

South Carolina 2023 ARPA Grant Program Application CPF 1.0



Section 1.1 - Applicant Information

Legal Entity/Organization Name	Sandhill Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
Parent Organization	N/A
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Cooperative
Primary Contact Name	Kirby Wayne
Title	Chief Operating Officer
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	122 S. Main St. Jefferson, SC 29718
Phone Number	843-622-4626
Email	kirby.wayne@mysandhill.net

Section 1.2 - Project Name/Number

Project Number (Format XXX-XX)	SHC-21
Project Name	New Market Rd CPF
Project Priority (1-5, 1 serving as highest priority for applicant)	4

Section 1.3 - Broadband Service Provider Context

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Submission	June 30, 2009
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.

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	
	22.3
	35.00%
	65.00%

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

Project Start Date

Project Construction Activity Begins

Project Construction Activity Completion

	March 1, 2024
	May 6, 2024
	December 31, 2024

Customer Premises

Initiation of Operations (premise installations begin)

Overall Project Completion Date

Will the project be completed within

24 months of official Notice to Proceed (NTP)?

	March 3, 2025
	September 30, 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?

100/20Mbps	
	\$34.95
Yes	
No	
Yes	

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Section 2.1 - Project Construction Costs

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		\$ 692,765.00
Applicant-Provided Funding		\$ 230,922.00
Third-Party Funding Source (if applicable) - List Source	NA	\$ -
In-Kind Match (for Main Street Projects only)	NA	\$ -
Total Project Cost		\$ 923,687.00
Percentage Funds Requested from SC Broadband Office	75%	75.00%
Percentage Funds from Applicant Match	25%	25.00%
Percentage Funds from Third Party Funding Source	0	0.00%
Percentage Funds from In-Kind Match	0	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

Agree

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.

Agree

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.

The SHC-22 CPF project will consist of approximately 22.30 miles of fiber that will provide a broadband service of a minimum of 100/20 Mbps up to 1 Gig symmetrical connectivity to the residents inside of the project area. This project will extend Sandhill's fiber from the border of Chesterfield County into Darlington County along New Market Rd, Lakeview Rd and Old Camden Highway. The scope of this project is to provide fiber services to not only the residents along the main highways mentioned above but also several side roads in this area. This project would enable Sandhill to establish equipment in the area that would feed future projects that could help reduce the digital divide in this rural area.

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

The projects selected for the CPF applications are based on the eligibility map provided by ORS and Sandhill's knowledge of areas that are known to have limited accessibility to high-speed broadband services. Working with both the local school districts and the local community college (Northeastern Tech), we have identified areas where people are trying to further their education at home. We have several people requesting more connectivity not just for educational purposes, but also for people who work remotely from home and have the need for faster and more reliable connections to perform their job duties. Lastly, we are trying to help our elderly community by providing fast reliable connections to the internet where they can take advantage of telehealth programs or where they can be monitored through our security equipment by relatives that might live in other locations that need peace of mind to know their loved ones are safe.

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.

We have made every effort to verify that the census blocks that we are applying to receive State funding are census blocks that are not currently funded via any grants or that no other ISP has fiber covering the entirety of the census blocks. We used a combination of ORS eligibility maps, RDOF awarded maps, maps provided on ISP's website dictating where they offer broadband services that meets the current ORS minimum speed requirement either via fiber or cable, talking with community leaders and local governments as well as spending numerous hours riding the areas ourselves verifying that the areas do not have a fiber network. To our knowledge, we have designed our projects so that there should not be conflicts. Some of the designs will require that we build along a road that has fiber already, but we must go along this road to reach the unserved or partially served census blocks that make up the project that we are applying for grant funding.

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

Currently, we offer customers the opportunity to sign up for Lifeline as well as the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). If the customer qualifies, they can receive a monthly discount off their internet bill. This allows the customer to get monthly internet service for free or for a discounted rate. In addition, we offer free whole home Wi-Fi, two access points, to every internet subscriber, which allows for whole home coverage and the ability to complete work or school or have a telemed visit from any room in the home. We use our website, bi-monthly magazine, bill messages, Facebook and other signage to advertise our services. We hang door tags in areas that are being built and encourage the customer to call and speak with a representative about services and assistance programs if needed. We also visit schools in our communities and hand out flyers educating people on ACP and Lifeline. We are heavily involved in the communities we serve and are involved in all local festivals/events where we distribute information and address any questions from the public.

