

South Carolina 2024 ARPA Grant Program Application SLFRF 3.0



Section 1.1 - Applicant Information

Legal Entity/Organization Name	Talkie Communications, Inc.
Parent Organization	N/A
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Corporation
Primary Contact Name	Andre DeMattia
Title	Co-CEO
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	99 Talbot Blvd, Chestertown, MD 21620
Phone Number	(240) 538-1609
Email	andre.demattia@talkiefiber.com
Secondary Contact Name	Philip J. Macres
Title	Outside Counsel
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	1250 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036
Phone Number	202-289-6956
Email	pmacres@kleinlawpllc.com
FCC Registration Number (FRN):	24272841
Registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) - (Yes/No)	Yes
Unique Entity ID (UEI) Number	EM64UDKGEVL7
Federal Tax ID Number	47-2983573
SC State Vendor Number	7000349210

Section 1.2 - Project Name/Number

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

TLK-02
Talkie-Anderson
2

Section 1.3 - Broadband Service Provider Context

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

2/4/2015 (obtained FRN)
2/27/2024 (BDC submission as of Dec. 31, 2023)
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.
Will all structures be served with the same technology type?
Estimated Miles of Fiber to be Installed
Estimated Percentage Underground
Estimated Percentage Aerial

Fiber to the Premises Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds 100/100 Mbps
Yes
140.98
100.00%
0.00%

Section 1.5 - Project Timeline

Project Start Date
Project Construction Activity Begins
Project Construction Activity Completion

October 1, 2024
October 1, 2024
October 1, 2025

Customer Premises

Initiation of Operations (premise installations begin)

March 1, 2025

Overall Project Completion Date
Will the project be completed within
24 months of official Notice to Proceed (NTP)?

October 1, 2025
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)	100/100
What is the monthly cost of the plan?	\$ 69.99
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)	3 years

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.	Yes
If yes, how many locations will be added?	1
If yes, specify the duration the applicant will offer this service.	4+ years

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. 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. 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		\$ 9,974,054.48
Applicant-Provided Funding		\$ 2,813,194.85
Third-Party Funding Source (if applicable)		\$ -
Total Project Cost		\$ 12,787,249.33
Percentage Funds Requested from SC Broadband Office		78%
Percentage Funds from Applicant Match		22%
Percentage Funds from Third Party Funding Source		0%

**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

Disagree

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.

Select one

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.

Talkie Communications, Inc. ("Talkie") seeks grant funds to deploy a 100 percent fiber-to-the-home/premises ("FTTH/P") network predominantly in "priority areas" of Anderson County, South Carolina. This network will (a) connect 1,660 residential and small business addresses to high-speed Internet; (b) serve 6 anchor institutions; and (c) include 140.98 miles of fiber deployed, plus the electronics and distribution network. Talkie's fiber-optic network will bring reliable, super-fast high-speed Internet services to this community and will provide enhanced digital experiences to the families, businesses, and anchor institutions within this community.

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).**

Talkie's Project will meet the needs of the residences, businesses and anchor institutions within this community, as it will deliver broadband services with symmetrical Gigabit speeds to these areas. Talkie will provide high-speed broadband services in this area ranging from 100 Mbps down/100 Mbps up, 400 Mbps down/400 Mbps up, 1 Gbps down/1 Gbps up, 2.5 Gbps down/2.5 Gbps up, and 10 Gbps down/10 Gbps up services (with latency of 3-5 milliseconds) at extremely affordable rates.

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.

Not Applicable, as the proposed Project is "not" in an area that is subject to an existing federal or state funding commitment for reliable speeds of 100/20 Mbps.

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

Talkie employs an effective direct and grass-roots marketing campaign to inform the community of the construction of its FTTH/P broadband network and spur the adoption of its broadband services. With respect to Talkie's construction of its broadband network, a Talkie representative goes door-to-door to inform the residents and businesses of that community of the upcoming construction and what to expect. Talkie includes a pricing brochure at that time, which also serves as an advertisement of its broadband services at no additional cost.

Talkie's marketing approach has been extremely effective because residents and businesses in the community where Talkie is deploying its FTTH/P network are in unserved areas and in dire need of high-speed broadband services. As a result, they rapidly sign up for Talkie's services when they see Talkie deploying its fiber in their neighborhood and right in front of their homes. At that time, such potential customers, who see the brochure left on their door, typically contact Talkie to subscribe to its high speed FTTH/P broadband services. Talkie also directs customers to its website, Talkiefiber.com, for information regarding its broadband services. Customers may then review the subscriber pricing, products, and bundled packages.

In addition, Talkie engages in the following adoption assistance measures to spur work, telehealth monitoring, education, and economic development in the community: (1) sends direct mail advertisements on a quarterly basis to residents within the zip codes of Talkie's footprint; (2) places ongoing ads in a local newspaper; (3) runs radio ads weekly; (4) advertises through social media outlets; (5) engages and partners with the County's Economic Development and Chamber of Commerce; (6) engages with the local community at open-to-the-public events where community members are able to learn about Talkie's services, ask questions, and sign up for service; and (7) advertises on its website.

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?

Talkie promotes digital literacy by working closely with all of its new broadband subscribers to get them up and running quickly and smoothly. Talkie's customer service representatives provide personalized service to ensure customers are able to access the Internet over Talkie's high-speed broadband network with ease. Talkie does not impose advanced technical support charges, as other companies may charge, when providing this assistance. Talkie also provides online training and tips on Facebook and YouTube as added support for its customers.

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.

N/A

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

Talkie will consult with the community on the affordability of its service offerings. It will make the four (4) low-cost broadband service offerings referenced below available to residential customers, which include speeds that are sufficient for a household with multiple users to simultaneously telework and engage in remote learning. Talkie understands that not everyone needs Gig-speed when accessing the Internet, and as such, will make these 4-tiered residential offerings available in its Project areas. Each of these service offerings will include no service contracts, a \$99 installation fee, and a \$9.99 per month router rental fee. Talkie’s Residential Low-Cost Service Offerings include; (1) Basic (400 Mbps/ 400 Mbps)-\$79.99; (2) Gigabit (1 Gbps/1 Gbps)-\$89.99; (3) Gigabit Plus (2.5 Gbps/2.5 Gbps)-\$149.99; and (4) Blazing Fast (10 Gbps/ 10 Gbps)-\$499.99.

Talkie also plans to offer discounted broadband service of 100 Mbps/ 100 Mbps at \$69.99 to eligible low-income residential customers in the Project area and provide a \$30.00 discount pursuant to the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program (“ACP”), or its successor. In addition, for low-income households that are eligible for the ACP, Talkie will waive the \$99 installation fee.

Moreover, as discussed in this Application, Talkie engages in numerous marketing activities and encourages face-to-face discussions with members of the community within its Project areas. As such, Talkie is able to readily inform and educate consumers of its low-cost option and the federal ACP program. Talkie does not require a contract for any of its low-cost service options. All of Talkie’s subscribers are provided with month-to-month service that they may cancel at any time.

In addition, Talkie does not charge connection costs to its customers with long driveways. In fact, Talkie has run fiber over 2 miles to reach a single customer’s home—at no additional cost to the customer.

<p>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.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
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If no to above, explain.

N/A

<p>If awarded, will the Grant funds be used to overbuild another existing broadband provider or to reimburse expenses related to overbuilding another broadband provider?</p>	<p>No</p>
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If yes to above, explain.

N/A

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5.1 - 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

5.2 - 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
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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

No

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