



APPLICATION

South Carolina 2021 Rural Broadband Grant Program

Applicant Information

Applicant Name/Organization TruVista Communications, INC f/k/a The Chester Telephone Company

Applicant FCC Registration Number (FRN) 0003707775

Primary Contact Name Eric Ramey

Title VP- Regulatory & Administration

Mailing Address 112 York Street

Phone Number 803-581-9152

City, State, Zip Chester, SC 29706

Email eric.ramey@truvista.biz

Broadband Service Provider Experience

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Form 477 Submission 12/9/2014

Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Form 477 Submission 03/15/2021

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)

Cities/Towns/Municipalities
(list)

Households

Businesses

Health Care Facilities

Community Anchor Institutions

Educational Institutions

Contiguous County Impact

Counties

(list) Fairfield

(Project: Chester 11)

Cities/Towns/Municipalities

(list) Blackstock

Households 125

Businesses 4

Health Care Facilities 0

Community Anchor Institutions 3

Educational Institutions 0

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 1 Gbps
- 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 type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$25 - \$34.99/month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$15 - \$19.99/month | |

Project Timeline

Project Start Date 07/15/21	Customer Premises
Project Construction Activity Begins 04/04/22	<i>Installations Begin</i> 07/08/22
Project Construction Activity Complete 07/08/22	<i>Installations End</i> 10/31/22
	Overall Project Completion Date 10/31/22

Project Cost Information

Total Project Cost	\$1,255,372.00	Average Cost per Location Served (all locations or structures)	\$9,510.39
Upfront Cost Requirements			
Cost of Building and/or Extending Infrastructure to Customer Premises	\$750.00	Average Cost per Housing Unit	\$9,510.39
		Average Cost per Business	\$9,510.39

Project Funding Information

South Carolina Rural Broadband Grant Program Funds requested (\$) 627,686.00

Applicant-Provided Funding (\$) 627,686.00

Non-Public Funding

Amount (\$)

Source(s)

Additional Information

- 1) Describe Applicant's and/or project Partner's experience building and/or operating broadband networks.
"2021 South Carolina Broadband Experience" - attached

- 2) Describe how your proposal meets the needs of the community to be served as described in the "Guidelines."
"Meeting the Needs" - 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.
"Plans or Programs" - 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.
Matching Funds Affidavit - attached

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

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: *Eric Ramey*

Print Name of Signatory: Eric Ramey

Title of Signatory: VP- Regulatory & Administration

Date: 05/14/2021

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.



South Carolina
Department of Commerce
Just right for business.



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

TruVista Communications (TruVista) has been in business since 1897 and has a strong legacy of providing telecommunications service in the rural markets where we operate. Our Broadband experience begins with the offering of DSL over our copper network in 2000. The initial offering was 256K to the end-user, and we currently offer a maximum of 100M over our ADSL network in our copper footprint with up to 750M in our Coax footprint. Inside our Fiber footprint, we can address almost any customer requirements. The highest speed currently offered to our residential customers in our Fiber markets is 1G with 10G available in some markets in Q4. Higher speeds can certainly be accommodated if requested, and speeds to our commercial customers can go as high as 10G currently (if requested). Customer requirements are constantly being evaluated to determine if higher speeds are needed. When the market demands require, we are willing and capable of upgrading our core network to accommodate.

In an effort to become a “broader” provider of Internet Services, TruVista executed a strategy to obtain CATV/COAX facilities in our existing footprint or complementary territories as a part of our growth strategy. The first acquisition came in **2002** with a Cable purchase (from Comporium) in the Winnsboro, SC market. This initial CATV purchase required TruVista to build out a fully functioning Head End in order to provide video/internet services over the COAX facilities. TruVista personnel were closely and deeply involved with the buildout, which provided a tremendous opportunity for in **2006**, TruVista purchased the cable franchise located in Chester, SC from Charter Communications. This acquisition allowed TruVista to provide higher internet speeds to customers in our ILEC footprint. **2006** also saw TruVista purchase from Charter Communications their CATV franchise in Camden, SC.

This acquisition was followed closely by purchases from Comporium in Lewisville, SC, and from Cablevision in the Great Falls, SC marketplaces. These acquisitions occurred in **2007**.

