

# APPLICATION

## South Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Project



### Applicant Information

Applicant Name/Organization Sandhill Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

Applicant FCC Registration Number (FRN) 0001886464

Primary Contact Name Lee Chambers

Title CEO

Mailing Address 122 S Main St

Phone Number 843-658-6379

City, State, Zip Jefferson, SC 29718

Email lee.chambers@mysandhill.net

### Broadband Service Provider Experience

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Form 477 Submission 5/1/00

Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Form 477 Submission 7/16/20

- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience delivering broadband service over fiber or hybrid fiber-coax infrastructure
- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience building and operating broadband networks in rural areas
- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience building and operating broadband networks in low-moderate income areas

### Project Area Information

County Marlboro

Rural or Urban Rural

Nearest City/Town Bennettsville

Project Area Map Code Marlboro 6

1076

Number of Households in Project Area (Target code)

46

Number of Businesses in Project Area

4

Number of Health Care Facilities in Project Area

29

Number of Community Anchor Points in Project Area

1

Number of Educational Institutions in Project Area

### Broadband Infrastructure Information

Indicate the type(s) of broadband infrastructure technology to be deployed in the project area.

- Fiber to the Premises* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds 250mb/250mb
- Hybrid fiber-coax (symmetrical upload/download speeds)* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- Hybrid fiber-coax (non-symmetrical upload/download speeds)* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- Fixed wireless* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- VDSL (25/3 Mbps or faster)* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds

### Broadband Pricing Schedules or Tiers

Indicate all rate tiers for broadband at speeds of 25/3 Mbps or faster will be offered to customers in the project area:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates less than \$10/month         | <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$20 - \$24.99/month            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$10 - \$14.99/month | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$25 - \$34.99/month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$15 - \$19.99/month |  |

---

### Project Timeline and Milestones

Project Start Date 9/1/20	Customer Premises Installations Complete 4/1/21
Project Construction Activity Begins 9/1/20	Project Completion Date 12/31/20
Project Construction Activity Complete 12/1/20	

---

### Project Cost Information

Total Project Cost \$637,200	Average Cost per Housing Unit \$ 382
Upfront Cost Requirements \$380,000	
Cost of Building and/or Extending Infrastructure to Customer Premises \$125,000	Average Cost per Business \$ 382
Average Cost per Location Served (all locations or structures) \$ 382	

---

### Project Funding Information

South Carolina CARES Act Funding Requested \$ 318,600

Applicant-Provided Funding \$ 318,600

Third-Party Funding	Amount	Source(s)
---------------------	--------	-----------

---

## Additional Information

Describe Applicant's and/or project Partner's experience building and/or operating broadband networks.

Sandhill has been in business since 1951 and providing internet services since 1996, first through dial up, then in 1998 through DSL. From 1998 to 2010, a robust fiber transport network was built connecting all 7 central office locations as well as 40 additional remote equipment locations. In 2010, Sandhill began overlaying their network with fiber optic cable capable of providing Fiber to the Premise services. Starting around this timeframe, VDSL was also incorporated into the network to increase the capacity of the existing copper plant to support 25/3 services, with 45 additional DSLAM locations added to the network to further push high speed broadband out to the more rural locations.

In 2014, Sandhill entered into an agreement with MetroCast Cable to purchase the existing cable plant serving the towns of Bennettsville, McColl, and Clio in Marlboro County. Since that time, fiber has been extensively added to the network and equipment to support a DOCSIS 3.1 system as well as fiber GPON. Over \$5 Million dollars has been spent to upgrade plant facilities in Marlboro County, including FTTP services now being offered in the Wallace community.

Describe how your proposal meets CARES objectives as described in the "Guidelines." Use additional pages if necessary.

Telemedicine- Telemedicine, which is key to screening and health care for COVID-19, is dependent on broadband access. Such access is not available to many citizens in Marlboro County and therefore has impacted COVID-19 screenings and non-COVID related healthcare during the crisis. Additionally, Marlboro County has no hospital and very limited primary and urgent care facilities. This magnifies the need for telemedicine capabilities.

### Distance Learning

K-12 -a large percentage of households in this Project Area have no access to broadband. Additionally, more than 86% of students in the Project Area live in poverty. Cellular based "hot spots" have been utilized in some parts of the state however the cellular tower coverage necessary to connect these hot spots is very limited in the County, many times rendering the hot spots useless.

Post-secondary- as with the K-12, lack of access and mobile hotspot challenges severely limit student ability to access distance learning. Northeastern Technical College statistics show a significant number of student in the project area without broadband access.

Work at Home-Many employers have responded to COVID-19 pandemic by assigning employees to "work from home". The limited access to broadband has made this impossible for some, threatening the employment of these individuals and viability of the impacted business/industry. Additionally the inability to work at home

Describe how your proposal meets the needs of the community to be served as described in the "Guidelines." Use additional pages if necessary.

As evidenced by ORS provided data, 74% of project area households have NO access to broadband internet. If funded, at the time of completion, the applicant's project will reduce the % of households with no access from 74% to 7% of households. Additionally other entities in the project area also suffer from lack of access:

Businesses: 46  
Health Care: 4  
Community Anchor Points: 29  
Education Institutions: 1

ORS requires project area specific statistics for most criteria except student poverty percentages which specify school district-wide statistics. The applicant believes this is prejudicial to counties with unified, single school districts serving all project areas. Marlboro County's district wide student poverty levels 85.3 % 2/10ths of a point from rounding to 86%. However, Project Area specific student poverty statistics compiled by the Marlboro County School District show student poverty levels in this Project Area are at 89%

Student poverty and overall economic conditions of the Project Area further challenge access to broadband. The \$25 a month subscriber cost offered by the applicant will serve to provide access at a much reduced price, therefore making it easier to impoverished households to obtain service.

Describe any plans or programs you have developed to improve adoption in the community described in this proposal. Use additional pages if necessary.

Marlboro County Government has partnered with Sandhill to develop an initiative to improve broadband access. This plan has been well publicized in the community and has received widespread support from all entities – government, faith-based and other community groups. All of these groups are committed to publicizing and promoting any extension of broadband service.

Sandhill is currently marketing using the local newspaper and billboards around the county to advertise our availability of gigabit capable broadband for the community. Direct fliers are also being mailed out as we expand into new territory as well as promotional options such as free installation to try and drive up adoption rates. There is a great hunger for high speed broadband in Marlboro County and once word gets out that we are in a new area, word of mouth advertising appears to be one of our best modes of communication. As we install customers, we are placing yard signs letting other neighbors know that they now have fiber to the home service.

Provide documents to establish proof that your organization has the necessary funds (50% of total project cost) to complete this project/proposal. List documents here and attach documents to this proposal.

Sandhill provides a full accounting each year by an independent auditor to ORS of our balance sheet. We currently have investment accounts with First Citizens and Wells Fargo and plan on funding the 50% stake by our general funds without need to borrow additional dollars.

As stated before, these projects were all ones we intended on trying to start next year, but with Covid and requests from the community, plan on starting this year if we can obtain additional funds to do so.

Any additional accounting statements needed can be provided upon request.

List any lease, franchise agreement, interconnection agreement, authorization, permit, or other items needed to complete this project.

