

South Carolina 2023 ARPA Grant Program Application CPF 1.0



Section 1.1 - Applicant Information

Legal Entity/Organization Name	Comporium, Inc.
Parent Organization	
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Corporation
Primary Contact Name	Tim Smoak
Title	Vice President - Business Development
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	330 East Black St. Rock Hill, SC 29730
Phone Number	803-326-7275
Email	tim.smoak@comporium.com

Section 1.2 - Project Name/Number

Project Number (Format XXX-XX)	CMP-02
Project Name	CLEC Chesnee / Midlands FTTP
Project Priority (1-5, 1 serving as highest priority for applicant)	4

Section 1.3 - Broadband Service Provider Context

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Submission	September 1, 2000
Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Submission	February 27, 2023
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.
 What is your network up-time in South Carolina for the last 12 months? e.g. 99.999%
 What is your network up-time in the county applied for the last 12 months e.g. 99.99%
 Will all structures be served with the same technology type?
 Estimated Miles of Fiber to be Installed
 Estimated Percentage Underground
 Estimated Percentage Aerial

Fiber to the Premises Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds 100/100 Mbps
Yes
360
100.00%
0.00%

Section 1.5 - Project Timeline
(Maximum Timeline Allotted is 24 months)

Project Start Date
 Project Construction Activity Begins
 Project Construction Activity Completion

November 17, 2023
June 14, 2024
September 30, 2025

Customer Premises
Initiation of Operations (premise installations begin)

November 18, 2024

Overall Project Completion Date
 Will the project be completed within
 24 months of official Notice to Proceed (NTP)?

October 31, 2025
Yes

Section 1.6 - ESA Project

Does this project include a Main Street Eligible Service Area?
 (YES/NO)

No

Section 1.7 - 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)
 What is the monthly cost of the plan?
 Does the above speed tier include unlimited data? (YES/NO)
 Is a Consumer-based Contract Required? (YES/NO)
 Is the pricing fixed? (YES/NO)
 If no, what's the duration?

100 Mbps/100 Mbps
\$49.94
Yes
No
Yes

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Section 2.2 - In-kind Match (for Main Street Projects only)

Type	Description	Qty	Rate	Amount
In-Kind Match				
In-Kind Match				
In-Kind Match				
In-Kind Match				
In-Kind Match				
In-Kind Match				
In-Kind Match				
Total				\$ -

Total Project Cost and In-Kind Match	#REF!
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Section 2.3 - Funding Details

Description	Comment	Amount
South Carolina ARPA Broadband Grant Program Funds requested		\$ 17,543,909.00
Applicant-Provided Funding		\$ 9,446,720.00
Third-Party Funding Source (if applicable) - List Source		\$ -
In-Kind Match (for Main Street Projects only)		\$ -
Total Project Cost		\$ 26,990,629.00
Percentage Funds Requested from SC Broadband Office		65.00%
Percentage Funds from Applicant Match		35.00%
Percentage Funds from Third Party Funding Source		0.00%
Percentage Funds from In-Kind Match		0.00%

**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 (or its successor) for the life of ACP for the Project Area.

Agree

Applicant will provide at least one low-cost residential option without data usage caps at a minimum speed of 100/20 for a documented 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, including covered telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment provided or produced by entities owned or controlled by the People's Republic of China and telecommunications equipment produced by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities).

Agree

The Applicant, to the extent practicable and consistent with applicable law under the award, will provide a preference for the procurement or use of goods, products, or materials produced in the United States as described in 2 C.F.R. 200.322 and Executive Order 14005 Ensuring the Future is Made in All by All of America's Workers (January 25, 2021).

Agree

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

Agree

The Project includes pre-project Engineering uses or costs

Disagree

If Yes to above, the pre-development Engineering uses or costs will be (1) tied to an eligible broadband project or reasonably expected to lead to such a project; (2) necessary for the efficient and timely performance of eligible Projects; and (3) incurred after March 15, 2021, but prior to execution of the Grant Agreement.

Disagree

Applicant will encourage its employees, contractors, and subcontractors to adopt and enforce on-the-job seat belt policies and programs for their employees when operating company-owned, rented or personally owned vehicles pursuant to Executive Order 13043, 62 FR 19217 (April 8, 1997).

Agree

Applicant will encourage its employees, contractors, and subcontractors to adopt and enforce policies that ban text messaging while driving.

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 except item 1)

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.

