



**South Carolina 2024 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)  
Coronavirus State Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) 3.0 Broadband Grant  
Program  
Application Guidelines**

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**Purpose**

The 2024 Coronavirus State Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (“SLFRF”) Grant Program seeks to expand broadband infrastructure to households, business, and communities in the State. This grant program will directly support South Carolina Act 244 (July 25, 2022), which authorizes the Office of Broadband Coordinator, an office within the Office of Regulatory Staff (“ORS”) that is more commonly known as the SC Broadband Office (“SCBBO”), to expand broadband infrastructure to households, businesses, and communities that are unserved or underserved by broadband services.

The South Carolina General Assembly has allocated \$214,234,345 of American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) funds, less administrative costs, to provide financial assistance to install and deliver broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas throughout the State. Depending on the number of qualified applications, the SCBBO intends to award remaining ARPA SLFRF funds as part of this grant program which is estimated to be less than \$40 million. Any other remaining funds from prior SCBBO grant rounds may also be leveraged inside of this grant program.

The ARPA SLFRF 3.0 grant program shall prioritize 1) unserved areas with no current Internet Service Provider (“ISP”), 2) Difficult Development Areas as identified by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”), and 3) census blocks that have a high concentration of unserved public K-12 student households as documented by the South Carolina Department of Education. All projects will be awarded based on V3.2 of the FCC BSL fabric.

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## Designated Contact Person

### **Jim Stritzinger**

*Director*

*Office of Broadband Coordinator*

South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff

[Broadband@ORS.SC.GOV](mailto:Broadband@ORS.SC.GOV)

### **Michael Herzberger**

*Deputy Director*

*Office of Broadband Coordinator*

South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff

[Broadband@ORS.SC.GOV](mailto:Broadband@ORS.SC.GOV)

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## Questions

Questions must be submitted using the SCBBO SLFRF 3.0 comment form available at: <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/4001b34e7b17446cb7f81c98ee7253e8> prior to the close of the Application Period. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document will be published with answers to questions. Individual responses will not be provided. An FAQ will be published on the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (the “ORS”) website at <https://ors.sc.gov/broadband/office/investments/state/arpaslfrf3.0>

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## Schedule of Events

Event	Date
<b>Funded Project Register (FPR) Submission Period Opens</b>	1/12/2024
<b>ARPA 3.0 Application Period Opens</b> <i>FPR Submission Period Closes</i>	2/12/2024
<b>ARPA 3.0 Application Period Closes</b>	3/25/2024
<b>Submitted Applications Posted on the ORS Website</b> <i>Comment Period Opens</i>	3/28/2024
<b>Comment Period Closes</b>	4/11/2024

<b>Internal Application Review / Selection</b>	April 2024
<b>Application Curing</b>	May 2024
<b>Notices to Proceed Issued</b>	June 2024
<b>3rd Quarter 2024 Financial/Construction Progress Report and Quarterly Expenses Due</b>	10/25/2024
<b>4th Quarter 2024 Financial/Construction Progress Report and Quarterly Expenses Due</b>	1/24/2025
<b>1st Quarter 2025 Financial/Construction Progress Report and Quarterly Expenses Due</b>	4/25/2025
<b>2nd Quarter 2025 Financial/Construction Progress Report and Quarterly Expenses Due</b>	7/25/2025
<b>3rd Quarter 2025 Financial/Construction Progress Report and Quarterly Expenses Due</b>	10/24/2025
<b>4th Quarter 2025 Financial/Construction Progress Report and Quarterly Expenses Due</b>	1/23/2026
<b>1st Quarter 2026 Financial/Construction Progress Report and Quarterly Expenses Due</b>	04/24/2026
<b>Project Completion</b>	6/30/2026
<b>Final Reporting Due</b>	8/28/2026

*\* All dates reflect no later than and are subject to change.*

All ARPA SLFRF 3.0 information, including the Eligibility Map depicting priority areas and detailed Schedule of Events are posted to the ORS website at <https://ors.sc.gov/broadband/office/investments/state/arpaslfrf3.0>

## Funding Award Selected

Applicants will be notified in writing, which may include email, if their proposed project is approved for funding, subject to the execution of a contractual funding agreement approved by the ORS.

