

South Carolina 2024 ARPA Grant Program Application SLFRF 3.0



Section 1.1 - Applicant Information

Legal Entity/Organization Name	Connect Holding II LLC d/b/a Brightspeed
Parent Organization	Connect Parent Corporation
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Corporation
Primary Contact Name	Pamela Sherwood
Title	Vice President, Broadband Office
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	1120 S. Tryon St. Charlotte, NC 28203
Phone Number	704-314-2249
Email	pamela.sherwood@brightspeed.com
Secondary Contact Name	Rod Mischke
Title	Broadband Grants Manager
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	1120 S. Tryon St. Charlotte, NC 28203
Phone Number	704-314-2628
Email	rod.mischke@brightspeed.com
FCC Registration Number (FRN):	31310576
Registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) - (Yes/No)	Yes
Unique Entity ID (UEI) Number	JWYXBY1U3ML3
Federal Tax ID Number	87-3811759
SC State Vendor Number	7000030743

Section 1.2 - Project Name/Number

Project Number (Format XXX-XX)	BSP-03
Project Name	Brightspeed Orangeburg County SLFRF 3.0
Project Priority (1-5, 1 serving as highest priority for applicant)	3

Section 1.3 - Broadband Service Provider Context

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Submission	2/28/2023 as Brightspeed alone; prior ILECs filed as part of Lumen/CenturyLink
Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Submission	25-Feb-24
Applicant has experience delivering broadband service via fiber and/or hybrid fiber-coax infrastructure (YES/NO)	Yes

Section 1.4 - Broadband Infrastructure Information

Indicate the type(s) of broadband infrastructure technology to be deployed in the project service area. Projects must provide a minimum of 100/20 Mbps scalable to 100/100 Mbps. Applicant must explain in detail why the proposed project cannot provide 100/100 Mbps.	Fiber to the Premises Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds 100/100 Mbps
Will all structures be served with the same technology type?	Yes
Estimated Miles of Fiber to be Installed	8
Estimated Percentage Underground	7.00%
Estimated Percentage Aerial	93.00%

Section 1.5 - Project Timeline

Project Start Date	June 1, 2024
Project Construction Activity Begins	July 1, 2025
Project Construction Activity Completion	June 1, 2026
Customer Premises <i>Initiation of Operations (premise installations begin)</i>	May 1, 2026
Overall Project Completion Date	June 30, 2026
Will the project be completed within 24 months of official Notice to Proceed (NTP)?	Yes

Section 1.6 - Low-Cost Plan

(Must be a minimum of 100/20 Mbps)

What Download/Upload speed is offered in your low-cost residential plan? (Example 100/20)	200/200 Mbps
What is the monthly cost of the plan?	\$59 (\$29 after \$30 discount to qualifying customers)
Does the above speed tier include unlimited data? (YES/NO)	Yes
Is a Consumer-based Contract Required? (YES/NO)	No
Duration of Low-Cost Plan (Post Construction)	\$30 discount for qualifying customers does not terminate

Section 1.7 - Free Public Wi-Fi

Will a new Free Public Wi-Fi location(s) be added? Free Public Wi-Fi is a location where anyone can access the Wi-Fi network at no cost 24/7, 365 days. Wi-Fi location needs to be in county or counties applied for.	No
If yes, how many locations will be added?	0
If yes, specify the duration the applicant will offer this service.	No Free Wi-Fi

Section 1.8 - Network Resiliency

Indicate if any of the Network Resilient Items will be implemented in the project area.

Ensure power redundancy with DC Battery/Diesel/Gas Generator Backup from temporary power loss at premise, Network Operations Center (NOC), and OLTs.	Will Implement
Ensure OLTs have divergent paths to redundant upstream equipment.	Will Implement
Configure OLTs on a fiber ring so the network may continue operation if fiber is cut and/or damaged.	Will NOT Implement
Establish an Emergency Action Plan (EAP).	Will Implement
Conduct readiness drills and tabletop exercises leveraging the EAP, document lessons learned and update the EAP based upon findings.	Will Implement
Deploy facilities underground as opposed to aerial to minimize impacts of downed utility poles from hurricanes, tornadoes, and vehicle accidents occurring in rights of way.	Will NOT Implement
Diversify connectivity by including more than a single tier-one provider as an access point to the Internet through the ISP's network.	Will NOT Implement
Maintain field service teams and spare equipment on standby before, during, and after major weather events and enact mutual assistance agreements, if appropriate.	Will Implement
Conduct regular site inspections for encroachments, damaged facilities, susceptible facilities or other threats through field reconnaissance and windshield surveys on facilities.	Will NOT Implement
Elevate OLTs above base flood elevations in mapped floodplains and associated flood-prone areas.	Will Implement

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Section 2.2 - Funding Details

Description	Comment	Amount
South Carolina ARPA Broadband Grant Program Funds requested		\$ 585,593.00
Applicant-Provided Funding		\$ 660,800.00
Third-Party Funding Source (if applicable)		
Total Project Cost		\$ 1,246,393.00
Percentage Funds Requested from SC Broadband Office		47%
Percentage Funds from Applicant Match		53%
Percentage Funds from Third Party Funding Source		0%

ADJUST APPLICANT
PROVIDED FUNDING
AMOUNT TO GET WHOLE
PERCENTAGES ONLY

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Section 3.1 Confirmations

Applicant participates in the Affordable Connective Program (ACP) and will participate in the ACP for the life of ACP for the Project Service Area.

