

South Carolina 2024 ARPA Grant Program Application SLFRF 3.0



Section 1.1 - Applicant Information

Legal Entity/Organization Name	FTC Diversified Services, LLC
Parent Organization	Farmers Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Corporation
Primary Contact Name	James L. Brown, III
Title	Chief Executive Officer
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	1101 E. Main Street, Kingstree, SC, 29556
Phone Number	843-382-2333
Email	brownj@ftc.org
Secondary Contact Name	Robin Coker
Title	Chief Marketing Officer
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	1101 E. Main Street, Kingstree, SC, 29556
Phone Number	843-382-1330
Email	cokerr@ftc.org
FCC Registration Number (FRN):	4320065
Registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) - (Yes/No)	Yes
Unique Entity ID (UEI) Number	ZVH8V8Z4BN55
Federal Tax ID Number	45-5595110
SC State Vendor Number	7000025349

Section 1.2 - Project Name/Number

Project Number (Format XXX-XX)	FTC-D3
Project Name	Lee
Project Priority (1-5, 1 serving as highest priority for applicant)	4

Section 1.3 - Broadband Service Provider Context

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Submission	December 1, 1999
Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Submission	3/1/2024
Applicant has experience delivering broadband service via fiber and/or hybrid fiber-coax infrastructure (YES/NO)	Yes

Section 1.4 - Broadband Infrastructure Information

Indicate the type(s) of broadband infrastructure technology to be deployed in the project service area. Projects must provide a minimum of 100/20 Mbps scalable to 100/100 Mbps. Applicant must explain in detail why the proposed project cannot provide 100/100 Mbps.	Fiber to the Premises Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds 100/100 Mbps
Will all structures be served with the same technology type?	Yes
Estimated Miles of Fiber to be Installed	19
Estimated Percentage Underground	100.00%
Estimated Percentage Aerial	0.00%

Section 1.5 - Project Timeline

Project Start Date	June 3, 2024
Project Construction Activity Begins	June 10, 2024
Project Construction Activity Completion	April 24, 2026
Customer Premises <i>Initiation of Operations (premise installations begin)</i>	February 3, 2025
Overall Project Completion Date	June 30, 2026
Will the project be completed within 24 months of official Notice to Proceed (NTP)?	Yes

Section 1.6 - Low-Cost Plan

(Must be a minimum of 100/20 Mbps)

What Download/Upload speed is offered in your low-cost residential plan? (Example 100/20)	250Mbps / 250Mbps
What is the monthly cost of the plan?	\$69.95 internet only \$49.95 with voice
Does the above speed tier include unlimited data? (YES/NO)	Yes
Is a Consumer-based Contract Required? (YES/NO)	No
Duration of Low-Cost Plan (Post Construction)	Minimum of 1 year

Section 1.7 - Free Public Wi-Fi

Will a new Free Public Wi-Fi location(s) be added? Free Public Wi-Fi is a location where anyone can access the Wi-Fi network at no cost 24/7, 365 days. Wi-Fi location needs to be in county or counties applied for.	No
If yes, how many locations will be added?	0
If yes, specify the duration the applicant will offer this service.	Select One

Section 1.8 - Network Resiliency

Indicate if any of the Network Resilient Items will be implemented in the project area.

Ensure power redundancy with DC Battery/Diesel/Gas Generator Backup from temporary power loss at premise, Network Operations Center (NOC), and OLTs.	Will Implement
Ensure OLTs have divergent paths to redundant upstream equipment.	Will Implement
Configure OLTs on a fiber ring so the network may continue operation if fiber is cut and/or damaged.	Will Implement
Establish an Emergency Action Plan (EAP).	Will Implement
Conduct readiness drills and tabletop exercises leveraging the EAP, document lessons learned and update the EAP based upon findings.	Will Implement
Deploy facilities underground as opposed to aerial to minimize impacts of downed utility poles from hurricanes, tornadoes, and vehicle accidents occurring in rights of way.	Will Implement
Diversify connectivity by including more than a single tier-one provider as an access point to the Internet through the ISP's network.	Will Implement
Maintain field service teams and spare equipment on standby before, during, and after major weather events and enact mutual assistance agreements, if appropriate.	Will Implement
Conduct regular site inspections for encroachments, damaged facilities, susceptible facilities or other threats through field reconnaissance and windshield surveys on facilities.	Will Implement
Elevate OLTs above base flood elevations in mapped floodplains and associated flood-prone areas.	Will Implement

