Wisconsin Digital Equity Capacity (WI DEC) Grant Program

5-DEC-2025

Thursday, April 10, 2025

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION of WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Broadband Office

PSC Staff: Alyssa Kenney, Milena Bernardinello, Damarr Purifoy, Troy Hoppenjan

Wisconsin Broadband Office

Outline

ACRONYMS

DEC = Digital Equity Capacity

DN = Digital Navigator

DL = Digital Literacy

WBO = Wisconsin Broadband Office

PSC = Public Service Commission

NTIA = National Telecommunication and Information Administration

IIJA = Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

Section I – Grant Overview

- Program Overview
  - Background
  - Target Populations
  - Wisconsin Digital Equity Plan
  - Eligibility
  - Program Tracks
  - Schedule of Events

Section II: Application Process

- How to Apply?
  - Application Requirements
  - Application
  - Best Practices
  - Evaluation

Section III: Award Process

- Application Review & Merit Criteria
- Resources
- Questions

Section I - GRANT OVERVIEW

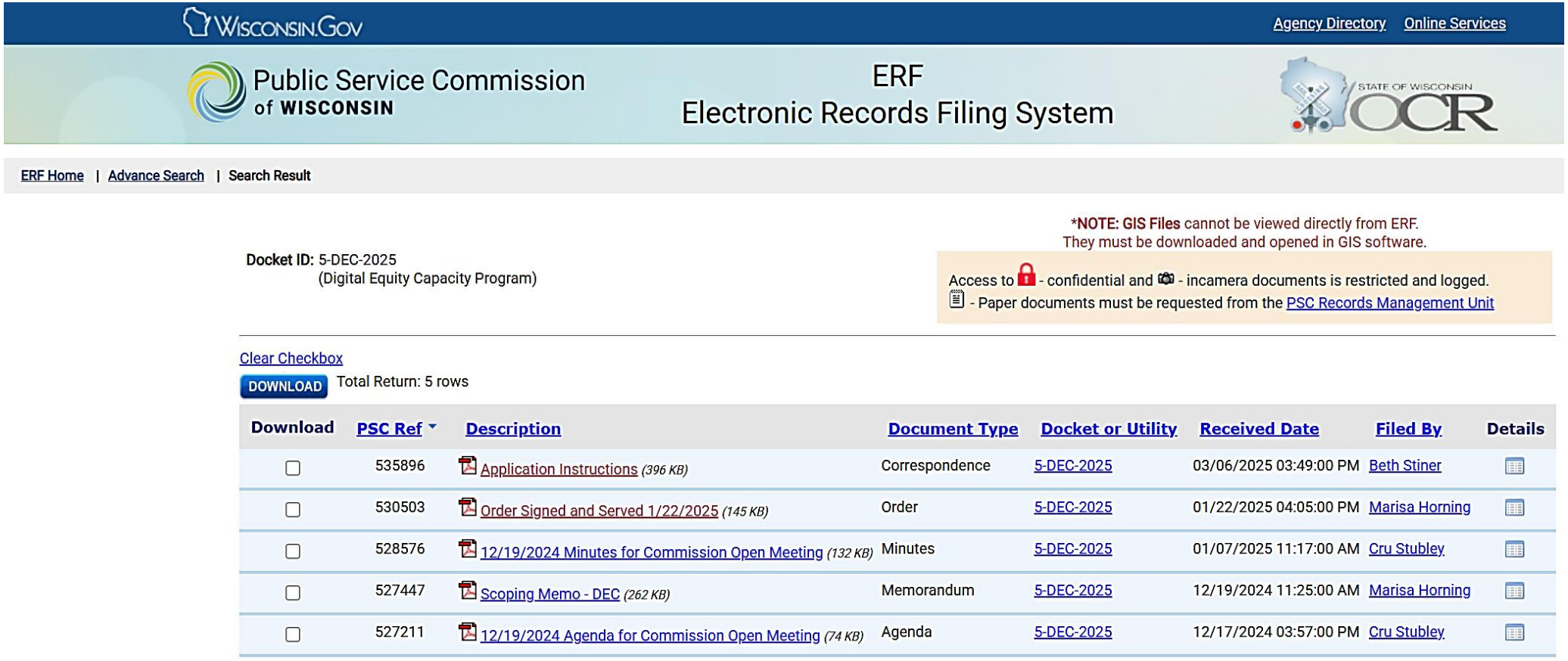
Program Overview

- The purpose of the Wisconsin Digital Equity Capacity Grant is to advance internet adoption and digital skills for Wisconsin residents, and build local capacity to promote digital opportunities, as guided by the Wisconsin Digital Equity Plan.
- Up to **$9,500,000.00** available for projects
  - Maximum individual award of $950,000.00 (10%)
- Structured along two program tracks:
  - Track 1 – Digital Navigators
  - Track 2 – Digital Opportunity Coalitions
- Must serve members of at least one Covered Population.
- Requires awardees to participate in external evaluation process, reporting and technical assistance.

Getting Started

Where to find information and resources

- All official documentation related to the WI Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program will be published to PSC's Electronic Filing System (ERF) under Docket # 5-DEC-2025.
- Search for & subscribe to dockets on ERF Home page: https://apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERF/ERFhome.aspx



WISCONSIN.GOV — Agency Directory | Online Services

Public Service Commission of WISCONSIN

ERF
Electronic Records Filing System

STATE OF WISCONSIN OCR

ERF Home | Advance Search | Search Result

Docket ID: 5-DEC-2025
(Digital Equity Capacity Program)

*NOTE: GIS Files cannot be viewed directly from ERF.
They must be downloaded and opened in GIS software.

Access to - confidential and - incamera documents is restricted and logged.
- Paper documents must be requested from the PSC Records Management Unit

Clear Checkbox

DOWNLOAD Total Return: 5 rows

Download	PSC Ref	Description	Document Type	Docket or Utility	Received Date	Filed By	Details
☐	535896	Application Instructions *(396 KB)*	Correspondence	5-DEC-2025	03/06/2025 03:49:00 PM	Beth Stiner	
☐	530503	Order Signed and Served 1/22/2025 *(145 KB)*	Order	5-DEC-2025	01/22/2025 04:05:00 PM	Marisa Horning	
☐	528576	12/19/2024 Minutes for Commission Open Meeting *(132 KB)*	Minutes	5-DEC-2025	01/07/2025 11:17:00 AM	Cru Stubley	
☐	527447	Scoping Memo - DEC *(262 KB)*	Memorandum	5-DEC-2025	12/19/2024 11:25:00 AM	Marisa Horning	
☐	527211	12/19/2024 Agenda for Commission Open Meeting *(74 KB)*	Agenda	5-DEC-2025	12/17/2024 03:57:00 PM	Cru Stubley	

Digital Equity Capacity Overview

Where to find information and resources

PSC's DEC webpage for a variety of up-to-date resources:

- DEC Webpage: https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/ServiceType/Broadband/DigitalEquityCapacityGrant.aspx
- **Application Instructions:** https://apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERFview/viewdoc.aspx?docid=535896
- Grants System Info: https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/GrantsSystem.aspx
- Grants System User Guide: https://psc.wi.gov/Documents/GrantsSystemUsersGuide.pdf

- DEC Email: PSCDigitalEquityCapacityGrant@wisconsin.gov

Background – Digital Equity Capacity

2022 – August - December

Initial Digital Equity Planning Funds application submitted.

$952,197 in planning funds allocated to Wisconsin starting October 1

Internet for All Wisconsin Kick Off

2023 – Jan. - July

Commission awards $335,000 to 7 digital equity outreach projects

Outreach and engagement, data collection and analysis, and drafting of Digital Equity Plan.

August

WI State Digital Equity Plan out for 30-day public comment period.

Sept. 30

WI State Digital Equity Plan due to NTIA.

2024

WI State Digital Equity Plan approved.

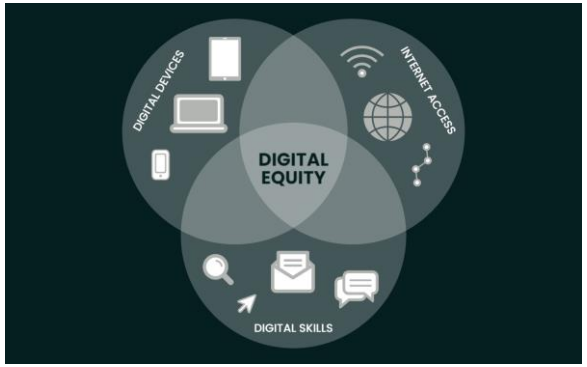
Plan implementation begins.

Federal Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program opens for applicants nation-wide.

2025+

State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program opens for WI applicants.

Implementation continues



Target Populations

'Covered Populations':

- Living in households with an income < 150% fed poverty level
- Aging individuals
- Incarcerated or recently incarcerated (NOT in federal correctional institutions)
- Veterans
- People w/ disabilities
- People w/ language barrier
- members of a racial or ethnic minority group
- primarily reside in a rural area

[1]Sec. 60302. Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pub. L. 117-58 (2021) where "[income] for the most recently completed year is not more than 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level, as determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census": Census Bureau Poverty Thresholds.