This project will create access to fiber-based services for portions of Aiken, Calhoun, Cherokee, Edgefield, Lexington, Orangeburg, Saluda, and Spartanburg Counties within the vicinity of Comporium’s existing fiber network. 10 Gigabit symmetric service using XGS-PON technology will be deployed to facilitate 1 Gbps connectivity initially with the potential for up to 10 Gbps at a later date. The network is scalable for higher speeds and is considered “future proof.” It will accommodate economic growth if additional residential or business development should occur in the affected areas.

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

Comporium’s proposed project will connect all 3,700 unserved locations within the communities in the 8- county application. These communities are individually unique in their own way and each has their own set of needs, many of which can be resolved with the availability of fiber broadband Comporium is proposing. The more rural counties of Orangeburg, Calhoun, Saluda, and Cherokee that are targeted in this application have very high overall pupils in poverty (PiP) rates and high overall poverty rates with the highest PiP rate in Orangeburg at (86.10%) and Calhoun at (80.98%), all project area counties, have a 50% or greater PiP. PiP homes lack of broadband creates further danger as children in homes without broadband have lower family incomes than peers creating generational poverty. Poverty levels for 7 of the 8 project area counties exceed the U.S. average 11.6%, specifically Orangeburg (26.50%), Cherokee (18.80%), Calhoun (18.70%), Edgefield (16.8%), and Saluda (16.5%) are much higher. A direct correlation exists between the counties that have high poverty levels and the unemployment rate. The Orangeburg County unemployment rate is the highest within the application area at 5.0% and three of the eight counties unemployment exceeds U.S. average of 3.4%. Within the 8-county application area 221,023 people leave their home county daily to commute to their jobs, the lack of broadband eliminates telework or a hybrid schedule for their jobs. Comporium’s broadband expansion into all counties will allow employees to work remotely allowing an avenue for additional economic impact in these rural areas. The average age across the eight-county application area of people 65 years and older, is 19.95%. Broadband will enable access for this elderly population to telehealth. Comporium’s fiber deployment can meet the needs of these communities and provide much needed connectivity to remote school, work, and telehealth.

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.

The applicant acknowledges there is minimal overlap of RDOF areas with the proposed project area. However, the proposed project area is in dire need of broadband services and additional broadband investment is needed to get the much-needed services to the locations at a quicker pace than that allowed under the RDOF funding. Specifically, RDOF broadband deployment obligations are to serve 40% by the end of the 3rd year, 60% by the end of the 4th year, 80% by the end of the 5th year, and the final locations by the end of the 6th year. This means the locations currently lacking broadband and unable to remotely attend school, telework, and or access telehealth could be without much needed access to broadband until 2028. Conversely the applicant, with grant funding, would be providing services at up to 1Gbps symmetrical over fiber facilities as early as mid-year 2024 with full project completion year end 2025. The majority of the project area does not have any commitment of federal funding.

Describe your plans or programs you will implement to improve adoption in the community described in this proposal.

Comporium understands that building a broadband network is critical to the project area and further recognizes the need to engage the community increases awareness and adoption of the newly available broadband services. Comporium plans on using various marketing tactics to promote the broadband expansion. These include but are not limited to:

- **Press Release:** As soon as an award announcement has been finalized and signed by ORS and the legal team of Comporium a press release will be issued to local media outlets. These types of media releases will be used first, to make residents and businesses aware of planned upgrades in unserved areas of the service territory.
- **Direct Phone Calls:** Comporium will generate a list of residential and business locations within the polygons that have been identified as unserved. Outbound phone calls will be made by the automated IVR (interactive voice response) system to notify customers upgrades are coming to their area.
- **Email Marketing and Advertising Campaign:** Current DSL customers of Comporium have an email address on file with the company. Comporium Marketing personnel will be able to compose an announcement email and send it directly to email addresses of residences and businesses who will benefit from broadband expansion.
- **Direct Mail Postcards:** Comporium will implement a direct mail campaign to target locations within the unserved polygons to make them aware of the upgrades. These postcards will notify current DSL customers that their area has been identified and will be upgraded with newer fiber technologies.
- **Community Engagement Events:** Comporium will hold events at various locations within the project areas. These events will be open to the public, so that customers can come ask questions to staff.

