

South Carolina 2024 ARPA Grant Program Application SLFRF 3.0



Section 1.1 - Applicant Information

Legal Entity/Organization Name	Sandhill Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
Parent Organization	N/A
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Cooperative
Primary Contact Name	Kirby Wayne
Title	Chief Operations Officer
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	122 S. Main St. Jefferson, SC 29718
Phone Number	843-622-4626
Email	kirby.wayne@mysandhill.net
Secondary Contact Name	Johnny McKenzie
Title	Assistant Plant Manager
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	122 S. Main St. Jefferson, SC 29718
Phone Number	843-337-0711
Email	johnny.mckenzie@mysandhill.net
FCC Registration Number (FRN):	1886464
Registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) - (Yes/No)	Yes
Unique Entity ID (UEI) Number	MYK7LMF56H77
Federal Tax ID Number	57-0351757
SC State Vendor Number	7000025393

Section 1.2 - Project Name/Number

Project Number (Format XXX-XX)	SHC-31
Project Name	Marlboro ARPA 3.0
Project Priority (1-5, 1 serving as highest priority for applicant)	2

Section 1.3 - Broadband Service Provider Context

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Submission	June 30, 2009
Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Submission	3/1/2024
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	16
Estimated Percentage Underground	40.00%
Estimated Percentage Aerial	60.00%

Section 1.5 - Project Timeline

Project Start Date	July 1, 2024
Project Construction Activity Begins	December 2, 2024
Project Construction Activity Completion	April 6, 2026
Customer Premises <i>Initiation of Operations (premise installations begin)</i>	April 27, 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)	100/100 Mbps
What is the monthly cost of the plan?	\$34.95
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)	2 Years

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.	Yes
If yes, how many locations will be added?	1
If yes, specify the duration the applicant will offer this service.	2 years

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 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 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 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 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		\$ 484,162.00
Applicant-Provided Funding		\$ 161,387.00
Third-Party Funding Source (if applicable)		\$ -
Total Project Cost		\$ 645,549.00
Percentage Funds Requested from SC Broadband Office		75%
Percentage Funds from Applicant Match		25%
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

Agree

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.

Agree

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.

The SHC-31 ARPA 3.0 project will consist of approximately 16 miles of fiber that will provide a broadband service of a minimum of 100/20 Mbps up to 1 Gig symmetrical connectivity to the residents inside of the project area. This project will extend Sandhill's fiber network throughout remote areas in Marlboro County. The scope of this project is to provide fiber services to not only the residents along the main highways but also along the side roads in the county. This project would enable Sandhill to establish equipment in the area that will help reduce the digital divide in this rural area.

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).

We work closely with the local school districts and a local community college (NETC) to identify areas where people desire to further their education from home. Several people have requested more connectivity not just for educational purposes, but for working remotely from home. Our elderly community also needs reliable broadband so they can take advantage of telehealth programs along with helping their relatives to monitor security equipment to know their loved ones are safe.

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.

We have made every effort to verify that the census blocks that we are applying to receive State funding are census blocks that are not currently funded via any grants or that no other ISP has fiber covering the entirety of the census blocks. We used a combination of ORS eligibility maps, RDOF awarded maps, maps provided on ISP's website dictating where they offer broadband services that meets the current ORS minimum speed requirement either via fiber or cable, talking with community leaders and local governments as well as spending numerous hours riding the areas ourselves verifying that the areas do not have a fiber network. To our knowledge, we have designed our projects so that there should not be conflicts. Some of the designs will require that we build along a road that has fiber already, but we must go along this road to reach the unserved or partially served census blocks that make up the project that we are applying for grant funding.

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

Currently, we offer customers the opportunity to sign up for Lifeline. If the customer qualifies, they can receive a monthly discount off their internet bill. This allows the customers to get monthly internet service for a discounted rate. In addition, we offer free Wi-Fi, one access point, to every internet subscriber, which allows the ability to complete work or school or have a telehealth visit from any room in the home. We use our website, bi-monthly magazine, bill messages, Facebook and other signage to advertise our services. We hang door tags in areas that are being built and encourage the customer to call and speak with a representative about services and assistance programs if needed. We also visit schools in our communities and hand out flyers educating people on Lifeline. We are heavily involved in the communities we serve and are involved in all local festivals/events where we distribute information and address any questions from the public. We are able to process reports with data to verify installs, interest in our services as well as analytics from our website to determine the number of visits or clicks. Through Salesforce, we are able to isolate serviceable areas and target them with direct marketing via mail and in person.

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?

We use our website, Facebook, SmartHub, our online account management system, and have computers set up in each office's lobby for customer use. We assist customers with email set up on mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones to make sure they receive the documentation needed for any type of assistance programs both in person and over the phone. We also have 24/7 Technical Support where our agents can assist customers with technical issues as well as troubleshoot with the ability to screen share. These calls are recorded, and reports can be generated to verify. We offer TrendMicro Platinum virus protection to all broadband subscribers on up to three devices. It gives recommendations inside the program to strengthen security and digital presence awareness. We use printed materials such as posters, bill inserts, custom bill messages and flyers are used to direct potential customers to not only our company website but those that provide assistance with paying their internet bill.

Will the Project deliver broadband in the approved Project Area that meets or exceeds symmetrical download and upload speeds of 100/100 Mbps?

Yes

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.

Explain how the Applicant will consult with the community in the Project Area on the general affordability needs of the target markets.

Sandhill has a great working relationship with all the Chamber of Commerce offices in our area as well as the County Council, Economic Development Boards, School Districts and Business Owners. We will continue to foster those relationships while having a presence at community events, serving on the boards of our local organizations as well as being a partner with the school districts. These connections provide us opportunities to speak about, share and distribute materials regarding our services and assistance programs available to our area.

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.

Yes

If no to above, explain.

If awarded, will the Grant funds be used to overbuild another existing broadband provider or to reimburse expenses related to overbuilding another broadband provider?

No

If yes to above, explain.

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5.1 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Marlboro County Government
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental entity
Role within proposed project	IT support
Primary Contact Name	Steven M Pollard
Title	IT Director Marlboro County
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	PO Box 419, Bennettsville, SC 29512
Phone Number	843-479-5600
Email	

5.2 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Tytt Budget
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Local Business
Role within proposed project	Local business
Primary Contact Name	Jonathan Berghorn
Title	Owner
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	3249 W Bobo Newsom Highway, Harsville, SC 29550
Phone Number	843-332-7093
Email	

5.3 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	House of Representatives
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental entity
Role within proposed project	Representative of Chesterfield and Lancaster Counties
Primary Contact Name	Richard L. "Richie" Yow
Title	S
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	178 Mill St., Chesterfield, SC 29709
Phone Number	843-623-5001
Email	RichardYow@schouse.gov

5.4 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Chesterfield County Economic Development
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental Entity
Role within proposed project	Coordination with local businesses on expansion needs and new growth opportunities
Primary Contact Name	Libby Lear
Title	Director
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	700 W. Blvd., Chesterfield, SC 29709
Phone Number	843-623-6500
Email	llear@chesterfieldcountysc.com

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6.1 - Attachment Checklist

(Please attach the following items to application)

GIS Shapefiles

Proposed 2020 Census Blocks

Select one

Proposed Fiber/Cable Lines

Select one

Proposed Structures Served by Type

Select one

Proposed Network Junctions

Select one

Signed affidavit certifying grant application is complete and accurate

Select one

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

Select one

Letters of support and strategic partnerships

Select one

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

Select one

Certificates of Insurance

Select one

Any additional information evidencing community need for project

Select one