Target Populations

Applicants must:

- Target, serve, or engage services or programs to members of one or more of the Covered Populations
- Describe / identify need within the community

Wisconsin Digital Equity Plan

Wisconsin Digital Equity Plan

Centered around five core values:

- **Access**
- **Affordability**
- **Adoption**
- **Trust**
- **Sustainability**

Wisconsin Digital Equity Plan

Three Digital Equity Plan Values to be implemented by the Capacity Grant Program:

- **Adoption**
- **Trust**
- **Sustainability**

Wisconsin Digital Equity Plan

Three DE Plan Values (and associated goals) implemented by the WI DEC Grant Program:

Adoption

- Goal 1: Support local **digital literacy champions** and **digital navigators** embedded within the community and trusted organizations that support the needs of Covered Populations.
- Goal 2: All Wisconsinites will have accessible, culturally responsive resources to **grow their digital literacy skills**.
- Goal 3: All Wisconsinites have access to resources and have the needed knowledge and resources to **maintain cyber security.**
- Goal 5: Ensure all Wisconsin populations and communities have accessible**, first language, culturally responsive technical support**.

Trust

- Goal 1: All Wisconsin communities have resources, access to training and support that is culturally relevant, in their **native languages**, and clearly provided by a legitimate source that they trust.
- Goal 2: Fostering **trust and transparency** among **state government, local government, providers, and communities**

Sustainability

- Goal 1: Support Digital Equity work by expanding cooperation and **partnerships of community-based organizations, anchor institutions, local governments, philanthropic groups**, and other **trusted local entities** striving to eliminate historical, institutional, and structural barriers.
- Goal 2: Support a sustainable model by **increasing cooperation, combining resources** among **collaborators**, and **aligning messaging**

Eligible Entities

- Local governments or any political subdivision within the State

- A State agency, or instrumentality of a State, including an agency that is responsible for adult education and literacy activities, or for providing public housing

- An Indian Tribe, Native Entity or Tribal Nation

Eligible Entities

- A foundation, corporation, institution, or association that is a nonprofit entity

- A community anchor institution including a public school, multi-family housing authority, a library, an institution of higher education, a healthcare provider or nonprofit or governmental community support organization.

- A local educational agency.

- An entity that carries out a workforce development program.

  - Applications must be submitted under a single, lead applicant.
  - If applicable, partner entities should be identified in the application narrative.

Eligible Activities – Track 1

Track 1 – Digital Navigators

Digital Navigator Model - National Digital Inclusion Alliance

Eligible Activities:

- Expanding current digital navigator positions, programs or service.
  Note: the functions of any funded position(s) need to meet the program goals, but the position title may be different from Digital Navigator.
- Establishing new digital navigator positions, programs or services.
- Providing internet enabled devices and the needed support for the target population to make use of the devices.
- Providing digital skills or digital navigation services, such as:
  - Support for subscribing to internet service
  - Digital skills training at various levels
  - Hardware or Software troubleshooting
  - Internet privacy and cybersecurity training
  - Digital literacy as it relates to workforce development, telehealth access, financial literacy, and access to government services or benefit programs.
- Other activities that align with the Digital Navigators track and associated goals may be proposed for consideration.

Eligible Activities – Track 2

Track 2 – Digital Opportunity Coalitions

Eligible Activities:

- Hiring additional staff, to facilitate coordination and/or provide shared services.
- Sharing resources between partner organizations including staff, funding, space, technology, or outreach services.
- Establishing or strengthening a referral network between partner organizations to deliver digital services.
- Developing or strengthening shared digital inclusion programming.
- Coordinating “wraparound” services for the target population.
- Developing shared education materials or events so the community understands the issues and solutions around internet access and adoption.
- Activities associated with convening the coalition and partners.
- Other activities that align with the Digital Opportunity Coalition Track and associated goals may be proposed for consideration.

Ineligible Activities – Both Tracks

Ineligible Activities:

- Construction
- Infrastructure

- Anything with environmental impacts

- Installation
- Modifications to buildings

Grant Application - Schedule of Events

DATE	EVENT
March 10, 2025	Application period opens
April 15, 2025	Last day for submitting questions and requests for clarification
April 24, 2025	PSC Digital Opportunity Mini-Conference
May 19, 2025	Last day to request PSC Grants System assistance
May 20, 2025, 1:30 p.m.	**Applications due from applicants (deadline for submitting in the PSC Grant System)**

Three-year performance period (Estimated 2026 – 2029).

PSC Digital Opportunity Mini-Conference

- Share, connect, and learn about best practices in digital equity work and grant management.
- Focus on how the digital equity community can implement the WI Digital Equity Plan and bridge the digital divide for all Wisconsinites.
  - Free event.
  - Free parking.
  - Lunch provided.
  - Registration required.

Wisconsin Broadband Office

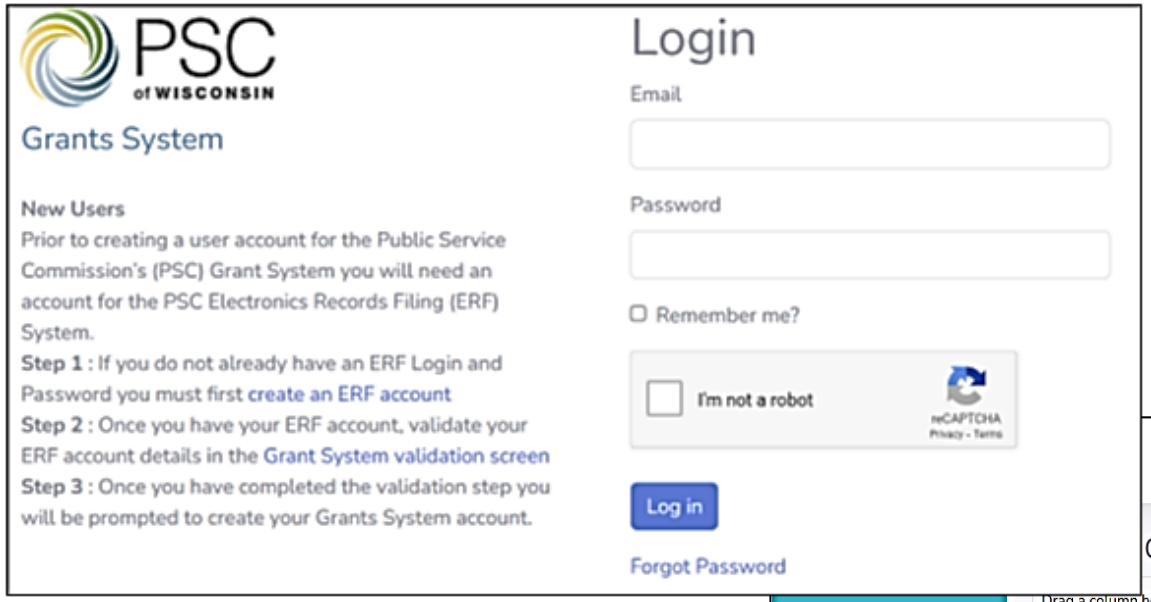
Stretch Break

Section II: APPLICATION PROCESS

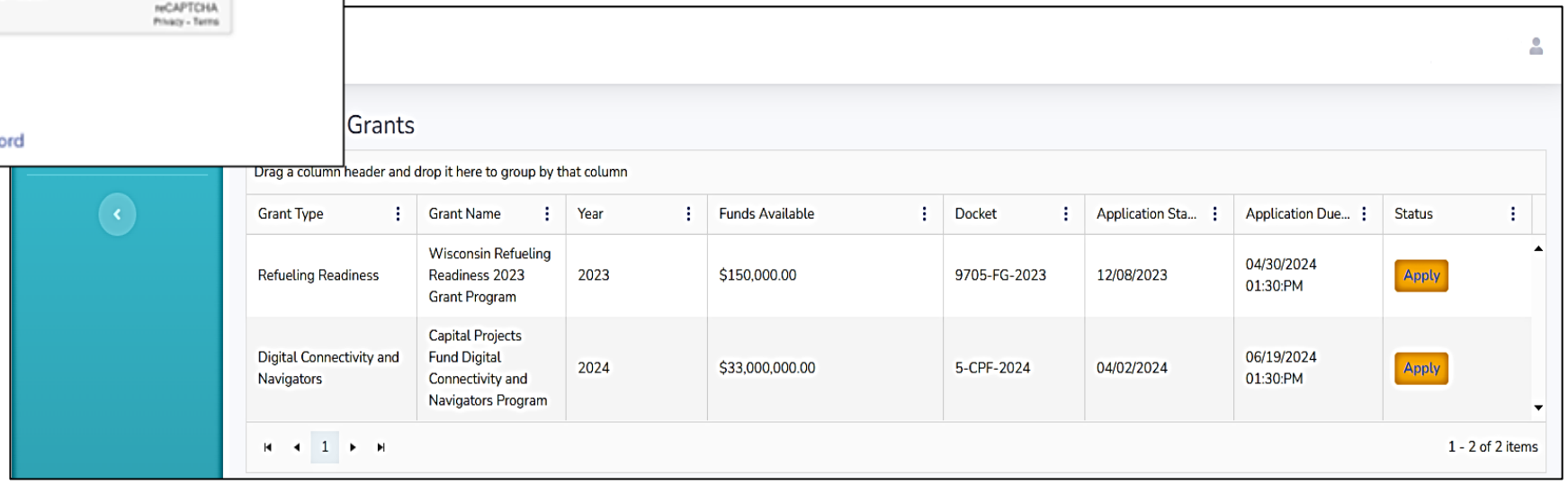
How to Apply?

