



Pandemic Recovery Office

One Capitol Hill | Providence, RI 02908 | 401-222-2280

Paul L. Dion, Ph.D.

Director

RHODE ISLAND PERFORMANCE REPORT

CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND 2024 REPORT

Rhode Island

2024 Performance Report

This project is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number CPFFN00169 awarded to
The State of Rhode Island by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW 3

PROGRAM INFORMATION 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 5

USES OF FUNDS 7

PROMOTING EQUITABLE OUTCOMES AND ADDRESSING CRITICAL NEEDS..... 9

LABOR..... 11

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 12

CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE 14

APPENDIX 1 15

OVERVIEW

In accordance with guidance from the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Governor McKee and the Rhode Island General Assembly will deploy the State's \$112.3 million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (CPF) allocation to invest \$25 million in high-quality broadband infrastructure and \$81.7 million for the construction or renovation of multipurpose community facilities that enable work, education, and health monitoring. The remaining \$5.6 million, allocated by U.S. Treasury as administrative funds, will be used to support the management of CPF and its approved programs. The CPF grant funds will enable the State to make investments in those areas that were impacted or made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic.

U.S. Treasury approved the CPF Broadband Infrastructure Projects Program (previously referred to as the ConnectRI Last Mile Grant Program) on March 28, 2023. On May 21, 2024, U.S. Treasury approved the CPF Broadband Infrastructure Projects Program Plan, which describes in greater detail the state's proposed CPF Program, including the communities selected for CPF funding and how the CPF Program complies with Treasury's requirements. The CPF funds augment the anticipated \$108.7 million the state anticipates receiving from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Access Equity and Deployment (BEAD) program. Combined, CPF and BEAD funds seek to establish universal, affordable, last mile broadband availability for all Rhode Island residences and businesses.

U.S. Treasury approved the CPF Community Learning Center municipal grant (previously referred to as the Multipurpose Community Facility Projects grant program) on July 18, 2023. In accordance with a process approved by U.S. Treasury, the State launched the grant application on August 7, 2023, to invite eligible projects and municipalities to apply for this funding. To be eligible, municipalities committed to the Governor's Learn365RI compact and attested to complying with all Treasury requirements for the project, programs, and grant management. Twenty projects in eighteen municipalities have been subawarded CPF funds thus far. The community learning center capital projects are required to be complete by October 31, 2026, with a Certificate of Occupancy and Beneficial Use in hand, and to expend all grant funds by December 31, 2026.

This is Rhode Island's second Performance Report, and it covers both the programs described above.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Approved program plan number (*as provided by Treasury*) - **111**

Program title: CPF Broadband Infrastructure Projects Program

Program start date – **10/02/2023**

Program end date – **12/31/2026**

Actual CPF funds allocated to this Program: **\$24,956,500.00***

Approved program plan number (*as provided by Treasury*) – **252**

Program title: CPF Community Learning Center Municipal Grant

Program start date – **08/03/2023**

Program end date – **12/31/2026**

Actual CPF funds allocated to this Program: **\$81,720,129.55***

** This only reflects the actual CPF program funds. Admin funds are not included in this amount.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Rhode Island is using its allocation of the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (CPF) to invest in developing last-mile broadband infrastructure and community learning centers to create centralized, convenient spaces for all ages to participate in education, employment, and wellness programs.

CPF Broadband Infrastructure Projects Program

Rhode Island has set the following goal:

Leverage a best-in-class, resilient, sustainable, and scalable broadband infrastructure to propel the state's 21st century economic, education, healthcare, civic and social engagement, and quality of life, by ensuring all Rhode Islanders have access to affordable, accessible, reliable high-speed internet in their homes, at their places of employment, and at public facilities by 2027.

