, the October 2017 FTE K-12 enrollment should be used to determine total eligibility. These funds are not intended to purchase a $50 device or piece of equipment per student. Rather, the total eligible funding amount derived from the $50/student should be used for network equipment or end-user digital devices that comply with grant requirement and will best serve the students.

2.4 Allowable Award Expenditures

Round 5 funds are intended for the exclusive use towards end-user digital devices as defined in Section 1.1 of this document or USAC approved E-Rate Category 2 infrastructure items. These items may be found on USAC's website: http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/beforeyoubegin/eligible-services-list.aspx). Any funds not used to support the purchase of these approved expenditures will be rescinded.

2.5 Important Dates

LEAs that plan to participate in Round 5 should note the following key dates:

- **September 21, 2017:** GOSA published a grant notice on the program website and opened Round 5 application: http://gosa.georgia.gov/2017-cfc-program-information

- **October 3, 2017 2:00-3:00 PM:** Webinar on Round 5 Grant Application and Program Overview Webinar PowerPoint

- **October 18, 2017 3:00-4:00 PM:** Webinar for Locally Authorized Charter Schools on How to Apply for E-Rate.

- **October 24, 2017:** GaDOE K-12 Network Summit at Rock Eagle 4-H Conference Center. Overview of Grant Program and E-Rate Program Updates for FY2018 filing

- **November 15, 2017:** The application window closes as of 5:00 PM ET.

- **January 2018:** Award announcements will be made.

- **February 28, 2018:** The last date to submit the LEA's Notice of Intent to GOSA for Connections for Classrooms – Round 5 funding. Notices of Intent will not be accepted after this date, and funds will be reallocated for other purposes.

- **March 31, 2020:** The last day to submit a request for reimbursement of expenses related to Round 5 awards.

These dates may be revised by GOSA as deemed necessary. If these dates are revised, GOSA will post a notice on the link identified above.

3.0 Applying for Round 5 of the Grant Program

3.1 Application Overview

Due to limited funding, this round will include a competitive application submission and review process to determine awards. Strong applicants will clearly describe how this grant will enable them to upgrade and improve their digital networks to change instruction to implement digital learning, specifically facilitating learning with technology that gives students some control over time, place, path, and/or pace. In addition, they will demonstrate their need for network equipment or devices, outline their equipment selection/deployment/maintenance plans, and explain how this investment ties into their current network.

Each application will be scored by at least two independent reviewers. The scoring rubric is available on the grant program website. Depending on the number and quality of applications received, applicants may receive full, partial, or no funding.

3.2 Application Process

The Round 5 application process is described fully in this section. Applicants should review and fill out the Round 5 Planning document prior to entering the information in the online application. Once complete, its information can be copied into the online application.

3.2.1 Application Planning

The first step to planning your application is to download the Round 5 Planning document titled "Application Planning Document" found at http://gosa.georgia.gov/2017-cfc-program-information. The document includes each of the informational elements requested in the application. It is a convenient way to collect the necessary information so that the online application can be easily completed in one session.

3.2.2 Accessing the Online Application

The online application is available at https://fs3.formsite.com/GOSAGHP/form71/index.html?1505415935900.

4.0 Grant Awards

In January 2018, the primary point of contact for each Connections for Classrooms application will receive email notification of the outcome of the LEA's grant application. The evaluation of grant applications will result in one of several outcomes:

<u>Granted in full</u>. An application where the full requested amount is approved for funding.
<u>Granted in part</u>. An application where an amount lesser than the requested amount is approved for funding.
<u>Not granted</u>. An application where none of the requested amount is approved for funding.

<u>Funds are reserved but not under contract until an agreement is executed between GOSA and/or the GaDOE and the LEA. GOSA and/or the GaDOE reserves the right to rescind funding if it its intended use is for purposes other than the eligible items as outlined in this document.</u>

Questions regarding the grant amounts or the competitive scoring should be directed to Steve Korwan, CFC program manager at <u>skorwan@georgia.gov</u>.

4.1 Award Setup

To accept a Round 5 grant award, a certifying representative of the Awardee must submit a Notice of Intent to accept funding no later than **February 28, 2018**. Notices of Intent should be sent to Steve Korwan at <u>skorwan@georgia.gov</u> and should contain the following information related to the grant request:

- The name of the school/district
- LEA Number
- School Number (if applicable)
- Awardee Contact Name
- Awardee Contact Phone
- Awardee Contact Email
- The dollar amount the Awardee intends to request from their Connections for Classrooms – Round 5 award

This procedure reserves funds in advance for the LEA, thus **Notices of Intent will not be accepted after this date**. Any reserved funds for which the requirements outlined in this section are not met will be rescinded. A Connections for Classrooms administrator will reply to each Notice of Intent submission to confirm its receipt.