All franchise, interconnection agreements, and pole attachment agreements are already in place and would not be needed to be secured in order to start these projects. There may be some railroad crossings that would require permits still needed depending on the project, but Sandhill feels confident in obtaining these for these projects. If necessary, we have existing railroad crossing permits we could utilize that would require some small redesign.

---

## Attachments and Exhibits

Please attach the following items to Application:

1. Map of Project Area (PDF and Shapefile formats)
2. Letters of support evidencing community need for project
3. Any additional information evidencing community need for project

---

## Certification and Signature

**CERTIFICATION:** The Applicant certifies that information included in this application is factual to their knowledge.



Applicant agrees to comply with all applicable requirements and conditions contained in Subrecipient Agreement for Coronavirus Relief Funds

**Signature:** C Lee Chambers

Digitally signed by C Lee  
Chambers  
Date: 2020.08.14 10:46:58 -04'00'

**Print Name of Signature:** C Lee Chambers

**Title of Signatory:** CEO

**Date:** 8/14/20

**Renewal Terms.** *Contingent upon extensions for the expenditure of CARES Act funds provided by the U.S. Department of Treasury and the State of South Carolina, this Agreement may be renewed as evidenced by written approval of both parties.*

*All questions and completed applications should be submitted to [Broadband@ors.sc.gov](mailto:Broadband@ors.sc.gov)*

*Facsimile signatures and email signatures shall be as effective as original signatures to bind any party.*

## APPLICATION

# South Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Project



### Applicant Information

Applicant Name/Organization **Sandhill Telephone Cooperative, Inc.**

Applicant FCC Registration Number (FRN) **0001886464**

Primary Contact Name **Lee Chambers**

Title **CEO**

Mailing Address **122 S Main St**

Phone Number **843-658-6379**

City, State, Zip **Jefferson, SC 29718**

Email **lee.chambers@mysandhill.net**

### Broadband Service Provider Experience

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Form 477 Submission **5/1/00**

Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Form 477 Submission **7/16/20**

- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience delivering broadband service over fiber or hybrid fiber-coax infrastructure
- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience building and operating broadband networks in rural areas
- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience building and operating broadband networks in low-moderate income areas

### Project Area Information

County **Marlboro**

Rural or Urban **Rural**

Nearest City/Town **Bennettsville**

Project Area Map Code **Marlboro 7**

**386** Number of Households in Project Area *(Target code)*

**17** Number of Businesses in Project Area

**0** Number of Health Care Facilities in Project Area

**5** Number of Community Anchor Points in Project Area

**0** Number of Educational Institutions in Project Area

### Broadband Infrastructure Information

Indicate the type(s) of broadband infrastructure technology to be deployed in the project area.

- Fiber to the Premises** Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds **250/250**
- Hybrid fiber-coax** Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds *(symmetrical upload/download speeds)*
- Hybrid fiber-coax** Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds *(non-symmetrical upload/download speeds)*
- Fixed wireless** Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- VDSL** Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds *(25/3 Mbps or faster)*

### Broadband Pricing Schedules or Tiers

Indicate all rate tiers for broadband at speeds of 25/3 Mbps or faster will be offered to customers in the project area:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates less than \$10/month         | <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$20 - \$24.99/month            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$10 - \$14.99/month | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$25 - \$34.99/month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$15 - \$19.99/month |  |

---

### Project Timeline and Milestones

Project Start Date	9/1/20	Customer Premises Installations Complete	4/1/21
Project Construction Activity Begins	9/1/20	Project Completion Date	12/31/20
Project Construction Activity Complete	12/1/20		

---

### Project Cost Information

Total Project Cost	\$ 231,600	Average Cost per Housing Unit	\$ 237
Upfront Cost Requirements	\$138,000		
Cost of Building and/or Extending Infrastructure to Customer Premises	\$46,000	Average Cost per Business	\$ 237
Average Cost per Location Served <i>(all locations or structures)</i>	\$ 237		

---

### Project Funding Information

South Carolina CARES Act Funding Requested	\$ 115,800
Applicant-Provided Funding	\$ 115,800

Third-Party Funding	Amount
	Source(s)

---

## Additional Information

Describe Applicant's and/or project Partner's experience building and/or operating broadband networks.

Sandhill has been in business since 1951 and providing internet services since 1996, first through dial up, then in 1998 through DSL. From 1998 to 2010, a robust fiber transport network was built connecting all 7 central office locations as well as 40 additional remote equipment locations. In 2010, Sandhill began overlaying their network with fiber optic cable capable of providing Fiber to the Premise services. Starting around this timeframe, VDSL was also incorporated into the network to increase the capacity of the existing copper plant to support 25/3 services, with 45 additional DSLAM locations added to the network to further push high speed broadband out to the more rural locations.

In 2014, Sandhill entered into an agreement with MetroCast Cable to purchase the existing cable plant serving the towns of Bennettsville, McColl, and Clio in Marlboro County. Since that time, fiber has been extensively added to the network and equipment to support a DOCSIS 3.1 system as well as fiber GPON. Over \$5 Million dollars has been spent to upgrade plant facilities in Marlboro County, including FTTP services now being offered in the Wallace community.

Describe how your proposal meets CARES objectives as described in the "Guidelines." Use additional pages if necessary.

### Telemedicine

Telemedicine, which is key to screening and health care for COVID-19, is dependent on broadband access. Such access is not available to many citizens in Marlboro County and therefore has impacted COVID-19 screenings and non-COVID related healthcare during the crisis. Additionally, Marlboro County has no hospital and very limited primary and urgent care facilities. This magnifies the need for telemedicine capabilities.

### Distance Learning

K-12 - A large percentage of households in this Project Area have no access to broadband. Additionally, more than 86% of students in the Project Area live in poverty. Cellular based "hot spots" have been utilized in some parts of the state however the cellular tower coverage necessary to connect these hot spots is very limited in the County, many times rendering the hot spots useless.

Post-secondary- as with the K-12, lack of access and mobile hotspot challenges severely limit student ability to access distance learning. Northeastern Technical College statistics show a significant number of student in the project area without broadband access.

Work at Home- Many employers have responded to COVID-19 pandemic by assigning employees to "work from home". The limited access to broadband has made this impossible for some, threatening the employment of these individuals and viability of the impacted business/industry. Additionally the inability to work at home

Describe how your proposal meets the needs of the community to be served as described in the "Guidelines." Use additional pages if necessary.

As evidenced by ORS provided data, 45% of project area households have NO access to broadband internet. If funded, at the time of completion, the applicant's project will reduce the % of households with no access from 45% to 5% of households. Additionally other entities in the project area also suffer from lack of access:

Businesses: 17  
Health Care: 1  
Community Anchor Points: 5

ORS requires project area specific statistics for most criteria except student poverty percentages which specify school district-wide statistics. The applicant believes this is prejudicial to counties with unified, single school districts serving all project areas. Marlboro County's district wide student poverty levels 85.3 % 2/10ths of a point from rounding to 86%. However, Project Area specific student poverty statistics compiled by the Marlboro County School District show student poverty levels in this Project Area are at 91%

Student poverty and overall economic conditions of the Project Area further challenge access to broadband. The \$25 a month subscriber cost offered by the applicant will serve to provide access at a much reduced price, therefore making it easier to impoverished households to obtain service.

