

South Carolina 2023 ARPA Grant Program Application CPF 1.0



Section 1.1 - Applicant Information

Legal Entity/Organization Name	Farmers Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
Parent Organization	
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Cooperative
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

Section 1.2 - Project Name/Number

Project Number (Format XXX-XX)	FTC -14
Project Name	Williamsburg
Project Priority (1-5, 1 serving as highest priority for applicant)	1

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	March 1, 2023
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.
 What is your network up-time in South Carolina for the last 12 months? e.g. 99.999%
 What is your network up-time in the county applied for the last 12 months e.g. 99.99%
 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	
Estimated Miles of Fiber to be Installed	102
Estimated Percentage Underground	100.00%
Estimated Percentage Aerial	0.00%

Section 1.5 - Project Timeline
(Maximum Timeline Allotted is 24 months)

Project Start Date
 Project Construction Activity Begins
 Project Construction Activity Completion

July 17, 2023
November 20, 2023
November 21, 2025

Customer Premises
Initiation of Operations (premise installations begin)

July 15, 2024

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

November 21, 2025
Yes

Section 1.6 - ESA Project

Does this project include a Main Street Eligible Service Area?
 (YES/NO)

No

Section 1.7 - 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)
 What is the monthly cost of the plan?
 Does the above speed tier include unlimited data? (YES/NO)
 Is a Consumer-based Contract Required? (YES/NO)
 Is the pricing fixed? (YES/NO)
 If no, what's the duration?

250 Mbps / 250 Mbps
\$69.95 internet only / \$49.95 with voice
Yes
No
Yes

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Section 2.2 - In-kind Match (for Main Street Projects only)

Type	Description	Qty	Rate	Amount
In-Kind Match				
In-Kind Match				
In-Kind Match				
In-Kind Match				
In-Kind Match				
In-Kind Match				
In-Kind Match				
Total				\$ -

Total Project Cost and In-Kind Match	#REF!
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Section 2.3 - Funding Details

Description	Comment	Amount
South Carolina ARPA Broadband Grant Program Funds requested		\$ 4,992,000.00
Applicant-Provided Funding		\$ 1,664,000.00
Third-Party Funding Source (if applicable) - List Source		\$ -
In-Kind Match (for Main Street Projects only)		\$ -
Total Project Cost		\$ 6,656,000.00
Percentage Funds Requested from SC Broadband Office		75.00%
Percentage Funds from Applicant Match		25.00%
Percentage Funds from Third Party Funding Source		0.00%
Percentage Funds from In-Kind Match		0.00%

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 (or its successor) for the life of ACP for the Project Area.

Agree

Applicant will provide at least one low-cost residential option without data usage caps at a minimum speed of 100/20 for a documented 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, including covered telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment provided or produced by entities owned or controlled by the People's Republic of China and telecommunications equipment produced by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities).

Agree

The Applicant, to the extent practicable and consistent with applicable law under the award, will provide a preference for the procurement or use of goods, products, or materials produced in the United States as described in 2 C.F.R. 200.322 and Executive Order 14005 Ensuring the Future is Made in All by All of America's Workers (January 25, 2021).

Agree

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

Agree

The Project includes pre-project Engineering uses or costs

Disagree

If Yes to above, the pre-development Engineering uses or costs will be (1) tied to an eligible broadband project or reasonably expected to lead to such a project; (2) necessary for the efficient and timely performance of eligible Projects; and (3) incurred after March 15, 2021, but prior to execution of the Grant Agreement.

Select one

Applicant will encourage its employees, contractors, and subcontractors to adopt and enforce on-the-job seat belt policies and programs for their employees when operating company-owned, rented or personally owned vehicles pursuant to Executive Order 13043, 62 FR 19217 (April 8, 1997).

Agree

Applicant will encourage its employees, contractors, and subcontractors to adopt and enforce policies that ban text messaging while driving.

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 except item 1)

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.

Williamsburg County, a vital part of the FTC territory, is a highly rural area with more than 30,000 people. The projects included here are in two parts of the county. The first is in the southernmost portion of Williamsburg, near Berkley County. It starts on the west at U.S. 52 near Lane and stretches to the Georgetown County border. The peak of the project extends north to U.S. 521 near Trio. The other part of the project is east of Kingstree and ends at the Georgetown County line. In the area known as Nesmith, it starts near S.C. 512 and extends south to County Road S 45-24. To the west, it ends near the intersection of County Road S 45-594.

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

The goal of Farmers Telephone Cooperative, Inc. has always been to provide services to all of its members. This application is no exception as FTC shares the agency's goal in reaching the people in this area with all-important broadband through a fiber connection.

The 104 census blocks in this grant application have been defined as "Unserved and/or Priority Areas" in Williamsburg County by the South Carolina Broadband Office.