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Section 2.2 - Funding Details

Description	Comment	Amount
South Carolina ARPA Broadband Grant Program Funds requested		\$ 456,000.00
Applicant-Provided Funding		\$ 603,000.00
Third-Party Funding Source (if applicable)	FTC	\$ 81,000.00
Total Project Cost		\$ 1,140,000.00
Percentage Funds Requested from SC Broadband Office		40%
Percentage Funds from Applicant Match		53%
Percentage Funds from Third Party Funding Source		7%

**ADJUST APPLICANT
PROVIDED FUNDING
AMOUNT TO GET WHOLE
PERCENTAGES ONLY**

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Section 3.1 Confirmations

Applicant participates in the Affordable Connective Program (ACP) and will participate in the ACP for the life of ACP for the Project Service Area.

Agree

Applicant will provide at least one low-cost option without data usage caps and at speeds sufficient for households with multiple users for a disclosed period of time.

Agree

The Project will comply with the requirements set forth in ARPA, South Carolina Act No. 244 of 2022, and other federal, state, and local laws, including environmental and permitting laws and regulations.

Agree

The Applicant will not use ARPA funds to procure or obtain certain telecom and video surveillance services or equipment as outlined in 2 CFR 200.216 and 2 CFR 200.471.

Agree

Applicant will not use ARPA funds to modernize cybersecurity for existing and new broadband networks.

Agree

Applicant will not procure telecommunications equipment or services from China.

Agree

The Project includes pre-project development uses or costs

Agree

If Yes to above, the pre-development uses or costs will be (1) tied to an eligible broadband project or reasonably expected to lead to such a project; and (2) obligated within the period between Feb. 1, 2024, and December 31, 2026 and expended to cover such obligations by December 31, 2026.

Agree

Applicant will require its employees, contractors, and subcontractors to comply with the applicable requirements in the South Carolina Underground Facility Damage Prevention Act pursuant to Title 58, Chapter 36 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, as amended.

Agree

Applicant affirms that it will consult with the SC Department of Transportation, electric utilities as well as local water sewer utilities as to any possible efficiencies that can be achieved with a “dig once” approach.

Agree

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4.1 - Additional Information

(max 2000 character limit per item)

Provide a Summary Narrative that describes your project.

This narrative must be unique for each project and discuss this project only. Refrain from discussing rates, structure counts, estimated dates, work that occurred in the past, or the Company's history of providing Broadband service. Limit 750 Characters.

The application includes four areas in Lee County. The first two are to the far west along the Kershaw County line north of Interstate 20. The southern part is bordered by state highways 32 and 264 and the one to the north, which is much larger, is intersected by state highways 21 and 265. The other two areas are adjacent to Bishopville. One portion is north of town along U.S. 15 on the east and S.C 341 to the west. It extends north near Lynches River. The final area is to the west of Bishopville and is bordered by U.S. 15 to the west and S.C. 34 to the north. When it extends south, it does not reach I-20.

Describe how your proposal meets the needs of the community to be served as described in the "Guidelines."

Refrain from discussing rates, structure counts, estimated dates, work that occurred in the past, or the Company's history of providing Broadband service. Limit 500 Characters (including spaces).

FTC and FTC DS will install underground fiber with ring capability that will create a robust, future proof network and provide multiple internet plans to include a 1 Gigabit symmetrical offering. Delivering broadband to these areas will enhance lives through distance learning opportunities, telehealth, work from home, and online applications, just to name a few.

The proposed fiber build will pass 109 K12 students and two "I Need Internet" address points.

If the proposed Project is in an area that is subject to an existing federal or state funding commitment for reliable speeds of 100/20 Mbps, explain why there is an identified need for additional broadband investment that is not met by existing federal or state funding commitments.

Describe any plans or programs you have developed and propose to implement to improve adoption in the community described in this proposal.

Adoption starts with education and FTC began by making presentations to various organizations. A fiber video was also produced for its local TV station and smaller clips were added to its website. The website includes a speed calculator used to estimate the needed bandwidth based on user information. In addition, a search tool was developed that shows the maximum speed available at an address and if it is currently served by fiber or copper. FTC and FTC DS plan to use newsletters, blogs, social media, direct mail and outdoor signage to convey the benefits of broadband and promote the fiber project. Other methods being utilized to reach the public are billboards, email marketing, in-store signs, and, most recently, ads on the back of Dollar General receipts. Live internet displays are also located at each FTC store. At construction sites, sandwich boards with the phrase "FTC Building Fiber Here" are placed to promote the project.