Application process is completed through PSC Grant System

- *Grant applications MUST be submitted via this system to be considered for funding.*
- *DO NOT upload your application to ERF, they will be automatically uploaded to ERF once submitted*



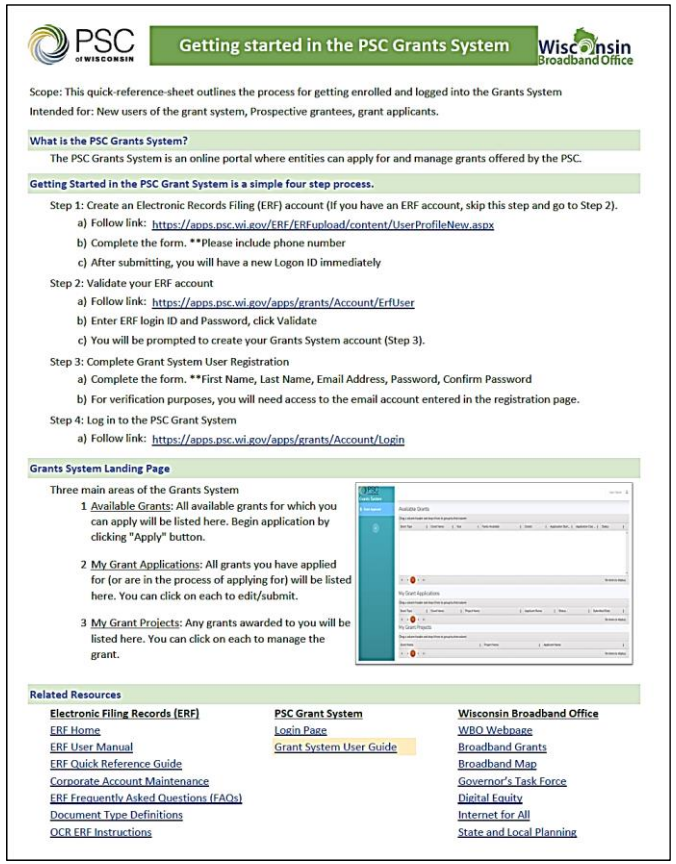
Login page: https://apps.psc.wi.gov/apps/grants



How to Apply?

Grants System Resources

One-page guide



Getting started in the PSC Grants System

Scope: This quick-reference-sheet outlines the process for getting enrolled and logged into the Grants System
Intended for: New users of the grant system, Prospective grantees, grant applicants.

What is the PSC Grants System?

The PSC Grants System is an online portal where entities can apply for and manage grants offered by the PSC.

Getting Started in the PSC Grant System is a simple four step process.

Step 1: Create an Electronic Records Filing (ERF) account (If you have an ERF account, skip this step and go to Step 2).
- a) Follow link: https://apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERFupload/content/UserProfileNew.aspx
- b) Complete the form. **Please include phone number
- c) After submitting, you will have a new Logon ID immediately

Step 2: Validate your ERF account
- a) Follow link: https://apps.psc.wi.gov/apps/grants/Account/ErfUser
- b) Enter ERF login ID and Password, click Validate
- c) You will be prompted to create your Grants System account (Step 3).

Step 3: Complete Grant System User Registration
- a) Complete the form. **First Name, Last Name, Email Address, Password, Confirm Password
- b) For verification purposes, you will need access to the email account entered in the registration page.

Step 4: Log in to the PSC Grant System
- a) Follow link: https://apps.psc.wi.gov/apps/grants/Account/Login

Grants System Landing Page

Three main areas of the Grants System
1. Available Grants: All available grants for which you can apply will be listed here. Begin application by clicking "Apply" button.
2. My Grant Applications: All grants you have applied for (or are in the process of applying for) will be listed here. You can click on each to edit/submit.
3. My Grant Projects: Any grants awarded to you will be listed here. You can click on each to manage the grant.

Related Resources

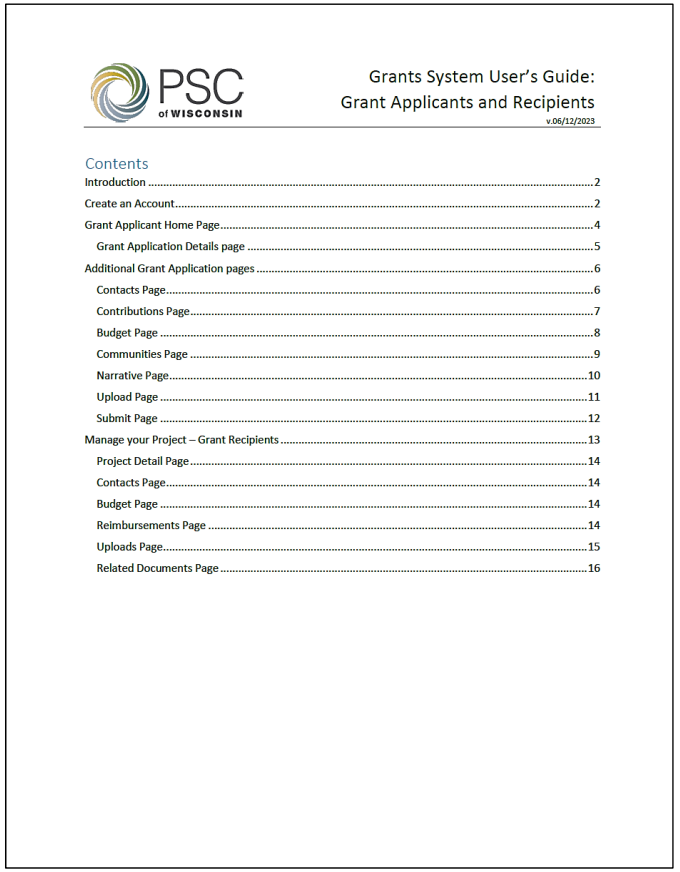
Electronic Filing Records (ERF)	PSC Grant System	Wisconsin Broadband Office
ERF Home	Login Page	WBO Webpage
ERF User Manual	Grant System User Guide	Broadband Grants
ERF Quick Reference Guide		Broadband Map
Corporate Account Maintenance		Governor's Task Force
ERF Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)		Digital Equity
Document Type Definitions		Internet for All
OCR ERF Instructions		State and Local Planning

https://psc.wi.gov/Documents/broadband/5-CPF-2023GettingStartedGrantsSystem.pdf

Webinar

https://psc.wi.gov/Documents/broadband/5-CPF-2023GettingStartedGrantsSystemPowerPoint.pdf

Grant System Manual



Grants System User's Guide:
Grant Applicants and Recipients
v.06/12/2023

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Grant Application Details page 5
Additional Grant Application pages 6
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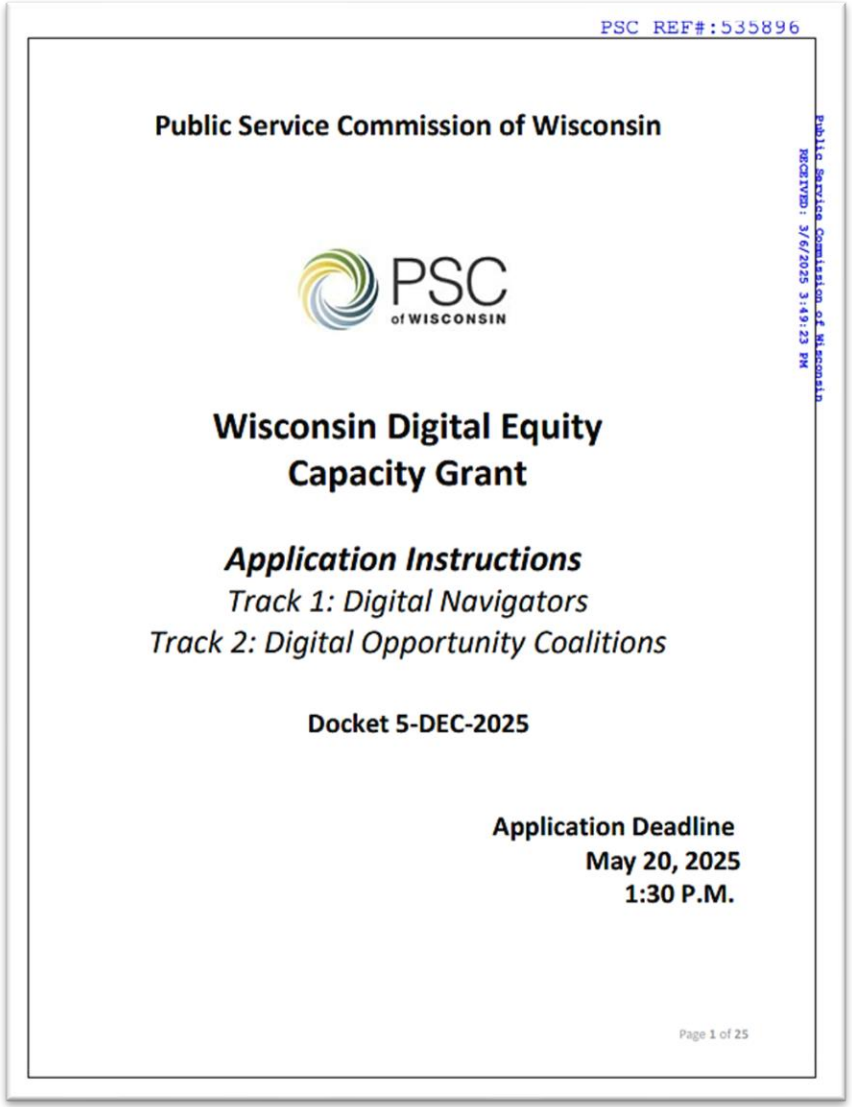
Manage your Project – Grant Recipients 13
Project Detail Page 14
Contacts Page 14
Budget Page 14
Reimbursements Page 14
Uploads Page 15
Related Documents Page 16

https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/GrantsSystem.aspx

Application Requirements

View [WI DEC Application Instructions] for most comprehensive information on the application requirements, merit scoring, and application process.

https://apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERFview/viewdoc.aspx?docid=535896



PSC REF#:535896

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
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PSC of WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Digital Equity Capacity Grant

Application Instructions

Track 1: Digital Navigators

Track 2: Digital Opportunity Coalitions

Docket 5-DEC-2025

Application Deadline
May 20, 2025
1:30 P.M.

