

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



Section 1.1 - Applicant Information

Legal Entity/Organization Name	Lynches River Communications, Inc.
Parent Organization	Lynches River Electric Cooperative
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Corporation
Primary Contact Name	Joseph Adams
Title	VP Engineering & Operations
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	PO Box 308, Pageland SC 29728
Phone Number	843-675-3239
Email	joseph.adams@lynchesriver.com
FCC Registration Number (FRN):	0029688389
Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number	008941494
Registered in the System for Award Management (SAM)	Yes
SAM Number	118172713/931W6
SC State Vendor Number	7000322883

Section 1.2 - Project Name/Number

Project Number (Format XXX-XX)	LRC-17
Project Name	GF-19-1961

Section 1.3 - Broadband Service Provider Context

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Form 477 Submission	March 8, 2021
Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Form 477 Submission	Revised 6/3/2022
Applicant has experience delivering broadband service via fiber and/or hybrid fiber-coax infrastructure (YES/NO)	Yes

Section 1.4 - Broadband Infrastructure Information

<p>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.</p>	<p>Fiber to the Premises Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds 100/100 Mbps</p>
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Section 1.5 - Proposed Broadband Pricing Tiers

Rates less than \$10/month (YES/NO)	No
If yes to \$10 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
Rates between \$10 - \$14.99 (YES/NO)	No
If yes to \$10-\$14.99 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
Rates between \$15 - \$19.99 (YES/NO)	No
If yes to \$15-\$19.99 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
Rates between \$20 - \$24.99 (YES/NO)	No
If yes to \$20-\$24.99 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
Rates between \$25 - \$34.99 (YES/NO)	No
If yes to \$25-\$34.99 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
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)	Yes
What's the duration of the pricing? (In Months)	Yes

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

Project Start Date	February 1, 2024
Project Construction Activity Begins	February 15, 2024
Project Construction Activity Complete	May 1, 2024
Customer Premises	June 1, 2024
<i>Installations Begin</i>	July 1, 2024
<i>Installations End</i>	August 1, 2024
Overall Project Completion Date	October 1, 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	62
Estimated Percentage Underground	33%
Estimated Percentage Aerial	67%
Number of Counties to be Impacted	1
County Names	Kershaw
Total Number of Census Blocks with Concentrations of K-12	27
Total number of Census Blocks in DDA's	22
Total number of Census Blocks NOT in DDA or K-12 Concentration	10
Total Number of unserved 2020 Census Blocks part of Proposed Project	19
Total number of housing units served	401
Total number of businesses served	164
Total number of other Public Facilities e.g. community centers, fire stations served	2
Total Structures Served	567
Average Cost Per Structure Served	\$ 5,659.00
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

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Section 2.2 - Funding Details

Description	Comment	Amount
South Carolina ARPA Broadband Grant Program Funds requested		\$ 1,925,118.00
Applicant-Provided Funding		\$ 1,283,412.60
Third-Party Funding Source (if applicable)		\$ -
Total Project Cost		\$ 3,208,530.60
Percentage Funds Requested from SC Broadband Office		60%
Percentage Funds from Applicant Match		40%
Percentage Funds from Third Party Funding Source		0%

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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.

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.

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

RiverNet Connect, a subsidiary of Lynchess River Electric Cooperative, is driven to construct and deploy broadband infrastructure in Kershaw County. Our main objective is to provide 62 miles of high-speed fiber optic internet to the project service area; thirty-three percent will be underground fiber and sixty-seven percent aerial fiber. There are 10 census blocks with no ISP, 27 census blocks with high concentration of K-12 students, 22 difficult development areas, and 19 unserved. This priority area includes 401 housing units, 2 public facilities, and 164 businesses. Upon funding approval, the project will begin February 1, 2024 and will be completed by October 1, 2024.

The fiber to premise broadband infrastructure ranges from 100 x 100 Mbps upload and download speeds to 1 gigabyte, with the capabilities to offer higher speeds in the future.

