



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) 0001887116

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) Kershaw

(Project: Kershaw 22)

Cities/Towns/Municipalities

(list) Camden

Households 11

Businesses 0

Health Care Facilities 0

Community Anchor Institutions 0

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 09/12/22	<i>Installations Begin</i> 09/30/22
Project Construction Activity Complete 09/30/22	<i>Installations End</i> 10/31/22
	Overall Project Completion Date 10/31/22

Project Cost Information

Total Project Cost	\$98,531.00	Average Cost per Location Served	
Upfront Cost Requirements		<i>(all locations or structures)</i>	\$8,957.36
Cost of Building and/or Extending Infrastructure to Customer Premises	\$750.00	Average Cost per Housing Unit	\$8,957.36
		Average Cost per Business	\$8,957.36

Project Funding Information

South Carolina Rural Broadband Grant Program Funds requested (\$) 49,265.50

Applicant-Provided Funding (\$) 49,265.50

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.



APPLICATION

South Carolina 2021 Rural Broadband Grant Program

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


TruVista.net

APPLICATION

South Carolina 2021 Rural Broadband Grant Program

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 11 homes with symmetrical speeds of up to 1 Gbps.

Provided we are awarded funds; these projects will provide approximately 11 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.


112 York Street
Chester, SC 29706


800.768.1212


TruVista.net

APPLICATION

South Carolina 2021 Rural Broadband Grant Program

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

To Nanette Edwards,

My wife and I would like to express our personal support of the TruVista Communication grant application for the SC Rural Broadband Grant.

Having lived in the Boykin area of rural Kershaw County for almost 50 years, we are familiar with the positive impact TruVista has had in the more urban areas of our county. As senior citizens, we would like to experience the peace of mind that the reliable high speed broadband services oof TruVista can provide.

Sincerely,

Jamie Guy
1237 Guy Road
Rembert, SC 29128
803 432-5312

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

Dear Nanette,

Thank you for your leadership in the SC Rural Broadband Initiative.

My wife, 4 daughters and I have a home in the Highway 261/Redbank Rd area of Kershaw County - we love it here.

We are surrounded by friendly, hardworking neighbors in this wonderful rural SC farming community but we are in many ways cut off from the world.

Over the last decade we have struggled to get a TV signal - a reliable internet connection is almost always out of the question - AT&T has essentially abandoned us.

Never has this been more personally painful than these last 15 months with our children home from school, and we home from our jobs, during the COVID-19 crisis.

We have limped along using rented "hot spots" and cell phone signals but all those solutions are just a puff of wind or a sway of the trees away from blank screens for my children's classes and my and my wife's jobs. Pretty much anytime we have anything important, we drive into town - sometimes to Columbia - to make sure connections to class or work are not at risk.

On behalf of our family, **I write today to express my personal support for the TruVista Communication (TruVista) grant application for the SC Rural Broadband Grant.** TruVista is the preferred Internet Service Provider in our County. As a member of the rural Kershaw community, a father of 4 and based on my work as a technology consultant I know how important infrastructure investments like Broadband Service are to the development of our community and to the education of our families. As I look at AT&T's abandonment of rural customers and the significant over-promise / under-delivery of HughesNet Satellite Service, **I really appreciate the proactive approach Tru-Vista has brought to our rural community's need for Broadband Service.** When we consider all the critical needs this will address - Education, Commerce, Healthcare, Community Safety and Emergency Response and Family Connections - it's an investment we must find a way to make!

Please consider supporting Tru-Vista's application for the Rural Broadband Grant.

Please contact me if I may be of help or service in any way.

Best Regards,

Lawrence M. Taylor
437 Ice House Hill Rd
Rembert, SC 29128

--

Lawrence Muir Taylor
PwC | Client Executive
Columbia, SC | +1 (803) 413 4693
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
pwc.com

215 Stockton Road
Rembert, SC 29128
lgcoplin@yahoo.com or lcoplin@relias.com
Mobile: 214-415-4387

May 12, 2021

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

Dear Ms. Edwards,

As a resident of Rembert, SC, I write today to express my personal support and that of my family to the TruVista Communication (TruVista) grant application for the SC Rural Broadband Grant. TruVista is the preferred internet service provider in Kershaw County and they are also active in bettering our community.

My family and I live in an extremely rural area of Kershaw county, where internet service is limited to unreliable DSL service that the current provider no longer supports. I work full-time from home in Rembert as a remote employee for a medical education company. I struggle daily to maintain connection for Webex meetings and it's nearly impossible to transfer files across the VPN. In addition to improving my ability to work remotely, this expansion of service would allow our middle school son to participate from our home in eLearning that our district provides.

We desperately need high-speed broadband service in our area. This enhanced broadband service will positively affect my family as well as all K-12 students, improve resident healthcare, drive economic development, increase property values, and decrease emergency response time.

We have complete faith in TruVista ability to be good stewards of the investment and execute the mission on-time and on-budget. We think the ORS would be wise to fund this application.

This grant has the potential to transform many cities in Kershaw County and positively impact our residents and businesses for many years to come.

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

Best regards,



Leslie Coplin