

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



Section 1.1 - Applicant Information

Legal Entity/Organization Name	WC Fiber, LLC
Parent Organization	West Carolina Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Corporation
Primary Contact Name	Jeff Wilson
Title	CEO
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	PO Box 610, Abbeville, SC 29620
Phone Number	864-446-9251
Email	jeff.wilson@wctel.com
FCC Registration Number (FRN):	0024824443
Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number	118416961
Registered in the System for Award Management (SAM)	YES
SAM Number	X6GHCVSZ3RK3
SC State Vendor Number	7000289683

Section 1.2 - Project Name/Number

Project Number (Format XXX-XX)	WCF-17
Project Name	Warbranch

Section 1.3 - Broadband Service Provider Context

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Form 477 Submission	12/31/2010
Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Form 477 Submission	6/30/2022
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)	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)	Select one
What's the duration of the pricing? (In Months)	Select one

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

Project Start Date	September 1, 2023
Project Construction Activity Begins	October 1, 2023
Project Construction Activity Complete	November 1, 2023
Customer Premises <i>Installations Begin</i>	November 1, 2023
<i>Installations End</i>	December 1, 2023
Overall Project Completion Date	December 1, 2023
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	1.7
Estimated Percentage Underground	95.2
Estimated Percentage Aerial	4.8
Number of Counties to be Impacted	1
County Names	Pickens
Total Number of Census Blocks with Concentrations of K-12	2
Total number of Census Blocks in DDA's	3
Total number of Census Blocks NOT in DDA or K-12 Concentration	0
Total Number of unserved 2020 Census Blocks part of Proposed Project	3
Total number of housing units served	19
Total number of businesses served	0
Total number of other Public Facilities e.g. community centers, fire stations served	0
Total Structures Served	19
Average Cost Per Structure Served	\$ 6,460.94
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		\$ 72,670.43
Applicant-Provided Funding		\$ 4,921.20
Third-Party Funding Source (if applicable)		\$ 45,166.15
Total Project Cost		\$ 122,757.78
Percentage Funds Requested from SC Broadband Office		59%
Percentage Funds from Applicant Match		4%
Percentage Funds from Third Party Funding Source		37%

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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

WCFIBER submits this grant application for a fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) broadband project in the Warbranch Rd community of Pickens County . This project has been identified as an area that is currently underserved with internet download speeds of less than 25 Mbps and upload speeds of less than 3 Mbps. The project will benefit 19 locations by providing access to a 100% fiber-based broadband service to each service location in the proposed project area. The technology utilized for broadband delivery will be the ITU-T G.9807.1 standards-based XGS PON technology, capable of delivering 10 Gbps downstream and 2.5 Gbps upstream.

This project area lacks broadband service that is desperately needed to enhance the quality of life through education, work, and everyday communication. The County has expressed its desire and support for WCFIBER to bring state-of-the-art broadband services to these underserved areas. WCFIBER has already engaged and will continually engage with the local school district to understand the needs within the community. WCFIBER has had one-on-one meetings with the local school district to get a perspective on the dire need. If we receive this grant, WCFIBER will engage the community through public meetings, mailings, and radio to inform people on how to inquire about services and information on the Affordable Connectivity Program.

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

These census blocks have been designated as being unserved, and WCFIBER's proposed project would serve 100% of priority census blocks and at least 80% of unserved census blocks. It is our intent to serve as many units as possible at the lowest possible cost. The service offered would be a total fiber to the home (FTTH) network allowing the fastest speeds available. WCFIBER has been working closely with local school districts and public officials on our efforts to apply for this grant. If awarded WCFIBER will utilize an aggressive marketing campaign to inform people in the proposed service areas that service is available, opportunities to learn about broadband and affordability through programs like the Affordable Connectivity Program. This campaign would include mailers, radio ads and in some cases door to door consultation.

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.

Upcountry Fiber, a partnership between WCFIBER and Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative (BREC), have been building fiber to the premises in rural, unserved areas, for the last 18 months. This partnership has not waited on funding from outside sources to subsidize our build-out. The partnership's belief is that it could not sit back and just wait for funding to come available while rural South Carolinians sat on the wrong side of the digital divide. Since 2021, the partnership has already constructed over 1,000 miles of fiber in upstate South Carolina. Utilizing BREC's existing pole infrastructure and easements, we are hanging ADSS fiber in the power space. This has allowed us to accelerate our deployment and do it more cost effectively by reducing make-ready costs, easement costs and permitting. At this point, BREC has not received any pole attachment requests from any other carriers in this proposed project area. This includes carriers who have won blocks in the RDOF auction. Based on the make-ready process alone, other service providers will not be able to deploy resources as quickly to the proposed project area as Upcountry Fiber. The pandemic has increased attention on the crucial role that broadband service plays in our daily lives. Broadband is now a necessary service just as vital as electricity and water that all citizens of South Carolina need access to now. It is an integral part of education, healthcare access, workforce development, telework, public safety, conducting routine business activities, and many other opportunities. Too many areas still lack access to this vital service. With the funding requested in this application, Upcountry Fiber is committed to building out this proposed project area by the end of 2023. We have the material and manpower available to meet and exceed all the projects that we have applied for. Students and residents in these unserved areas will have access to symmetrical gigabit service now rather than waiting years.