FTC is an active participant in the Affordable Connectivity Program and will continue to promote the Lifeline broadband discount as ACP comes to an end.

Free Wi-Fi has been installed at Chappell Park in Bishopville for use by the public.

Describe your plans or programs you have developed and propose to implement to increase digital literacy, for example, support through online training, for this project?

Computers and equipment were provided free of charge to community centers to teach residents how the internet can improve their quality of life. Fifteen computers, keyboards and mice were given to Shiloh Community Center. A partnership with Central Carolina Technical College is being developed to hold free community one-to-two hour face-to-face internet classes. FTC will commit to a minimum of one class per county for SLFRF 3.0. Some areas of focus will be basic PC skills, internet security and safety and tools for online research in numerous fields. The classes will be promoted via social media, newsletters, company website, newspapers, and targeted direct mail. In addition, FTC, for educational purposes, will pursue the development of a video based on the classes that can be shown at speaking engagements, played on the TV channel and broken into smaller segments for placement on the company's website.

Will the Project deliver broadband in the approved Project Area that meets or exceeds symmetrical download and upload speeds of 100/100 Mbps?

Yes

If no to above, explain and provide support demonstrating why the Project will not deliver such speeds and provide an affidavit that 100/100 Mbps symmetrical download/upload speeds are not practicable.

Explain how the Applicant will consult with the community in the Project Area on the general affordability needs of the target markets.

FTC and FTC DS will consider conducting market studies of the project service area to determine the general affordability of its broadband plans. Focus groups involving residents from those specific areas could also be conducted to receive community feedback. Finally, discussions with city and county officials as well as councils of government would provide information vital to the process.

The FCC has released a wind-down order for the Affordable Connectivity Program. April 2024 will be the final month active ACP customers will receive a full credit of up to \$30 on their internet service. With the end of ACP approaching, FTC will continue to promote the Lifeline broadband discount of \$9.25 for internet service.

Will the Project (1) prioritize investments in fiber-optic infrastructure wherever feasible and focus on projects that deliver a physical broadband connection by prioritizing projects that achieve last mile connections or ensure funded middle mile projects have commitments in place to support new and/or improved last mile service; (2) include affordability options and shall participate in ACP for the life of ACP; and (3) prioritize support for local networks owned, operated, or affiliated with local governments, nonprofits, and cooperatives.

Yes

If no to above, explain.

If awarded, will the Grant funds be used to overbuild another existing broadband provider or to reimburse expenses related to overbuilding another broadband provider?

No

If yes to above, explain.

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5.1 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Farmers Telephone Cooperative, Inc
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Cooperative
Role within proposed project	FTC will provide financial, engineering and any other support necessary for this project.
Primary Contact Name	James L. Brown III
Title	Chief Executive Officer
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	1101 E. Main Street, Kingstree, SC 29556
Phone Number	843-382-2333
Email	brownj@ftc.org

5.2 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	
Role within proposed project	
Primary Contact Name	
Title	
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	
Phone Number	
Email	

5.3 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name
Entity Type
(e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)
Role within proposed project
Primary Contact Name
Title
Mailing Address City, State, Zip
Phone Number
Email

5.4 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name
Entity Type
(e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)
Role within proposed project
Primary Contact Name
Title
Mailing Address City, State, Zip
Phone Number
Email

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6.1 - Attachment Checklist

(Please attach the following items to application)

GIS Shapefiles

Proposed 2020 Census Blocks

Yes

Proposed Fiber/Cable Lines

Yes

Proposed Structures Served by Type

Yes

Proposed Network Junctions

Yes

Signed affidavit certifying grant application is complete and accurate

Yes

Proof of funding related to proposed project or non-cash support, provide associated documentation e.g. yearly financial reports, bank statement, etc.

Yes

Letters of support and strategic partnerships

Yes

Copies of Applicant's Current Fee Structure for all Internet Speed Tiers

Yes

Certificates of Insurance

Yes

Any additional information evidencing community need for project

Yes