



APPLICATION

South Carolina 2021 Rural Broadband Grant Program

Applicant Information

Applicant Name/Organization **Lynches River Electric Cooperative**

Applicant FCC Registration Number (FRN)

Primary Contact Name **Dustin Catoe**

Title **CFO**

Mailing Address **PO Box 308**

Phone Number **843-675-3224**

City, State, Zip **Pageland, SC, 29728**

Email **dustin.catoe@lynchesriver.com**

Broadband Service Provider Experience

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Form 477 Submission

Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Form 477 Submission

Applicant and/or Project Partner has Experience:

- Delivering broadband service via fiber and/or hybrid fiber-coax infrastructure
- Delivering broadband service via fixed wireless infrastructure
- Building and operating broadband networks in rural areas
- Operating broadband networks in low-moderate income areas

Project Area Information

Eligible County Impact

Counties
(list)

Cities/Towns/Municipalities
(list)

Households

Businesses

Health Care Facilities

Community Anchor Institutions

Educational Institutions

Contiguous County Impact

Counties
(list) Lancaster

Cities/Towns/Municipalities
(list)

Households **343**

Businesses

Community Anchor Institutions

Health Care Facilities

Educational Institutions

Broadband Infrastructure Information

Indicate the type(s) of broadband infrastructure technology to be deployed in the project area.

- Fiber to the Premises* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds **300/300 mbps**
- Hybrid fiber-coax (symmetrical upload/download speeds)* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- Hybrid fiber-coax (non-symmetrical upload/download speeds)* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- Fixed wireless* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds

Broadband Pricing Schedules or Tiers

Indicate all rate tiers for wireline projects of at least 100/20 Mbps or fixed wireless at 50/5 Mbps or faster that will be offered to customers in the project area:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates less than \$10/month | <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$20 - \$24.99/month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$10 - \$14.99/month | <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$25 - \$34.99/month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$15 - \$19.99/month | |

Project Timeline

Project Start Date	Waiting on NTP	Customer Premises	
Project Construction Activity Begins	Aug 1st/or NTP date	<i>Installations Begin</i>	December 31,2021
Project Construction Activity Complete	Oct 31, 2022	<i>Installations End</i>	Oct 31, 2022
		Overall Project Completion Date	Oct 31, 2022

Project Cost Information

Total Project Cost	\$1,183,009	Average Cost per Location Served <i>(all locations or structures)</i>	\$3,449
Upfront Cost Requirements	\$100,000		
Cost of Building and/or Extending Infrastructure to Customer Premises	\$1,083,009	Average Cost per Housing Unit	\$3,449
		Average Cost per Business	\$3,449

Project Funding Information

South Carolina Rural Broadband Grant Program Funds requested (\$) **\$591,504**

Applicant-Provided Funding (\$) **\$591,505**

Non-Public Funding

Amount (\$)

Source(s)

Additional Information

- 1) Describe Applicant's and/or project Partner's experience building and/or operating broadband networks.

Please see attached

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

Please see attached

- 3) Describe any plans or programs you have developed to improve adoption in the community described in this proposal. Please include letters of support from key community partners that indicate their awareness of your project.

Please see attached

- 4) Provide documents that demonstrate your organization currently has the necessary funds (50% of total project cost) to complete this project/proposal. List documents here and attach documents to this proposal.

Please see attached

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

Please see attached

Attachments and Exhibits

Please attach the following items to application:

- Map of project area (*PDF and Shapefile formats*)
- Letters of support evidencing community need and strategic partnerships
- Any additional information evidencing community need for project
- Most recent FCC Form 477 filing

Certification and Signature

CERTIFICATION: The Applicant certifies that information included in this application is factual to their knowledge.

Signature:



Print Name of Signatory: **Dustin P Catoe**

Title of Signatory: **CFO**

Date: **May 12, 2021**

All questions and completed applications should be submitted to Broadband@ORS.SC.GOV

Facsimile signatures and email signatures shall be as effective as original signatures to bind any party.



South Carolina
Department of Commerce
Just right for business.



Describe Applicant's and/or project Partner's experience building and/or operating broadband networks.

Over the past two years, Lynches River Electric Cooperative (LREC) has led the way in creating equal access to high-speed, fiber internet in Chesterfield, Lancaster and Kershaw counties. Beginning in the fall of 2019, well before the COVID-19 pandemic reinvigorated the community focus on broadband internet for rural communities, LREC and RiverNet Connect began overseeing the development and execution of engineering plans to serve over 7,000 homes. Since connecting the first RiverNet customer in September of 2020, RiverNet's customers have grown to over 1,350 throughout the LREC service territory with more joining each day. The current network provides the highest quality fiber service over 500 miles of line in the three different counties. The network is maintained by an experienced group of dedicated employees with over 125 combined years of experience in the broadband industry.

Describe how your proposal meets the needs of the community to be served as described in the "Guidelines." Use additional pages if necessary.

LREC, in conjunction with its fiber subsidiary, has made a priority of identifying underserved and unserved areas throughout Chesterfield, Lancaster and Kershaw counties. As a matter of fact, all the areas identified in this application are categorized as 0 percent 25/3 access as indicated on the ORS unserved areas map. We recognize the positive exponential impact that equal access to broadband can have on the community we serve and the implications that access to broadband has on a student's access to quality education. Because of this connection, we are committed to providing our community and each of its citizens with access to world class internet service regardless of where an individual resides.