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## Funding Agreement Process

Selected Applicants must enter into a contractual funding agreement (“Funding Agreement”) with the ORS. The ORS reserves the right to negotiate the final terms and conditions of the Funding Agreement with Applicants whose proposals are selected and to reject any Applications with whom the ORS cannot agree to terms and conditions, including but not limited to the addition and omission of proposed funded areas provided by an Applicant. Such Funding Agreement is not valid until approved by the ORS. Selected Applicants must be in receipt of a Notice to Proceed before any work may begin. With the exception of allowable engineering expenses, any project costs incurred prior to receipt of a Notice to Proceed are ineligible expenses under this grant program. The anticipated Funding Agreement term begins on the effective date of the Funding Agreement and construction must be completed by the deadline as set forth in the timeline.

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## Definitions

**Broadband Serviceable Locations (“BSL”)** - A broadband serviceable location is defined as “a business or residential location in the United States at which fixed broadband Internet access service is, or can be, installed.” A residential BSL includes all residential structures, including structures that are (or contain) housing units or group quarters (as those terms are defined by the United States Census Bureau). A business BSL includes “all non-residential (business, government, non-profit, etc.) structures that are on property without residential locations and that would expect to demand Internet access service.”

**Eligibility Map** - The SC Broadband Office analysis of Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) Broadband Data Collection (“BDC”) Submission, <September 1, 2023>. BDC data is aggregated to 2020 Census Blocks, into three categories (*Priority Areas, Unserved, and Partially Served*). Satellite, mobile broadband, and all DSL services are excluded. Census blocks in the eligibility map will be the only areas available for funding.

**Served** – A BSL, as defined by the FCC, is considered served if standard broadband service at reliable speeds of 25/3 megabits per second (“Mbps”) download/upload is

available to the residence or business via wire line cable or fiber connection at no additional charge for aid in construction cost (standard hookup fees are excluded from this provision). If the broadband customer is asked or required to bear the additional costs to construct a drop or line to the residence or business to obtain broadband service at reliable speeds of 25/3 Mbps download/upload, then the structure is considered unserved.

**Unserved** – Any BSL at which standard broadband service at reliable speeds of 25/3 Mbps download/upload is unavailable to the BSL without additional charge for aid in construction cost as of the Eligibility Map published by the SCBBO.

**Underserved** – Any BSL at which standard broadband service at reliable speeds of 25/3 Mbps download/upload but less than 100/20 Mbps download/upload is unavailable to the BSL without additional charge for aid in construction cost as of the Eligibility Map published by the SCBBO. Note, fixed wireless, satellite, and DSL connections that are advertising speeds greater than 100/20 Mbps download/upload are underserved.

**Partially Served** – A census block in which not all BSLs contained within are unserved or underserved.

**Comments** – A comment period provides the ISPs or any interested party the opportunity to raise issues regarding an application submitted for grant funding. Comments must be provided to the SCBBO by the deadline set forth in the timeline in order to be considered.

**Partnerships** – Any documented collaboration between an Applicant and a third party.

**Network Resiliency** – Broadband Infrastructure that provides continuous business operation (i.e., highly resistant to disruption and able to operate in a degraded mode if damaged), rapid recovery if failure does occur, and the ability to scale to meet rapid or unpredictable demands.

~~**Universal Service**—Telecommunications services including internet access, internet services, and internet connection services and other services that are identified by the FCC as eligible for federal universal service support mechanisms. See 47 U.S.C. 254(c), (h)(5)(A)(ii). Universal service is the principle that all Americans should have access to communications services. Since that time, universal service policies have helped make telephone service universally available, even in remote rural areas. Today, the FCC recognizes high-speed Internet as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’s essential communications technology and is working to make broadband as universally available as telephone services, while continuing to support telephone services.~~

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## **Comments to ISP Grant Applications**

The SCBBO will receive comments on grant applications by using the following form (NO COMMENTS ON AVAILABILITY WILL BE ACCEPTED): <https://arcg.is/1bOjDe0> and submitting supplemental evidence (when applicable), to the Citrix ShareFile site for ARPA SLFRF 3.0, if provided by the deadline as set forth in the timeline.

