

**South Carolina 2022 ARPA Grant
Program
Application SFRF 1.0**



Section 1.1 - Applicant Information

Legal Entity/Organization Name	Farmers Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
Parent Organization	
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Cooperative
Primary Contact Name	F. Bradley Erwin
Title	Chief Executive Officer
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	1101 E. Main Street, Kingstree, SC, 29556
Phone Number	843-382-2333
Email	Erwinb@ftc.org
FCC Registration Number (FRN):	1887025
Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number	9787623
Registered in the System for Award Management (SAM)	
SAM Number	NHJEBNLBKXD7 (Unique Entity Identifier)
SC State Vendor Number	7000025349

Section 1.2 - Project Name/Number

Project Number (Format XXX-XX)	FTC-04
Project Name	Lake City / Nesmith

Section 1.3 - Broadband Service Provider Context

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Form 477 Submission	December 1, 1999
Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Form 477 Submission	9/1/2022
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
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Section 1.5 - Proposed Broadband Pricing Tiers

Rates less than \$10/month (YES/NO)	No
If yes to \$10 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
Rates between \$10 - \$14.99 (YES/NO)	No
If yes to \$10-\$14.99 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
Rates between \$15 - \$19.99 (YES/NO)	No
If yes to \$15-\$19.99 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
Rates between \$20 - \$24.99 (YES/NO)	No
If yes to \$20-\$24.99 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
Rates between \$25 - \$34.99 (YES/NO)	No
If yes to \$25-\$34.99 month plan what are the upload/download speeds	
Do the above speed tiers include unlimited data? (YES/NO)	Select one
Is a Consumer-based Contract Required? (YES/NO)	Select one
Is the pricing fixed? (YES/NO)	Select one
What's the duration of the pricing? (In Months)	Select one

Section 1.6 - Project Timeline
(Maximum Timeline Allotted is 24 months)

Project Start Date	January 2, 2023
Project Construction Activity Begins	January 2, 2023
Project Construction Activity Complete	October 1, 2024
Customer Premises	468
<i>Installations Begin</i>	October 1, 2023
<i>Installations End</i>	October 18, 2024
Overall Project Completion Date	December 31, 2024
Will the project be completed within 24 months of official Notice to Proceed (NTP)?	Yes

Section 1.7 - Project Service Area Information

Estimated Miles of Fiber to be Installed	52
Estimated Percentage Underground	100
Estimated Percentage Aerial	0
Number of Counties to be Impacted	2
County Names	Florence, Williamsburg
Total Number of Census Blocks with Concentrations of K-12	36
Total number of Census Blocks in DDA's	0
Total number of Census Blocks NOT in DDA or K-12 Concentration	15
Total Number of unserved 2020 Census Blocks part of Proposed Project	36
Total number of housing units served	402
Total number of businesses served	66
Total number of other Public Facilities e.g. community centers, fire stations served	11
Total Structures Served	468
Average Cost Per Structure Served	\$ 2,944.44
Does the applicant plan to serve every structure in the proposed project service area?	Yes

If no, provide an explanation for why the Project will not Pass all Homes in the proposed project service area

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Section 2.2 - Funding Details

Description	Comment	Amount
South Carolina ARPA Broadband Grant Program Funds requested		\$ 1,378,000.00
Applicant-Provided Funding		\$ 1,378,000.00
Third-Party Funding Source (if applicable)		\$ -
Total Project Cost		\$ 2,756,000.00
Percentage Funds Requested from SC Broadband Office		50%
Percentage Funds from Applicant Match		50%
Percentage Funds from Third Party Funding Source		0%

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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.

Agree

The Project will comply with the requirements set forth in ARPA, South Carolina Act No. ____ 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 March 3, 2021, and December 31, 2024 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

Farmers Telephone Cooperative, Inc., (FTC) is applying to the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (SCORS) for an American Rescue Plan Act Grant for the purpose of providing fiber-based broadband service to multiple priority areas. FTC covers approximately 3,000 square miles of rural South Carolina and provides internet service over copper cables utilizing Digital Subscriber Line technology.

FTC seeks funding to help subsidize the cost of upgrading copper facilities to last-mile fiber. The proposed fiber build will future proof the broadband network in these priority areas and provide up to 1 Gig symmetrical speeds today while also providing the capability to accommodate future technology advancements.

FTC has weathered many hurricanes and winter storms since it was founded in 1951 and as a company decided to place all cable facilities underground to keep service functioning through inclement weather. Fiber networks placed underground provide the most long-term, cost effective, comprehensive service possible, and thus will be the best method of broadband deployment.

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

The fiber build locations for this application have been defined as “priority areas” in Williamsburg and Florence counties by the South Carolina Broadband Office. Through this fiber build, FTC will be passing 468 structures, including 402 residential addresses that serve as the home for approximately 135 students. By deploying a fiber connection, FTC will future proof the network, and these households and students will have access to affordable broadband internet plans with multiple qualifying speeds to include a 1 Gigabit symmetrical offering.

Williamsburg County, based on 2020 Census data, has a population of 30,484 and a median income of \$35,681, which is well below the state level of \$54,864. Also, only 14.3% of the population has a bachelor’s degree or greater. Taking into consideration these figures, along with an internet broadband subscription rate of 59.6%, Williamsburg is often tabbed as a county of need compared to its S.C. counterparts.

Florence County has a population of 136,504 and a median income of \$49,645. Also, 24.8% of the population has a bachelor’s degree or greater. According to the 2020 Census, the internet broadband subscription rate for Florence is 74.5%. For the priority areas, however, access to broadband is considerably lower.

