



APPLICATION

South Carolina 2021 Rural Broadband Grant Program

Applicant Information

Applicant Name/Organization **Palmetto Telephone Communications, LLC**
Applicant FCC Registration Number (FRN) **0003-7413-86**
Primary Contact Name **Jason J. Dandridge** Title **CEO**
Mailing Address **2471 Jefferies Highway** Phone Number **843-538-9331**
City, State, Zip **Walterboro, SC 29488** Email **jason.dandridge@prtc.us**

Broadband Service Provider Experience

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Form 477 Submission **08/27/2014**

Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Form 477 Submission **01/13/2021**

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) **Bamberg County**

Cities/Towns/Municipalities
(list) **Town of Ehrhardt**

Households **447**

Businesses **23**

Health Care Facilities **1 Fire rescue squad**

Community Anchor Institutions **7 churches & 1 fire department**

Educational Institutions

Contiguous County Impact

Counties
(list)

Cities/Towns/Municipalities
(list)

Households

Businesses

Health Care Facilities

Community Anchor Institutions

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
- Hybrid fiber-coax* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
(*symmetrical upload/download speeds*)
- Hybrid fiber-coax* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
(*non-symmetrical upload/download 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$25 - \$34.99/month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$15 - \$19.99/month | |

Project Timeline

Project Start Date 07/15/2021 (or as soon as ORS approves project)	Customer Premises 479
Project Construction Activity Begins 1/15/2022 (as soon as fiber arrives)	Installations Begin 06/15/2022
Project Construction Activity Complete 10/15/2022	Installations End 10/31/2022
	Overall Project Completion Date 10/31/2022

Project Cost Information

Total Project Cost \$3,128,000	Average Cost per Location \$6,531
Upfront Cost Requirements \$0.00	Served (all locations or structures)
Cost of Building and/or Extending Infrastructure to Customer Premises <small>Included in the "total project cost"</small>	Average Cost per Housing Unit \$6,531
	Average Cost per Business \$6,531

Project Funding Information

South Carolina Rural Broadband Grant Program Funds requested (\$) 1,564,000

Applicant-Provided Funding (\$) 1,564,000

Non-Public Funding

Amount (\$) 1,564,000

Source(s) Company's general funds

Additional Information

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

Palmetto Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc. (PRTC) was founded December 22, 1951. PRTC began by providing voice service to most of Colleton County, SC and a very small part of Bamberg County, SC. PRTC does not provide service to Edisto Island, SC, which is part of Colleton County and did not serve Walterboro, SC until 2005.

PRTC began offering DSL service in the early 2000s over twisted copper. As the need for greater bandwidth increased, PRTC realized the copper infrastructure would not support the bandwidth requirements of the future. In 2008, PRTC built its first Fiber-to-the-Premise area. Today, PRTC has over \$66M of buried or underground fiber optic cable deployed. Over 85% of PRTC's customers are provided service over fiber optic cable. PRTC just recently received approval for the "RUS South Carolina 512-R54 Palmetto loan", which will provide funds to complete the fiber build-out to the 15% of customers currently on copper. PRTC plans to have an 100% fiber network before the end of 2022.

In addition to serving Colleton County, PRTC provides services in eight other counties. PRTC created Palmetto Telephone Communications, LLC in 1998, which allows PRTC to provide services outside of its original "certificated area". PTC is necessary to comply with state and federal regulatory rules. Through PTC, PRTC provides service in Charleston County, Bamberg County, Beaufort County, Jasper County, Hampton County, Allendale County, Barnwell County, and Dorchester County. In Dorchester County, PRTC has overbuilt the Town of St. George. Walterboro, SC and St. George, SC are the largest two towns PRTC serves thru its affiliate PTC. In addition to Walterboro, SC and St. George, SC PRTC fully serves Cottageville, SC; Williams, SC; Smoaks, SC; and Lodge, SC. PRTC provides services in Yemassee, SC; Varnville, SC; Hampton, SC; Brunson, SC; Fairfax, SC; Allendale, SC; Barnwell, SC; Williston, SC; Ehrhardt, SC; Hollywood, SC; Meggett, SC; Ravenel, SC; and Bamberg, SC - primarily to business and government customers.

PRTC provides advanced communications and technology services in all nine counties. PRTC's voice options include POTS, PRI Service, Hosted PBX, SIP trunking, business class voice lines, long-distance service, unified messaging, and unified communications. PRTC serves around 8,276 residential access lines and 2,433 business voice lines.