We started investing heavily in equipment that would allow us to offer multi-gigabytes service and up to 10 gigabytes upload and download. Multi-gigabyte service will prepare us for technologies that don't exist yet. While it could be up to five years before the demand will be here, it is coming. The broadband infrastructure that RiverNet Connect is building today will be capable of supporting advanced technologies of the future.

Our team is driven to engage the community in the broadband expansion efforts. A multi-faceted marketing strategy was developed to accommodate the diverse needs of the community members. The plan includes tactics to broaden fiber knowledge, increase connectivity, and provide support by utilizing digital platforms in addition to traditional in-person events and print sources. Our team is committed to addressing affordability as a barrier to broadband expansion efforts to improve equitable access. High-speed internet is an indispensable utility that families and business owners rely on; this rural sector deserves access to reliable broadband.

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

Our efforts to supply fiber optic internet to people in this area can improve their overall quality of life because they will have access to digital resources when needed.

Economy

The recent unemployment rate is 4%. The expansion of fiber in this county will create telework opportunities and attract more businesses and industries to the area which will provide more jobs and boost the local economy.

Education

Approximately, 20% of children in the Kershaw County School District live in poverty. Virtual education did not dissipate and will continue via e-learning days and online coursework. Reliable, internet access is a necessary component of successful online learning and imperative to providing equitable learning experiences.

Health-Wellbeing

Rural broadband access can result in improved health and welfare of residents, particularly the current 14.4% living in poverty. Welfare agencies conduct business online alleviating in-person contact and resolving transportation issues. Many healthcare facilities utilize online scheduling, health record summaries, and billing/payment, and offer virtual healthcare options.

Affordability

We offer a variety of affordable residential packages. Currently, anyone that qualifies for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) receives a \$30 bill credit. Also, a \$10 bill credit from RiverNet is applied to eligible consumers when selecting the 100 Mbps or 300 Mbps packages. The \$99 installation fee is waived with a 1-year service contract.

Residential Fiber Packages:

100 x 100 Mbps = \$0.00 (ACP), Basic 300 x 300 Mbps = \$19.95 (ACP), Basic 300 x 300 Mbps = \$59.95, Pro 1 Gig = \$49.95 (ACP), Pro 1 Gig = \$79.95

Business Fiber Packages: *includes a 20% discount and 3-year contract

Lite 300 x 300 Mbps = \$79.95 or *\$63.96, Pro 600 x 600 Mbps = \$119.95 or *\$95.96, Elite 1 Gig = \$269.95 or *\$215.96

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.

n/a

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

We are working diligently to inform community members of the broadband expansion efforts using a variety of platforms and methods to target various people groups represented in the area. Our strategies ensure that the community is aware of fiber optic availability, residential and business package options and upgrades, events, educational opportunities, and any other announcements that are needed to promote broadband expansion in the rural areas.

Website

The site is used to check availability and register for service. A RiverNet Connect member service representative is notified and makes contact to begin the installation process. If service is not yet available, they will receive an email explaining that they will be notified via email, phone call, and/or text message as soon as service is available at the registered home or business.

Social Media

Strategic Facebook posts and lives are created to increase engagement and promote fiber services.

Phone Calls

Lynches River Electric Co-op members will receive an automated call informing them of the availability of service followed by encouragement to contact RiverNet Connect for service.

Print Resources

Printed material is mailed directly to Lynches River Electric Cooperative members informing them of the fiber optic options that are available or are coming soon. We also initiate a door-to-door campaign to leave printed material on doorknobs to promote fiber service in the area.

In-person Events

We participate in numerous community events throughout the county. A team is available to check availability, register for service, and answer any questions. Informational sessions are held to educate community members on fiber, demonstrate streaming, and answer broadband related questions. Monthly educational sessions will be hosted at the cooperative.

Advertisement Campaigns

Banners, live announcements, swag giveaways, and program advertisements are part of a campaign to inform people attending the football game.