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

The Comporium Marketing department will strive to build on past success stories with increasing digital literacy and broadband adoption in the CPF project areas. When exploring and discussing strategies to assist in digital literacy, Comporium created a training video called; "Comporium Internet 101 - Basic Internet Concepts." Please view the link to Comporium Internet 101 – Basic Internet Concepts here: <https://youtu.be/iWE97b8xhJY>. Topics covered in this video range from bandwidth, home wi-fi, email, protecting oneself against online scams, and antivirus software. Comporium previously has held meetings in community centers in Fort Lawn, Buford, North, and Woodford, South Carolina where residents and businesses were invited to attend. Those in attendance saw the video and had the opportunity to ask questions to marketing staff and multi system technicians that were in attendance. Comporium also held training classes in our business office locations to assist those who simply want to know more about the internet and broadband adoption. Those in attendance at the business office locations also watched the Comporium Internet 101 – Basic Internet Concepts video. Customer service representatives and multi-service technicians were also made available to those in attendance for questions regarding broadband adoption. Comporium's Broadband Technical support team has proven that it can help new broadband users learn more about the internet and assist in troubleshooting issues. Comporium also has software that reads social media comments on the Comporium Facebook and Twitter pages and relays those comments to broadband technical support so a technician can respond to them. Customers can also access their My-Account online and submit their own reports and then a call center representative will call them back. These types of broadband sessions and digital literacy will continue if awarded a broadband grant through the Capital Project Fund (CPF).

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

Contingent on cooperation and assistance from local governments as applicable, Comporium Inc. will provision a wi-fi access point within the project area. This will be free to the citizens of Spartanburg County for a period of 24 months. Following the initial two-year period, Comporium will no longer offer free wireless wi-fi broadband service, but will allow the county government or a representative authorized by Spartanburg County to ensure the continued availability of the wi-fi service by assuming financial responsibility with no nonrecurring charge if such entity deems the service to be in the public interest at that time. The monthly recurring charge for broadband enabled wi-fi service will be available under 1-year contractual increments that are not automatically renewed.

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 Area on the general affordability needs of the target markets.

Comporium, Inc. consulted with Duke Energy Government Relations, Town of Chesnee, and Town of Ridge Spring to discuss broadband needs and affordability needs within the target market areas. All participants agreed rates were affordable.

What network resiliency strategies will be leveraged to ensure facilities remain operational?

Comporium, Inc. entity owns and operates most of the core network elements that serve all the Comporium ILECs and CLECs. Comporium, Inc. uses dedicated transport to provide diverse connectivity between the Comporium, Inc. subsidiary locations. This dedicated transport carries voice, data, and video traffic between the Comporium Family of companies. Comporium, Inc. has IP and TDM connections to multiple carriers providing connectivity for our customers to reach the world. Comporium, Inc.'s MPLS core network provides diverse and redundant IP routing that supports all Comporium customer facing services. Broadband is provided to all the Comporium companies via core network routers located throughout each Comporium operating area. Cache servers, firewalls, and other security equipment are sized to handle the traffic from all the Comporium affiliates and subsidiaries. The broadband network connects to the internet numerous 100 Gbps circuits that are purchased from three different vendors to ensure the network has sufficient capacity that is also resilient. The traffic is constantly monitored, maintaining high-quality broadband service to all end users. Comporium generally deploys FTTP services using diverse ring networks. These networks provide protection against a large customer impacting event by providing a path for traffic to reroute around in the case of a fiber cut or equipment failure. Comporium's Inc.'s network also utilizes a combination of backup batteries and standby generators to provide reliable service when commercial power fails. The optical network terminals at customer sites can also be equipped with a backup battery providing service for up to twenty-four hours in the event of a commercial power failure. Comporium's Network Operations Center proactively monitors the network 24x7 to ensure critical network events are responded to in a timely manner.

<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>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>	

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5.1 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Congress of the United States
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental Entity
Role within proposed project	Legislative Support
Primary Contact Name	Ralph Norman
Title	House of Representative Member
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	319 Cannon House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone Number	202-225-5501
Email	ralph.norman@mail.house.gov

5.2 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	City of Chesnee
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental Entity
Role within proposed project	Local Government Support
Primary Contact Name	Bruce G. Mahaffey
Title	Mayor
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	201 West Cherokee St. Chesnee, S.C. 29323
Phone Number	864-461-2225
Email	dcoggins@cityofchesnee.org (City Clerk)

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

House of Representatives of South Carolina
Governmental Entity
State Government Support
Bill Taylor
Representative
P. O. Box 2646 Aiken, SC 29802
(803) 270-2012
bill@taylorschouse.com

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

House of Representatives of South Carolina
Governmental Entity
State Government Support
Cal Forrest
Representative
323-C Blatt Building Columbia, SC 29211
803-212-6938
calforrest@schouse.gov

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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

Existing ~~Fiber/Cable Lines~~ 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

Main Street Work Plan

No

Any additional information evidencing community need for project

Yes