

South Carolina 2023 ARPA Grant Program Application CPF 1.0



Section 1.1 - Applicant Information

Legal Entity/Organization Name	FTC Diversified Services, LLC
Parent Organization	Farmers Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Corporation
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-D2
Project Name	Lynches River
Project Priority (1-5, 1 serving as highest priority for applicant)	5

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	
83	Estimated Miles of Fiber to be Installed
95.00%	Estimated Percentage Underground
5.00%	Estimated Percentage Aerial

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	Project Start Date
November 20, 2023	Project Construction Activity Begins
November 21, 2025	Project Construction Activity Completion

Customer Premises
Initiation of Operations (premise installations begin)

July 15, 2024	Customer Premises
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Overall Project Completion Date
 Will the project be completed within
 24 months of official Notice to Proceed (NTP)?

November 21, 2025	Overall Project Completion Date
Yes	Will the project be completed within 24 months of official Notice to Proceed (NTP)?

Section 1.6 - ESA Project

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

No	Does this project include a Main Street Eligible Service Area? (YES/NO)
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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	What Download/Upload speed is offered in your low cost residential plan? (Example 100/20)
\$69.95 internet only / \$49.95 with voice	What is the monthly cost of the plan?
Yes	Does the above speed tier include unlimited data? (YES/NO)
No	Is a Consumer-based Contract Required? (YES/NO)
Yes	Is the pricing fixed? (YES/NO)
	If no, what's the duration?

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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		\$ 4,983,000.00
Applicant-Provided Funding		\$ 1,546,000.00
Third-Party Funding Source (if applicable) - List Source	FTC	\$ 115,000.00
In-Kind Match (for Main Street Projects only)		\$ -
Total Project Cost		\$ 6,644,000.00
Percentage Funds Requested from SC Broadband Office		75.00%
Percentage Funds from Applicant Match		23.27%
Percentage Funds from Third Party Funding Source		1.73%
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.

This project includes parts of four counties: Lee, Williamsburg, Clarendon and Sumter. While this project has parts in four of the five counties within the FTC footprint, two sections in Lee, which will be new areas to FTC DS, make up the majority. The first is the northern most section of Lee near Ashland and highways 13, 14 and 51. It borders Darlington County. The other, west of Lucknow and bordering Kershaw County, is inside the area of highways 282, 336, 35 and 50. In Williamsburg, there are two small sections in the same area south of Kingstree and north of U.S. 521. They are between state highways 377 and 527. There is another project in Clarendon around Summerton. It is primarily west of both the town and U.S. 15.

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 those in the rural parts of its territory. In October 1998, FTC formed FTC Diversified Services, LLC to reach the municipalities in the FTC counties. And this application is another step toward achieving that goal. The 84 census blocks in this grant application have been defined as "Unserved and/or Priority Areas" in Lee, Williamsburg, Clarendon and Sumter counties by the South Carolina Broadband Office. Through this project, FTC and FTC DS fiber will be passing 637 structures, including 472 residential addresses that serve as the home for approximately 137 students. According to the 2020 Census, Lee has a population of 16,531 and a median income of \$32,851 that falls well below the state level of \$54,864. Of that total, only 14.9% have a 4-year degree or greater. Lee has a broadband subscription rate of 60.3%. Williamsburg County, according to census data, 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% have a bachelor's degree or greater. Finally, the internet broadband subscription rate of 59.6%. All of these figures show why both Lee and Williamsburg are considered counties of need compared to the rest of South Carolina. Clarendon County, population 31,024, has a median income of \$43,881 with only 15.8% of its population with a bachelor's degree or greater. Its broadband subscription rate is 75.9%, but this project area is considerably lower. Sumter County, population 104,758, has a median income of \$46,570. Nearly 21% have a 4-year degree or greater and the broadband subscription rate is 77.9%. Like Clarendon's project area, the broadband subscription rate for the Sumter project is considerably lower.