Bringing qualifying broadband to these priority areas will provide the opportunity for residents to enhance their lives through distance learning, telemedicine, working from home, ecommerce opportunities, job searches and online applications, just to name a few.

Funding through this grant will help FTC build fiber to this priority area, which, otherwise, would be cost prohibitive to construct.

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.

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

Adoption of broadband starts with understanding the need for it and offering a superior product. In addition, FTC has:

- Developed a video for FTC's all-local TV station.
- The video was then split into segments for the website.
- The company also developed a speed calculator to assist with determining speeds needed.
- FTC has also attempted to educate through newsletters, blogs, social media and advertising.
- FTC provides free installation, free router, free WiFi and WiFi app to manage the home network.

See attached information on Calix GigaSpire U6 router and its features.

- Free Basic Parental Controls including:

Set up user profiles

Enable and disable devices within profiles

Allows for multiple bedtime schedules

- Other features of FTC's Internet not highlighted above are:

Unlimited usage with no data caps, 15 Gigabits of email storage, 10 Megabits of web space, No contract required

FTC also devoted a section on its website to fiber and broadband. It details the progress of FTC's ongoing fiber projects, including an online tool that shows the maximum speed available down to the address point level.

FTC participates in the Affordable Connectivity and Lifeline programs. Also, to assist with adoption and retention, the company offers FTC Connections, a program that provides monthly discounts based on the number of core products (internet, wireless, voice, security, and digital TV) the customer subscribes to.

2 services \$10 monthly discount

3 services \$20

4 services \$30

5 services \$40

No contract required

FTC also offers a military discount option of 10 percent on internet service for active duty and retirees.

As part of the Project, explain how the Applicant will make efforts to increase digital literacy, for example, support through online training?

FTC has made educating the public on internet and broadband a priority for the past several years. Even before the pandemic, presentations and videos were planned to make sure the public understood why it is important. FTC produced an extensive video to be used on its all-local TV station to inform viewers on fiber and broadband. The same video was broken up into segments for use on its website, ftc.net. This production served to show the growing need for more bandwidth in today's society.

Further, computers were donated to community centers to teach residents, particularly senior citizens, about the internet and how they can use it to improve their quality of life. From ordering their groceries online to meeting with their doctors in video chats to even keeping up with their grandchildren on social media, broadband could change their lives.

Below are some of the initiatives to increase literacy in the project area as well as some that could be added moving forward:

Digital Lane is a training center designed to prepare the community for digital deployment. FTC donated 15 desktop computers along with the wiring, keyboards, mice and local networking, including a switch and cabling to equip the facility. Additionally, 1 Gigabit Internet service for one year was donated.

FTC could also entertain a partnership with Williamsburg Technical College and the Continuum, an educational facility in Lake City, to hold community classes to train nearby residents on the power and utilization of broadband.

As part of the Project, identify any areas that the Applicant would be willing to provide public Wi-Fi in a central or community location to improve access for all South Carolinians and for what period of time.

FTC offers and maintains public Wi-Fi to multiple areas in four of the five counties it serves. The Business District of Lake City has established public Wi-Fi access provided by FTC. The proposed fiber build east of the city has reasonable access to broadband in the downtown area.

Please review the complete list of existing FTC public Wi-Fi locations:

Florence County:

Business District of Lake City

Main Street

Sumter:

Bobby Richardson Baseball Complex

416 South Wise Drive

Central Carolina Technical College

506 North Guignard Drive

Business District of Sumter

Main Street

Palmetto Tennis Center

400 Theatre Drive

University of South Carolina Sumter

200 Miller Road

Lee County:

Chappell Park

397 Chappell Drive

Bishopville

Clarendon County:

John C. Land Landing

Greenall Road

Summerton

List documents that demonstrate your organization currently has the necessary funds to complete this project/proposal. Attach documents to this proposal.

See attached investment statements which demonstrate that FTC has the necessary funds to complete this project.

List any lease, franchise agreement, interconnection agreement, authorization, permit, or other items needed to complete this project.	
Will the Project deliver broadband in the approved Project Service 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 Service Area on the general affordability needs of the target markets.	
<p>FTC will consider conducting market studies of the project service area to determine the general affordability of its broadband plans. Focus groups involving residents from those specific areas could also be conducted to receive community feedback. Finally, discussions with city and county officials as well as councils of governments would provide information vital to the process.</p> <p>In addition, as a participant of the Affordable Connectivity Program, FTC will continue to utilize various avenues to educate consumers on the advantages of this valuable initiative.</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.	Select one
If no to above, explain.	



<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>	
<p>Is there an identified need in the Project Service Area for additional broadband infrastructure that is not met by existing federal or state funding commitments?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>If so, explain whether service to households and businesses in the Project Service Area should require a holistic approach that provides service to a wider area in order to make ongoing service of certain households or businesses within the service area economical.</p>	
<p></p>	

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5.1 - 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

5.2 - 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

5.3 - 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 Service Areas

Yes

Proposed Fiber/Cable Lines

Yes

Proposed Structures Served by Type

Yes

Proposed Network Junctions

Yes

6.2 Signed affidavit certifying grant application is complete and accurate

Yes

Partners for financial support related to proposed project or non-cash support provide associated documentation.

Yes

Letters of support evidencing community need and strategic partnerships

Yes

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

Yes

Certificates of Insurance

Yes

Certificates of Bonding, as described in CFR § 200.326 Bonding requirements.

Yes

Any additional information evidencing community need for project

Yes