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

We understand the learning curve involved for many people, especially those that have had limited to no access to the internet and lack experience, so a team has been formed to improve the digital literacy of our community. The goals are to create educational videos that explain the basics of broadband to more advanced topics of streaming. All videos will be recorded and posted on RiverNet Connect and Lynches River Electric Cooperative YouTube Channel and promoted via Facebook.

Monthly educational classes will be held during designated times at the office.

In order to pinpoint the needs of the community members, survey data will be collected so specific broadband topics can be addressed during the in-person educational classes as well as the recorded videos. As mentioned previously, RiverNet Connect hosts informational sessions that include explanations and demonstrations to increase digital literacies of the communities being served.

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.

RiverNet Connect understands that many community members are unserved or underserved and the negative impact it has on the quality of life in the current age; therefore, free WiFi is available in the parking lots of Lynches River Electric in Pageland, Bright Light Baptist Church in Heath Springs, Union Baptist Church in Lancaster, and Buffalo Baptist Church in Kershaw, and will be available soon at Bethany Church in Kershaw. These free WiFi spots were established during the pandemic and will continue to be there as there are no plans to remove them. We continue efforts to establish free WiFi in other areas of the county near the eastern parts of Chesterfield County and are waiting on approval from the establishment. If funding is approved, RiverNet Connect will provide free WiFi in the Westville area of Kershaw County.

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

See attached Designation Notice

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

SCDOT Permit and Pole Attachment Agreement

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.

RiverNet Connect, subsidiary of Lynchess River Electric Cooperative, is devoted to serving the needs of the community and less about generating large profits. The fiber optic infrastructure plans presented in this application rely on funding received from this grant to keep costs at a minimum allowing for affordable broadband options. Affordability continues to be a factor affecting the adoption of broadband; therefore, we strive to ensure that low-income options are available. We evaluated the targeted markets and considered ways to keep packages affordable. According to the Broadband Commission/The International Telecommunications Union, affordable broadband is defined as at or below 2% of the average monthly income. The median household income for Kershaw County is \$53,980. Our basic package is \$59.95 and falls below the 2% target. This package does not include an income threshold requirement or the Affordable Connectivity Program deductions. According to this criteria, we offer an affordable package. Our team will continue to evaluate and adjust prices as necessary to ensure that affordable broadband is available to our targeted markets. Another valued consideration was the transparency of the fiber optic costs. It was important that our advertised price packages included the total price whereas our competitors' advertised pricing packages do not include taxes, equipment rental, and other surcharges that will be charged, making it difficult for the consumer to know the exact cost of the broadband service. Our packages leave no unexpected financial surprises. The cost of broadband continues to be a major factor affecting the number of people that choose to have an internet connection. Our intention is to provide affordable, fiber optic internet that is sufficient for multiple users to engage in professional and educational activities simultaneously. Funding through the ARPA grant will expedite the expansion of fiber to low-income consumers in the targeted area.

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.	

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5.1 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Senate of South Carolina
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Government
Role within proposed project	supporter
Primary Contact Name	Penry Gustafson
Title	SC Senator, District 27
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	PO Box 142, Columbia, SC 29202
Phone Number	8032126040
Email	penrygustafson@scsenate.gov

5.2 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	South Carolina House of Representatives
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	government
Role within proposed project	supporter
Primary Contact Name	Cody Mitchell
Title	SC House of Representatives-elect, District 65
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	PO Box 323, Bethune, SC 29009
Phone Number	18034276487
Email	ctmitchellsc@gmail.com

5.3 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Kershaw County Council
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	government
Role within proposed project	supporter
Primary Contact Name	Danny Catoe
Title	Kershaw County Councilman elect, District 5
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	515 Walnut Steet, Camden, SC 29020
Phone Number	8036692941
Email	dcatoe2009@live.com

5.4 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Bethany Baptist Church
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	non-profit
Role within proposed project	Supporter
Primary Contact Name	Craigian Blankenship
Title	Pastor
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	3089 Youngs Park Dr., Westville, SC 29175
Phone Number	8034277493
Email	bcraigian@bellsouth.net

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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.

Yes

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.

No

Any additional information evidencing community need for project

Yes