Describe any plans or programs you have developed to improve adoption in the community described in this proposal. Use additional pages if necessary.

Marlboro County Government has partnered with Sandhill to develop an initiative to improve broadband access. This plan has been well publicized in the community and has received widespread support from all entities – government, faith-based and other community groups. All of these groups are committed to publicizing and promoting any extension of broadband service.

Sandhill is currently marketing using the local newspaper and billboards around the county to advertise our availability of gigabit capable broadband for the community. Direct fliers are also being mailed out as we expand into new territory as well as promotional options such as free installation to try and drive up adoption rates. There is a great hunger for high speed broadband in Marlboro County and once word gets out that we are in a new area, word of mouth advertising appears to be one of our best modes of communication. As we install customers, we are placing yard signs letting other neighbors know that they now have fiber to the home service.

Provide documents to establish proof that your organization has the necessary funds (50% of total project cost) to complete this project/proposal. List documents here and attach documents to this proposal.

Sandhill provides a full accounting each year by an independent auditor to ORS of our balance sheet. We currently have investment accounts with First Citizens and Wells Fargo and plan on funding the 50% stake by our general funds without need to borrow additional dollars.

As stated before, these projects were all ones we intended on trying to start next year, but with Covid and requests from the community, plan on starting this year if we can obtain additional funds to do so.

Any additional accounting statements needed can be provided upon request.

List any lease, franchise agreement, interconnection agreement, authorization, permit, or other items needed to complete this project.

All franchise, interconnection agreements, and pole attachment agreements are already in place and would not be needed to be secured in order to start these projects. There may be some railroad crossings that would require permits still needed depending on the project, but Sandhill feels confident in obtaining these for these projects. If necessary, we have existing railroad crossing permits we could utilize that would require some small redesign.

---

## Attachments and Exhibits

Please attach the following items to Application:

1. Map of Project Area (PDF and Shapefile formats)
2. Letters of support evidencing community need for project
3. Any additional information evidencing community need for project

---

## Certification and Signature

**CERTIFICATION:** The Applicant certifies that information included in this application is factual to their knowledge.



Applicant agrees to comply with all applicable requirements and conditions contained in Subrecipient Agreement for Coronavirus Relief Funds

**Signature:** C Lee Chambers

Digitally signed by C Lee  
Chambers  
Date: 2020.08.14 10:49:20 -04'00'

**Print Name of Signature:** C Lee Chambers

**Title of Signatory:** CEO

**Date:** 8/14/20

**Renewal Terms.** *Contingent upon extensions for the expenditure of CARES Act funds provided by the U.S. Department of Treasury and the State of South Carolina, this Agreement may be renewed as evidenced by written approval of both parties.*

*All questions and completed applications should be submitted to [Broadband@ors.sc.gov](mailto:Broadband@ors.sc.gov)*

*Facsimile signatures and email signatures shall be as effective as original signatures to bind any party.*

# APPLICATION

## South Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Project



### Applicant Information

Applicant Name/Organization Sandhill Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

Applicant FCC Registration Number (FRN) 0001886464

Primary Contact Name Lee Chambers

Title CEO

Mailing Address 122 S Main St

Phone Number 843-658-6379

City, State, Zip Jefferson, SC 29718

Email lee.chambers@mysandhill.net

### Broadband Service Provider Experience

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Form 477 Submission 5/1/00

Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Form 477 Submission 7/16/20

- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience delivering broadband service over fiber or hybrid fiber-coax infrastructure
- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience building and operating broadband networks in rural areas
- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience building and operating broadband networks in low-moderate income areas

### Project Area Information

County Marlboro

Rural or Urban Rural

Nearest City/Town Bennettsville

Project Area Map Code Marlboro 8

911 Number of Households in Project Area (Target code)

156 Number of Businesses in Project Area

7 Number of Health Care Facilities in Project Area

45 Number of Community Anchor Points in Project Area

4 Number of Educational Institutions in Project Area

### Broadband Infrastructure Information

Indicate the type(s) of broadband infrastructure technology to be deployed in the project area.

- Fiber to the Premises* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds 250/250
- Hybrid fiber-coax* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds (symmetrical upload/download speeds)
- Hybrid fiber-coax* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds (non-symmetrical upload/download speeds)
- Fixed wireless* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- VDSL* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds (25/3 Mbps or faster)

### Broadband Pricing Schedules or Tiers

Indicate all rate tiers for broadband at speeds of 25/3 Mbps or faster will be offered to customers in the project area:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates less than \$10/month         | <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$20 - \$24.99/month            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$10 - \$14.99/month | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$25 - \$34.99/month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$15 - \$19.99/month |  |

---

### Project Timeline and Milestones

Project Start Date 9/1/20	Customer Premises Installations Complete 4/1/21
Project Construction Activity Begins 9/1/20	Project Completion Date 12/31/20
Project Construction Activity Complete 12/1/20	

---

### Project Cost Information

Total Project Cost \$ 558,000	Average Cost per Housing Unit \$ 157
Upfront Cost Requirements \$335,000	
Cost of Building and/or Extending Infrastructure to Customer Premises \$110,000	Average Cost per Business \$ 157
Average Cost per Location Served (all locations or structures) \$ 157	

---

### Project Funding Information

South Carolina CARES Act Funding Requested \$ 279,000	
Applicant-Provided Funding \$ 279,000	

Third-Party Funding	Amount
	Source(s)

---

## Additional Information

Describe Applicant's and/or project Partner's experience building and/or operating broadband networks.

Sandhill has been in business since 1951 and providing internet services since 1996, first through dial up, then in 1998 through DSL. From 1998 to 2010, a robust fiber transport network was built connecting all 7 central office locations as well as 40 additional remote equipment locations. In 2010, Sandhill began overlaying their network with fiber optic cable capable of providing Fiber to the Premise services. Starting around this timeframe, VDSL was also incorporated into the network to increase the capacity of the existing copper plant to support 25/3 services, with 45 additional DSLAM locations added to the network to further push high speed broadband out to the more rural locations.

In 2014, Sandhill entered into an agreement with MetroCast Cable to purchase the existing cable plant serving the towns of Bennettsville, McColl, and Clio in Marlboro County. Since that time, fiber has been extensively added to the network and equipment to support a DOCSIS 3.1 system as well as fiber GPON. Over \$5 Million dollars has been spent to upgrade plant facilities in Marlboro County, including FTTP services now being offered in the Wallace community.

Describe how your proposal meets CARES objectives as described in the "Guidelines." Use additional pages if necessary.

Telemedicine, which is key to screening and health care for COVID-19, is dependent on broadband access. Such access is not available to many citizens in Marlboro County and therefore has impacted COVID-19 screenings and non-COVID related healthcare during the crisis. Additionally, Marlboro County has no hospital and very limited primary and urgent care facilities. This magnifies the need for telemedicine capabilities.

### Distance Learning

K-12- A large percentage of households in this Project Area have no access to broadband. Additionally, more than 86% of students in the Project Area live in poverty. Cellular based "hot spots" have been utilized in some parts of the state however the cellular tower coverage necessary to connect these hot spots is very limited in the County, many times rendering the hot spots useless.