2012 saw the remaining acquisitions (to date). Both of these occurred in Georgia and were purchased from Northland Communications and Gumlog Cable. Combine these purchases and the growth strategies associated; the upgrades and growth strategy in our copper footprint and finally our edging out strategy with FTTX, we have seen tremendous growth in our Broadband Subscribers. In the last 5 years (YE 2015 –YE 2020), we have seen subscriber growth rate grow 30+% in total. Our entire technician workforce is Broadband trained. Our NOC is Broadband trained, and education continues as the technology evolves.

TruVista continues to invest millions of dollars annually in capital primarily to ensure our ability to build, successfully deliver, upgrade and successfully maintain our Broadband Subscriber Base. Since 2012, TruVista's Capital Budget directly associated with the Network has grown 300+%. The primary driver of the increase and easily the majority of the investment is directly related to increasing and retaining Broadband Subscribers with FTTX technology utilized in all new buildouts.

Through the Vice President level, the TruVista leadership team has a vast and extensive knowledge of the communications industry. With a combined 180+ years of industry experience, this team manages significant projects on a regular basis. When Brian Singleton took over the leadership role as President and CEO 17 years ago, he began to assemble his key leadership team from talent he has known within the industry. Brian, currently CEO, has recently recruited a new EVP/CFO, Tim Geyer, who has 23 years of experience in the telecom industry and maintains his CPA certification. Tim's experience in the financial arena will be invaluable in maintaining the integrity of the finances. Brian also recruited Carla French, who is now serving as President/COO. Brian knows Carla from previously working with her at BellSouth. With her tenure at TruVista included, Carla brings 35 years of telecom experience to the team

Beginning with 2015's Capital Budget thru 2020 and budgeted for 2021, there will be \$100,000,000+ spent on network projects, of which 75-80% can be associated with Broadband. This funding is private to TruVista and does not include grants won over the last couple of years. The projects range from small fiber buildouts to major projects. In 2021 TruVista is planning to pass 6000 premises with FTTH. We continue a Beautification Fiber Project partnering with the city in the historical Camden, SC (Kershaw Co) area, and to date, we have invested \$5M+ in Capex. TruVista is currently constructing a \$12.14M USDA ReConnect Project in Kershaw County. We expect the ReConnect project to complete near YE 2021, over 3 years ahead of schedule. TruVista has also taken on a private project budgeted to be over \$5M to provide FTTH services to an underserved section of lower Richland County, passing over 2,000 premises. TruVista continuously evaluates opportunities to provide FTTH services in underserved geographies within South Carolina.



112 York Street
Chester, SC 29706



800.768.1212



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

TruVista is committed to providing high quality, reliable and fast broadband connections to all households within reach of our service areas. When the opportunity to apply for funding through the SC Broadband Grant Program to help provide broadband services to unserved/underserved areas became available, TruVista recognized that it is uniquely positioned to build to the areas outlined in this application. TruVista will provide Fiber to the Premise (FTTP) based internet product to approximately 132 homes with symmetrical speeds of up to 1 Gbps.

Provided we are awarded funds; these projects will provide approximately 132 underserved households in this application area with broadband internet access that will facilitate distance-learning opportunities, telehealth applications, and enhanced Work-From-Home options. With 150+ employees in the South Carolina communities we serve, we are keenly aware of the needs of the communities. These folks are neighbors and friends of existing customers and potential customers. We proactively meet with community leaders to keep them informed of our Fiber deployment efforts. For example, we meet with City, County and Education leaders of Kershaw County to keep them informed of the USDA deployment. We also meet with interested community leaders around FTTX efforts. For example, we have recently met with the Santee-Lynches COG to brainstorm on FTTX efforts within their geography.

TruVista recognizes that speed to market is paramount to underserved communities and we are committed to deliver High Speed Broadband as quickly as possible. One example is our USDA ReConnect Round 1 award allowed for 5 years to complete the project, but our commitment (based on the USDA's ability to respond to "checkpoints") is to have the project completed in less than 2 years. TruVista will always strive to exceed expectations on delivery of service.

TruVista will continue to be active partners with communities and community leaders to work together to identify both needs and potential solutions.


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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.

