

**South Carolina 2022 ARPA Grant
Program
Application SFRF 1.0**



Section 1.1 - Applicant Information

Legal Entity/Organization Name	PBT Telecom, Inc.
Parent Organization	Comporium, Inc.
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Corporation
Primary Contact Name	Chris Moody
Title	Senior Regulatory Cost Analyst
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	330 East Black Street Rock Hill, SC 29730
Phone Number	803-326-7255
Email	chris.moody@comporium.com
FCC Registration Number (FRN):	0003717709
Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number	003793015
Registered in the System for Award Management (SAM)	Yes
SAM Number	DEM8FVJK5DC5
SC State Vendor Number	7000289866

Section 1.2 - Project Name/Number

Project Number (Format XXX-XX)	CMP-14
Project Name	Ridge Spring

Section 1.3 - Broadband Service Provider Context

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Form 477 Submission	September 1, 2000
Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Form 477 Submission	March 1, 2022
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
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Section 1.5 - Proposed Broadband Pricing Tiers

Rates less than \$10/month (YES/NO)	Select one
If yes to \$10 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
Rates between \$10 - \$14.99 (YES/NO)	Select one
If yes to \$10 - \$14.99 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
Rates between \$15 - \$19.99 (YES/NO)	Select one
If yes to \$15 - \$19.99 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
Rates between \$20 - \$24.99 (YES/NO)	Select one
If yes to \$20 - \$24.99 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
Rates between \$25 - \$34.99 (YES/NO)	Yes
If yes to \$25 - \$34.99 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	30 Mbps/ 5 Mbps
Do the above speed tiers include unlimited data? (YES/NO)	Yes
Is a Consumer-based Contract Required? (YES/NO)	No
Is the pricing fixed? (YES/NO)	No
What's the duration of the pricing? (In Months)	No

Section 1.6 - Project Timeline
(Maximum Timeline Allotted is 24 months)

Project Start Date	December 30, 2022
Project Construction Activity Begins	June 1, 2023
Project Construction Activity Complete	September 30, 2024
Customer Premises	
<i>Installations Begin</i>	October 1, 2024
<i>Installations End</i>	December 31, 2024
Overall Project Completion Date	December 31, 2024
Will the project be completed within 24 months of official Notice to Proceed (NTP)?	Yes

Section 1.7 - Project Service Area Information

Estimated Miles of Fiber to be Installed	97.7
Estimated Percentage Underground	98%
Estimated Percentage Aerial	2%
Number of Counties to be Impacted	3
County Names	Aiken, Edgefield, Saluda
Total Number of Census Blocks with Concentrations of K-12	35
Total number of Census Blocks in DDA's	0
Total number of Census Blocks NOT in DDA or K-12 Concentration	40
Total Number of unserved 2020 Census Blocks part of Proposed Project	75
Total number of housing units served	583
Total number of businesses served	26
Total number of other Public Facilities e.g. community centers, fire stations served	0
Total Structures Served	609
Average Cost Per Structure Served	\$ 4,250.72
Does the applicant plan to serve every structure in the proposed project service area?	Yes

If no, provide an explanation for why the Project will not Pass all Homes in the proposed project service area

South Carolina 2022 ARPA Grant Program Application SFRF 1.0



Section 2.2 - Funding Details

Description	Comment	Amount
South Carolina ARPA Broadband Grant Program Funds requested		\$ 1,294,345.39
Applicant-Provided Funding		\$ 1,294,345.39
Third-Party Funding Source (if applicable)		\$ -
Total Project Cost		\$ 2,588,690.78
Percentage Funds Requested from SC Broadband Office		50%
Percentage Funds from Applicant Match		50%
Percentage Funds from Third Party Funding Source		0%

South Carolina 2022 ARPA Grant Program Application SFRF 1.0



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.

Agree

The Project will comply with the requirements set forth in ARPA, South Carolina Act No. ____ 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 March 3, 2021, and December 31, 2024 and expended to cover such obligations by December 31, 2026.