Through this project, FTC will be passing 717 structures, including 634 residential addresses that serve as the home for approximately 99 students. By deploying a fiber connection, FTC will future proof the network, and these households and students will have access to affordable broadband internet plans with multiple qualifying speeds to include a 1 Gigabit symmetrical offering.

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Williamsburg County has a population of 30,484 and a median income of \$35,681, which falls well below the state level of \$54,864. Also, of that total, only 14.3% of have a 4-year degree or greater. With an internet broadband subscription rate of 59.6%, along with these figures, Williamsburg County is generally considered a county of need compared to the rest of South Carolina.

Bringing qualifying broadband to these areas will enhance the lives of those who live there through distance learning, telemedicine, working from home, ecommerce opportunities, job searches and online applications, just to name a few.

Funding through this grant will help FTC build fiber to this priority area, which, otherwise, would be cost prohibitive to construct.

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 your plans or programs you will implement to improve adoption in the community described in this proposal.

COVID-19 brought to light the need for broadband. The need was always there, but when so many had to work from home and students had to take classes online, the urgency for it increased. Understanding that need should help with increased adoption of broadband.

Long before the pandemic, FTC was working on educating the people in its territory. Part of the process was developing a video for FTC's local TV station. The video was split into shorter videos for its website. The company also developed a speed calculator, which, after receiving user information, calculates the needed bandwidth. FTC has also attempted to educate through newsletters, blogs, social media and advertising.

FTC devoted a section on its website to fiber. It details the progress of FTC's ongoing fiber project, including an online tool that shows the maximum speed available at an address.

Further, computers were donated to centers to teach residents, particularly senior citizens, how the internet can improve their quality of life. Digital Lane is a center designed to prepare the community for digital deployment. FTC donated 15 computers, along with the wiring, keyboards, mice and local networking, including a switch and cabling, to equip the facility. Additionally, 1 Gigabit Internet service for one year was donated.

Free Wi-Fi access is also being added at the Kingstree Recreation Center, both on the inside and outside. This facility, located in Williamsburg County, houses the town's baseball and softball fields.

The next step in the adoption process was offering a robust, no data cap internet product, starting with free installation, a free smart router for new service and a free FTC WiFi app to manage the home network. Among the features available through this offering is free premium Wi-Fi, which includes Basic Parental Controls.

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

FTC has made educating the public on internet and broadband and the need for it a priority during the past several years. One discovery made was that people of all socio-economic levels did not understand the increased need for bandwidth, its power and what speed they required for a positive experience. In fact, even professionals, when asked during presentations what speed they had, seldom knew the answer.

To help the public better understand, FTC embarked on a bit of a mission, culminating in an extensive video to be used on its all-local TV station. The same video was broken up into segments for use on its website, ftc.net. This production served to show the growing need for more bandwidth in today's society.

Further, computers were donated to community centers to teach residents, particularly senior citizens, about the internet and how they can use it to improve their quality of life. From ordering their groceries online to meeting with their doctors in video chats to even keeping up with their grandchildren on social media, broadband could change their lives.

Below are some of the initiatives to increase literacy in the project area as well as some that could be added moving forward:

Digital Lane is a center designed to prepare the community for digital deployment. FTC donated 15 computers, along with the wiring, keyboards, mice and local networking, including a switch and cabling, to equip the facility.

Additionally, 1 Gigabit Internet service for one year was donated.

Free Wi-Fi access is also being added at the Kingstree Recreation Center, both on the inside and outside. This facility, located in Williamsburg County, houses the town's baseball and softball fields.

FTC could also entertain a partnership with the local Williamsburg Technical College facility to hold community classes to train nearby residents on the power and utilization of broadband.

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

Application 1 Wi-Fi Question 6

FTC offers and maintains public Wi-Fi to multiple areas in four of the five counties it serves with a plan under way to add the fifth, Williamsburg County. The Kingstree Recreation Department, located at 375 Nelson Boulevard, will have coverage at the recreation facility, both inside and outside. The town's baseball and softball fields along with an outside basketball court are located at the facility.

Below is the complete list of existing FTC public Wi-Fi locations:

Florence County
Business District of Lake City
Main Street

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
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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.

FTC 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.

In addition, as a participant of the Affordable Connectivity Program, FTC will continue to utilize various avenues to educate consumers on the advantages of this valuable initiative.

What network resiliency strategies will be leveraged to ensure facilities remain operational?

FTC, as a standard practice, takes a 3 step approach to network reliability. First and foremost, all facilities are buried to protect from inclement weather. Secondly, the electronic GPON OLT equipment which feeds each serving area, is placed on a fiber optic network ring to ensure a single cut will not bring down the network. Finally, the GPON equipment is equipped with a backup generator and batteries to ensure service even during prolonged power outages.

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

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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

Existing ~~Fiber/Cable Lines~~ 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

Main Street Work Plan

No

Any additional information evidencing community need for project

Yes