To reach this goal, Rhode Island will leverage CPF dollars to directly support broadband infrastructure projects in the state through the CPF Broadband Infrastructure Projects Program Plan, which was approved by U.S. Treasury on May 21, 2024. This program is being implemented by the State's Executive Office of Commerce acting through the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (Corporation). Specifically, the Corporation will use CPF funding to do two things:

- 1) Improve speed, resilience, and latency of current last-mile networks by ensuring such networks can support 100/100 Mbps average real speeds for all users, and is scalable to 1/1 Gbps, with a latency equal to or less than 100 milliseconds. If it is determined to be impracticable for a project to deliver services at 100/100 Mbps due to geography, topography, or excessive cost, the proposed project must be designed so that it reliably meets or exceeds 100/20 Mbps and is scalable to a minimum of 100/100 Mbps in the future, and
- 2) Provide affordable broadband access to homes and businesses. For the CPF Broadband Infrastructure Projects Program, "affordable" is defined as providing a binding commitment to a non-promotional price for the lowest speed tier (100/100 Mbps), as specified by the Proposer, for a period of no less than five (5) years.

The projects will directly support opportunities for Rhode Islanders to use broadband services for work, education, and health monitoring. All projects will be designed to address a critical need of the community that the project will serve.

The majority of CPF Program funding (\$23,870,765, or 92.5%) will provide subgrants for last-mile projects to project areas, which are not currently served by a reliable wireline connection that delivers at least 100 Mbps of download speed and 100 Mbps of upload speed and latency equal to or less than 100 milliseconds. The Corporation issued a Request for Proposals for such deployments on July 2, 2024, which closes on August 12, 2024. The Corporation anticipates the subrecipient

selection process will be completed by September of 2024, and full deployment of projects funded by the Program will be completed by December 31, 2026.

CPF Community Learning Center Municipal Grant Program

The CPF Community Learning Center (CLC) municipal grant is being implemented by the State's Pandemic Recovery Office (PRO) that sits within the Department of Administration and serves as the central office for policy coordination and compliance for federal COVID-19 stimulus funds. PRO initiated an application process in August 2023 through which 20 grants have been awarded to 18 municipalities for community learning center capital projects. Currently the subawards support 14 renovation projects including four libraries, one acquisition, and five new construction projects. The projects are spread across the state including one on Aquidneck Island.

Governor Dan McKee has placed improving educational outcomes, raising incomes, and building a healthier state for all Rhode Islanders, among his top goals. To support these goals, the Administration launched the Learn365RI Initiative, to which all applicants of the CPF CLC municipal grant were required to sign on. The CPF CLC grant application allowed municipalities to tailor each project to their community's needs while committing to offer a minimum of five years' worth of programming designed to improve education outcomes, support employment opportunities, and provide health monitoring.

To supplement the CPF CLC funding, the Administration has included funding in the state budget to support programming needs at the community learning centers. This ensures that the community learning centers have funding support to develop comprehensive and robust programming that meets Treasury's requirements. All CPF CLC projects are targeting substantial completion with a Certificate of Occupancy and Beneficial Use in hand by October 31, 2026, and all Treasury-compliant programs that directly and jointly enable work, education, and health monitoring to be operational by December 31, 2026.

USES OF FUNDS

CPF Broadband Infrastructure Projects Program

Through President Biden’s Investing in America Agenda, Rhode Island has an opportunity to address the digital divide and improve broadband services in the State. Treasury’s CPF funding is one element of a suite of funds being deployed by the State to improve broadband infrastructure and enhance digital equity in the State. Other Federal funding streams include National Telecommunications and Information Administration’s (“NTIA”) Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (“BEAD”) and Digital Equity Act (“DEA”) programs. Rhode Island seeks to best leverage the multiple federal broadband funding streams to maximize overall economic impact.

In alignment with the approved CPF Broadband Infrastructure Projects Program Plan, the funds allocated to the CPF Program will be used to support broadband infrastructure projects (“Broadband Infrastructure Projects”) in three communities in the State, Jamestown, Newport, and Westerly, and will achieve the following outcomes:

1. Improve speed, resilience, and latency of current last-mile networks by ensuring that such networks can support 100/100 megabits-per-second (“Mbps”) average real speeds and
2. Provide affordable broadband access to homes and businesses, where “affordable” is defined as providing a binding commitment to a non-promotional price for the lowest speed tier (100/100 Mbps), as specified by the Proposer, for a period of no less than five (5) years.