Page 1 of 25

Application (Step by Step)

Step 1- Log in or create an ERF system account

Step 2- Click 'Apply' on the line for

DEC: Track 1: Digital Navigators OR DEC: Track 2: Digital Opportunity Coalitions

Step 3- Fill in the required Applicant Detail information.

Step 4- Application Navigation

Step 5- Fill in one Primary Contact and any additional contacts.

Step 6- If applicable, enter in matching funds contributions (NOT required).

Step 7- Fill out the Budget section

Step 8- Enter in Communities Served

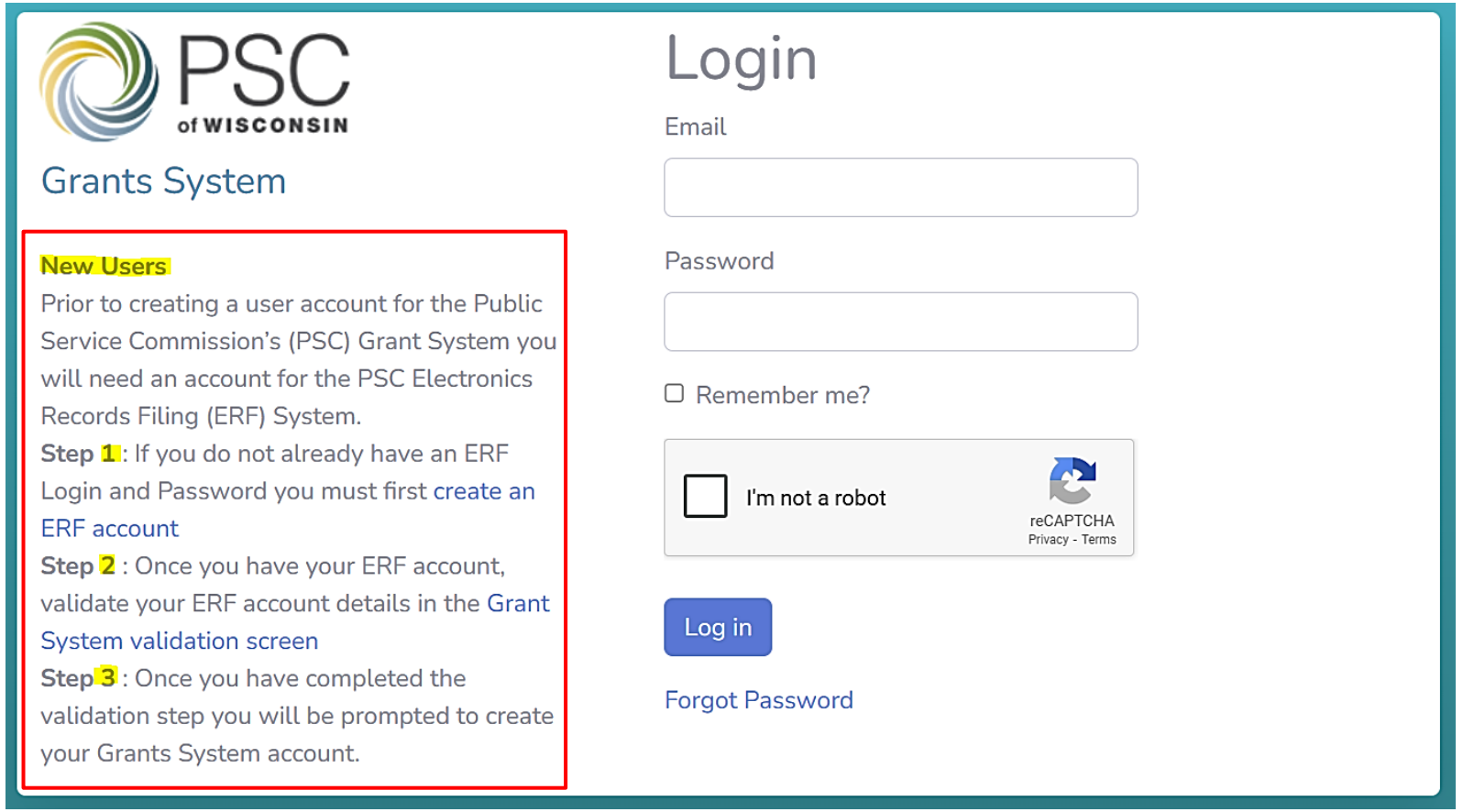
Step 9- Answer all Narrative questions

Step 10- Review, Validate and Submit

Application (Step by Step)

Step 1- Login or create an account

Login page: https://apps.psc.wi.gov/apps/grants

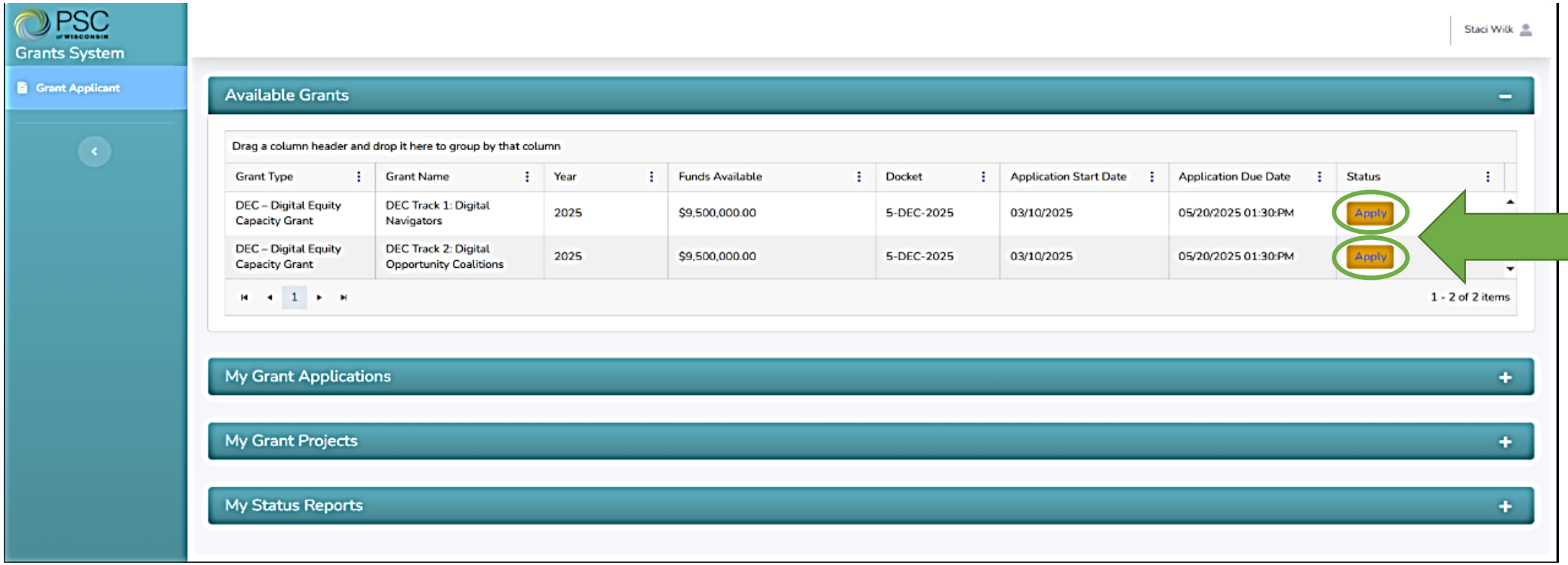


Application (Step by Step)

