



Broadband and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security or “CARES Act”

Act 142 of the South Carolina General Assembly allocated \$50 million of the Coronavirus Relief Fund for South Carolina included in the CARES Act to the SC Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) for broadband initiatives related to COVID-19.

Allocation: \$50,000,000
Total Funds Expended: \$38,397,994



Online Learning Initiative

Procuring mobile hotspots and monthly internet service for qualifying student households through December 31, 2020

Funding

Allocation: \$20,000,000
Total Funds Expended: \$12,271,169
Funds Transferred to SCDOE: \$8,200,000

Program Update

The ORS collaborated with schools across the state. Schools reported monthly on the status of mobile hotspots and monthly internet service. The ORS created communications materials including press releases, a program overview, and a video tutorial on how to complete monthly reporting.

The Online Learning Initiative program transferred to the SC Department of Education (SCDOE) on December 31, 2020 along with \$8.2 million to provide service through June 2021.

Participating Schools

Public K-12: 82
Private K-12: 4
Charter: 3
Higher Ed Institutions: 26
Total: 115

Hotspots/Wired Services

Verizon: 59,701
AT&T: 24,476
T-Mobile: 1,377
Service Only: 390
Wired: 6,598
Total: 92,542



Mapping and Planning

Securing a vendor for the development of a broadband statewide county-by-county mapping plan and statewide broadband infrastructure plan

Funding

Allocation: \$300,000
CostQuest: 299,900
RFA: 120,000
Total Funds Expended: \$419,900

Program Update

The ORS requested all broadband service providers and broadband infrastructure owners operating in South Carolina to submit broadband availability data to the ORS. The ORS procured the services of CostQuest Associates, Inc. to perform various Geographic Information Systems (GIS)-related services. A detailed map was made available in December 2020. The ORS also contracted the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA) for the continuing storage, security, and maintenance of the map.



Broadband Infrastructure Program

Expansion of broadband infrastructure with emphasized services to rural communities and communities with a high prevalence of COVID-19 or with demographic characteristics consistent with risk factors for COVID-19

Funding

Allocation: \$29,700,000

Total Funds Expended: \$17,157,488

Program Update

The ORS engaged Revolution D, Inc. to identify areas of the state that are unserved, impacted by COVID-19, and that if broadband were available, would support distance learning, telehealth, and/or teleworking. Companies completed infrastructure projects in December 2020, helping to expand broadband availability in the state.

The ORS created a program overview, various press releases, an application, guidelines, funding agreements, and reporting tools. Companies were required to submit Financial Progress Reports and Construction Progress Reports to the ORS.

Applications Funded: 78

Companies: 14

Counties Served: 27

Program Targets: 59

Priority Targets: 35

Households Served: 2,169

Households Passed*: 18,574

Businesses Passed: 1,000

Community Anchor Points Passed: 202

Educational Institutions Passed: 38

Health-care Facilities Passed: 29

**The residence or business is eligible to subscribe to services.*

Allendale Broadband Pilot Project

To advance deployment of broadband to unserved areas during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ORS partnered with SCETV, USC Salkehatchie, Allendale County School District, the Allendale Hampton Jasper Regional Library, and Revolution D, Inc. to launch a pilot program allowing free Wi-Fi to students and/or the public together with residential broadband service in Allendale County. Project partners worked with Palmetto Rural Telephone Cooperative to get fiber backhaul and Dominion Energy to get electricity to the SCETV towers located in Allendale County. Equipment was installed on the towers that will provide residents with fixed wireless (citizen broadband radio service) access to broadband service.

Potential Number of Impacted Households: 1,000

Public Wi-Fi Maximum Download/Upload Speeds: 50 Mbps / 10 Mbps

Residential Network Maximum Download/Upload Speeds: 78 Mbps / 6 Mbps

Questions

Broadband Information
CARESAct@ORS.SC.GOV



More information can be found at ORS.SC.GOV/broadband