Upon notice by ORS to an Applicant stating the SCBBO has received comment(s) on a grant application, the Applicant may, within three (3) business days:

1. Submit a response to the comments containing specific evidence, where applicable
2. Demonstrate with specific evidence the ISP's claims are not valid or incorrect;
3. Modify the application to meet the criteria if necessary; or
4. Withdraw its application.

Upon review of the application, the challenge, the Applicant's response, and additional information (if any) requested and provided to the ORS, the ORS will make a determination concerning the challenge. Such determination shall be final and binding upon both the Applicant and the commenter. Email will be deemed a sufficient means of communicating the final determination.

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## **Funded Project Register**

To comply with ARPA requirements, and in an effort to avoid duplication of facilities to the greatest extent practicable, SCBBO will afford each ISP, county, or municipal government the opportunity to share their fully funded projects with the SCBBO in order to accelerate broadband deployment in unserved areas of the State.

For broadband infrastructure funds associated with ARPA, the SCBBO seeks to avoid duplicating investments and facilities by collecting geospatial information and construction-related detail for any Privately Funded Projects, the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund ("RDOF"), the USDA's ReConnect Program, as well as any county or municipal ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Funds ("LFRF") investments. Properly documented projects will be maintained in the SCBBO Funded Project Register ("FPR") for the duration of the indicated FPR construction period. However, by accepting this information, SCBBO makes no affirmation or commitment that it will not fund those unserved areas.

The SCBBO will accept eligible project submissions for the FPR as set forth in the timeline. Eligible projects must represent construction that will be completed by June

30, 2025. More detailed information for the FPR may be found at: <https://ors.sc.gov/broadband/office/investments/state/arpaslfrf3.0>

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### **Eligible/Ineligible Activities under ARPA 3.0 SLFRF**

Any project currently under contract or under construction is not eligible to apply. An Applicant may submit no more than 5 applications for any single parent holding company. Applicants cannot apply for the same census blocks and/or BSLs across multiple applications. That is to say, each grant application must be mutually exclusive to all other applications and associated project areas for which an applicant may apply. The Applicant must provide evidence that each project will be completed by the deadline set forth in the timeline in order to be considered. To be eligible, the Applicant must fund a financial match of the total project cost but may use funds from other sources to make its match. The use of other federal funds that seek to braid or blend projects are permissible but must be disclosed and tracked such that compliance is maintained around all federal funding sources. An applicant must provide proof that it has secured the necessary funds to complete the project in its entirety. The SCBBO will only reimburse grantees that provide proof of payment for all eligible expenses upon the completion of the project.

The SCBBO will withhold 3% of any awarded grant amount as retainage until such time the grantee submits their FCC Broadband Data Collection (BDC) filing following the completion of the project to both the FCC and the SCBBO. The filing must show the grantee reports all BSLs associated with their funding agreement are now served. Grantees must provide copies of BDC timestamped submission confirmations (PDF) from the FCC to the SCBBO for review and approval prior to the release of the retainage.

After the application period has closed, there shall be no further telephonic, email, or in-person contact by Applicants, their agents, or representatives with the ORS in an attempt to lobby or influence the approval of its applications relating to the ARPA 3.0 SLFRF. Only formal written comments regarding submitted applications, which are due by the deadline set forth in the timeline will be accepted and considered. Any improper contact with the ORS can lead to disqualification of the application. The ORS may contact the Applicant to seek clarification or additional information regarding an application. The quiet period will terminate upon receipt of the Funding Agreement.

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### **~~Universal Service Broadband Requirement~~**

~~Upon approval of a project under this grant program, all existing BSLs (whether recognized by the FCC or not), in the Project Area must be served in a manner that is non-discriminatory, at speeds or technology equal to or greater than the minimum required in these guidelines, and without additional construction or startup costs to the~~

~~customer. New construction or development occurring after a notice to proceed has been issued by the SCBBO is exempt from this provision.~~

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**Projects must meet the following eligibility criteria:**