Step 2- Click ‘Apply’ on the line for

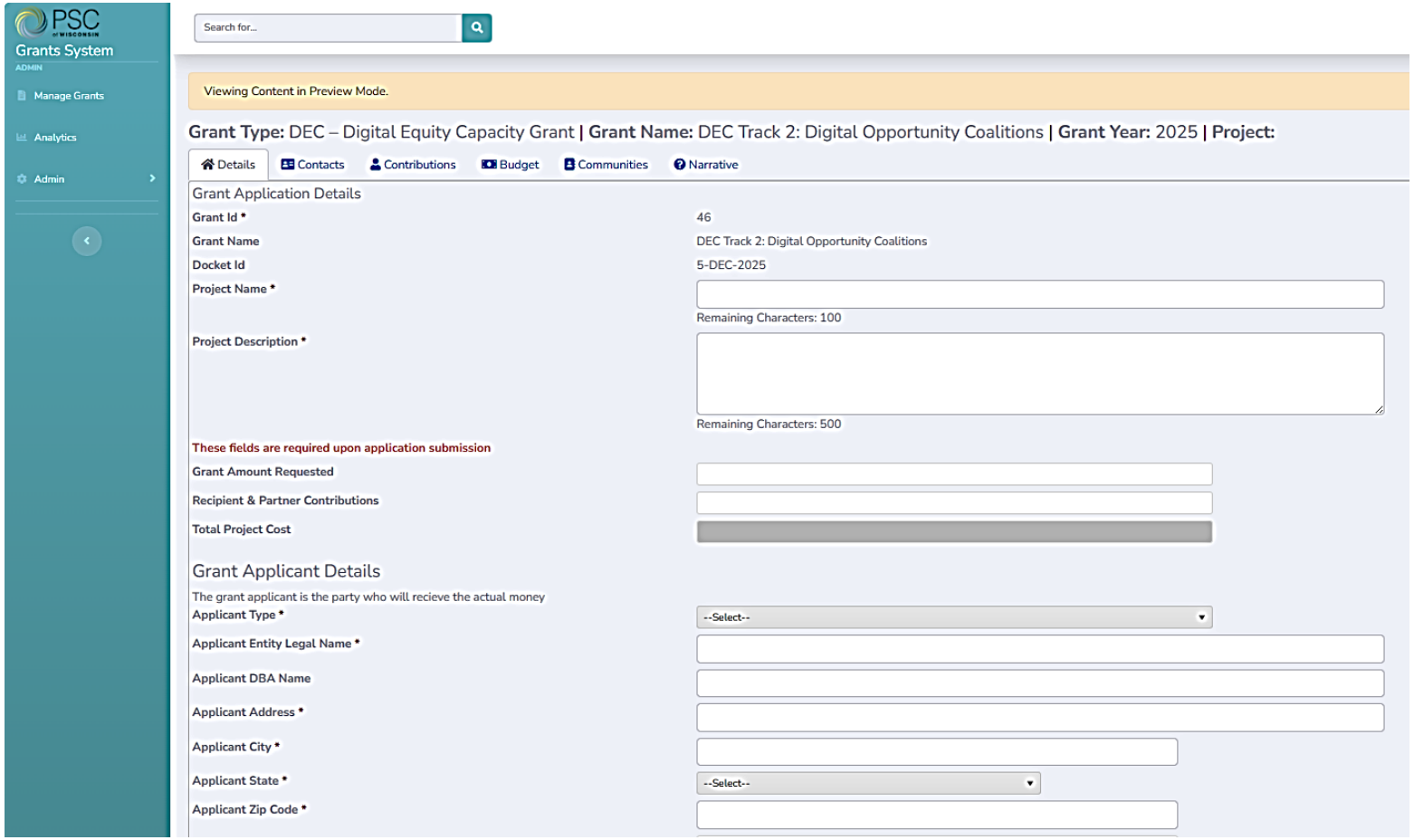
DEC: Track 1, Digital Navigators OR

DEC: Track 2: Digital Opportunity Coalitions



Application (Step by Step)

Step 3- Enter project information and create grant application



Grant Application Details

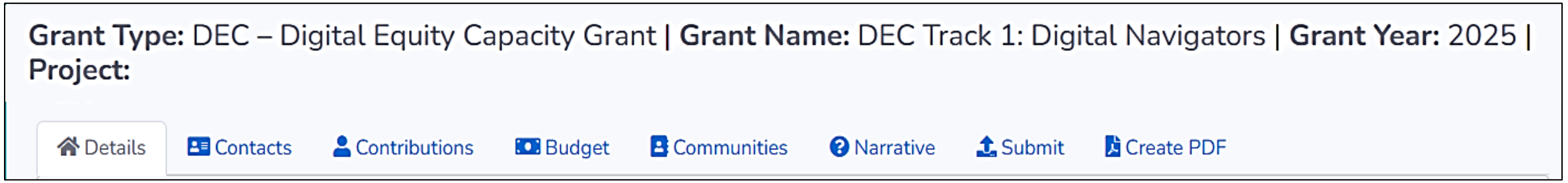
- Project name
- Project description
- Grant amount requested
- Recipient & partner contributions
- Total project cost (calculated)

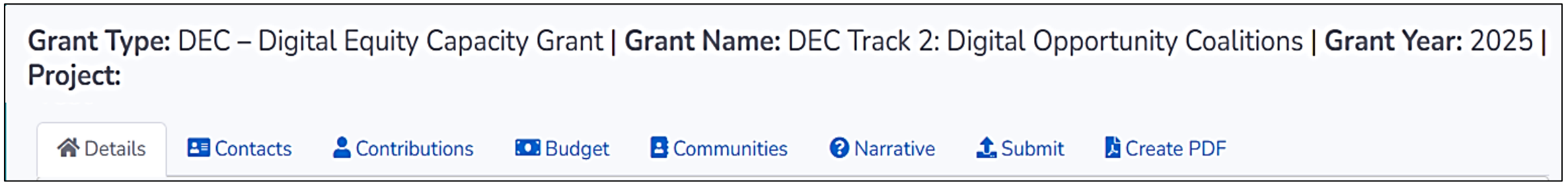
Grant Applicant Details

- Applicant type
- Entity legal name, DBA
- Contact info
- Tax ID (FEIN)

Application (Step by Step)

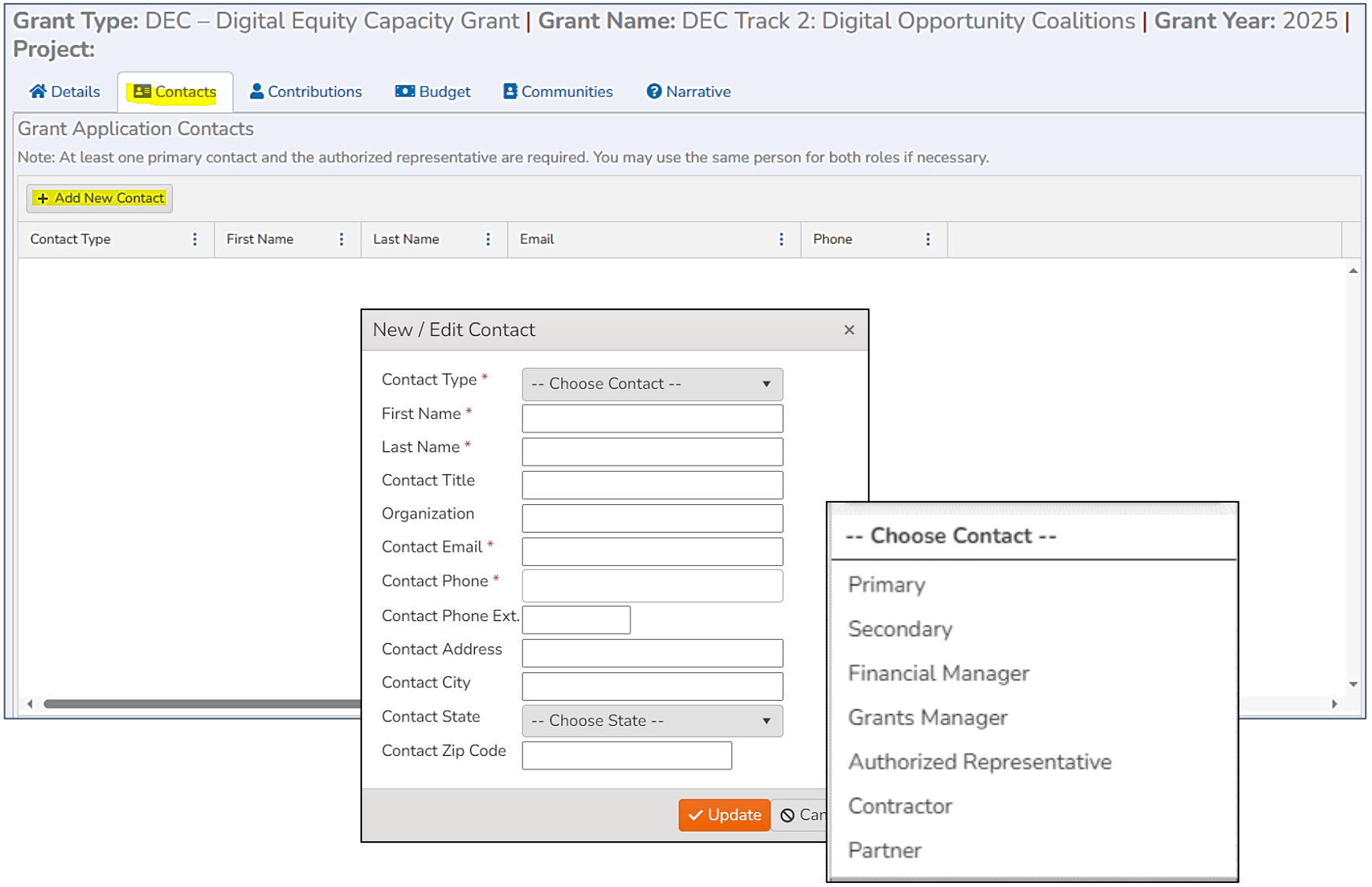
Step 4- Grant System Navigation





Application (Step by Step)

Step 5- Fill in Contact Information



Required:

- Primary Contact

Recommended:

Authorized Representative

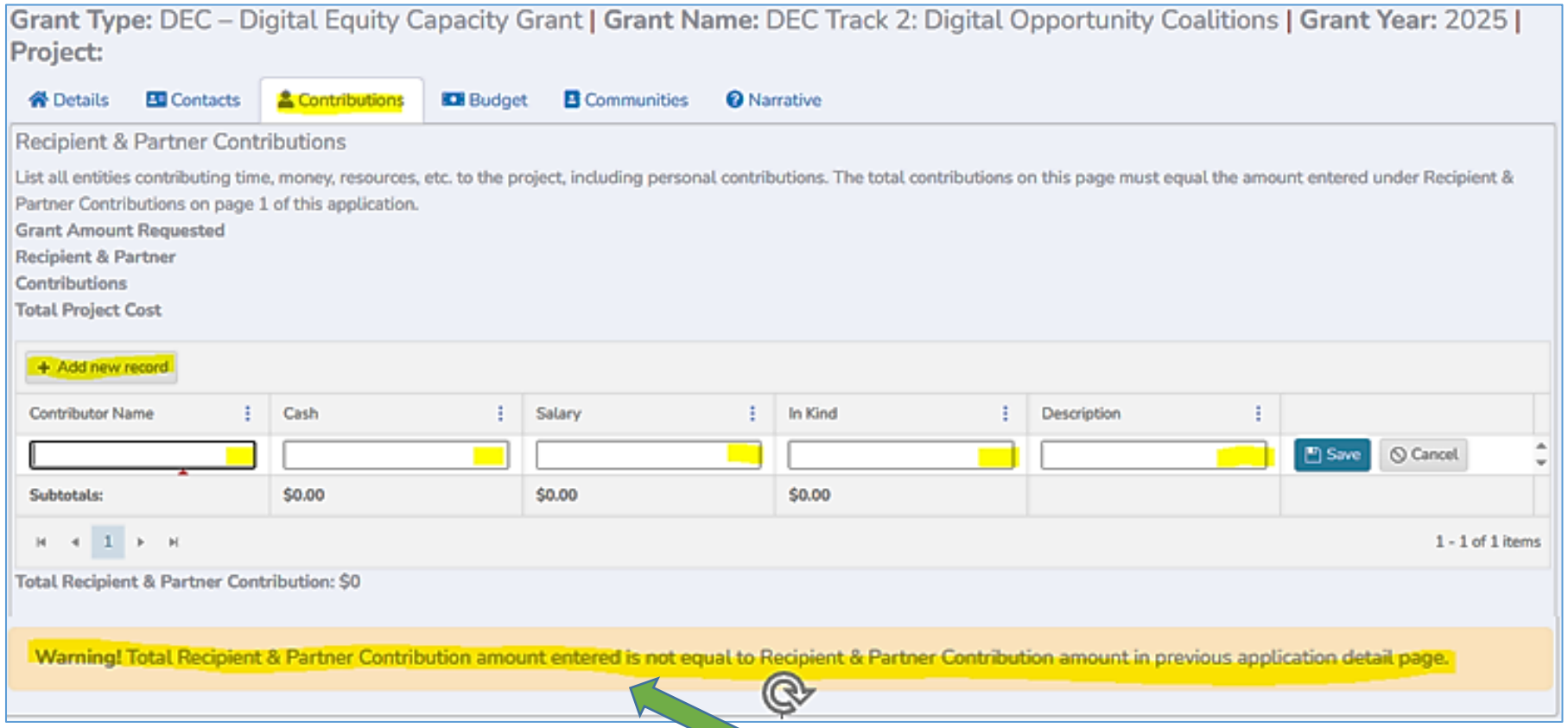
- Individual who can sign documents on behalf of the applicant

Partner

- Primary Contact of any partner organizations

Application (Step by Step)

Step 6- Enter in matching funds contributions

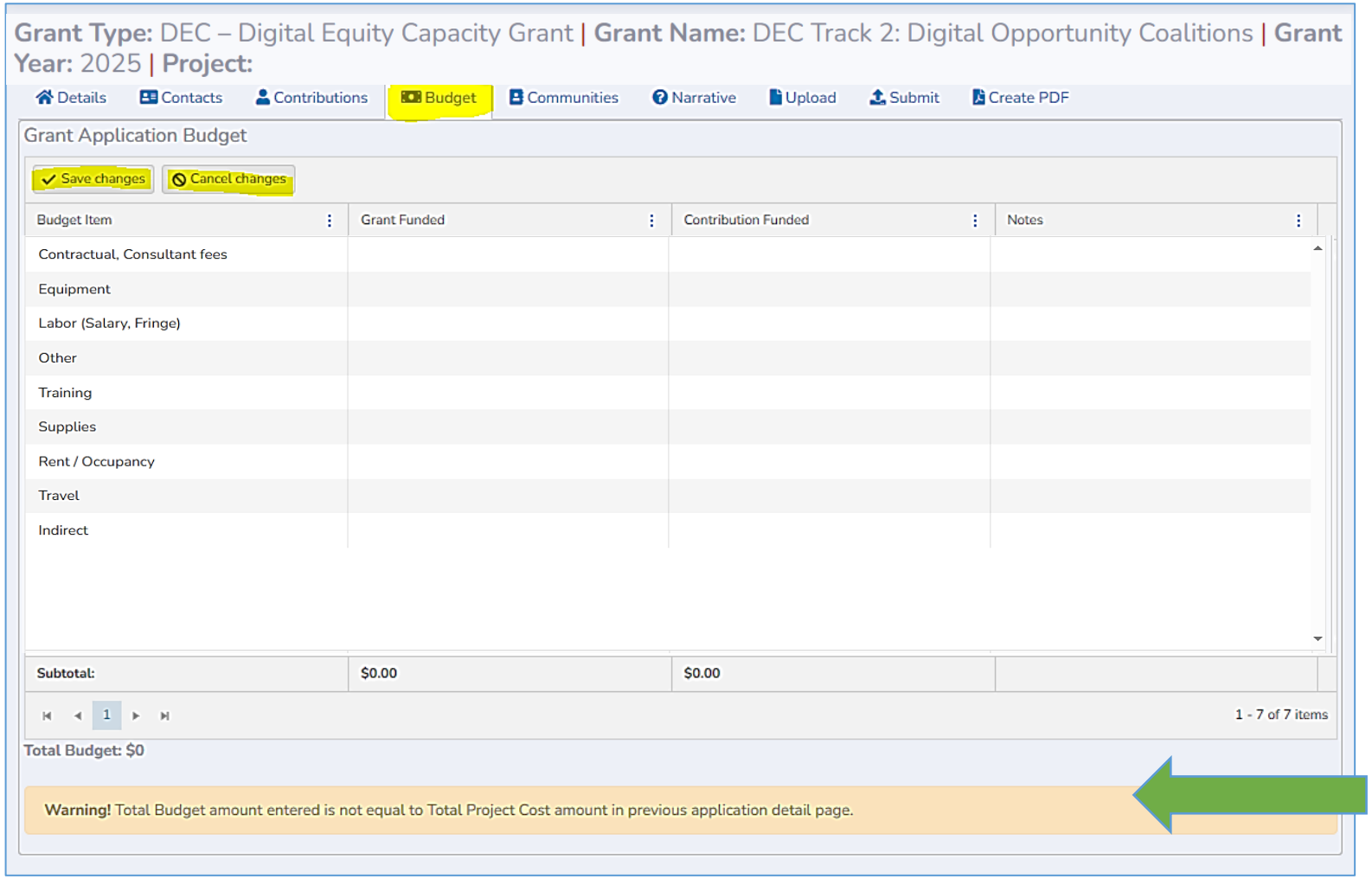


- Grant-Recipient and Partner contributions
- Description is optional- allows you to add notes regarding contribution
- Matching is OPTIONAL (not required or scored)

Built-in validation

Application (Step by Step)

Step 7- Fill out the Budget section



Enter in budget amounts for each budget category (round to whole dollars).

- Contractual, Consulting Fees
- Equipment
- Labor (Salary, Fringe)
- Other
- Training
- Supplies
- Rent/Occupancy
- Travel
- Indirect

Correctly distribute budget category costs between grant funds and contribution funds.

- Built in validation include:
  - Total Budget = Total Project Cost from Details Tab
  - Grant and Contribution subtotals must equal Details Tab
  - Enter Zero's where appropriate

Application (Step by Step)

Step 7 - Fill out the Budget section (cont.)

APPENDIX A:
BUDGET CATEGORIES

Contractual, Consultant Fees	All project expenses for work performed by a contractor or consultant. A contractor is a legal entity contracted to provide goods and services within normal business operations, provides similar goods or services to many different purchasers and operates in a competitive environment. Examples: legal services, accounting services, professional facilitation services, curriculum developer. Any materials supplied by a contractor should be included here.
Training	Costs associated with training provided to employees or other individuals responsible for carrying out project activities, where the training received is necessary for or provides a direct benefit to project implementation.
Rent / Occupancy	Facility rental or occupancy costs. Where the expense is necessary for project implementation.
Equipment	All items (including information technology systems) with a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost of $10,000.
Supplies	All items with per-unit acquisition costs of less than $10,000. Supplies are generally consumed during the performance period.
Labor (Salary, Fringe)	Actual labor expenses, including fringe benefits, of the grant recipient. This category is limited to direct personnel expenses only.
Travel	Grantee's travel expenses related to the project supported by internal travel policy documentation.
Other	Direct costs for items required for the project which do not clearly fit into other categories and may not be included in indirect costs. Please provide details in the notes.
Indirect Costs	Costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. Entities that do not have a current Federal negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of up to 15 percent of modified total direct costs.