PRTC provides symmetrical broadband speeds to both its residential and business customers connected to its fiber network. PRTC internet speeds range from 25MB/25MB to 1GB/1GB. PRTC provides metro ethernet services that

range from 2MB to 10GB. Wi-Fi is included with most internet deployments. PRTC serves over 10,000 broadband connections.

PRTC provides digital TV services over the MediaKind Mediaroom platform. PRTC's TV offering includes nearly 400 channels in both standard-definition and high-definition.

PRTC recently began providing security and home automation services. PRTC utilizes Alarm.com technology and QOLSYS equipment to provide security service.

PRTC provides a variety of managed services including help desk services, complete management of customers' IT infrastructure, management of switches, routers, firewalls, and e-mail service. PRTC also provides content filtering, cloud storage and data backup, virtual server hosting, endpoint protection, and Office 365.

PRTC owns and operates a Ribbon Communications C15 softswitch and is currently in the process of converting to a geo-diverse MetaSwitch virtual softswitch. PRTC's core IP network is built on Cisco 9900 ASR series routers with 10GB connectivity which is currently being upgraded to a 100GB backbone. PRTC currently utilizes 4x10GB IP Transit connections. PRTC's FTTP network utilizes Calix E-Series GPON equipment, and each home is equipped with a Calix GigaCenter home gateway that includes managed Wi-Fi. By upgrading the core transport from 10GB to 100GB, PRTC's network is very well equipped to handle thousands of additional broadband, voice, and IPTV subscribers without the need for additional capital investments in the core/transport portion of the network.

Please see the attached map produced by Revolution D, Inc. that illustrates PRTC's robust fiber network.

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

PTC, PRTC's subsidiary will provide minimum broadband speed of 25mb/25mb to the residences and businesses located in Bamberg County, which is one of the fourteen eligible counties in the SC 2021 Rural Broadband Grant Program. PTC will deliver this service with a state-of-the-art Fiber to the Premise network. PTC's network will be able to deliver speeds of 10GB/10GB. PTC will offer standard speeds of 25mb/25mb, 50mb/50mb, 100mb/100mb, 250mb/250mb, 500mb/500mb, and 1gb/1gb options to the inhabitants of proposed area. PRTC will provide fifty percent of the funding required to serve the proposed area in this application. PTC will bring the goal of Universal Service one step closer by building a Fiber to the Premise network to the proposed area. PRTC/PTC has

the expertise and financial resources to complete the project by October 31, 2022.

- 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.

Palmetto Telephone Communications, LLC (PTC) recognizes that broadband is a necessity and wants to make sure that everyone no matter where they live have access to quality broadband service.

PTC will work with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the local school district to advertise broadband to low-income customers and households with students enrolled in grades K-12. In addition to federal and state Lifeline benefits, PTC will offer Lifeline recipients an additional company Lifeline credit to make broadband more affordable and will offer free with free installation.

PTC has been approved by USAC to offer up to \$50 off each qualified customers' monthly broadband invoice through the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program. Under the EBB, customers can qualify if they meet one of the following criteria:

- Receive Medicaid, SNAP, Supplemental Security Income, Federal Housing Assistance, Veteran's, and Survivors Pension Benefit
- Experienced substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020 with a total household income of \$99,000 for single filers or \$199,000 for joint filers
- Received a federal Pell Grant in the current award year.
- Household has a child that received free or reduced lunch including recipients through USDA's Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in the 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 school year.

PTC has a strong relationship with local leaders and will work with them to address barriers that prevent customers from adopting broadband. PTC is committed to educating the community by offering a free computer class to customers who are not familiar with broadband and the apps that are available to them.

Please see attached letters of support.

- 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 the attached memorandum from McNair, McLemore, Middlebrooks & Co., LLC, the company's CPA firm.

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

PTC currently provides service in Bamberg county and therefore has the necessary interconnection agreements to provide voice service in the proposed area. PRTC/PTC has a franchise agreement to provide TV service in the unincorporated areas in Bamberg County. PTC would need a franchise agreement to offer TV service in the Town of Ehrhardt. PTC would need to obtain general construction permits in proposed area if the project is approved.

[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
- 2020-03 SC STATEWIDE - Best Avail Tech Map by Revolution D, Inc.

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Certification and Signature

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

Signature:



Print Name of Signatory: Jason J. Dandridge

Title of Signatory: Chief Executive Officer

Date: May 14, 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.



**Palmetto Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
Palmetto Telephone Communications, LLC
Scoring Rubric**

Project: Town of Ehrhardt

1. Community Need

- a. Project area is in an Area of Need in one of the 14 eligible counties published by the ORS on its website.
- b. Creative solutions for low-income communities (e.g.: Free Wi-Fi in a well-defined area of home and/or businesses)

Palmetto will build a fiber to the premise infrastructure in the Town of Ehrhardt which is in Bamberg County. Palmetto will provide community Wi-Fi at the Community park in Ehrhardt.