Agree

Applicant will provide at least one low-cost option without data usage caps and at speeds sufficient for households with multiple users for a disclosed period of time.

Agree

The Project will comply with the requirements set forth in ARPA, South Carolina Act No. 244 of 2022, and other federal, state, and local laws, including environmental and permitting laws and regulations.

Agree

The Applicant will not use ARPA funds to procure or obtain certain telecom and video surveillance services or equipment as outlined in 2 CFR 200.216 and 2 CFR 200.471.

Agree

Applicant will not use ARPA funds to modernize cybersecurity for existing and new broadband networks.

Agree

Applicant will not procure telecommunications equipment or services from China.

Agree

The Project includes pre-project development uses or costs

Disagree

If Yes to above, the pre-development uses or costs will be (1) tied to an eligible broadband project or reasonably expected to lead to such a project; and (2) obligated within the period between Feb. 1, 2024, and December 31, 2026 and expended to cover such obligations by December 31, 2026.

Select one

Applicant will require its employees, contractors, and subcontractors to comply with the applicable requirements in the South Carolina Underground Facility Damage Prevention Act pursuant to Title 58, Chapter 36 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, as amended.

Agree

Applicant affirms that it will consult with the SC Department of Transportation, electric utilities as well as local water sewer utilities as to any possible efficiencies that can be achieved with a “dig once” approach.

Agree

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4.1 - Additional Information

(max 2000 character limit per item)

Provide a Summary Narrative that describes your project.

This narrative must be unique for each project and discuss this project only. Refrain from discussing rates, structure counts, estimated dates, work that occurred in the past, or the Company's history of providing Broadband service. Limit 750 Characters.

Brightspeed is proposing to build a forward-looking XGSPON fiber-optic broadband network to eligible locations in portions of Orangeburg County. This network would provide symmetrical speeds of at least 200/200 Mbps up to 2 Gbps to each eligible location passed. XGSPON is a 10 gigabit per second (Gbps) symmetrical Passive Optical Network delivered via a dedicated fiber loop to the customer's premises, allowing Brightspeed to provide high-speed data transfer rates up to 2 Gbps transported on a single fiber from the ILEC central office to the customer's home or business.

Describe how your proposal meets the needs of the community to be served as described in the "Guidelines." **Refrain from discussing rates, structure counts, estimated dates, work that occurred in the past, or the Company's history of providing Broadband service. Limit 500 Characters (including spaces).**

Upon approval of the project, all customers in the Project Service Area will be served in a manner that is non-discriminatory, at speeds equal to or greater than 100/100 Mbps, and without installation fees to the customer. This investment will significantly improve customers' choice and service experience, and vastly improve access to the internet and the multitude of educational, healthcare, business, and entertainment opportunities that broadband internet access enables.

If the proposed Project is in an area that is subject to an existing federal or state funding commitment for reliable speeds of 100/20 Mbps, explain why there is an identified need for additional broadband investment that is not met by existing federal or state funding commitments.

Brightspeed is not proposing to serve any area that is subject to an existing federal or state funding commitment for reliable speeds of 100/20 Mbps.

Describe any plans or programs you have developed and propose to implement to improve adoption in the community described in this proposal.

Brightspeed intends to meet the challenges of customer adoption by utilizing strong outreach tactics with clear messaging and wide reach to promote customer acquisition and drive adoption in the area.

Brightspeed's local teams will determine, based on the geography of the impacted households, the best method of marketing the launch to ensure the highest degree of efficacy within the targeted communities. We expect to implement a marketing strategy similar to that used where we have completed builds using grant dollars in other communities, which include: Planned Marketing Campaigns that include multiple touches as groups of addresses within a wire center are completed; using a Pre-launch Awareness "Coming soon!" message supported by local teams issuing news releases; direct mailing; and placing yard signs and banners. Then we conduct a pre-sale signup as part of our launch awareness, conducting a direct message and email outreach, using geofencing. In addition, we utilize doorhangers and conduct in-person events.

Once the area is officially launched, we continue with post-launch awareness programs with our traditional type marketing, including "Open For Sale" Campaigns/Touchpoints while leveraging our existing legacy fiber advertising and point of sale materials. We continually monitor the responses and augment with In-Flight campaigns to increase awareness and take rates. Where we have a county partner, we work with the county to implement additional educational awareness programs, such as webinars and public meetings.

Describe your plans or programs you have developed and propose to implement to increase digital literacy, for example, support through online training, for this project?