The majority of CPF Program funding, \$23,870,765. will provide subgrants for last-mile broadband infrastructure projects to qualified subrecipients in the three communities listed above.

Subrecipients will be selected through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process. As noted above, the Corporation issued an RFP on July 2, 2024, to begin the subrecipient selection process. That RFP closes on August 12, 2024, and the Corporation anticipates finalizing subrecipient selection in September 2024. Full deployment of projects funded by the CPF Program will be completed by December 31, 2026. All subgrant information, including subgrant application announcements, subgrant applications, requests for proposals, subrecipient scoring rubrics, subaward grant agreements, and outreach operational plans will be shared with Treasury for review and approval.

Based on its approved prioritization matrix, it is anticipated that the CPF investment will improve broadband access for 6,700 locations. This is an estimated cost of \$3,731 per location, which is consistent with broadband infrastructure deployments in comparable geographies and population densities.

CPF Community Learning Center Municipal Grant Program

PRO developed a funding formula, approved by U.S. Treasury, based on population and per capita income that distributes the funds objectively among participating municipalities. At the beginning of the application process PRO shared their formula-based allocation with all 39 municipalities in Rhode Island. As the program progressed, there were municipalities who either opted out, were unable to complete a compliant application, or whose projects were judged as noncompliant when reviewed in strict adherence with U.S. Treasury’s guidance. In such cases, the allocation of CPF funds for those municipalities that could no longer participate in the grant, were reallocated across all qualifying municipalities based on the Treasury approved formula. Going forward, if any of the participating municipalities can’t move forward, their allocation will be redistributed among those that continue with their CPF community learning center projects.

Using the State’s grant management system – eCivis, PRO launched an application process on August 7, 2023, that has resulted in subawards for 20 projects in 18 municipalities at the time of this report. The application process was structured so PRO could review and determine eligibility and feasibility of the capital projects proposed prior to moving on to subaward. All applicants who completed the application successfully were approved for subaward agreements. Once the application and review process were completed, PRO conducted on-site reviews with all eligible applicants to initiate the subrecipient monitoring activities and document pre-award conditions of the assets receiving CPF funding. *(For award details, see Appendix I)*

The CPF CLC grant funds may be used to purchase, construct, or renovate a community learning center. PRO is adhering to U.S. Treasury’s guidance on allowable costs to determine expenses that may be paid using CPF funds. PRO reviews transaction logs from subrecipients monthly to ensure that CPF funds are covering eligible costs only. Additionally, with each funding request, after the first, grantees are required to share invoices, checks, and other documentation to verify that CPF funds are only used for allowable capital costs.

PROMOTING EQUITABLE OUTCOMES AND ADDRESSING CRITICAL NEEDS

Treasury encourages uses of CPF funds that promote strong, equitable growth, including racial equity, in communities with a critical need, such as high-poverty and rural areas.

Consistent with these goals, the **CPF Broadband Infrastructure Projects Program** will adhere to the following principles:

- Equity is and will remain a core and foundational principle for any state broadband initiative. In addition to targeting underserved locations, consistent with the Treasury’s goals, Rhode Island will continue engagement efforts with populations often lacking broadband access including, but not limited to, households with incomes at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty line, individuals aged 60 and above, incarcerated individuals, and individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group.
- To address affordability as a barrier to broadband adoption, Rhode Island will consider whether broadband service options offered by program recipients will be affordable to their target markets in the proposed service area based on median household income.
- Participating service providers will be required to commit that the non-promotional price of the lowest cost broadband service plan that delivers at least 100/100 Mbps (inclusive of all taxes, fees, and charges) must not exceed \$53.09 per month, which is 2 percent of the lower limit of the second quintile of monthly Rhode Island Household Income, as reported by the Census Bureau. In addition, the service provider must certify that it will participate in the CPF-mandated Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) to the extent it continues to exist or, if ACP no longer exists, the ACP’s successor program.