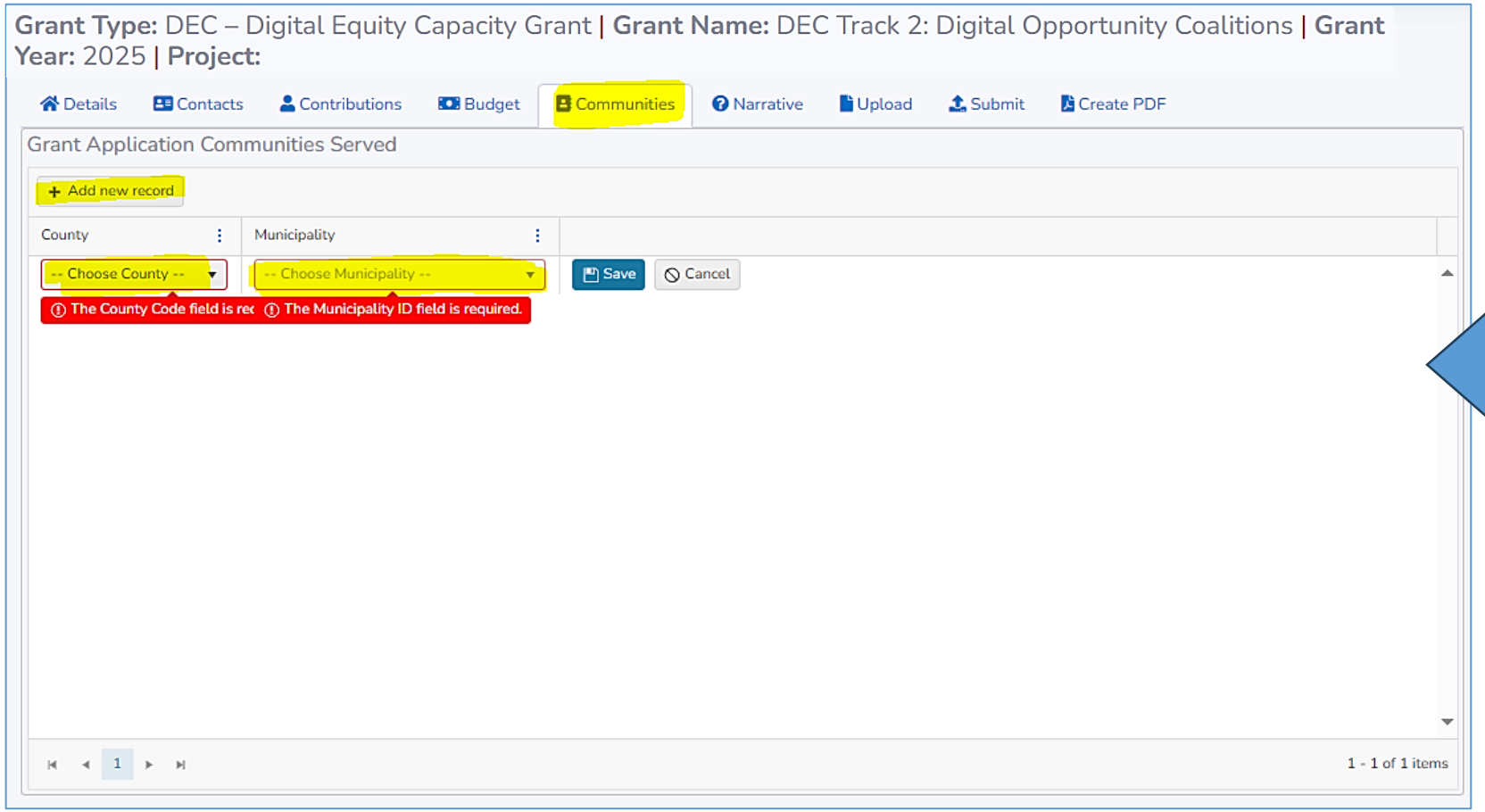
2 CFR 200.1 "Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC)"

Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $50,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each subaward in excess of $50,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

Application (Step by Step)

Step 8- Enter in Communities

Enter the County/Counties and municipalities to be served by the project



Tip:
if project is to serve entire county, select county within "Municipality List"

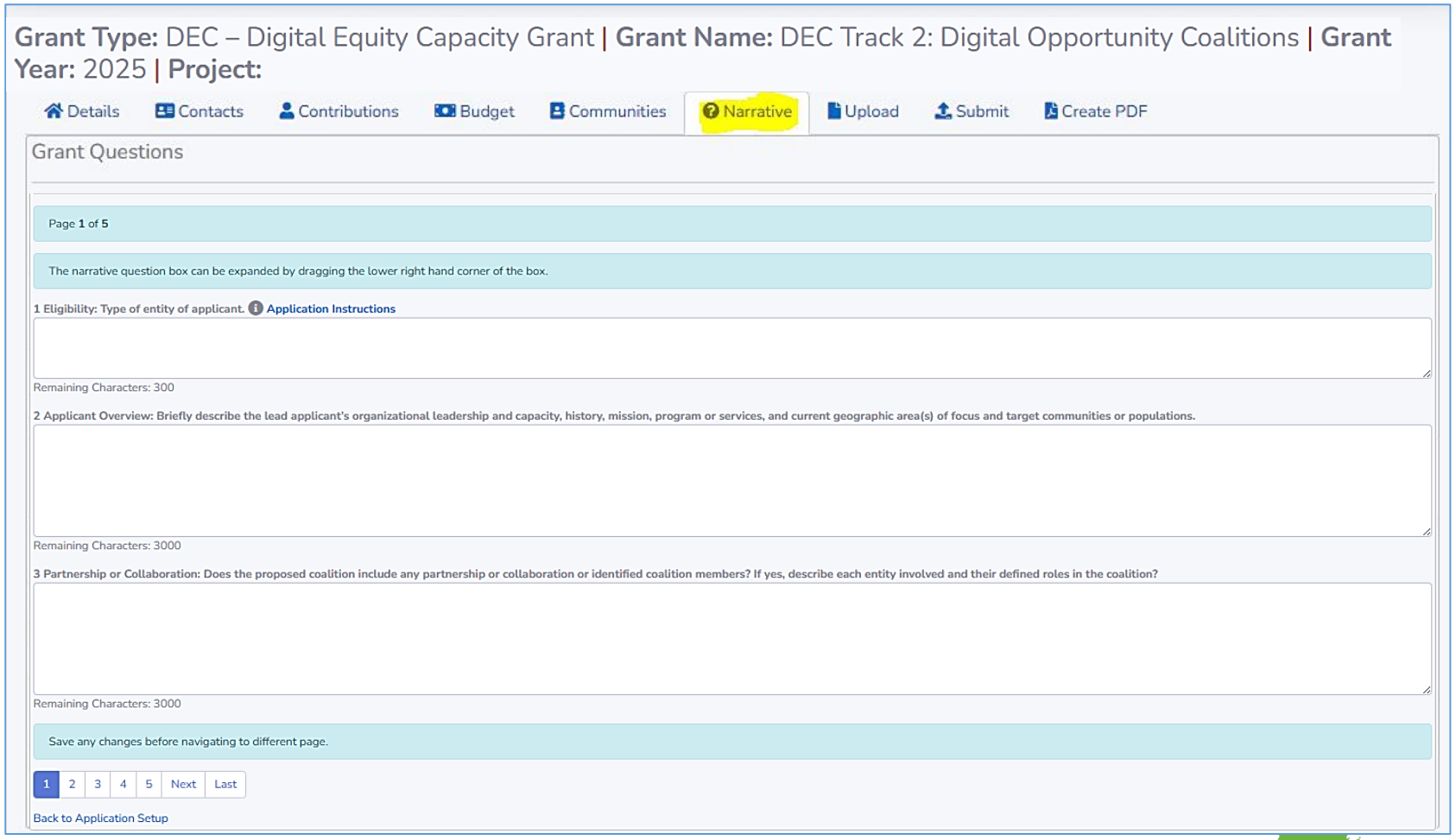
Not reviewed for merit. Part of Project Description

Application (Step by Step)

Step 9- Answer all Narrative questions

- ❖ 14 questions for Track 1
- ❖ 13 questions for Track 2

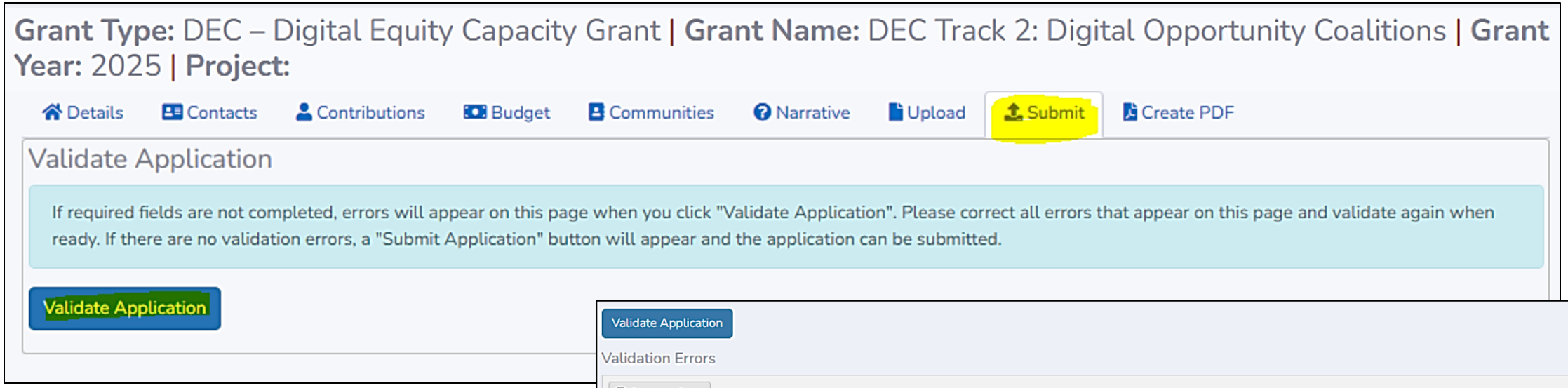
- Answer every question
- Save before advancing to the next page
- Character limits on all fields
- Not possible to copy/paste formatting or images, only text
- For any questions:
  Tool Tip > App Instructions > Email Inquiry