1. Each project must contain at least one census block that includes a high-priority area. All additional Census blocks must be unserved, partially served, or additional high-priority areas according to the SC Broadband Office Eligibility Map associated with the ARPA SLFRF 3.0 grant program. Census blocks for which an applicant may apply do **NOT** have to be contiguous.
2. Each project applied for **CANNOT** span more than two counties.
3. The same census blocks and/or BSLs **CANNOT** be applied for in multiple applications.
4. Applicant must provide access to 100% of the eligible BSLs in the entire project area outlined in the grant application upon completion of the project. All remaining eligible BSLs in partially served Census blocks must also be provided access. Applicants must identify all eligible BSLs in a given census block (see Project Applications section below) for which their project represents. An Applicant must submit adequate justification in their grant application if they are not providing access to 100% of the eligible structures in the project area. SCBBO maintains sole discretion as to whether any such justification is deemed acceptable.
5. Private ISPs, public ISPs, and ISPs working in partnership with electric and telecommunication cooperatives and local governments are the only eligible Applicants for the ARPA SLFRF 3.0 grant program. Each applicant must have a Tier D CostQuest license.
6. Applicants shall propose a financial match percentage not to exceed a maximum of 75% for each project submitted and must disclose the source of those funds. Additional documented and disclosed third-party financial contributions (public or private), for a project are permissible.
7. A total grant award **CANNOT** exceed \$9,999,999.00 per grant application.
8. Applicants that apply through the FPR to build out facilities may not include those same BSLs as part of any subsequent grant application.
9. Deploy new broadband infrastructure in unserved and/or partially served areas to include at least 1 priority area, including: 1) areas with no current ISPs, 2) Difficult Development Areas as identified by HUD, 3) areas with a high concentration of public K-12 student households. All projects must utilize wireline technology that is capable of reliably meeting or exceeding 100/100 Mbps symmetric (download/upload) speeds; provided, however, if such speeds are not practicable because of geography, topography, or excessive costs, the project shall be designed to deliver 100/20 Mbps download/upload speeds and



be scalable to 100/100 Mbps symmetrical download/upload speeds. If not symmetrical, the Applicant must provide an affidavit that such speeds are not practicable and provide support for its assertion.

10. A project that does not overbuild another ISP's existing wireline broadband network that currently delivers service at sustainable speeds equal to or greater than the 100/20 Mbps minimum benchmark to all requesting customers without additional charges. (Networks that cannot deliver or sustain reliable 100/20 Mbps or cannot deliver service without additional construction or setup charges may be overbuilt.)
11. Upon project completion, provide retail broadband service verifying all addresses are searchable through the Applicant's online service signup search portal (as applicable), within the Applicant's proposed project area and report availability for the project area through the FCC bi-annual data submission process.
12. ~~Adhere to the South Carolina Universal Service Broadband requirement. Any deviation from this provision will require a written request by the applicant and must be documented in the Funding Agreement for each project.~~
13. Completed, operable, paid for, and submitted to the ORS for reimbursement of the lesser of the grant amount or a percentage of allowable expenses, as determined by the grant agreement, by the deadline set forth in the timeline.
14. Mandatory Participation in the Affordable Connectivity Program ("ACP") for the life of the ACP, or its successor.
15. Provide an affordable high-speed Internet plan (minimum speeds of 100/20 Mbps down/up with no data caps and no contract), option that does not include an income threshold requirement for a disclosed duration upon the completion and reimbursement of an awarded project.
16. Document and implement strategies to bolster Community-based Broadband Adoption and Use with an emphasis on enabling work, telehealth monitoring, education, and economic development.
17. Each application may include no more than four (4) letters of support/project sponsors.
18. Be compliant with all federal and state ARPA SLFRF requirements, for which Grantees of public funds are responsible.
  - a. Department of the Treasury Final Rule [31 CFR Part 35 RIN 1505-AC77] <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRF-Final-Rule.pdf>
  - b. 2021-2022 Bill 4408: American Rescue Plan authorizations [https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess124\\_2021-2022/bills/4408.htm](https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess124_2021-2022/bills/4408.htm)
19. Eligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- a. Construction and Materials (e.g., fiber, conduit, photonics, electronics, etc.)
  - b. New and rehabilitative construction contracts
  - c. Architect and engineering services, subject to ORS approval
  - d. Permitting fees
  - e. Validation of Service expenses
  - f. Equipment related to broadband infrastructure
  - g. Salaries directly related to construction of the project
  - h. Equipment installation
20. Grant funds may not be used for ineligible costs. Ineligible costs include, but are not limited to:
- a. General broadband planning not associated with the project
  - b. Expenses related to providing broadband services
  - c. Ongoing overhead, operating costs, or staff costs
  - d. Political activities, lawyer fees, or lobbying
  - e. Expenses related to preparing for and/or administering the Grant upon an award
  - f. Equipment that is depreciable and has a useful life after Project completion
  - g. Equipment installed within a residence, business, or community anchor institution, excluding any free Wi-Fi provision included as part of a grant application.
  - h. Supply and Material Markups
  - i. Operating expenses not directly related to the construction of the Project, including, but not limited to, leases of any kind. Expenses related to the provision of customer devices (handsets, laptops, tablets, etc.)
  - j. Bandwidth or spectrum expenses
  - k. Salaries, or overhead not directly related to the construction of the Project
  - l. Expenses related to the purchase or construction of towers, land, or buildings, or for building renovations, tower upgrades, or the acquisition of facilities or companies
  - m. Purchase of equipment that is depreciable and has a useful life after project completion, unless it is part of the facilities used to deliver the broadband service (e.g., fiber, conduit, electronics, etc.)