As we expand our service area, we continue to identify and prioritize our most vulnerable communities throughout the three counties we serve. Each of our currently active zones bring service to rural areas and bring high-speed internet to previously unserved homes. Our team also recognized the inequity in access for families of a lower socioeconomic status and is actively targeting specific communities with high poverty levels in comparison to the state average.

Describe any plans or programs you have developed to improve adoption in the community described in this proposal. Please include letters of support from key community partners that indicate their awareness of your project.

Rome wasn't built in a day and neither are fiber optic networks. At Lynches River Electric Cooperative, we desperately wish we could connect every consumer in need immediately. Though we all recognize this impossibility, our construction crews have been working with unmatched dedication to reach as many consumers as possible, as quickly as possible. In order to subsidize traditional fiber service, we have developed the Community Fiber initiative to accelerate access to internet for a greater number of individuals.

Through our Community Fiber initiative, LREC and RiverNet have partnered with community leaders to identify churches and community centers that serve as gathering places for citizens. RiverNet and LREC have prioritized these locations to receive service and have donated equipment to create free community fiber hotspots. These hotspots have the capability to provide 300 Mbps speeds to at least 50 devices at one time. At this time, there are three active Community Hotspots located in Pageland, Heath Springs and the Buford Community. In addition, we have the equipment on hand to create seven additional hot spot locations as we broaden our service area and identify areas that are most in need of access to internet.

In addition, RiverNet is hosting community information sessions to educate consumers on the various benefits and components of fiber optic internet. These sessions will provide information on virtual tools like Zoom, streaming services, wireless routers, hotspots and more. In addition, employee experts will be on hand to answer questions and troubleshoot common problems consumers are experiencing. We hope this initiative will remove the knowledge barrier many underserved communities face.

Finally, in response to requests from some of our underprivileged and underserved community members, RiverNet has begun offering an installation option that does not require an install fee. Our member service representatives quickly realized that the set-up fee prevented many community members from accessing high-quality internet service. As we continue with this project, our team will remain reactive and responsive to the needs of our community to ensure we create the highest possible adoption level possible, especially in our most vulnerable communities.

4. Provide documents to establish proof that your organization has the necessary funds (50% of total project cost) to complete this project/proposal. List documents here and attach documents to this proposal.

Lynches River Electric has available up to \$5 million in a multiple advance promissory note from CoBank. These funds are more than enough to provide for the 50 percent funding of the total project cost. Please see attached document CoBank Multiple Advance Term Promissory Note.

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

We are not in need of any agreement, permit or other item to complete this project.

Richard L. "Richie" Yow
District No. 53 –*Chesterfield* and
Lancaster Counties
178 Mill Street
Chesterfield, SC 29709
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Columbia, SC 29201

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Committees and Subcommittees:

Labor, Commerce and Industry
Banking and Consumer Affairs
Insurance
Administration and Regulations
House Invitations and Memorial
Resolutions, 2nd V.C.
SC Rural Infrastructure Authority

House of Representatives
State of South Carolina

May 4, 2021

Mr. Brian Broughton, CEO
Lynches River Electric Cooperative
P.O. Box 308
Pageland, S.C. 29728

Dear Brian:

As a member of the S.C. House of Representatives serving parts of Chesterfield and Lancaster counties, I want to commend you, Lynches River Electric Cooperative and RiverNet Connect for the important role you are playing in bringing broadband internet to our communities. Your new subsidiary offers a tremendous boost to our economic development and the local economy. Corporate entities and industries looking for a new home cite broadband internet as a priority on their checklist of needs. Existing small businesses benefit as well. A broadband infrastructure allows them to move their commerce online, almost a necessity in today's economy.

Of course, RiverNet Connect is going to be great for everyone's quality of life. Our neighbors can more easily access telehealth options, like a doctor's "visit" from home. Our students, when necessary, can fully take advantage of the virtual education options that schools and colleges offer. And community hot spots RiverNet Connect has provided in Pageland, Buford, and Heath Springs allow everyone access to these services.

RiverNet Connect's fiber-optic internet is bringing a new standard of rural broadband to Chesterfield, Lancaster and Kershaw counties. If there is anything I can do to assist in this endeavor, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richie Yow". The signature is stylized and includes a circled "53" at the end.

Richard L. Yow
House of Representatives, District 53



May 4, 2021

Mr. Brian Broughton, CEO
Lynches River Electric Cooperative
P.O. Box 308
Pageland, S.C. 29728

Dear Mr. Broughton:

While I have always appreciated the role Lynches River Electric Cooperative has played in providing electricity to Lancaster County, until recently, I never considered how our electric co-op will play such an important part of our county's future. Already, Lynches River has made a difference with RiverNet Connect's community hot spots in Buford, Pageland, and Heath Springs.

Providing broadband to low population densities has always been cost-prohibitive, but with the launch of RiverNet Connect in 2019, broadband internet is becoming a reality in areas ignored by other service providers. While I understand you are still in the early stages of providing fiber to your members, I know your hard work will pay off for all of us.

The dream of the Lancaster County Council is to provide our community members with the same opportunities that are available to our big city counterparts, including high internet speeds that will allow connectivity to our rapidly-changing world. Recent university studies found that every dollar invested in rural broadband returns nearly four times that much to the state's economy.

Addressing the digital divide requires continued commitment and funding by federal and state agencies. As policymakers implement rules to expand rural broadband access, they must consider the diverse nature of rural communities and the various systemic challenges they face.

Thanks for taking the lead in making a difference in Lancaster County.

Sincerely,