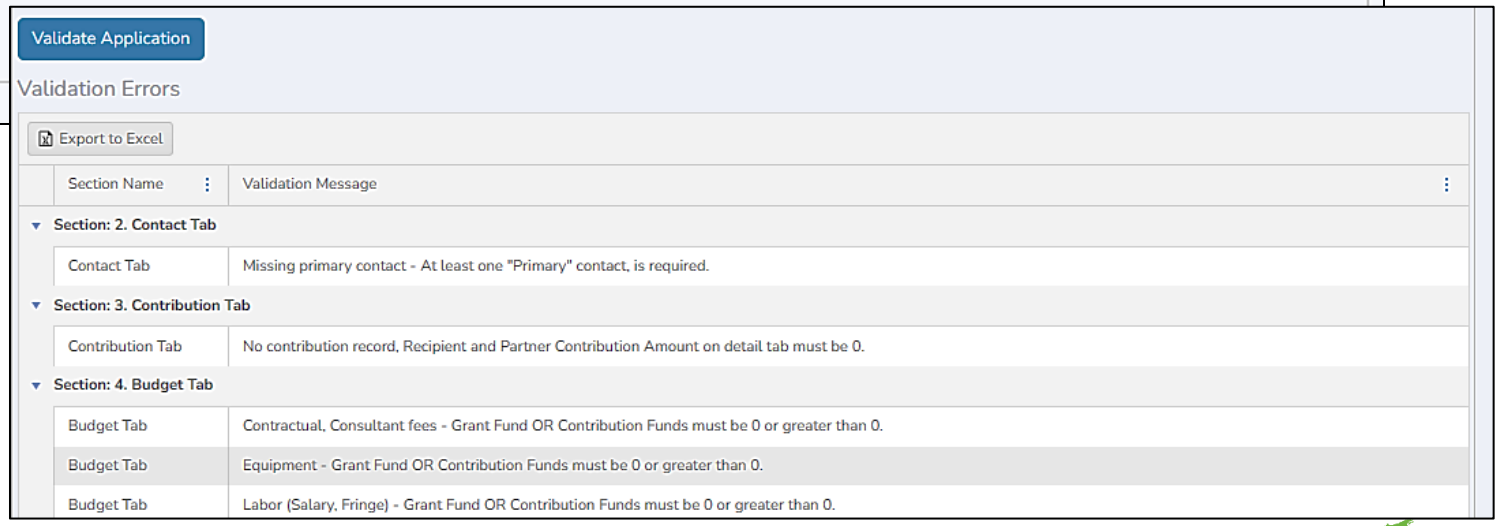


PSCDigitalEquityCapacityGrant@wisconsin.gov

Application (Step by Step)

Step 10- Review, Validate and Submit





- **Review your application for accuracy and completeness.**
- **Go to submit tab, click ‘validate’**

Application (Step by Step)

PSC Grants System – Create PDF Page

- You can export a PDF version of the document for your own filing
- Available while drafting application, or after submission
- Do not upload this PDF to ERF, your application is automatically uploaded

Application (Step by Step)

Common Errors

- General typos, often with dates or company names
- Missing answers
- Budget: put zeros if no amount in that category. Read the budget category definitions in Appendix A.
- Not submitting the form electronically through the online Grant System

Best Practice

- Review the App Instruction + PSC Grants System User's Guide before applying
- Start early to filling out your application!

  Deadline May 20, 1:30PM CT
- Review your application before submitting

Section III: AWARD PROCESS

Awarding Process & Timeline

Commission Awarding Process

The items that the Commission considers to make its grant award decision consists of the following :

- Grant applications
- Merit ranking of the grant applications prepared by a preliminary evaluation committee
- Discussion memo prepared by Commission staff (advisory only)

The Commission meets in an open session to discuss the record and to decide which applications should be awarded grants.

Awarding Timeline:

Commission Awards
Commission discussion & award decision

Application Cures
PSC & Awarded Applicants Prepare Project Details for Federal Approval

NTIA Reviews & Approval
(additional cures may be required)

Awarding Process – Scoring

Merit Criteria - Track 1: Digital Navigators	*Max Points*
Organizational Capacity and Experience	10
Digital Navigators Plan	15
Trusted Relationship with Target Population	15
Project Design and Goals	10
Alignment with Digital Equity Plan	10
Financial and Operational Capacity	10
Budget	10
Overall Project Merit Score	7-80

Track 1 = 80 points total

Awarding Process – Scoring (cont.)

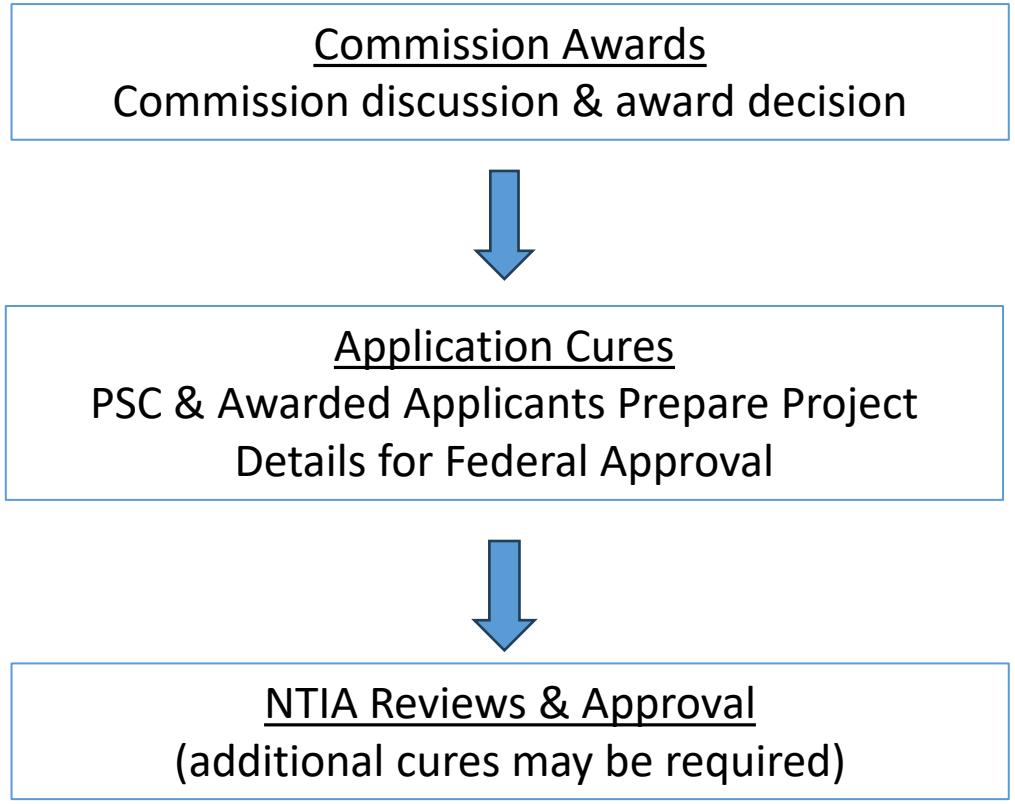
Merit Criteria - Track 2: Digital Opportunity Coalitions	*Max Points*
Organizational Capacity and Experience	10
Coalition Plan	15
Trusted Relationship with Target Population	15
Project Design and Goals	10
Alignment with Digital Equity Plan	10
Financial and Operational Capacity	10
Budget	10
Overall Project Merit Score:	7-80

Track 2 = 80 points total

Awarding Process

Federal Awarding Process

Awarding Timeline:



Each applicant awarded by the Commission must:

- Register on **SAM.gov** and obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (**UEID**).
- Work with PSC staff to complete a **Human Subject Research** determination.
- Work with PSC on **procurement processes**, as applicable to the project.
- Work with PSC staff to ensure any contracts, subgrants, cooperative agreements, etc. are federally compliant.

Program Evaluation

The Digital Equity Act of 2021 has placed significant emphasis on funding projects that produce measurable results that are aligned with the goals in the State Digital Equity Plan.

To ensure alignment with the Plan and consistent measurements across projects, the PSC will work with an external evaluator for all grant projects.

Grant recipients will be required to work with the external evaluator.

Resources

Where to find information and resources related to the Wisconsin Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program

Visit PSC's DEC webpage for a variety of up-to-date resources:

- PSC's DEC Webpage: https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/ServiceType/Broadband/CPFInfrastructure.aspx
- Application Instructions: https://apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERFview/viewdoc.aspx?docid=535896
- PSC Grants System User Guide: https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/GrantsSystem.aspx
- Reminder: last day for emailing questions and requests for clarification on application instructions is APRIL 15, 2025!

DEC Docket on the Electronic Records Filing System (ERF)

- 5-DEC-2025: https://apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERFsearch/content/searchResult.aspx?UTIL=5&CASE=DEC&SEQ=2025&START=none&END=none&TYPE=none&SERVICE=none&KEY=none&NON=N
- ERF Home page: https://apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERF/ERFhome.aspx

For any contact: PSCDigitalEquityCapacityGrant@wisconsin.gov

Questions

PSCDigitalEquityCapacityGrant@wisconsin.gov

Wisconsin Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program

Wisconsin Broadband Office