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### **Special Considerations and Exceptions**


To provide broadband service to an unserved area, an application may include costs to build facilities through an area already served by broadband. The ORS will evaluate such applications on a case-by-case basis to determine approval of eligible costs.

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## Project Applications and how to apply:

A list of eligible BSLs will be published to the APPA SLFRF 3.0 – Maps and Data folder through the ORS' Citrix ShareFile platform. Access will be granted when the Applicant has filled out the data access request form located here <https://arcg.is/1fiq1j> and the Broadband Data License form located here <https://arcg.is/1COCbX>. ISPs cannot apply for the ARPA SLFRF 3.0 grant program without providing a copy of their **CostQuest Tier D license**, which must be uploaded to each respective ISP's ARPA SLFRF 3.0 – folder through the ORS' Citrix ShareFile platform. To initiate a CostQuest Tier D license, applicants must visit <https://apps.costquest.com/NTIArequest/>, and follow the prompts provided from CostQuest.

Applicants must use the SCBBO data published to the Citrix ARPA SLFRF 3.0 “Maps and Data” folder as their starting point. These are the only census blocks and point locations eligible for funding under ARPA SLFRF 3.0. ISPs must upload a subset of the eligible census block data and eligible BSL data to their Citrix ARPA SLFRF 3.0 “GIS Data” folder. Data provided in support of this grant program must be paired alongside their completed grant application and associated attachments in the “Applications and Attachments” folder. Do not change the format or attribution of the files provided. ISPs must create and provide GIS layers in Shapefile format of their proposed linework and a point layer representing their network junctions linking existing facilities to newly proposed facilities in their project area. Please see Attachment 1 (GIS Data dictionary), for proper field attribution.

Applications will be available beginning by the deadline set forth in the timeline with applications due by 3:00 pm (EDT) by the deadline set forth in the timeline. Applications, all attachments, and GIS Data must be uploaded to the ORS Citrix site under the “ARPA SLFRF 3.0 Applications and Attachments” folder. If an applicant does not have access to the “ARPA SLFRF 3.0 Applications and Attachments” folder, the applicant should complete the data access request form located here <https://arcg.is/1fiq1j> and access will be granted. Applications received after the deadline will **NOT** be considered. Failure to answer each question and section completely may result in disqualification of the application. All questions with answers highlighted in the following color (  ) are **REQUIRED** to be answered. Questions with answers highlighted in yellow are optional. All applications must be submitted by ISPs providing retail service to broadband, provided under the following sections:

### 1. Applicant Information

1.1. Descriptors reflecting the primary Applicant.

1.2. Project Name/Number/Priority - Provide a project name and number, the number should be unique and formatted as such XXX-XX, with the first three digits alphabetical and the last two numerical. Project Priority - Applicants must rank their grant applications (if multiple submitted) in order of preference (1 - 5; 1 serving as highest priority for Applicant)

1.3. Broadband Provider Context – Provide information on the nature of the ISP and its compliance with FCC reporting.

1.4. Broadband Infrastructure Information – Choose the type of Broadband Infrastructure to be deployed and provide the ISP's Broadband. Provide estimates of miles of fiber to be installed and percentages of deployment methods (aerial/underground).