Post-secondary as with the K-12, lack of access and mobile hotspot challenges severely limit student ability to access distance learning. Northeastern Technical College statistics show a significant number of student in the project area without broadband access.

Work at Home- Many employers have responded to COVID-19 pandemic by assigning employees to "work from home". The limited access to broadband has made this impossible for some, threatening the employment of these individuals and viability of the impacted business/industry. Additionally the inability to work at home

Describe how your proposal meets the needs of the community to be served as described in the "Guidelines." Use additional pages if necessary.

As evidenced by ORS provided data, 47% of project area households have NO access to broadband internet. If funded, at the time of completion, the applicant's project will reduce the % of households with no access from 47% to 21% of households. Additionally other entities in the project area also suffer from lack of access:

Businesses: 156  
Health Care: 7  
Community Anchor Points: 45  
Education Institutions: 4

ORS requires project area specific statistics for most criteria except student poverty percentages which specify school district-wide statistics. The applicant believes this is prejudicial to counties with unified, single school districts serving all project areas. Marlboro County's district wide student poverty levels 85.3 % 2/10ths of a point from rounding to 86%. However, Project Area specific student poverty statistics compiled by the Marlboro County School District show student poverty levels in this Project Area are at 89%

Student poverty and overall economic conditions of the Project Area further challenge access to broadband. The \$25 a month subscriber cost offered by the applicant will serve to provide access at a much reduced price, therefore making it easier to impoverished households to obtain service.

Describe any plans or programs you have developed to improve adoption in the community described in this proposal. Use additional pages if necessary.

Marlboro County Government has partnered with Sandhill to develop an initiative to improve broadband access. This plan has been well publicized in the community and has received widespread support from all entities – government, faith-based and other community groups. All of these groups are committed to publicizing and promoting any extension of broadband service.

Sandhill is currently marketing using the local newspaper and billboards around the county to advertise our availability of gigabit capable broadband for the community. Direct fliers are also being mailed out as we expand into new territory as well as promotional options such as free installation to try and drive up adoption rates. There is a great hunger for high speed broadband in Marlboro County and once word gets out that we are in a new area, word of mouth advertising appears to be one of our best modes of communication. As we install customers, we are placing yard signs letting other neighbors know that they now have fiber to the home service.

Provide documents to establish proof that your organization has the necessary funds (50% of total project cost) to complete this project/proposal. List documents here and attach documents to this proposal.

Sandhill provides a full accounting each year by an independent auditor to ORS of our balance sheet. We currently have investment accounts with First Citizens and Wells Fargo and plan on funding the 50% stake by our general funds without need to borrow additional dollars. As stated before, these projects were all ones we intended on trying to start next year, but with Covid and requests from the community, plan on starting this year if we can obtain additional funds to do so.

Any additional accounting statements needed can be provided upon request.

List any lease, franchise agreement, interconnection agreement, authorization, permit, or other items needed to complete this project.

All franchise, interconnection agreements, and pole attachment agreements are already in place and would not be needed to be secured in order to start these projects. There may be some railroad crossings that would require permits still needed depending on the project, but Sandhill feels confident in obtaining these for these projects. If necessary, we have existing railroad crossing permits we could utilize that would require some small redesign.

---

## Attachments and Exhibits

Please attach the following items to Application:

1. Map of Project Area (PDF and Shapefile formats)
2. Letters of support evidencing community need for project
3. Any additional information evidencing community need for project

---

## Certification and Signature

**CERTIFICATION:** The Applicant certifies that information included in this application is factual to their knowledge.



Applicant agrees to comply with all applicable requirements and conditions contained in Subrecipient Agreement for Coronavirus Relief Funds

**Signature:** C Lee Chambers

Digitally signed by C Lee  
Chambers

Date: 2020.08.14 10:51:19 -04'00'

**Print Name of Signature:** C Lee Chambers

**Title of Signatory:** CEO

**Date:** 8/14/20

**Renewal Terms.** *Contingent upon extensions for the expenditure of CARES Act funds provided by the U.S. Department of Treasury and the State of South Carolina, this Agreement may be renewed as evidenced by written approval of both parties.*

*All questions and completed applications should be submitted to [Broadband@ors.sc.gov](mailto:Broadband@ors.sc.gov)*

*Facsimile signatures and email signatures shall be as effective as original signatures to bind any party.*

## APPLICATION

### South Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Project



#### Applicant Information

Applicant Name/Organization Sandhill Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

Applicant FCC Registration Number (FRN) 0001886464

Primary Contact Name Lee Chambers

Title CEO

Mailing Address 122 S Main St

Phone Number 843-658-6379

City, State, Zip Jefferson, SC 29718

Email lee.chambers@mysandhill.net

#### Broadband Service Provider Experience

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Form 477 Submission 5/1/00

Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Form 477 Submission 7/16/20

- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience delivering broadband service over fiber or hybrid fiber-coax infrastructure
- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience building and operating broadband networks in rural areas
- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience building and operating broadband networks in low-moderate income areas

#### Project Area Information

County Marlboro

Rural or Urban Rural

Nearest City/Town Bennettsville

Project Area Map Code Marlboro 9

718 Number of Households in Project Area (Target code)

17 Number of Businesses in Project Area

1 Number of Health Care Facilities in Project Area

16 Number of Community Anchor Points in Project Area

1 Number of Educational Institutions in Project Area

#### Broadband Infrastructure Information

Indicate the type(s) of broadband infrastructure technology to be deployed in the project area.

- Fiber to the Premises Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds 250/250
- Hybrid fiber-coax (symmetrical upload/download speeds) Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- Hybrid fiber-coax (non-symmetrical upload/download speeds) Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- Fixed wireless Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- VDSL (25/3 Mbps or faster) Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds

### Broadband Pricing Schedules or Tiers

Indicate all rate tiers for broadband at speeds of 25/3 Mbps or faster will be offered to customers in the project area:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates less than \$10/month         | <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$20 - \$24.99/month            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$10 - \$14.99/month | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$25 - \$34.99/month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$15 - \$19.99/month |  |

---

### Project Timeline and Milestones

Project Start Date 9/1/20	Customer Premises Installations Complete 4/1/21
Project Construction Activity Begins 9/1/20	Project Completion Date 12/31/20
Project Construction Activity Complete 12/1/20	

---

### Project Cost Information

Total Project Cost \$ 481,800	Average Cost per Housing Unit \$ 458
Upfront Cost Requirements \$289,000	
Cost of Building and/or Extending Infrastructure to Customer Premises \$95,000	Average Cost per Business \$ 458
Average Cost per Location Served (all locations or structures) \$ 458	

---

### Project Funding Information

South Carolina CARES Act Funding Requested \$ 240,900

Applicant-Provided Funding \$ 240,900

Third-Party Funding	Amount
	Source(s)

---

## Additional Information

Describe Applicant's and/or project Partner's experience building and/or operating broadband networks.