2. Availability – Broadband Infrastructure

- a. FTTP symmetrical

Palmetto will offer the following plans on its fiber to the premise infrastructure:

Broadband Plans
25MB/25MB
50MB/50MB
100MB/100MB
250MB/250MB
500MB/500MB
1GB/1GB

3. Adoption/Affordability – Subscriptions for Low-moderate Income Households

Palmetto will offer the following plans and discounts in the project area:

Broadband Plans	Rates	CPE	*Lifeline Credit	*FCC EBB Program Credit	PRTC Pd *Lifeline Credit	Cost to Consumer
25MB/25MB	59.95	5.99	9.25	50.00	6.69	-
50MB/50MB	69.95	5.99	9.25	50.00	9.25	7.44
100MB/100MB	99.95	5.99	9.25	50.00	11.95	34.74
250MB/250MB	129.95	5.99	9.25	50.00	19.95	56.74
500MB/500MB	149.95	5.99	9.25	50.00	24.95	71.74
1GB/1GB	249.95	5.99	9.25	50.00	29.95	166.74

*To qualify for PTC's "Low-moderate Income household" the subscriber must qualify for the Federal Lifeline broadband lifeline credit with the FCC.

*PRTC/PTC will provide an internal credit for customers who qualify for the Federal Lifeline Broadband credit.

*PRTC/PTC will offer the Emergency Broadband Benefit program to its subscribers as long as the FCC offers the program.

4. Adoption/Community assistance – Applicant Strategy and Training Plan

- a. Community Adoption Strategy and Plan
- b. Broadband User Training Plan

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5. Broadband Service Provider Experience

- a. Experience delivering broadband over fiber or HFC for 2 or more years.
- b. Experience building and operating fiber/broadband in rural areas.
- c. Experience operating broadband successfully in low-income areas

PRTC/PTC built its first Fiber-to-the-Premise in 2008.

PRTC/PTC primary service area, Colleton County, is rural.

PRTC/PTC primary service area, Colleton County, is low-income. The Colleton County School District participates in the CEP to provide free meals to students. Please see below URL for the Public Media Release regarding the 2020 – 2021 school year.

https://colleton.k12.sc.us/UserFiles/Servers/Server_21782554/File/News/CEP%20Media%20Release%2020-21.pdf

6. Project Cost

- a. Lowest cost per home passed.
- b. Higher costs per home passed receive lower points.

