**Grant Application**

# **Project Information**

**Project Title:** Digital Equity Expansion Grant

**Funder:** Ford Fund

**Amount Requested:** $150,000

**Application Deadline:** 9/21/2026

**Project Description:**

The Digital Equity Expansion Grant supports nonprofit organizations working to close the digital divide and improve economic mobility for under-resourced youth and families. Funding is intended to strengthen community-based programs that expand access to broadband, devices, digital literacy, STEM learning, and workforce reskilling. Priority will be given to organizations that demonstrate strong community partnerships, measurable outcomes, and culturally responsive practices.
Grant Guidelines
Eligibility
Applicants must be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit or have a qualified fiscal sponsor.
Organizations must serve communities with documented barriers to digital access and economic opportunity.
Eligible activities include program delivery, staffing, equipment, outreach, and evaluation.
Funding Range
Typical award size: $50,000 – $150,000
Funding period: 12 months (renewable based on performance and outcomes).
Proposal Requirements
Organizational background (mission, history, service area).
Statement of need supported by local/community data.
Project description, including goals, activities, and partners.
SMART objectives with measurable outputs and outcomes.
Evaluation plan outlining tools, metrics, and reporting.
Sustainability plan for continuation post-grant.
Detailed budget and justification.
At least two letters of support from community partners.
Review Criteria
Community Need & Relevance (25%) — Demonstrates a clear, evidence-based need.
Project Design & Feasibility (25%) — Clear goals, timeline, and strong partnerships.
Impact & Measurability (20%) — SMART objectives and robust evaluation plan.
Organizational Capacity (15%) — Leadership, staffing, systems, and past performance.
Sustainability & Equity (15%) — Plans for long-term impact, cultural responsiveness, and accessibility.

# **Grant Application Responses**

## **1. What unmet needs led to the creation of your nonprofit? (252 words)**

The Harbor Bridge Community Lab (HBCL) was established in response to the pressing unmet needs in Solano County, California, primarily concerning the digital divide and limited economic mobility for under-resourced youth and families. The region faces significant challenges, including low broadband subscription rates and high youth unemployment, which hinder the ability of residents to participate fully in a technology-driven economy. This digital inequity disproportionately affects low-income, minority, and immigrant communities, who often encounter barriers such as high costs and low digital confidence.
Recognizing these challenges, HBCL was founded in 2019 with a mission to close the digital divide and enhance economic mobility through STEM learning, digital literacy, and career pathways. The organization's programs, including the After-School STEM Labs, Mobile Tech Bus, and Workforce Reskilling initiatives, were specifically designed to address these unmet needs by providing accessible opportunities for skill development and career preparation.
The impact of HBCL's efforts is evident in their significant annual outputs, such as serving 260 youth in STEM labs and engaging 1,200 residents through the Tech Bus. These initiatives not only increase STEM skills and remove access barriers but also prepare young adults for roles in the tech sector, directly aligning with the organization's mission and values of equity, community voice, and evidence-driven practices.
HBCL's strategic approach is centered on leveraging community assets and focusing on measurable impact within 12-24 months. By addressing root causes and targeting underserved populations, the organization aims to create lasting change and equip residents with the skills needed to thrive in today's economy.

## **2. Which populations are most impacted, and how are they included in shaping solutions? (271 words)**

The populations most impacted by the Harbor Bridge Community Lab's initiatives are low-income, minority, and immigrant communities in Solano County, CA. These groups often face significant barriers to digital literacy and economic mobility, largely due to cost constraints and low digital confidence. Recognizing these challenges, HBCL has tailored its programs to directly address the unique needs of these communities, ensuring they are not only beneficiaries but active participants in shaping the solutions provided.
HBCL places a strong emphasis on community voice, one of its core values, involving residents in the development and implementation of its programs. This participatory approach ensures that the solutions are relevant and effective in addressing the specific needs of the communities served. For instance, the After-School STEM Labs are designed to empower youth by increasing their STEM skills and confidence, directly responding to the educational and professional gaps identified by community members themselves.
Additionally, the Mobile Tech Bus extends HBCL’s reach into neighborhoods with low broadband subscription rates, making digital resources and training more accessible, particularly in areas identified through community feedback as underserved. By engaging 1,200 residents through the Tech Bus, HBCL not only increases digital access but also fosters a sense of inclusion and empowerment among participants.
The organization's evaluation plan further incorporates community input by measuring improvements in skills, confidence, and access, ensuring that the programs remain aligned with the needs and aspirations of the target populations. Through this comprehensive, inclusive approach, HBCL not only addresses immediate barriers but also supports long-term economic mobility and digital equity, resonating with its mission to equip residents with the skills needed to thrive in a technology-driven economy.