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

We use our website, Facebook, SmartHub, our online account management system, and have computers set up in each office's lobby for customer use. We assist customers with email set up on mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones to make sure they receive the documentation needed for any type of assistance programs. Printed materials such as posters, bill inserts, bill messages and flyers are used to direct potential customers to not only our company website but those that provide assistance with paying their internet bill.

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.

We currently have 9 Hot Spot locations scattered across Chesterfield & Marlboro Counties for public use since 2020. The Hot Spots were set up in towns as well as in the rural parts of our service area to make internet available to those who may need it most. These Hot Spots are set up for 1GB speeds and were to be used for educational or work from home purposes. We will contact local authorities to determine other public areas or buildings, parks or recreational facilities that we would be able to install Hot Spots. Sandhill also installed free Wi-Fi to the local high schools as well as the recreational ballfields. This again helps reach more people with the ability to connect to 1GB speeds.

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.

Explain how the Applicant will consult with the community in the Project Area on the general affordability needs of the target markets.

Sandhill has a great working relationship with all Chamber of Commerce's in our area as well as the County Council, Economic Development Boards and school districts. We will continue to have a huge presence at community events and on the boards of our local organizations as well as a partner with the school districts where we are able to distribute materials about ACP and Lifeline as well as the free whole home WiFi that we offer along with our internet service.

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

Throughout our plant, our commercial power is backed up by generators at our main office locations with OLT and routing equipment installed. All locations that have electronics installed have battery backup designed to last a minimum of 8 hours. Most are designed to last much longer. Physically, our Central offices in our ILEC area are designed with a fiber ring that connects each of them. In our routers, this is designed so that if a fiber cable were to get cut, all traffic would divert and go out a different path. Basically, self-healing when a single fiber cable is cut so that our equipment stays up and running. We are working towards creating the same type of fiber ring in our CLEC area as well, but this is not yet complete due to the fact that we are still actively building new CLEC areas. We also have 4 paths out to the outside internet world in case a fiber cable is cut outside of our territory. This allows our routers to be able to route our customers out in multiple directions in the event that a particular path is down for some reason. Also, several of our distribution cabinets (FDH Locations), are designed with a back door route into them in case of a fiber cut. In these cases where there are no electronics involved the switchover can't be automatic. However, some of these locations are set up so that we can manually go out and move some fiber jumpers in the field in order to get an FDH back up and working if there is a fiber cut involving the fiber that feeds the FDH. We also try to maintain a good stock of spare equipment to be able to take care of equipment failure situations quickly when something goes down. We have staff on call 24/7 to assist with any type of outage so that we can keep our customers up and working.

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.

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5.1 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Darlington County Council
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental Entity Responsible for adopting the annual budget and setting policies and procedures that govern Darlington County.
Role within proposed project	
Primary Contact Name	David Coker
Title	Representative District #8
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	912A W. Carolina Avenue, Hartsville, SC 29550
Phone Number	843-861-2624
Email	dcoker@darcosc.net

5.2 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Marlboro County Government
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental Entity Responsible for adopting the annual budget and setting policies and procedures that govern Marlboro County.
Role within proposed project	
Primary Contact Name	Doris Sumpter
Title	Interim County Administrator
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	P.O. Box 419 Bennettsville, SC 29512
Phone Number	843-479-5600
Email	dsumpter@marlborocounty.sc.gov

5.3 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Chesterfield County School District
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental Education Entity
Role within proposed project	Providing addresses of students that need ACP assistance for broadband
Primary Contact Name	Dr. Tammy M. Haile
Title	Assistant Superintendent
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	401 West Blvd., Chesterfield, SC 29709
Phone Number	843-623-7370
Email	THaile@chesterfieldschools.org

5.4 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	House of Representatives (South Carolina)
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental Entity
Role within proposed project	Community Support
Primary Contact Name	Richard L. "Richie" Yow
Title	House of Representative for District No. 53
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	178 Mill St., Chesterfield, SC 29709
Phone Number	843-623-5001
Email	RichardYow@schouse.gov

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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

No