Brightspeed is committed to undertaking programs necessary to meet the needs of the local community, including, but not limited to, educational forums, technology demonstrations, or other individual outreach. Brightspeed has dedicated staff that actively looks for partnerships with organizations that provide outreach and educational programs that facilitate digital literacy, such as libraries, workforce development and governmental agencies. We work with county officials whenever possible and provide them with customer-facing materials detailing upcoming availability they are free to use on their website. In the event of a launch event, we will ensure that the necessary staff is available to ensure the most seamless possible adoption of Brightspeed's technology.

In addition, Brightspeed is in the process of developing our digital literacy training module for our website, which is expected to launch in the second quarter of 2024. This will cover topics such as website navigation, e-mail, social media, parental control mechanisms, end-user cybersecurity, and more for beginning internet users.

Brightspeed looks forward to working with Orangeburg County and its residents to improve our existing network to offer high speed internet, to offer fiber broadband services to new customers, to educate customers about how to use the service, and how to protect themselves on-line.

<p>Will the Project deliver broadband in the approved Project Area that meets or exceeds symmetrical download and upload speeds of 100/100 Mbps?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>If no to above, explain and provide support demonstrating why the Project will not deliver such speeds and provide an affidavit that 100/100 Mbps symmetrical download/upload speeds are not practicable.</p>	
<p style="background-color: #ffffcc; height: 118px;"></p>	
<p>Explain how the Applicant will consult with the community in the Project Area on the general affordability needs of the target markets.</p>	
<p>Brightspeed intends to engage with the community via in-person meetings with County staff as well as utilizing the marketing efforts above. Brightspeed understands that affordability is an important factor for residents of the proposed areas and has priced its broadband plans accordingly. Brightspeed participates in both the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which offers a \$30 monthly discount to qualifying residents, and the federal Lifeline program, which offers a discount of up to \$9.25 per month. In addition, Brightspeed offers an additional \$30 per month discount on our 200/200 plan to residents that qualify for the ACP and/or Lifeline, bringing the total maximum monthly discount to \$69.25 per month. As our 200/200mbps plan costs \$59 per month, these discounts will provide many low-income residents of the area with high-speed broadband at no out-of-pocket cost to them.</p> <p>While there is currently uncertainty surrounding the future of the ACP program, Brightspeed commits to the additional \$30 per month discount to qualifying residential customers whether or not ACP is allowed to continue as a program and commits to participating in any subsequent federal or state program to ensure affordability for low-income qualifying consumers that may be offered in the future. Brightspeed remains committed to ensuring our low-income customers continue to have an affordable option and is currently vetting how to “qualify” new low-income customers for any such program. Brightspeed’s broadband services offer high speeds and prices well below the national benchmark standard and will enable job creation and support the anticipated economic benefits to the community.</p>	

<p>Will the Project (1) prioritize investments in fiber-optic infrastructure wherever feasible and focus on projects that deliver a physical broadband connection by prioritizing projects that achieve last mile connections or ensure funded middle mile projects have commitments in place to support new and/or improved last mile service; (2) include affordability options and shall participate in ACP for the life of ACP; and (3) prioritize support for local networks owned, operated, or affiliated with local governments, nonprofits, and cooperatives.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>If no to above, explain.</p>	
<p></p>	
<p>If awarded, will the Grant funds be used to overbuild another existing broadband provider or to reimburse expenses related to overbuilding another broadband provider?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>If yes to above, explain.</p>	
<p></p>	

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5.1 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Orangeburg County, SC
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental Entity
Role within proposed project	Supporter
Primary Contact Name	Harold M. Young
Title	County Administrator
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	1437 Amelia St. Orangeburg, SC 29115
Phone Number	803-533-6104
Email	kstephens@orangeburgcounty.org

5.2 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	United Way of the Midlands
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Non-profit
Role within proposed project	Supporter
Primary Contact Name	Sara Fawcett
Title	President and CEO
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	1818 Blanding St. Columbia, SC 29201
Phone Number	803-733-5400
Email	

5.3 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name
Entity Type
(e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)
Role within proposed project
Primary Contact Name
Title
Mailing Address City, State, Zip
Phone Number
Email

5.4 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name
Entity Type
(e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)
Role within proposed project
Primary Contact Name
Title
Mailing Address City, State, Zip
Phone Number
Email

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6.1 - Attachment Checklist

(Please attach the following items to application)

GIS Shapefiles

Proposed 2020 Census Blocks

Yes

Proposed Fiber/Cable Lines

Yes

Proposed Structures Served by Type

Yes

Proposed Network Junctions

Yes

Signed affidavit certifying grant application is complete and accurate

Yes

Proof of funding related to proposed project or non-cash support, provide associated documentation e.g. yearly financial reports, bank statement, etc.

Yes

Letters of support and strategic partnerships

Yes

Copies of Applicant's Current Fee Structure for all Internet Speed Tiers

Yes

Certificates of Insurance

Yes

Any additional information evidencing community need for project

No