## **3. What program(s) will this grant support? (227 words)**

This grant will support the Harbor Bridge Community Lab's Mobile Tech Bus program, an innovative initiative designed to bridge the digital divide by bringing cutting-edge technology and learning opportunities directly to underserved neighborhoods in Solano County. The Mobile Tech Bus is a critical component of our mission to enhance economic mobility for under-resourced youth and families by providing access to digital literacy and STEM education.
The program operates by traveling to areas with low broadband subscription rates and higher youth unemployment, effectively removing access barriers and delivering essential digital skills training directly to the community. By engaging over 1,200 residents annually, the Mobile Tech Bus ensures that participants gain the confidence and skills necessary to thrive in a technology-driven economy. This initiative not only aligns with our values of equity and community voice but also leverages local assets to achieve measurable impact within 12-24 months.
Through this grant, we aim to expand the reach and frequency of the Mobile Tech Bus visits, thereby increasing the number of individuals who can benefit from our services. This support will directly contribute to our outcomes of improved digital skills, higher ACP enrollments, and increased job placement rates, particularly among low-income, minority, and immigrant communities. By investing in the Mobile Tech Bus, we are fostering innovation and creating a sustainable pathway for our participants to achieve economic success and digital proficiency.

## **4. What makes your approach unique or effective compared to existing efforts? (366 words)**

The Harbor Bridge Community Lab (HBCL) employs a multifaceted approach that stands out due to its innovative integration of digital literacy, STEM education, and workforce development, all tailored to bridge the digital divide and enhance economic mobility for under-resourced communities. Unlike traditional programs that often address these components separately, our approach combines them into a cohesive strategy that maximizes impact and outcomes.
Firstly, our innovation lies in the deployment of a Mobile Tech Bus, which takes technology and digital education directly to communities with low broadband access and high youth unemployment. This mobile initiative eliminates physical and financial barriers, ensuring that even the most isolated individuals can benefit from our programs. By engaging 1,200 residents annually through this mobile platform, we significantly widen our reach and accessibility compared to stationary facilities.
Secondly, our After-School STEM Labs provide hands-on, experiential learning opportunities for youth, fostering both interest and competence in STEM fields. By serving 260 youth annually, we not only enhance their technical skills but also build digital confidence, which is crucial for their future success in a technology-driven economy. This direct engagement approach ensures that learning is practical and relevant, directly aligning with our mission to prepare young adults for tech roles.
Moreover, our Workforce Reskilling program targets young adults, equipping them with the skills necessary for immediate employment in tech sectors. This program is particularly effective as it directly addresses employability, with a focus on measurable outcomes such as job placement rates. By integrating real-world career pathways into our offerings, we provide tangible, immediate benefits to participants.
Our evaluation plan underpins our effectiveness by focusing on measurable improvements in skills, confidence, and access. Key performance indicators, such as skills gain and ACP enrollments, are meticulously tracked to ensure that we meet our strategic goals. This evidence-driven approach not only demonstrates our impact but also allows us to continually refine our programs to better serve our target communities.
In conclusion, HBCL's unique approach is characterized by its comprehensive, community-centered, and evidence-based methodology. By leveraging both static and mobile resources, we ensure that our efforts are inclusive and far-reaching, effectively addressing the root causes of digital inequity and making a measurable impact on the communities we serve.