The **CPF Community Learning Center Municipal Grant Program** requires all grantees to proactively incorporate considerations of equity in their data gathering, community engagement, and program development. This is done in the following ways:

- Program Development: Grantees will assemble objective, reliable data to validate the issues their community learning center will address through targeted programming.
- Community Engagement: PRO is requiring grantees to develop a multi-pronged grassroots community engagement strategy that enables them to reach a diverse group of community members. Grantees are planning to conduct community outreach using consistent, frequent, and open communication, in multiple languages where useful, and at various locations, and events, to enable community members to provide maximum input into the community learning center project and its programs.
- Access: Projects are required to be ADA accessible to ensure that community members of all physical abilities can use the CPF funded community learning centers. PRO has also provided guidance that the community learning centers must have expansive and flexible operating hours to enable community members to use the facility in accordance with their schedule and convenience.

- Affordability: In accordance with Treasury’s and PRO’s guidance, CPF CLC projects are required to provide free/affordable services to community members. The Treasury-compliant programs that directly and jointly enable work, education, and health monitoring may not charge any more than the minimal amount needed to defray minimal costs of basic supplies or equipment.

LABOR

The CPF Broadband Infrastructure Projects Program has not yet awarded grants. Consistent with Treasury’s goals, the program will use strong labor standards to promote effective and efficient delivery of high-quality infrastructure projects while also supporting the economic recovery through employment opportunities for workers.

All recipients of the CPF Community Learning Center Municipal Grant have committed to using strong labor practices. Most projects are going to execute contracts in the near future and are planning to include language requiring equal employment opportunity certification and prevailing wage requirements in their contract documents, as well as Davis-Bacon and preference for complying with the Build America, Buy America Act, where applicable. In the few cases where contractor have been procured, the grantees attest that their contracts include the above-mentioned requirements.

PRO will require all grantees to submit their contract documentation that demonstrates compliance with the requirement for strong labor standards to promote effective and efficient delivery of quality infrastructure projects while also supporting the economic recovery through employment opportunities for workers.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CPF Broadband Infrastructure Projects Program

In 2023, Rhode Island created its Broadband and Digital Equity Strategic Plan, which set the following principles for thoughtful stakeholder and community engagement: a) Meet communities where they are, b) Enable participatory planning, and c) Cultivate strong implementation partnerships. Over the past year, the Corporation's broadband team has implemented this approach and has conducted significant community engagement and stakeholder outreach – prioritizing engagement with unserved and underserved residents – to understand the broadband infrastructure and digital equity needs in the state. Highlights of these efforts, included:

- Hosting quarterly meetings of the state's Broadband Advisory Council.
- Creating and hiring a dedicated position for Digital Equity and Community Engagement.
- Developing a Digital Equity Working Group, which has over 30 members; meetings are held twice per month.
- Creating and disseminating a ConnectRI newsletter to share the Corporation's broadband activities and opportunities to get involved.
- Implementing a Digital Equity Public Survey.
- Utilizing numerous listening sessions, one-on-one meetings, and results of the Digital Equity Survey to create the state's first Digital Equity Plan; translating the executive summary of that plan into Spanish.
- Creating the Rhode Island Broadband Map that identified unserved and underserved locations in the state, available in both English and Spanish.

Rhode Island is committed to ensuring full community input to support improved statewide broadband connectivity.

CPF Community Learning Center Municipal Grant Program

Through the application process and subaward agreement finalization, PRO required all subrecipients of the CPF CLC grant to commit to a grassroots multi-pronged community engagement strategy that facilitates ongoing participation from diverse community members through the period of performance which ends on December 31, 2026. Grantees are conducting outreach through emails, websites, paper flyers, tables at town events, surveys, focus groups, town-hall meetings, listening sessions, as well as through partnership with community programming organizations.