Sandhill has been in business since 1951 and providing internet services since 1996, first through dial up, then in 1998 through DSL. From 1998 to 2010, a robust fiber transport network was built connecting all 7 central office locations as well as 40 additional remote equipment locations. In 2010, Sandhill began overlaying their network with fiber optic cable capable of providing Fiber to the Premise services. Starting around this timeframe, VDSL was also incorporated into the network to increase the capacity of the existing copper plant to support 25/3 services, with 45 additional DSLAM locations added to the network to further push high speed broadband out to the more rural locations.

In 2014, Sandhill entered into an agreement with MetroCast Cable to purchase the existing cable plant serving the towns of Bennettsville, McColl, and Clio in Marlboro County. Since that time, fiber has been extensively added to the network and equipment to support a DOCSIS 3.1 system as well as fiber GPON. Over \$5 Million dollars has been spent to upgrade plant facilities in Marlboro County, including FTTP services now being offered in the Wallace community.

Describe how your proposal meets CARES objectives as described in the "Guidelines." Use additional pages if necessary.

Telemedicine- which is key to screening and health care for COVID-19, is dependent on broadband access. Such access is not available to many citizens in Marlboro County and therefore has impacted COVID-19 screenings and non-COVID related healthcare during the crisis. Additionally, Marlboro County has no hospital and very limited primary and urgent care facilities. This magnifies the need for telemedicine capabilities.

### Distance Learning

K-12- A large percentage of households in this Project Area have no access to broadband. Additionally, more than 86% of students in the Project Area live in poverty. Cellular based "hot spots" have been utilized in some parts of the state however the cellular tower coverage necessary to connect these hot spots is very limited in the County, many times rendering the hot spots useless.

Post-secondary- as with the K-12, lack of access and mobile hotspot challenges severely limit student ability to access distance learning. Northeastern Technical College statistics show a significant number of student in the project area without broadband access.

Work at Home- Many employers have responded to COVID-19 pandemic by assigning employees to "work from home". The limited access to broadband has made this impossible for some, threatening the employment of these individuals and viability of the impacted business/industry. Additionally the inability to work at home

Describe how your proposal meets the needs of the community to be served as described in the "Guidelines." Use additional pages if necessary.

As evidenced by ORS provided data, 82% of project area households have NO access to broadband internet. If funded, at the time of completion, the applicant's project will reduce the % of households with no access from 82% to 12% of households. Additionally other entities in the project area also suffer from lack of access:

Businesses: 17

Health Care: 1

Community Anchor Points: 16

Education Institutions: 1

ORS requires project area specific statistics for most criteria except student poverty percentages which specify school district-wide statistics. The applicant believes this is prejudicial to counties with unified, single school districts serving all project areas. Marlboro County's district wide student poverty levels 85.3 % 2/10ths of a point from rounding to 86%. However, Project Area specific student poverty statistics compiled by the Marlboro County School District show student poverty levels in this Project Area are at 90%.

Student poverty and overall economic conditions of the Project Area further challenge access to broadband. The \$25 a month subscriber cost offered by the applicant will serve to provide access at a much reduced price, therefore making it easier to impoverished households to obtain service.

Describe any plans or programs you have developed to improve adoption in the community described in this proposal. Use additional pages if necessary.

Marlboro County Government has partnered with Sandhill to develop an initiative to improve broadband access. This plan has been well publicized in the community and has received widespread support from all entities – government, faith-based and other community groups. All of these groups are committed to publicizing and promoting any extension of broadband service.

Sandhill is currently marketing using the local newspaper and billboards around the county to advertise our availability of gigabit capable broadband for the community. Direct fliers are also being mailed out as we expand into new territory as well as promotional options such as free installation to try and drive up adoption rates. There is a great hunger for high speed broadband in Marlboro County and once word gets out that we are in a new area, word of mouth advertising appears to be one of our best modes of communication. As we install customers, we are placing yard signs letting other neighbors know that they now have fiber to the home service.

Provide documents to establish proof that your organization has the necessary funds (50% of total project cost) to complete this project/proposal. List documents here and attach documents to this proposal.

Sandhill provides a full accounting each year by an independent auditor to ORS of our balance sheet. We currently have investment accounts with First Citizens and Wells Fargo and plan on funding the 50% stake by our general funds without need to borrow additional dollars.

As stated before, these projects were all ones we intended on trying to start next year, but with Covid and requests from the community, plan on starting this year if we can obtain additional funds to do so.

Any additional accounting statements needed can be provided upon request.

List any lease, franchise agreement, interconnection agreement, authorization, permit, or other items needed to complete this project.

All franchise, interconnection agreements, and pole attachment agreements are already in place and would not be needed to be secured in order to start these projects. There may be some railroad crossings that would require permits still needed depending on the project, but Sandhill feels confident in obtaining these for these projects. If necessary, we have existing railroad crossing permits we could utilize that would require some small redesign.

---

## Attachments and Exhibits

Please attach the following items to Application:

1. Map of Project Area (PDF and Shapefile formats)
2. Letters of support evidencing community need for project
3. Any additional information evidencing community need for project

---

## Certification and Signature

**CERTIFICATION:** The Applicant certifies that information included in this application is factual to their knowledge.

- Applicant agrees to comply with all applicable requirements and conditions contained in Subrecipient Agreement for Coronavirus Relief Funds

**Signature:**

**C Lee Chambers**

Digitally signed by C Lee  
Chambers

Date: 2020.08.14 10:54:08 -04'00'

**Print Name of Signature:** C Lee Chambers

**Title of Signatory:** CEO

**Date:** 8/14/20

**Renewal Terms.** *Contingent upon extensions for the expenditure of CARES Act funds provided by the U.S. Department of Treasury and the State of South Carolina, this Agreement may be renewed as evidenced by written approval of both parties.*

*All questions and completed applications should be submitted to [Broadband@ors.sc.gov](mailto:Broadband@ors.sc.gov)*

*Facsimile signatures and email signatures shall be as effective as original signatures to bind any party.*

# APPLICATION

## South Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Project



### Applicant Information

Applicant Name/Organization Sandhill Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

Applicant FCC Registration Number (FRN) 0001886464

Primary Contact Name Lee Chambers

Title CEO

Mailing Address 122 S Main St

Phone Number 843-658-6379

City, State, Zip Jefferson, SC 29718

Email lee.chambers@mysandhill.net

### Broadband Service Provider Experience

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Form 477 Submission 5/1/00

Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Form 477 Submission 7/16/20

- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience delivering broadband service over fiber or hybrid fiber-coax infrastructure
- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience building and operating broadband networks in rural areas
- Applicant and/or project Partner has experience building and operating broadband networks in low-moderate income areas

### Project Area Information

County Marlboro

Rural or Urban Rural

Nearest City/Town Bennettsville

Project Area Map Code Marlboro 10

337 Number of Households in Project Area (Target code)

7 Number of Businesses in Project Area

0 Number of Health Care Facilities in Project Area

13 Number of Community Anchor Points in Project Area

2 Number of Educational Institutions in Project Area

### Broadband Infrastructure Information

Indicate the type(s) of broadband infrastructure technology to be deployed in the project area.