1.5. Project Timeline – Provide relevant dates reflecting the project's proposed period of performance.

- 1.6. Low-Cost Plan – Indicate the low-cost residential plan including speed, cost, and duration.
- 1.7. Free Public Wi-Fi – Indicate if new free public Wi-Fi will be built in the County and or Counties applied for along with duration and number of Wi-Fi locations.
- 1.8. Network Resiliency – List of network resiliency items and indicate which, if any, will be implemented in the project area.
2. Budget Summary
  - 2.1. Project Costs – Provide details associated with project costs by category. If you have quantity and per unit cost, please include. All fields are required in column E are required.
  - 2.2. Funding Details – Provide details on project match and any 3<sup>rd</sup> party funding sources.
3. Confirmations
  - 3.1. Agree/Disagree answers to confirm Applicant acceptance of key elements associated with ARPA 3.0 SLFRF grant program.
4. Additional Information – Narrative portion of the grant application. 750-character limit on Summary Narrative and 500-character limit on Community Needs Narrative. All other questions include a 2000-character limit on any specific response.
5. Project Sponsors
  - 1.1.– 5.4 Identify any sponsors that will provide support toward the Applicant’s project, including level of contribution. Applicants must also identify any sponsor providing financial support under the ‘role within proposed project’ field.
6. Attachments – Attachments listed in the application tab must accompany the grant application to be considered for ARPA 3.0 SLFRF funds. Failure to provide requested attachments may result in disqualification of a submission.
  - 1.2. GIS Shapefiles – Applicants are required to submit GIS Shapefiles or a File Geodatabase to the ORS as part of the application submission process. Applicants must provide GIS data showcasing the **proposed project limits utilizing the templates provided by the ORS** in accordance with GIS standards established under the ARPA SLFRF 3.0 grant program. The proposed project must include data depicting the 2020 Census Blocks that will be served, proposed broadband infrastructure lines, proposed network junctions, and structures that will have access using the FCC BSL Fabric data as their source. Data must be fully attributed and compiled in accordance with the GIS data standard and associated template data developed as part of this grant program. See Attachment 1.

GIS data from Applicants will be evaluated by the ORS. Applications which are funded will include a print map and corresponding table of Census Block IDs that will be produced by ORS and will serve as the basis of the project limits which must be dated and initialed by the ISP as part of the execution of a grant agreement and issuance of a Notice to Proceed. See Attachments 2 and 3.

Applicants are reminded all GIS data (excluding 2020 Census Blocks depicting proposed project areas), are considered confidential, proprietary, trade secret, and privileged information from each ISP, and are treated as confidential by the ORS. South Carolina HB 4408 Section 12 Paragraph B also states:

"(B) The Office of Broadband Coordinator shall maintain as confidential all individual company-designated proprietary information. All such individual proprietary information is exempt from the provisions contained in S.C. Code Sections 30-4-10, et seq., the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act."

6.1. Signed Affidavit - All applications will require certification and signature through execution of an affidavit by the President, CEO, or CFO. Signed affidavits must be included as an attachment to an application submission. See attachment 4.

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## Application Selection

In an effort to minimize the potential for duplication of facilities, the SCBBO may use, among other data sources, FPR data from approved projects in South Carolina to deconflict served and unserved/underserved BSLs.

The ORS will review applications and rank eligible projects in accordance with the criteria and priorities set forth in these guidelines. Applicants may only submit one project per application with a maximum of 5 grant applications, by holding company, per provider. Applicants submitting more than one project may prioritize their projects indicating preference in the space provided within each respective grant application. Applications will be reviewed and scored; however, ORS reserves the right to award grants that are in the public interest and accelerates internet deployment. Past project performance and adherence to compliance reporting of an ISP supporting Broadband deployment projects previously funded by the SCBBO and/or a lack of follow through on previous FPR commitments may also be considered during final selection. Applications will be scored based on the following criteria:

**1. 30% High Priority Area –**

- Census blocks of 20 or more K-12 student households; or,
- Census blocks where no ISPs currently provide retail service; or,
- Census blocks represented as Difficult Development Areas (“DDA”).