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 bolster adoption rates.

With that in mind, FTC and its subsidiary, FTC Diversified Services, LLC, were working on educating the people in its area long before COVID.

Part of the process was developing a video for FTC's local TV station, which was split into shorter videos for its website. FTC also developed a speed calculator, which, after receiving user information, determines needed bandwidth at an address. FTC has also attempted to educate through newsletters, social media, blogs and advertising.

A section added on the website details the progress of the company's fiber project. It included an online tool that shows the maximum speed available at an address.

The company also donated 15 computers to the Shiloh Community Center, a facility under development, that will be used by residents in both Sumter and Lee counties.

In Clarendon, FTC recently met with the K&H Resource Center, which offers help to senior citizens in the Summerton area. Part of the meeting centered around the donation of computers as well as cultivating a relationship with the University of South Carolina Sumter to take free Apple courses in the school's iLab.

FTC donated 15 computers, along with the wiring, keyboards, mice and local networking, including a switch and cabling, to equip the Digital Lane facility in Williamsburg County. Additionally, 1 Gigabit Internet service for one year was donated. Finally, free Wi-Fi access is also being added at the Kingstree Recreation Center, both on the inside and outside.

Another step in the adoption process is offering a robust, no data cap internet product, starting with free installation, a free smart router for new service, a free FTC WiFi app and free premium Wi-Fi with 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 and FTC Diversified Services, LLC have made educating the public on broadband a priority for the past several years. One discovery made was that people of all socio-economic levels did not understand the need for bandwidth and what speed they required for a positive experience. In fact, even professionals, when asked during presentations, seldom knew what speed they had.

So, FTC and FTC DS embarked on a bit of a mission, culminating in an extensive video to be used on its local TV station. The same video was broken up into segments for use on its website.

Also, the companies are helping make broadband and its use available to the public. The Shiloh Community Center, still being developed, is a facility in the Sumter/Lee area. It will be a meeting space and since FTC and FTC DS donated 15 desktop computers, it will be a location for the training and utilization of broadband. FTC donated 11 desktop computers for use in an established training session at the South Sumter Resource Center, a county-operated facility complete with a branch of the local library.

Conversations with the K&H Resource Center for senior citizens in Clarendon were recently held about donating computers to bolster its computer area. FTC reached out to the University of South Carolina Sumter to help cultivate a relationship with K&H to utilize the school's iLab.

FTC donated 15 computers, along with the wiring, keyboards, mice and local networking, including a switch and cabling, to equip the Digital Lane facility in Williamsburg County. Additionally, 1 Gigabit Internet service for one year was donated. Finally, free Wi-Fi access is also being added at the Kingstree Recreation Center, both on the inside and outside.

FTC and FTC DS could also entertain partnerships with the Central Carolina Technical College campuses in Lee, Clarendon and Sumter counties along with Williamsburg Technical College to hold community classes.

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.

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.

The following is a complete list of existing FTC public Wi-Fi locations:

Florence County
 Business District of Lake City
 Main Street

Sumter - Bobby Richardson Baseball Complex - 416 South Wise Drive
 Central Carolina Technical College
 506 North Guignard Drive
 Business District of Sumter
 Main Street
 Palmetto Tennis Center
 400 Theatre Drive
 University of South Carolina Sumter
 200 Miller Road

Lee County - Chappell Park - 397 Chappell Drive
 Bishopville
 Clarendon County
 John C. Land Landing
 Greenall Road
 Summerton

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 and FTC Diversified Services, LLC 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 and FTC DS 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?	
<p>FTC Diversified Services, 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>	
<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>	Yes
If no to above, explain.	
<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>	No
If yes to above, explain.	

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5.1 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Farmers Telephone Cooperative, Inc
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Cooperative
Role within proposed project	FTC will provide financial, engineering and any other support necessary for this project.
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

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
Phone Number
Email

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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