ATTACHMENT A – PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The Digital Connections Partnership Schools Grant is a unique opportunity for local school districts to upgrade their technology infrastructure through an innovative matching grant program administered by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) and the Executive Office of Education (EOE), with the consultation of MassIT, the Commonwealth’s office of information technology.

The process is designed to reduce the administrative burden on districts while also facilitating rapid implementation of projects in suburban, urban, and rural communities across the Commonwealth. The basic principles underlying the grant were guided by an advisory committee with broad representation from state agencies and the field.

**September 2014**

**Advisory committee meeting and RFP development**

On September 16, 2014 an advisory committee, with broad representation from state agencies and the field, met to establish the guiding principles of the grant program:

- Funding should be available to all types of communities – urban, suburban, and rural.
- All public school districts should have the opportunity to apply for funding.
- Effort should be made under this matching grant program to make funds available to communities with fewer resources than other communities.
- Districts should be encouraged to propose projects in areas that are unserved or underserved by broadband access, and encouraged to propose projects that are part of larger, integrated plans to connect community anchor institutions.
- The process should be as simple and straightforward as possible. The state agencies should make efforts to alleviate administrative burden on districts and promote cost savings.
- The grant should not promote a particular brand of blended learning; rather, districts should be free to craft projects that meet their local context and needs.

**October 2014**

**RFP posted and information disseminated**

- ESE and MassIT hold informational webinars on October 16 and 17, 2014.
- The RFP is posted to the ESE website and to Commbuys, the website of the state’s Operational Services Division and announced through a variety of channels, including but not limited to the Commissioner’s Update, Twitter, emails to superintendents and district technology directors, and presentations at conferences.

**November 17, 2014**

**Proposals due to the Office of Digital Learning at ESE**

Districts may propose to fund one or more schools in the district and use up to $2 million in state funds (urban and suburban communities) or $1 million in state funds (rural communities) to contribute to the project. The total cost of the project is the state bond contribution plus the local contribution. The size of the local contribution is on a sliding scale (30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%) based on the Chapter 70 funding formula.

- **Example:** a suburban community with a 70% local match requirement proposes a $2 million project:
  - The state contribution is $600,000 (30%)
  - The local contribution is $1,400,000 (70%)

- **Example:** a rural community with a 30% local match requirement proposes a $1.4 million project:
  - The state contribution is $980,000 (70%)
  - The local contribution is $420,000 (30%)

- **Example:** an urban community with a 50% local match requirement proposes a $4 million project:
  - The state contribution is $2 million (50%)
  - The local contribution is $2 million (50%)

**State bond funds** may be only used to fund capital projects that provide high-speed broadband and/or wireless Internet connectivity for schools, including the cost of related products and services needed to complete these infrastructure projects.

**Local matching funds** may be used for the same purposes as state funds. Local matching funds may also include: devices for students and teachers, provided that all devices counted toward the meet current recommended technology specifications for online PARCC assessments at the time the devices are purchased; assistive technology that enables students and adults with disabilities to use devices; and professional development and technical training for educators (teachers and other faculty, support staff, and administrators) in maximizing devices to enhance teaching and learning. The school district may contribute matching funds from either a public or private source.

- Only the products and services described above may be counted toward the local match, and funds
may only be counted toward the local match for the benefit of the school buildings awarded this grant and only for the benefit of educators and students who teach and learn within funded school buildings.

- **Funding for devices** may only be counted toward the local match if district or municipality establishes a line item in the district or municipal budget for technology infrastructure, separate from instructional technology, and identifies an associated funding stream that provides a reliable resource for replenishing and sustaining devices funded through this project.

- Related professional development costs may only cover the period between the award date and June 30, 2016, after which professional development must be sustained at the local level.

- In calculating the local match, MassIT and ESE will classify the products and services proposed by the district as either state or local commitments. Districts are not required to obtain quotes for devices or professional development; instead, these costs will be based on a fixed per-pupil cost basis determined by MassIT and ESE.

- The number of students in the per-pupil calculation will be based on the scale of the 1:1 initiative planned for each school as provided by the district in Part IV. For example, if the district proposes a 1:1 initiative for an entire school, all enrolled students will factor into the calculation. Alternately, if the district proposes a 1:1 initiative only for certain grades and subject areas in the school, only the number of students served by the initiative will be included in the per pupil calculation.

- Districts seeking to fund products and services in schools that are not receiving infrastructure upgrades from state bond funds (but who still want to take advantage of bulk purchasing and maximize other efficiencies) are encouraged to do so, provided they “cost out” these costs from the local match. MassIT will work with districts on a case-by-case basis.

### November 2014

**Massachusetts expected to be added to the Learning Technology Initiative (LTI) contract**

The **LTI contract** will be available to districts to purchase personal, portable computing devices; install or upgrade wireless networks; purchase professional development and technical training; and purchase related products, services, and technical support. The intent of the contract is to make available vendors responsible to provide equipment and related services (“solutions”) on a per pupil cost basis, and to work effectively with districts and any other project partners and providers. Districts do not have to be awarded funding under the Digital Connections Partnership Schools Grant to purchase from the LTI contract; the contract is available to all districts in the Commonwealth. Districts are, however, encouraged to make purchases through MassIT to maximize the purchasing power of the state and reduce costs for all participating districts.

### Mid-December 2014

- MassIT estimates the cost of the project based on industry standards using information provided by the district in the Excel workbook entitled "Part III – Technical Information.xlsx". This estimate will serve as the basis by which ESE and EOE will announce finalists for the grant.

- MassIT and/or ESE may contact applicant districts to ask clarifying questions during the review period.

- A group of semifinalists will be announced at the same time. One or more semifinalists may qualify for funding if the actual costs of the finalists’ projects are lower than projected, or if one or more finalists are unable to secure a commitment to fund the local match.

### January 2015

- All finalists host site visits from state-approved vendors, obtains quotes from these vendors, and selects a vendor with the consultation of MassIT (semifinalists are encouraged to host site visits as well, in order to be eligible for an award if excess funds remain).

- Districts awarded funding under this grant must apply for E-rate discounts, and they have the option of asking MassIT to complete their E-rate applications.

- The final cost of the project, as well as the calculation of the local match, will be established once a vendor is selected. MassIT will advance all or a portion of the project costs on behalf of the district.

### Summer 2015

- Construction begins on the funded infrastructure projects.

- Districts purchase any devices included in their proposal.

- MassIT coordinates construction for districts that are not using LTI.

- For districts using the LTI contract, LTI vendors coordinate with the districts.

### Fall 2015

- Districts begin using their new digital learning connections and devices to improve teaching and learning.

- ESE follows up with grant recipients to support their progress in improving teaching and learning.

- ESE plans ways to disseminate best practices from these districts.

### Ongoing

- MassIT checks quality of work completed by vendors and invoices districts.

- Districts reimburse MassIT on a basis and terms decided between the district and MassIT.