In order to enter into a contract for a Round 5 grant award, a certifying representative of the Awardee must submit the following documents:

- Priority 1: Copies of the Awardee's FY18 471 forms and the associated FCDL notifications
- Priority 2: Copies of the purchase orders for the E-rate Category 2 eligible equipment and services
- Priority 3: Copies of the purchase orders for the end-user digital devices

A Contractual Agreement will be sent to the Awardee for signature after these items have been received and reviewed by the program manager.

4.2 Grant Recipient Registration

Requests for Reimbursements are processed through the FluidReview workflow system (http://cfc.fluidreview.com). LEAs that applied for the 2014, 2015, or 2016 Connections for Classrooms program, whether awarded or not, have already registered with this system and will see the request for reimbursement feature on the main screen when they authenticate. Awardees that did not apply for the 2014, 2015, or 2016 grant program must register with FluidReview in order to access the request for reimbursement form. A registration link will be provided to these Awardees at the time that awards are made.

4.3 Request for Reimbursement

Connections for Classrooms is a reimbursement-based grant program. Requests for reimbursement may be submitted after the procurement of the end-user digital devices or infrastructure items has been made and paid for by the recipient. Expense and payment reference documentation should be included with each reimbursement request to support the requested funding amounts. Payment requests may be made no more than once every calendar month and can be submitted online at the Connections for Classrooms grant management website located at http://cfc.fluidreview.com.

> (i) Reimbursement requests must be made prior to March 31, 2020.
> Requests made after that time will not be considered.

To submit a reimbursement request, an LEA representative should visit the FluidReview portal at http://cfc.fluidreview.com and complete the following:

1. Select the option "Round 5 Reimbursement Request Form."

2. Complete the first page of information with the reimbursement contact, the reimbursement request and the banking information. Be sure to enter the amount being requested. See the image below labeled "Reimbursement Request, Page 1."

   - The Grant Project # can be found in the Grant Award materials.
   - The Reimbursement Request # indicates which sequenced Round 5 reimbursement request this is for your LEA or school.

Reimbursement Request, Page 1

LEA Name:

Carroll County

LEA ID:

622

Reimbursement Request Contact

(To assist with questions or follow-up)

Name

Phone

Email

Reimbursement Request Information

* See how to identify the Routing Number and Bank Account Number

Grant Project #

Reimbursement Request #

Final Reimbursement Request? ○ Yes ⦿ No

Routing Number

Bank Account Number

Amount Requested

Save & Continue Editing   Next

3. Proceed using the [Next] button to complete the second page of information with documentation related to the reimbursement request. See the image below labeled "Reimbursement Request, Page 2."

Reimbursement Request, Page 2*

Complete this process for requests for reimbursement for items granted from the **Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program (DLDRGP)** under the Connections for Classrooms program.

Supporting Documentation

Please provide the documents that support the reimbursement request, including receipts, payment records, etc. Each piece of documentation must be uploaded separately.

[Browse...]

Upload 2

[Browse...]

Upload 3

[Browse...]

Upload 4

[Browse...]

Upload 5

[Browse...]

Approving Authority

I certify that the data above is correct and that this request is in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Connections for Classrooms grant.

☐

Authorized Representative [ ]

Title [ ]

Click here when you have completed your reimbursement request form:

☐   [Back] [Save & Continue Editing] [Save & Exit]

4. Upload documents that support the reimbursement request, including receipts, payment records, etc. To do so, click the button [Choose File], which opens a window where you can choose a file from your computer's local hard drive.
5. Indicate the approving authority.
6. Select [Save & Exit] to complete the request. You will return to the FluidReview portal main screen.
7. **Important:** To complete the reimbursement request you must click the option Round 5 Submit Reimbursement Request Form from the FluidReview portal main screen. See the image below labeled "Reimbursement Request, Submit."

Screenshot provided is from a prior grant round. Once the Fluid Review system is updated for Round 5, the screenshots in this document will be replaced.

Reimbursement Request, Submit

To support timely reimbursements, please make sure to submit proper documentation with each reimbursement request. Questions regarding Round 5 expense reimbursements should be directed to Steve Korwan at skorwan@georgia.gov or 404-463-2399.

Reimbursement requests are handled as quickly as possible from the time they are submitted. The process for funding reimbursements is as follows:

1. The Awardee makes a reimbursement request using the steps outlined above.
2. The request is reviewed and validated by grant administrators.
3. The Awardee contact is sent an email message if the reimbursement request requires follow-up information to validate and approve the request.
4. Once all necessary information is received and verified, the request is approved.
5. Funds are then wired via ACH transfer to the Awardee's bank.

Reimbursement payments are transferred directly into a designated banking account and are coordinated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the OneGeorgia Authority.

**Please note that if an Awardee receives any funding from the GaDOE, instructions for reimbursement of those funds will be transmitted when the awards are announced. **

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