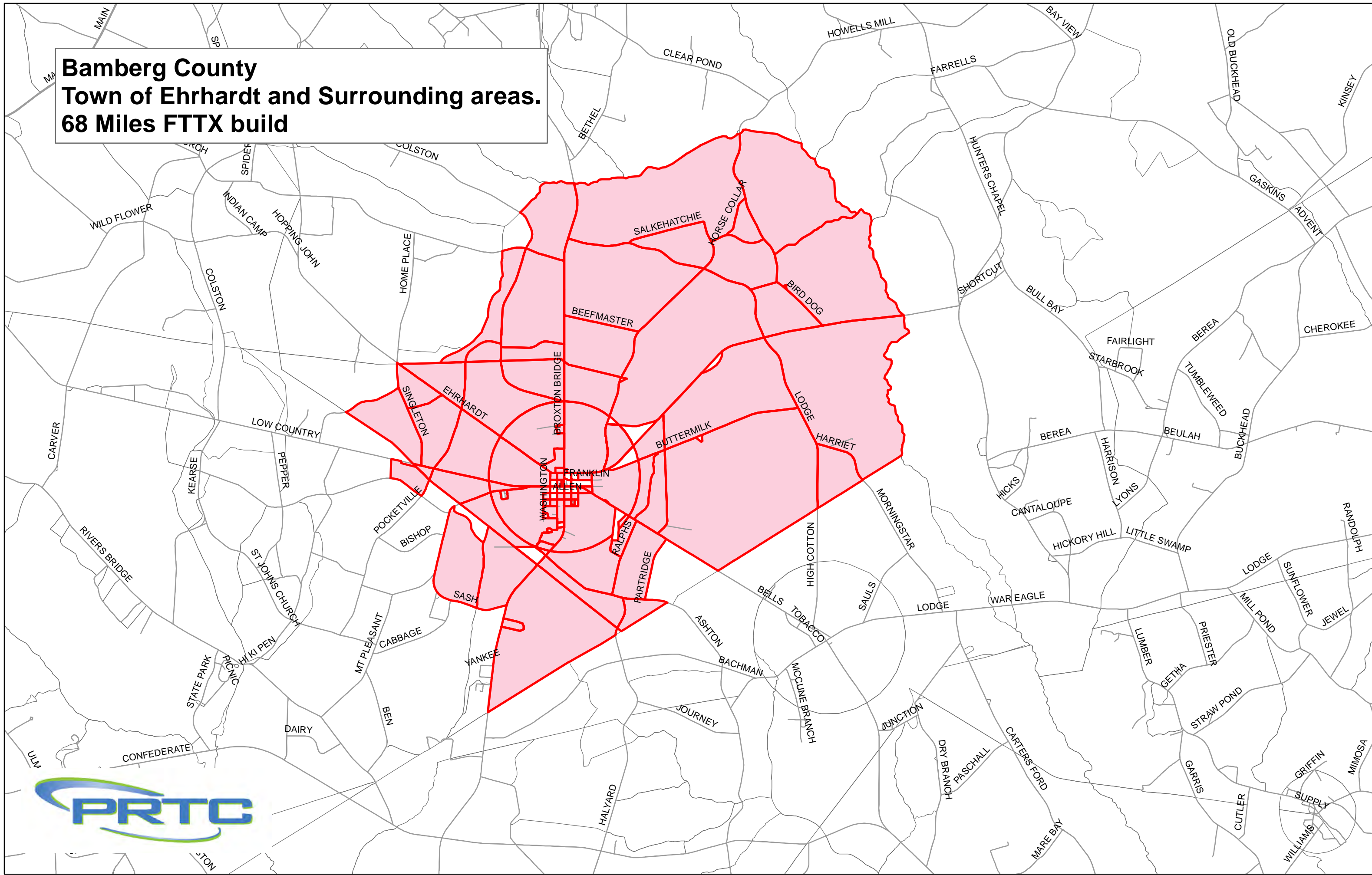
The average cost per premise passed in the Town of Ehrhardt project is \$6,531.

7. Proof of Funding – REQUIRED of all Applicants.

- a. Applicant must provide proof that it has secured the necessary funds to meet its 50% match requirement.

Please see the attached memorandum from McNair, McLemore, Middlebrooks & Co., LLC, the company's CPA firm.

**Bamberg County
Town of Ehrhardt and Surrounding areas.
68 Miles FTTX build**





Town of Ehrhardt

13704 Broxton Bridge Road • PO Box 185
Ehrhardt, South Carolina 29081
Voice • Fax (803) 267-5335

Chartered 1898

William C. Stanley, Mayor

Town Council
Harry Hughes
William J. Edinger
Amy Lee
Bennie Hughes

May 4, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

The need for adequate internet service in Bamberg County is at an all-time high. The recent pandemic has revealed how underserved the rural SC towns, cities, and counties are. I am writing to express my support of PRTC bringing fiber-to-the-premises network to the Town of Ehrhardt.

Sincerely,



William C. Stanley

Mayor, Town of Ehrhardt



Town of Ehrhardt

13704 Broxton Bridge Road • PO Box 185
Ehrhardt, South Carolina 29081
Voice • Fax (803) 267-5335

Chartered 1898

William C. Stanley, Mayor

Town Council
Harry Hughes
William J. Edinger
Amy Lee
Bennie Hughes

May 4, 2021

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Sincerely,

William Edinger

Mayor Pro Temp, Town of Ehrhardt

Bennie Hughes, Town Council Member

Harry Hughes, Town Council Member



Town of Ehrhardt

13704 Broxton Bridge Road • PO Box 185
Ehrhardt, South Carolina 29081
Voice • Fax (803) 267-5335

Chartered 1898

William C. Stanley, Mayor

Town Council
Harry Hughes
William J. Edinger
Amy Lee
Bennie Hughes

May 4, 2021

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Sincerely,

Chad E. Dilling

Police Chief



Town of Ehrhardt

13704 Broxton Bridge Road • PO Box 185
Ehrhardt, South Carolina 29081
Voice • Fax (803) 267-5335

Chartered 1898

William C. Stanley, Mayor

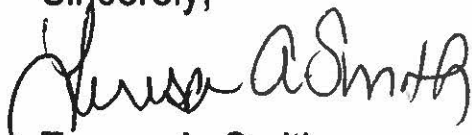
Town Council
Harry Hughes
William J. Edinger
Amy Lee
Bennie Hughes

May 4, 2021

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Sincerely,



Teresa A. Smith

Town Clerk, Town of Ehrhardt