Disagree

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

**South Carolina 2022 ARPA Grant Program
Application SFRF 1.0**



4.1 - Additional Information
(max 2000 character limit per item)

Provide a Summary Narrative that describes your project

PBT Telecom, Inc.'s, purpose of this project is to extend broadband services to underserved areas in Saluda County. These rural communities do not have access to sufficient broadband today. This project proposes to deploy Passive-Optical-Network (PON) services over FTTH facilities to provide robust broadband to these underserved areas. PBT Telecom, Inc., has the experience to complete the project on time and on budget as the proposed project is similar in scope and scale to the FTTH networks PBT Telecom, Inc. has been deploying since 2005. Across all PBT Telecom, Inc. affiliates and or subsidiaries, Comporium passes more than 50,000 homes with FTTH and serves more than 35,000 customers with FTTH. The proposed polygons covered in this project will benefit from the skills and experience gained over the last 15 years of FTTH deployments. PBT Telecom, Inc. will serve customers via a PON based FTTH system and offer voice, broadband and video services to the addresses within the polygons. This grant application will provide broadband connectivity of 1Gbps symmetrical speeds provisioned over forward-looking fiber facilities, and the network will be scalable to provide even higher broadband speeds as future needs for broadband increase. The speed of 1Gbps is enough access for each location to stream and connect multiple devices, simultaneously allowing families to be connected to school, work, and telemedicine without any jitter or latency issues. Additionally, businesses will be able to maximize operational efficiencies by completing web-based transactions at much faster speeds and with enough capacity to sustain IP-based calling and networks. Constructing this FTTH network provides a solution to the lack of access to remote resources resolving the current problems the residential and business locations face, while also creating a resource to spur future economic development in the Saluda County area.

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

When identifying possible project areas, Comporium internal mapping and engineering evaluated each unserved priority area census blocks that were published on the South Carolina Eligibility map. This project meets one of the defined ORS criteria of what each project should include; priority unserved census block(s) with 20 or more K-12 students, priority unserved census block(s) with no ISP currently serving any form of Internet to citizens, or priority unserved census block(s) with Difficult Development Area designation. These unserved priority area census blocks fall on the outer-most fringe areas of the PBT Telecom, Inc.'s broadband network. The company seeks to serve 100% of the locations within the priority area census blocks. Once the unserved priority area census blocks were identified, the same mapping team examined the unserved census blocks that encompass each unserved priority area to determine how to reach the most unserved locations within the areas of need published on the eligibility map. Project area specifics: 1) Pupils in Poverty: July 2022, the total enrollment in the Saluda school district was 2,422 students. Out of the total enrollment 1,854 are considered pupils in poverty (76.55%). 2) Elderly population: As of July 2021, 4008 individuals or 21.3% of the county's overall population is over 65 years of age and older. The broadband access under this project would provide access to telehealth so elderly individuals will not have to leave their home when seeking medical assistance, saving them time, money, and reducing health care risks and concerns. 3) Economic impact: Saluda County has experienced many economic challenges in recent years. The current unemployment rate within the county is 3.1%. 264 people are currently depending on unemployment assistance. Aside to those people who are unemployed, 3,275 individuals are living in poverty or 17.4%.

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, to the proposed project area.

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

PBT Telecom, Inc., understands that building a broadband network is critical to the area and further recognizes the need to engage the community increase awareness and adoption of the newly available broadband services. Comporium plans on using various marketing tactics to promote the broadband expansion. These include but are not limited to:

- Press Release:** As soon as an award announcement has been finalized and signed by ORS and the legal team of PBT Telecom, Inc. a press release will be issued to local media outlets in Saluda County. These types of media releases will be used first, to make residents and businesses aware of planned upgrades in underserved areas of the service territory.
- Direct Phone Calls:** PBT Telecom, Inc. will generate a list of residential and business locations within the polygons that have been identified as underserved. Outbound phone calls will be made by the automated IVR (interactive voice response) system to notify customers upgrades are coming to their area.
- Email Marketing and Advertising Campaign:** Current DSL customers of PBT Telecom, Inc. have an email address on file with the company. Comporium Marketing personnel will be able to compose an announcement email and send it directly to email addresses of residences and businesses who will benefit from the fiber expansion.
- Direct Mail Postcards:** PBT Telecom, Inc. will implement a direct mail campaign to target locations within the underserved polygons to make them aware of the upgrades. These postcards will notify current DSL customers that their area has been identified and will be upgraded with newer fiber technologies.
- Community Engagement Events:** PBT-Telecom, Inc. will hold events at various locations in Saluda County. These events will be open to the public, so that customers can come ask questions to staff.

As part of the Project, explain how the Applicant will make efforts to increase digital literacy, for example, support through online training?