Several municipalities have already conducted community outreach capitalizing on the various summertime public events in their communities such as local Movie Nights, Independence Day and Earth Day celebrations, as well as stakeholder engagement meetings focused on the design and programming of the community learning center. These in-person engagement efforts are being complemented by digital and paper surveys, notices, virtual meetings, and online surveys.

Additionally, the grantees are committed to develop processes to address grievances received during project construction/implementation which include regular team meetings, leadership oversight, transparent communications, and documentation of grievance.

CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE

The **CPF Broadband Infrastructure Projects Program** and **CPF Community Learning Center Municipal Grant Program** will meet legal requirements relating to nondiscrimination and nondiscriminatory use of Federal funds. Those requirements include ensuring that entities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Treasury do not deny benefits or services, or otherwise discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin (including limited English proficiency), disability, age, or sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity) in accordance with the following authorities: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), 42 U.S.C. 2000d-1 et seq., and the Department's implementing regulations, 31 C.F.R. part 22; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), 29 U.S.C. 794; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), 20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq., and the Department's implementing 17 regulations, 31 C.F.R. part 28; Age Discrimination Act of 1975, 42 U.S.C. 6101 et seq., and the Department's implementing regulations at 31 C.F.R. part 23.

Rhode Island Commerce Corporation understands that Treasury will collect and review information to ascertain their compliance with the applicable requirements after providing financial assistance.

PRO requires all subrecipient municipalities to commit to maintaining compliance with Title VI and to include language in their solicitation and contracting documents requiring all contractors and subcontractors to meet the Title VI requirements.

APPENDIX 1

Summary table of CPF Community Learning Center municipal grant program subawards

Municipality	Project Name	Award Date	Award Number	Award Amount	Funds Drawdown by Subrecipient
Town of Barrington	Bay Spring Community Learning Center	03/01/2024	20001	\$814,773	\$0
Town of Bristol	Rogers Free Library Community Facility Improvements	03/01/2024	20002	\$1,751,142	\$41,875
City of Newport	Florence Gray Center	03/08/2024	20004	\$2,900,763	\$154,864
Town of Cumberland	Wellness Hub at the Amarat Building and Heritage Park	03/13/2024	20007	\$2,618,159	\$0
Town of Westerly	Tower Street Community Center	03/13/2024	20011	\$1,653,617	\$0
Town of South Kingstown	Peace Dale Library Community Learning Center Services Expansion Project	03/18/2024	20003	\$2,520,044	\$15,000
City of Providence	Elmwood Community Center	03/25/2024	20013	\$4,884,000	\$1,199,300
Town of Smithfield	East Smithfield Neighborhood Center Rehabilitation	03/25/2024	20005	\$1,813,952	\$160,118
City of Providence	Joslin Recreation Center	03/27/2024	20014	\$3,665,000	\$164,500
City of East Providence	East Providence Community Center	04/04/2024	20020	\$4,043,761	\$189,778
Town of Hopkinton	Town of Hopkinton Community Center	04/08/2024	20012	\$1,246,730	\$0
Town of East Greenwich	Swift Community Center Renovation Project	04/10/2024	20006	\$668,523	\$0
City of Woonsocket	Multipurpose Community Learning Center at Cass Park	05/02/2024	20008	\$5,406,552	\$0
Town of Coventry	Coventry Community Learning Center	05/23/2024	20018	\$2,862,272	\$0
Town of Charlestown	Cross Millis Public Library Community Learning Center	05/28/2024	20017	\$530,240	\$0
Town of Lincoln	Lincoln Learning Center	06/03/2024	20019	\$1,695,292	\$0
Town of North Providence	North Providence Community Center	06/03/2024	20022	\$3,160,884	\$0
City of Central Falls	EI Centro	06/04/2024	20021	\$4,175,419	\$0
Town of Exeter	Exeter Work, Education, and Health Resource Center	06/24/2024	20009	\$522,525	\$0
Totals as of 6/30/2024				\$46,933,658	\$1,925,435