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

WCFIBER has developed computer literacy classes working through the local school district's adult education programs. We have conducted three classes in Greenwood County and have plans to conduct classes in Anderson, Pickens and Oconee Counties. These classes are open to the public, and you do not have to be a customer to attend. The courses cover basic computer skills, streaming, and cyber security. We also use online tools to help businesses navigate social media for marketing purposes. We are looking at utilizing the NorthStar curriculum in the future.

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

WCFIBER will continue to offer computer literacy classes and to further expand classes in other areas. We are currently working on a method to host classes virtually. Recently we have provided classes not only to residential customers but also to business customers on how to further their marketing efforts through social media. We also have recorded instructional videos that customers can view to increase their understanding of video streaming.

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.

Since the pandemic's beginning, we have offered free Wi-Fi and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. We are now discussing offering free Wi-Fi in more locations to serve communities where we offer service. We currently offer free Wi-Fi at twenty-three (23) sites for the public. As our service area grows, more locations will be added.

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

Reports from the independent auditors of West Carolina Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc. and Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative, Inc. detailing procedures followed demonstrate that each company has the necessary resources to complete this project collectively.

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

Some County and SCDOT permits may be required for buried construction outside of the existing Blue Ridge Electric easements.

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.

WCFIBER has had discussions with County Government Officials, School District Superintendents, Council of Governments, and government social services to better understand the broadband affordability needs of existing and prospective service areas. WCFIBER has presented to County Councils, City Councils, and non-profits. We are also working with these organizations to provide information on the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). Some other organizations we have worked with in providing information on our service packages and the Affordable Connectivity Program includes GLEAMNS Human Resources Commission, Local housing authorities, The Department of Social Services, Local food banks, First Steps, and Veteran Offices.

We have utilized radio, printed materials, door hangers, and community events to inform the public of the ACP.

WCFIBER also has had discussions with various entities regarding pricing. Our prices are evaluated annually utilizing adoption rates, cost of service, and competitive pricing.

- **A**doption Rates: Our adoption rates exceed industry standards not only in new markets but also in established markets.
- **C**ost to Provide Service: We are constantly evaluating our cost to provide service. We invest in the latest technology to provide the best service. We are one of the few companies offering a total fiber to the home network.
- **C**ompetitive Pricing: Based on throughput - speed measured in Mbps - we offer the lowest prices in the area. Our service offerings are symmetrical speeds, which most competitors do not provide.

WCFIBER utilizes the following measures to eliminate barriers to service adoption:

- **A**ffordable services offering designed to meet the needs of all users, from basic browsing and email to those that have fully engaged in a digital lifestyle.
- **N**o data caps or speed throttling
- **N**o installation charges
- **N**o contracts
- **N**o deposits
- **N**o credit checks
- **F**irst month free

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?	Yes
If yes to above, explain.	
<p>We intend to overbuild existing service providers offering copper DSL services in portions of the proposed project area which does not meet the minimum 25Mb x 3Mb requirement. Therefore these areas are considered unserved or underserved and are eligible for funding.</p>	
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?	Yes
<p>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.</p>	

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5.1 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Cooperative
Role within proposed project	Partner - Owner of mainline fiber
Primary Contact Name	Jim Lovinggood
Title	President / CEO
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	734 W Main St, Pickens, SC 29671
Phone Number	864-898-2015
Email	jim.lovinggood@blueridge.coop

5.2 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Pickens County
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Government
Role within proposed project	Passed Resolution in Support
Primary Contact Name	Chairman Bowers / Co. Administrator Ken Roper
Title	Chairman / County Administrator
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	222 McDaniel Ave, B-2, Pickens, SC 29671
Phone Number	864-898-5844
Email	kenr@co.pickens.sc.us

5.3 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Appalachian Council of Governments
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental
Role within proposed project	Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Steve Pelissier
Title	Executive Director
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	30 Century Circle, Greenville, SC 29607
Phone Number	864-242-9733
Email	pelissier@scacog.org

5.4 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Pickens School Dist.
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental
Role within proposed project	Provided data on students / Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Danny Merck
Title	Superintendent
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	1401 Main St., Ste. #900, Columbia, SC 29201
Phone Number	864-397-1000
Email	

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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

No

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.

Yes

Any additional information evidencing community need for project

No