Comporium has broadband technical support call center that dedicates staff to answering broadband questions for customers and to help troubleshoot broadband issues. Customers can call into the call center 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to as questions to employees. After each call a customer is invited to complete a survey to let management receive feedback on the customer experience. This is based off of a four-question survey that goes out to the customer after a ticket with broadband technical support is closed. These four questions are based on a 1-5 range, with 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest score. Survey includes the following questions: 1) Please rate the agent's professionalism and courtesy, 2. Please rate the agent's communication skills, 3. Please rate the agent's overall technical knowledge, 4. Please rate your overall satisfaction level with Internet Technical Support. Two additional questions are asked strictly for feedback only: How do you feel we could further improve our Internet Technical Support and Was your issue related to a recent Comporium installation. From January through July of this year customer survey results exceeded over 96% favorability rates for customer satisfaction. Comporium's Broadband Technical support team has proven that it can help new broadband users learn more about the internet and assist in troubleshooting issues. Comporium also has software that reads social media comments on the Comporium Facebook and Twitter pages and relays those comments to broadband technical support so a technician can respond to them. Customers can also access their my-account online and submit their own reports and then a call center representative will call them back. Comporium Media Services understands importance of digital literacy exists and created a series of training videos to help with basic broadband troubleshooting needs.

As part of the Project, identify any areas that the Applicant would be willing to provide public Wi-Fi in a central or community location to improve access for all South Carolinians and for what period of time.

Contingent on cooperation and assistance from local governments as applicable, PBT Telecom, Inc. will provision a wi-fi access point at the Ridge Spring Fire Department. This will be free to the citizens of Saluda County for a period of 24 months.

List documents that demonstrate your organization currently has the necessary funds to complete this project/proposal. Attach documents to this proposal.

A bank letter has been provided with this application package showing that the company has the available funding to complete this project.

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

A combination of existing Right-of-Ways, Easements, SCDOT easements and County easements will be used to complete this project.

Will the Project deliver broadband in the approved Project Service 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 Service Area on the general affordability needs of the target markets.

Comporium determined that low cost broadband options needed to be created to encourage greater broadband adoption, but we also developed the packages to have a lower priced option for communities. Comporium Marketing executed a rate analysis and rate comparison of various low cost, affordable, broadband offerings industry wide. Comporium Marketing created two low cost options for Coax and FTTP. The low cost coax options are Coax Lite 30Mbps x 5Mbps with a price of \$29.94 and Coax Essential 100Mbps x 5Mbps with a price of \$49.94. The low cost fiber options are Fiber Lite 30Mbps x 5 Mbps with a price of \$29.94 and Fiber Essential with a price of 100Mbps x 100 Mbps with a price of \$49.94.

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.	
Is there an identified need in the Project Service Area for additional broadband infrastructure that is not met by existing federal or state funding commitments?	No
If so, explain whether service to households and businesses in the Project Service Area should require a holistic approach that provides service to a wider area in order to make ongoing service of certain households or businesses within the service area economical.	

South Carolina 2022 ARPA Grant Program Application SFRF 1.0



5.1 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Town of Saluda
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental Entity
Role within proposed project	Community Support
Primary Contact Name	Kes Holmes
Title	Chief of Police and Town Administrator
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	101 S. Jefferson St. Saluda, SC 29138
Phone Number	(864) 445-3522
Email	townofsaluda@townofsaluda.com

5.2 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Saluda County Library
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental Entity
Role within proposed project	Community Partnership
Primary Contact Name	Sandra Padget
Title	County Director
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	400 West Highland St Saluda, SC 29138
Phone Number	864-445-4500 #2228
Email	s.padget@saludacounty.sc.gov

5.3 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	The Senate of South Carolina
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental Entity
Role within proposed project	Legislative Support
Primary Contact Name	Nikki G. Setzler
Title	Senator
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	510 Gressette Senate Office Building PO Box 142 Columbia, SC 29202
Phone Number	803-212-6140
Email	

5.4 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Saluda County Council
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental Entity
Role within proposed project	Community Support
Primary Contact Name	James Frank Daniel, Sr.
Title	County Councilman
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	400 West, Saluda, SC 29138
Phone Number	864-445-4500
Email	f.daniel@saludacounty.sc.gov

South Carolina 2022 ARPA Grant Program Application SFRF 1.0



6.1 - Attachment Checklist

(Please attach the following items to application)

GIS Shapefiles

Proposed 2020 Census Blocks

Yes

Proposed Service Areas

Yes

Proposed Fiber/Cable Lines

Yes

Proposed Structures Served by Type

Yes

Proposed Network Junctions

Yes

6.2 Signed affidavit certifying grant application is complete and accurate

Yes

Partners for financial support related to proposed project or non-cash support provide associated documentation.

No

Letters of support evidencing community need and strategic partnerships

Yes

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

Yes

Certificates of Insurance

Yes

Certificates of Bonding, as described in CFR § 200.326 Bonding requirements.

Yes

Any additional information evidencing community need for project

Yes