## **5. How will you measure success? (308 words)**

Success at the Harbor Bridge Community Lab (HBCL) is measured through a comprehensive evaluation plan that aligns with our mission to close the digital divide and enhance economic mobility for under-resourced youth and families. Our approach emphasizes impact and outcomes, using specific metrics to track progress and demonstrate effectiveness.
We utilize key performance indicators to measure success across our three main programs: After-School STEM Labs, Mobile Tech Bus, and Workforce Reskilling. For the After-School STEM Labs, success is quantified by tracking skills gains among participants. We assess improvements in STEM knowledge and practical application through pre- and post-program assessments, ensuring that youth are developing the necessary skills to thrive in a technology-driven economy.
The Mobile Tech Bus program's success is measured by the number of residents engaged and the increase in broadband access. We track the number of Advanced Communications Program (ACP) enrollments as an indicator of improved digital access and confidence among the communities we serve. This is particularly critical in areas with traditionally low broadband subscription rates.
For the Workforce Reskilling program, job placement rates serve as a primary measure of success. By preparing young adults for tech roles, we aim to enhance their employability and economic mobility. We monitor employment outcomes post-training to ensure participants are successfully transitioning into technology-related careers.
In addition to these quantitative measures, we gather qualitative feedback from participants, parents, and community stakeholders to assess confidence levels and the perceived value of our programs. This feedback helps us refine our strategies and ensure they are inclusive and responsive to community needs.
Overall, our success is measured by our ability to achieve measurable impact within 12-24 months, targeting improvements in skills, confidence, and access. By focusing on these outcomes, HBCL remains committed to leveraging community assets and evidence-driven practices to fulfill our mission and uphold our values of equity and community voice.

## **6. What tools, metrics, or methods will be used to collect and analyze data? (272 words)**

The Harbor Bridge Community Lab (HBCL) employs a robust evaluation framework to collect and analyze data, ensuring that our initiatives are both impactful and aligned with our mission to close the digital divide and enhance economic mobility. Our organizational context provides a solid foundation for evidence-driven practices, allowing us to remain responsive to the needs of under-resourced youth and families.
HBCL utilizes a combination of qualitative and quantitative tools to measure the effectiveness of our programs. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are central to our evaluation plan, focusing on improvements in skills, confidence, and access. For our After-School STEM Labs, we track skills gain through pre- and post-program assessments, which provide concrete data on participants' progress in STEM competencies. Additionally, surveys are employed to evaluate changes in digital confidence, allowing us to gauge how effectively we are empowering youth to engage with technology.
Our Mobile Tech Bus outreach is measured by the number of residents engaged and the increase in ACP enrollments, reflecting our success in removing access barriers and promoting digital literacy. The Workforce Reskilling program's effectiveness is assessed through job placement rates, offering a clear metric of how well we are preparing young adults for technology-driven roles.
To ensure data integrity and actionable insights, HBCL employs data management software that facilitates the collection, analysis, and reporting of metrics. This approach enables us to identify trends, adapt strategies, and continuously improve program delivery. By leveraging community assets and focusing on measurable impact within 12-24 months, we remain committed to our values of equity and community voice, ultimately striving to equip every resident with the skills needed to thrive in a technology-driven economy.

## **7. How will evaluation findings be shared with stakeholders? (301 words)**

The Harbor Bridge Community Lab (HBCL) is committed to maintaining transparency and fostering collaborative relationships with its stakeholders. Evaluation findings will be shared with stakeholders through a strategic communication plan designed to ensure clarity, accessibility, and engagement.
Firstly, HBCL will produce detailed annual reports that summarize program outcomes, key performance indicators, and overall impact. These reports will highlight specific metrics such as skills gain, Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) enrollments, and job placement rates, providing stakeholders with clear evidence of the organization's progress toward closing the digital divide and enhancing economic mobility.
To ensure that stakeholders are continuously informed and engaged, HBCL will host quarterly stakeholder meetings. These meetings will serve as a platform for presenting interim evaluation findings, discussing challenges and successes, and gathering feedback. By engaging stakeholders in these discussions, HBCL leverages community voices and ensures that its strategies remain aligned with the needs and expectations of the communities it serves.
Additionally, HBCL will utilize digital platforms to disseminate evaluation findings. Updates will be shared via the organization's website, social media channels, and newsletters, making information readily accessible to a broader audience. These digital communications will include infographics and summaries that convey complex data in a more digestible format, ensuring that stakeholders of all backgrounds can understand and appreciate the impact of HBCL's programs.
Finally, HBCL values the importance of evidence-driven practices and will collaborate with academic and industry partners to publish findings in relevant journals and at conferences. This not only validates the organization's work but also contributes to the broader field of digital equity and STEM education.
Through these comprehensive strategies, HBCL ensures that evaluation findings are not only shared effectively but also used to drive continuous improvement and innovation, aligning with its mission to equip every resident with the skills needed to thrive in a technology-driven economy.

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