Scoring is calculated as follows:

- Project includes at least one priority unserved census block(s) with 20 or more K-12 students – 15 points
- Project includes at least one priority unserved census block(s) with no ISP currently serving any form of Internet to citizens – 10 points

- Project includes at least one priority unserved census block(s) with Difficult Development Area designation – 5 points
- Unserved census blocks chosen that are geographically coincident with two or more of the factors outlined in items above (e.g. an unserved census block includes concentrations of 20 or more K-12 housing units, and is also a DDA) - up to 5 additional bonus points

**2. 20% Geography**

- Identified areas that accelerate deployment and are in the public interest to fund - Up to 20 points. This may include, but not be limited to:
  - o Counties where availability of Broadband infrastructure has been limited and public investment in Broadband deployment projects have been minimal in contrast to neighboring counties
  - o Rural areas where costs to deploy broadband infrastructure are higher with fewer concentrations of citizens
  - o Areas with high concentrations of “I Need Internet” Survey Results

**3. 15% Average Cost Per Structure and Financial Match Percentage**

- Lower percent of funding requested by Applicant receives higher points – up to 10 points
- Lower average cost per structure receives higher points – up to 5 points

**4. 20% Collaboration/Adoption/Community Assistance/Wi-Fi - Applicant Strategy and Training Plan**

- Community Adoption/Use Strategy and Plan for Project Area – up to 10 points
- Free Community-based Wi-Fi for a disclosed period of time in Project Area – up to 5 points
- Demonstrated Partnerships via letters of support with a pledge of assistance and/or commitment with Local Government, Communities, and Non-Profit Organizations in Project Area – up to 5 points

**5. 5% Additional Priority Areas containing concentrations of 20 or more K-12 student households**

- Applicants will receive an additional point (5 points maximum), for each K-12 priority area census block above and beyond a single K-12 priority area census block within a single grant application – up to 5 points
- No additional priority area census block containing concentrations of K-12 student households in a single application – 0 points

**6. 5% Low-Cost Plan Duration - Years committed to providing proposed low-cost plan upon completion of the project**

- 2 years – up to 5 points
- 1 year – up to 1 point
- <1 year – 0 points

7. **5% Network Resiliency** – Commitment to deploying resilient network as part of proposed project build

- Number of Resilient-based Best Management Practices (BMPs), for which the Applicant will commit to implementing as part of the proposed project build. Half point per Resilient-based Best Management Practices (BMPs), provided as a checklist in the grant application. - Up to 5 points

The ORS will post all completed applications to the ORS website (See: <https://ors.sc.gov/broadband/office/investments/state/arpaslfrf3.0>).

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### **Disbursement of Funds**

Funds will be disbursed to participants upon the successful completion of the project and submittal of invoice and any other documentation required by the ORS.

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### **Reporting Requirements and Right to Audit**

The grant award recipients will be required to report the status of the project, including delays, each quarter, and must notify the ORS immediately if delays are identified or when outlined milestones are met. Grant recipients must also comply with ARPA SLFRF reporting, monitoring, and audit requirements as prescribed by the applicable federal authority.

At any point, the ORS reserves the right to audit the project, conduct site visits, ensure timelines are met, and obtain additional information from the ISP to verify compliance with contractual obligations. Throughout the project, geotagged photographs of active construction must be captured and reported by the ISP through quarterly reporting. As housing units are connected, geotagged photographs of speed tests are required throughout various parts of the project service area to verify the network is functional and capable of meeting upload/download speed thresholds required as part of the grant program. The grant award recipients will be required to provide address specific information for all homes passed in the Final Report. In addition, award recipients will also be required to share their FCC data information in the grant application and update that information throughout the project period. ORS timelines for FCC data reporting are identical to those published by the FCC.

The grant award recipients must track and report for a period of two (2) years after completion of construction on the number of homes passed, the take rate, and agree to survey those that do not subscribe to determine the reason they are not subscribing to service.