- Fiber to the Premises Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds 250/250
- Hybrid fiber-coax (symmetrical upload/download speeds) Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- Hybrid fiber-coax (non-symmetrical upload/download speeds) Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- Fixed wireless Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- VDSL (25/3 Mbps or faster) Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds

### Broadband Pricing Schedules or Tiers

Indicate all rate tiers for broadband at speeds of 25/3 Mbps or faster will be offered to customers in the project area:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates less than \$10/month         | <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$20 - \$24.99/month            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$10 - \$14.99/month | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$25 - \$34.99/month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$15 - \$19.99/month |  |

---

### Project Timeline and Milestones

Project Start Date 9/1/20	Customer Premises Installations Complete 4/1/21
Project Construction Activity Begins 9/1/20	Project Completion Date 12/31/20
Project Construction Activity Complete 12/1/20	

---

### Project Cost Information

Total Project Cost \$ 340,800	Average Cost per Housing Unit \$ 623
Upfront Cost Requirements \$205,000	
Cost of Building and/or Extending Infrastructure to Customer Premises \$68,000	Average Cost per Business \$ 623
Average Cost per Location Served (all locations or structures) \$ 623	

---

### Project Funding Information

South Carolina CARES Act Funding Requested \$ 170,400

Applicant-Provided Funding \$ 170,400

Third-Party Funding	Amount
	Source(s)

---

## Additional Information

Describe Applicant's and/or project Partner's experience building and/or operating broadband networks.

Sandhill has been in business since 1951 and providing internet services since 1996, first through dial up, then in 1998 through DSL. From 1998 to 2010, a robust fiber transport network was built connecting all 7 central office locations as well as 40 additional remote equipment locations. In 2010, Sandhill began overlaying their network with fiber optic cable capable of providing Fiber to the Premise services. Starting around this timeframe, VDSL was also incorporated into the network to increase the capacity of the existing copper plant to support 25/3 services, with 45 additional DSLAM locations added to the network to further push high speed broadband out to the more rural locations.

In 2014, Sandhill entered into an agreement with MetroCast Cable to purchase the existing cable plant serving the towns of Bennettsville, McColl, and Clio in Marlboro County. Since that time, fiber has been extensively added to the network and equipment to support a DOCSIS 3.1 system as well as fiber GPON. Over \$5 Million dollars has been spent to upgrade plant facilities in Marlboro County, including FTTP services now being offered in the Wallace community.

Describe how your proposal meets CARES objectives as described in the "Guidelines." Use additional pages if necessary.

Telemedicine- which is key to screening and health care for COVID-19, is dependent on broadband access. Such access is not available to many citizens in Marlboro County and therefore has impacted COVID-19 screenings and non-COVID related healthcare during the crisis. Additionally, Marlboro County has no hospital and very limited primary and urgent care facilities. This magnifies the need for telemedicine capabilities.

### Distance Learning

K-12- A large percentage of households in this Project Area have no access to broadband. Additionally, more than 86% of students in the Project Area live in poverty. Cellular based "hot spots" have been utilized in some parts of the state however the cellular tower coverage necessary to connect these hot spots is very limited in the County, many times rendering the hot spots useless.

Post-secondary- as with the K-12, lack of access and mobile hotspot challenges severely limit student ability to access distance learning. Northeastern Technical College statistics show a significant number of student in the project area without broadband access.

Work at Home- Many employers have responded to COVID-19 pandemic by assigning employees to "work from home". The limited access to broadband has made this impossible for some, threatening the employment of these individuals and viability of the impacted business/industry. Additionally the inability to work at home

Describe how your proposal meets the needs of the community to be served as described in the "Guidelines." Use additional pages if necessary.

As evidenced by ORS provided data, 70% of project area households have NO access to broadband internet. If funded, at the time of completion, the applicant's project will reduce the % of households with no access from 70% to 7% of households. Additionally other entities in the project area also suffer from lack of access:

Businesses: 7  
Health Care: 0  
Community Anchor Points: 16  
Education Institutions: 2

ORS requires project area specific statistics for most criteria except student poverty percentages which specify school district-wide statistics. The applicant believes this is prejudicial to counties with unified, single school districts serving all project areas. Marlboro County's district wide student poverty levels 85.3 % 2/10ths of a point from rounding to 86%. However, Project Area specific student poverty statistics compiled by the Marlboro County School District show student poverty levels in this Project Area are at 91%

Student poverty and overall economic conditions of the Project Area further challenge access to broadband. The \$25 a month subscriber cost offered by the applicant will serve to provide access at a much reduced price, therefore making it easier to impoverished households to obtain service.

Describe any plans or programs you have developed to improve adoption in the community described in this proposal. Use additional pages if necessary.

Marlboro County Government has partnered with Sandhill to develop an initiative to improve broadband access. This plan has been well publicized in the community and has received widespread support from all entities – government, faith-based and other community groups. All of these groups are committed to publicizing and promoting any extension of broadband service. (see attached letters of support)

Sandhill is currently marketing using the local newspaper and billboards around the county to advertise our availability of gigabit capable broadband for the community. Direct fliers are also being mailed out as we expand into new territory as well as promotional options such as free installation to try and drive up adoption rates. There is a great hunger for high speed broadband in Marlboro County and once word gets out that we are in a new area, word of mouth advertising appears to be one of our best modes of communication. As we install customers, we are placing yard signs letting other neighbors know that they now have fiber to the home service.

Provide documents to establish proof that your organization has the necessary funds (50% of total project cost) to complete this project/proposal. List documents here and attach documents to this proposal.

Sandhill provides a full accounting each year by an independent auditor to ORS of our balance sheet. We currently have investment accounts with First Citizens and Wells Fargo and plan on funding the 50% stake by our general funds without need to borrow additional dollars. As stated before, these projects were all ones we intended on trying to start next year, but with Covid and requests from the community, plan on starting this year if we can obtain additional funds to do so.

Any additional accounting statements needed can be provided upon request.

List any lease, franchise agreement, interconnection agreement, authorization, permit, or other items needed to complete this project.

All franchise, interconnection agreements, and pole attachment agreements are already in place and would not be needed to be secured in order to start these projects. There may be some railroad crossings that would require permits still needed depending on the project, but Sandhill feels confident in obtaining these for these projects. If necessary, we have existing railroad crossing permits we could utilize that would require some small redesign.

---

## Attachments and Exhibits

Please attach the following items to Application:

1. Map of Project Area (PDF and Shapefile formats)
2. Letters of support evidencing community need for project
3. Any additional information evidencing community need for project

---

## Certification and Signature

**CERTIFICATION:** The Applicant certifies that information included in this application is factual to their knowledge.

- Applicant agrees to comply with all applicable requirements and conditions contained in Subrecipient Agreement for Coronavirus Relief Funds

**Signature:** C Lee Chambers

Digitally signed by C Lee  
Chambers

Date: 2020.08.14 10:56:02 -04'00'

**Print Name of Signature:** C Lee Chambers

**Title of Signatory:** CEO

**Date:** 8/14/20

**Renewal Terms.** *Contingent upon extensions for the expenditure of CARES Act funds provided by the U.S. Department of Treasury and the State of South Carolina, this Agreement may be renewed as evidenced by written approval of both parties.*

*All questions and completed applications should be submitted to [Broadband@ors.sc.gov](mailto:Broadband@ors.sc.gov)*

*Facsimile signatures and email signatures shall be as effective as original signatures to bind any party.*

## Letters of Support



# City of Bennettville

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

P.O. BOX 1036

Bennettville, South Carolina 29512

August 12, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

Please let this serve as a letter of support of Sandhill Telephone Cooperative's application for CARES Act funding for broadband upgrade in Marlboro County.