TruVista is committed to bringing reliable broadband and Wi-Fi services to our communities. We have previously been awarded a USDA ReConnect grant to bring high-speed internet to unserved and underserved areas of Kershaw County, SC. TruVista recently worked with the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff to craft a broadband offer for low-income Students' in our service footprint who do not currently have an internet connection, anticipating a significant amount of classroom activity taking place in a virtual environment. This offer was intended to assist these lower-income households in ensuring their school-aged children have the resources to continue their educations successfully. At the time of school closings in March of 2020, TruVista committed to providing **free**, up to 25Mb internet service to homes with school-aged children but no Broadband connection. TruVista connected 1600+ student households, without charge, through the end of the school year. Internally the free internet offer was named Educate 2020, and it was offered across the TruVista footprint in South Carolina and Georgia. The Educate 2020 Program resulted in over 1,600 HSD connections. TruVista also participated in the 2020 Fall program to provide FTTH to student households and exercised a tremendous amount of energy to connect student households that were approved by the individual school districts/State of SC. TruVista has also participated in training community leaders in Chester and Fairfield Counties on the Broadband efforts and benefits of deployment. Also, we provided technical overviews to help these leaders better understand the technology itself and why Fiber was the desired technology.

TruVista was also recently approved as a participant in the Emergency Broadband Program. This program will help in the acceleration of Broadband adoption in unserved and underserved communities. TruVista has set up "registration" kiosks within all our retail facilities providing access to our customers or potential customers to apply for the EBB Program. We have also trained all of our customer facing reps on the program. Although we are not allowed to apply for the customer, we are attempting to make it easier for these potential customers to complete full applications.



Nanette Edwards
State of South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS)
1401 Main Street, Suite 900
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Ms. Edwards,
On behalf of the Chester County Chamber of Commerce, I offer my support and that of our membership, for the TruVista Communication (TruVista) grant application for the SC Rural Broadband Grant Program. TruVista is the preferred Internet Service Provider in our County and they are also a go-to community partner, having been a chamber member almost 40 years. They have provided consistent communications/broadband service to our residents since 1897. Many TruVista staff members call our county home and take pride that their hard work improves the quality of life for their family, friends, and neighbors.

One of the main goals of our organization is to help make Chester County one of the most vibrant and connected communities in South Carolina. At this present time, many parts of our county are extremely rural and in need of high-speed broadband service. This expansion of service will positively impact K-12 students, improve healthcare (especially with MUSC Chester's telehealth options), drive economic development, increase property values, and decrease emergency response time. This grant has the potential to completely transform Chester County and positively impact our residents and businesses for many years to come. We trust TruVista's ability to be good stewards of the investment and execute the mission on-time and on-budget.

Please contact me if I can provide any further information in support of this application.; our office number is 803-581-4142. Thank you!

Sincerely,


Brooke Clinton, President

Chester County Chamber of Commerce



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF CHESTER COUNTY
509 DISTRICT OFFICE DRIVE
CHESTER, SOUTH CAROLINA 29706

Nanette Edwards
State of South Carolina
Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS)
1401 Main Street, Suite 900
Columbia, SC 29201
nedwards@ors.gov

To Nanette Edwards,

On behalf of Chester County School District, I write today to express my personal support and that of my entire team, to TruVista Communication (TruVista) grant application for the SC Grant. TruVista is the preferred Internet Service Provider in our County and they are also a go-to community partner. They have provided outstanding communications/broadband service to our residents since 1897.

Chester County School District's vision is to help make the Chester County one of the most vibrant and connected communities in SC. At this present time, many parts of our county are extremely rural and are in need of high-speed broadband service. This expansion of service will positively impact K-12 students, improve resident healthcare, and drive economic development, increase property values and decrease emergency response time.

TruVista is a vital trusted partner in our mission to deploy high-speed broadband. TruVista staff members live and work in our community. We think the ORS would be wise to fund this application

This grant has the potential to completely transform Chester County and positively impact our residents and businesses for many years to come. We have complete faith in TruVista ability to be good stewards of the investment and execute the mission on-time and on-budget.

Please contact me if I can provide any further information in support of this application.

Sincerely,

Dr. Will Pickens

Dr. Will Pickens
Chief Administrative Officer