The City of Bennettville is fortunate to have an existing cable television franchise with Sandhill Connexions, LLC and many city residents enjoy the benefits provided as part of this service. However, the current Pandemic environment has created special and additional needs for citizens inside and outside the City of Bennettville in terms of broadband access. Most urgent is that the upcoming school openings will have a major online component that will require improvements in infrastructure to meet demands. Without these improvements, many children will have limited access to education.

With limited revenue combined with decreasing growth, the City of Bennettville must rely heavily on grant funding for its infrastructure and utility improvements and we are a good example of how grant funding can make a real difference. This CARES Act funding will make the difference in broadband infrastructure improvements.

Again, we fully support Sandhill Telephone Cooperative's application for CARES Act funding for infrastructure improvement and extension in Marlboro County. Please contact Mayor Carolyn Prince or Max Alderman at 843.479.9001 for additional comments if needed.

Sincerely,

Mayor Carolyn Prince, Ph. D.

City Administrator, Max Alderman



**Dr. Gregory A. McCord**  
Superintendent

August 12, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

As Superintendent of Schools, one of my major responsibilities is to ensure that all students are afforded an opportunity for a quality education. Prior to the current pandemic Covid-19, we were making gains. Our students are now 1:1 with technology devices and our staff is increasingly doing more to support instructional technology. In March of 2020, we had to make a fast adjustment and provide instruction using a total virtual platform. Because we do not have the services of larger counties and municipalities, we have been stymied as our students have not been able to receive services either at all or not adequately enough for to maintain a consistent school schedule.

I am writing in support of Sandhill Telephone Cooperative's applications for CARES Act funding for broadband infrastructure extension in Marlboro County. Marlboro County has long been neglected in services related to broadband well behind other counties in the State. We also have staff members that experience the same issues as students as many of them currently reside in the county. In the year 2020 and beyond, students and staff will need to have reliable access to the internet to be and remain competitive in a global and diverse market. Even from a local standpoint, we are severely disadvantaged from access to local issues or advancements. Therefore, a county-wide grant for low population, rural counties such as this may be the only opportunity for broadband access improvement. Marlboro County School District currently has just under 90% of its students living in what is commonly referred to as "low-poverty" households. Education is the surest way that we can level the field for our youth and for this community.

Working with our local county government and Ron Munnerlyn has presented us this opportunity to show how all county entities are connected regardless of the infrastructure of the organization and should always work towards bettering its citizens. For this we are thankful but without approval, it will leave us not only back at point zero but our students even further behind.

In closing, we reiterate our full support for Sandhill's grant applications and ask that you consider our situation and the points made above in your evaluation of these requests. Please feel free to me if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

Gregory A. McCord, Ed.D.

cc: Larry McNeil, Board of Trustees, Chairman

Marlboro County School District  
P.O. Box 947 - 122 Broad Street  
Bennettville, SC 29512-0947  
Phone (843)521-7631

**#345**

gmccord@marlboro.k12.sc.us



# NORTHEASTERN

— TECHNICAL COLLEGE —

August 13, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of Sandhill Telephone Cooperative's applications for CARES Act funding for broadband infrastructure extension in Marlboro County (South Carolina). These applications were prepared in partnership with Marlboro County Administrator, Mr. Ron Munnerlyn and have the full support of Northeastern Technical College. Sandhill is an experienced, not-for-profit, internet provider currently serving Marlboro County. Their experience and community-centered approach make them the perfect partner for this project.

Sandhill Telephone Cooperative and Northeastern Technical College (NETC) have previously formed a partnership to provide free broadband service to NETC students who are now completing coursework through a virtual college concept, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted and increased the demand for broadband access for citizens in rural areas such as Marlboro County.

The recently released 2020-2021 instructional plans for South Carolina Public School Districts (including the Marlboro County School District) will rely heavily upon online instruction and will require significant upgrades to the broadband infrastructure of rural counties such as Marlboro County (South Carolina). These upgrades are vital to the educational success of students, as they directly impact academic accessibility and instruction for all Marlboro County residents.

In closing, we extend our full support for Sandhill's grant application. You may contact me directly at (843) 921-6901 or via email at [kwagner@netc.edu](mailto:kwagner@netc.edu) should you require additional information.

Sincerely,

**Kyle Wagner, Ph.D.**  
**Northeastern Technical College, President**

Jason Steen,  
*County Council Chair*

Corrie H. Plato,  
*County Council Vice-Chair*



J. Ronald Munnerlyn, Jr.,  
*County Administrator &  
Economic Developer*

## MARLBORO COUNTY Government

August 12, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of Sandhill Telephone Cooperative's applications for CARES Act funding for broadband infrastructure extension in Marlboro County. These applications were prepared in partnership with Marlboro County Administrator Ron Munnerlyn and have the full support of County Council. Sandhill is an experienced, not-for-profit, internet provider currently serving Marlboro County. Their experience and community-centered approach make them the perfect partner for this project.

Unlike other counties that may be classified as underserved, broadband access in Marlboro County is virtually nonexistent with only .6% (point six) of households having access. In fact, we are ranked worst in the state in this regard. With the announcement that schools in Marlboro County will have a significant "online" component for the fall semester, the need for broadband access is even more critical. The telemedicine and "work-from-home" needs of our county are also significant. (Note that "quick fixes" providing temporary broadband access via cellular-based hot spots are not effective as cell tower coverage is also very limited in our county.)

The decision to break the state into "blocks" puts Marlboro County and other rural unserved areas at a serious disadvantage. Extension of the limited existing broadband infrastructure almost always is originated from some central point in these counties, requiring one block to be traversed to serve an outlying block. Furthermore, with little or no competition between providers and a very low population density, there is a slim chance of any provider seeing a return on investment for infrastructure expansion. Therefore, a county-wide grant for low population, rural counties is the only opportunity for broadband access improvement.

In light of the decision to consider applications block by block, it is counterintuitive to use county-wide school statistics instead of block statistics. The applications are heavily weighted towards counties with student poverty percentages in excess of 86% - our county's student poverty statistics are at 85.3%. If considered block by block (like every other criteria), half of Marlboro County's blocks exhibit student poverty far in excess of the 86% number.

In closing, we reiterate our full support for Sandhill's grant applications and ask that you consider our situation and the points made above in your evaluation of these requests. Please feel free to contact County Administrator Ron Munnerlyn at 843-439-0238 if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

Jason Steen, Council Chair

# Town of Blenheim

Post Office Box 88  
Blenheim, S.C. 29516

**Mayor**  
**Bobby Brock**

**Clerk/Treasurer**  
**Martha McQuage**

**Council**  
**Toma Dees**  
**Freddy Brock**  
**John Nolan**  
**Carl Freeman**

August 13, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

This has reference to applications by Sandhill Telephone Cooperative for Cares Act funding for broadband infrastructure extension in Marlboro County. The Town of Blenheim supports these applications. Sandhill is a not-for-profit, internet provider serving Marlboro County.

Broadband access in our County is almost nonexistent with only .6% of households having access. The need for broadband access is essential for on-line classes for our School System. Our county's student poverty statistics are 85.3% and certainly should be considered as an important part of broadband coverage for our county. A county wide grant for low population, rural counties is the only opportunity for broadband access improvement.

The Town of Blenheim fully supports for Sandhill's grant application and therefore your consideration to approve this grant should be based on the need to provide our students with access to the internet for virtual lessons.

Sincerely,

R. L. Brock, Mayor  
Town of Blenheim



Jane B. Rogers, Chairman  
John R. Nobles, MD, Vice-Chairman  
Lindsay M. Woodberry, Pharm D, Secretary  
Joseph C. Breeden, Jr., Treasurer  
Barry Avent  
Casey Blackmon, DVM  
Sully Blair  
D. Gail Cain, FNP  
Wayne Easterling, RN  
Leslie Herndon, MBA-HEM, RT (R)(T)  
Joe Kinney, MSW, LISW  
George McIntyre  
Doc Stillwell

August 13, 2020

South Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Project  
Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security or "CARES Act"

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in support of Sandhill Telephone Cooperative's application for CARES Act funding for broadband infrastructure expansion in Marlboro County. I serve as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Marlboro County General Hospital, a private foundation created in 1982, and as a member of the Scotland Health Care System Board of Trustees, a system based in Laurinburg, NC that has been providing access to primary and specialty care physicians in Marlboro County of over 15 years.

As one of the many residents of Marlboro County who relies on broadband access via cellular-based hot spots, I can attest to the unreliability of this system. Many folks are now required to work from home as much as possible and Marlboro County schools have announced a significant "online" component for the fall semester. The service limitations of cell tower coverage in our county make this source of internet connection very unreliable and creates a very poor working and learning environment. Expansion of broadband infrastructure will enhance the distance learning capabilities of our school system and allow our citizens to fulfill their job duties effectively.

Limited access to health care is another great concern for Marlboro County. In 1982, our hospital was sold to HCA. In 2015, Community Health Systems closed our hospital. Like other counties in South Carolina, losing our hospital has had a very negative impact on the health of our citizen as well as a negative economic impact. Even though Scotland Health Care System, CareSouth Carolina and McLeod Health each provide some services in the county, Marlboro County is a Medically Underserved Area, designated as a High Needs Health Professional Shortage Area for Primary Care and Mental Health. Primary Care and Mental Health are the two access to care limitations that telehealth tools can help us overcome. Reliable broadband internet throughout the county will greatly increase the telehealth services available to our citizens.

Thank you for your consideration of the needs of Marlboro County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane B. Rogers".

Jane B. Rogers

Marlboro County General Hospital  
Marlboro County General Hospital Charity Trust  
P.O. Box 388  
400 Tyson Avenue  
Bennettsville, SC 29512

TOWN OF CLIO

Mayor

Ben Petrone

Council

Cathy Helsel  
Samuel McCollum  
Pearlie Thomas, Sr.  
Ken Phillips



101 Calhoun Street  
P.O. Box 487  
Clio, SC 29525-0487  
843-586-9426 Tel  
843-586-7733 Fax

townofclio@bellsouth.net

# Town of Clio

101 Calhoun Street  
Clio, S.C. 29525

Mayor  
Ben Petrone

Clerk/Treasurer  
Robyn Williamson-Jacobs

Council  
Cathy Helsel  
Ken Phillips  
Samuel McCollum  
Pearlie Thomas

August 13, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

This has reference to applications by Sandhill Telephone Cooperative for Cares Act funding for broadband infrastructure extension in Marlboro County. The Town of Clio fully supports these applications. Sandhill is a not-for-profit, internet provider serving Marlboro County.

Broadband access in our Town is almost nonexistent with only .6% of households having access. The need for broadband access is essential for on-line classes for our School System. Our county's student poverty statistics are 85.3% and certainly should be considered as an important part of broadband coverage for our county. A county wide grant for low population, rural counties is the only opportunity for broadband access improvement.

The Town of Clio fully supports Sandhill's grant application and therefore your Consideration to approve this grant should be based on the need to provide our students with access to the internet for virtual lessons,

Sincerely

Ben Petrone, Mayor  
Town of Clio

# Town of McColl

*A Progressive City of 3,000*

300 South Main Street • McColl, S.C. 29570

Phone: (843) 523-5341 • Fax (843) 523-5695

---

Bobby Odom, Mayor  
Tameka McLain, Clerk/Treasurer  
Terry Freeman, Chief (PD)  
Tammie Goff/ Water & Sewer Clerk  
David Coleman, Water & Sewer Supervisor

Brian Blue, Council  
R.C. Cummings, Council  
George Garner, Council  
Robin Grooms-Clark, Council  
Lynn Kubas, Council  
Gordon Jones, Council

August 13, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter as full support of Sandhill Telephone Cooperative's application for CARES Act funding for broadband infrastructure extension in Marlboro County. As Mayor of McColl I have witnessed and listened to the frustrations of the citizens, business owners, as well as educators due to lack of broadband service both within the town limit and rural areas of our county. The statistics speak for themselves. The Town of McColl falls well within the parameters for meeting the much needed funding for broadband service. We are at the TOP of the list in our state for underserved areas for this technology.

It is well past the time that our citizens receive the much needed technology to survive in today's world. The pandemic issues are only another added layer of frustration for folks having to work and utilize virtual technology, in a community known as a "technology desert".

I humbly ask that we are awarded the long over due funding to assist in obtaining broadband service.

Yours in Service,

Mayor Bobby Odom

**SUMMARY SHEET - Marlboro County SC CARES Act Broadband Grant**

Marlboro County Project Area Block	Students in poverty	Total Students	% Students in poverty	Households NO broadband	% of household NO broadband	Total Households	Additional households if approved	% households w/ NO broadband AFTER project	Non-Residential Impact			
									Businesses	Health Care	Community Anchor Points	Educational Institutions
6	369	413	89%	1,196	74%	1,616	1,076	7%	46	4	29	1
7	170	186	91%	429	45%	953	386	5%	17	1	5	0
8	526	592	89%	1,657	47%	3,526	911	21%	156	7	45	4
9	139	154	90%	845	82%	1,030	718	12%	17	1	16	1
10	32	35	91%	374	70%	534	337	7%	7	0	16	1

Marlboro County Project Area Block	Total Students	Total project cost	Total cost households	Total Business cost	Average Costs all Structures	Average Cost per Household	Average Cost per Business	Average Costs all Structures
6	413	\$ 637,200	\$ 404,360	\$ 17,280	\$ 376	\$ 376	\$ 376	
7	186	\$ 231,600	\$ 91,588	\$ 4,033	\$ 237	\$ 237	\$ 237	
8	592	\$ 558,000	\$ 136,061	\$ 23,290	\$ 149	\$ 149	\$ 149	
9	154	\$ 481,800	\$ 324,783	\$ 7,687	\$ 452	\$ 452	\$ 452	
10	35	\$ 340,800	\$ 205,474	\$ 4,273	\$ 610	\$ 610	\$ 610	









