

South Carolina 2023 ARPA Grant Program Application CPF 1.0



Section 1.1 - Applicant Information

Legal Entity/Organization Name	WC Fiber, LLC
Parent Organization	West Carolina Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
Entity Type (e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Corporation
Primary Contact Name	Jeff Wilson
Title	President / CEO
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	PO Box 610, Abbeville, SC 29620
Phone Number	864-446-9251
Email	jeff.wilson@wctel.com

Section 1.2 - Project Name/Number

Project Number (Format XXX-XX)	WCF-22
Project Name	Pickens/Anderson Counties
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	12/31/2010
Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Submission	February 28, 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.

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	
	878
	45.00%
	55.00%

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

Project Start Date

Project Construction Activity Begins

Project Construction Activity Completion

	November 20, 2023
	January 8, 2024
	March 31, 2025

Customer Premises

Initiation of Operations (premise installations begin)

Overall Project Completion Date

Will the project be completed within

24 months of official Notice to Proceed (NTP)?

	April 1, 2024
	November 28, 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?

250 Mbps / 250 Mbps	
	\$50
Yes	
No	
Yes	

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Section 2.1 - Project Construction Costs

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		\$ 38,804,880.00
Applicant-Provided Funding		\$ 1,258,474.00
Third-Party Funding Source (if applicable) - List Source	See List Below	\$ 11,676,486.00
In-Kind Match (for Main Street Projects only)		\$ -
Total Project Cost		\$ 51,739,840.00
Percentage Funds Requested from SC Broadband Office		75.00%
Percentage Funds from Applicant Match		2.43%
Percentage Funds from Third Party Funding Source		22.57%
Percentage Funds from In-Kind Match		0.00%

<u>Third-Party Funding:</u>	<u>Amount:</u>	
Blue Ridge Electric	\$11,633,486.00	
Anderson County	\$20,000.00	
And Cty School Dist#3	\$3,000.00	
Clemson University	\$20,000.00	
	\$11,676,486.00	

**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

Agree

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.

Agree

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.

WCFIBER, LLC submits this grant application to construct a 100% fiber network in the proposed project area. This project area includes unserved locations across all regions of Pickens County and the northwestern region of Anderson County. The proposed network will utilize XGS PON technology capable of delivering 10 Gbps symmetrical service to each location passed.

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

These census blocks have been designated as being unserved, and WCFIBER's proposed project would construct a 100% fiber to the home (FTTH) network to serve these unserved locations. WCFIBER has been working closely with local school districts and public officials on our efforts to apply for this grant. If awarded WCFIBER will utilize an aggressive marketing campaign to inform people in the proposed service areas that service is available, opportunities to learn about broadband and affordability through programs like the Affordable Connectivity Program. This campaign would include mailers, radio ads and in some cases door to door consultation.

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 understand small portions of this proposed project area overlap areas that have been awarded federal funding through RDOF. However, as evidenced by the numerous letters of support we have received from these communities, there is an identified need for additional broadband investment in these areas that is not being met by existing federal or state funding commitments. These communities have an urgent and critical need for reliable high-speed Internet access that is not being met, and they are very supportive of WCFIBER's efforts to expand broadband to their communities. Additional broadband infrastructure is needed to ensure that these rural areas do not continue to get left behind in areas of K-12 education, economic development, public safety, and health care. The United States Department of the Treasury has established guidelines which encourages recipients "to prioritize support for broadband networks owned, operated, or affiliated with local governments, nonprofits, and cooperatives." WCFIBER, LLC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of West Carolina Rural Telephone Cooperative, and has partnered with Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative to expand broadband service to unserved areas in upstate South Carolina, including Oconee, Pickens, and Anderson Counties. WCFIBER is Anderson County's preferred provider pursuant to an award under the County's RFP #22-08. WCFIBER already has a strong existing presence in these areas.

We are committed to expanding broadband very quickly to these areas and meeting this critical need now. We have a strong history of meeting – and exceeding – our broadband build-out timeline commitments. Not only will we build out to these areas very quickly, but we will construct a future-proof, 100% fiber network capable of delivering up to 10 Gbps symmetrical speeds.

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

WCFIBER plans to conduct a marketing campaign targeting the proposed area with direct mail, postcards, radio ads and in some cases door to door consultation. We actively host meetings at chamber and non-profit events to inform the public on our expansion plans. WCFIBER has already established a way for the community to register their interest through our website. Once service is available, residents are immediately contacted. We also actively market the ACP program through direct mail, postcards, and community events.

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

WCFIBER has developed computer literacy classes working with Tri-County Technical College. We have conducted two classes in Oconee and Pickens County and have plans to conduct classes in the fall in Anderson County with additional classes in Oconee County. These classes are open to the public, and you do not have to be a customer to attend. The courses cover basic computer skills, streaming, and cyber security. We also use online tools to help businesses navigate social media for marketing purposes.

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.

Yes. If awarded this grant, we will identify a minimum of 2 locations within the proposed project area to install a free public Wi-Fi hotspot. These hot spots will remain installed until at least 12/31/2027. Likely locations would be fire departments, community centers, churches, etc. We will identify these possible locations and work with the property owner to obtain approval for the hotspot.

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
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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.

WCFIBER has had discussions with County Government Officials, School District Superintendents, Council of Governments, and government social services to better understand the broadband affordability needs of existing and prospective service areas. WCFIBER has presented to County Councils, City Councils, and non-profits. We are also working with these organizations to provide information on the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). Some other organizations we have worked with in providing information on our service packages and the Affordable Connectivity Program includes GLEAMNS Human Resources Commission, Local housing authorities, The Department of Social Services, Local food banks, First Steps, and Veteran Offices.

We have utilized radio, printed materials, door hangers, and community events to inform the public of the ACP. WCFIBER also has had discussions with various entities regarding pricing. Our prices are evaluated annually utilizing adoption rates, cost of service, and competitive pricing.

- **Adoption Rates:** Our adoption rates exceed industry standards not only in new markets but also in established markets.
- **Cost to Provide Service:** We are constantly evaluating our cost to provide service. We invest in the latest technology to provide the best service. We are one of the few companies offering a total fiber to the home network.
- **Competitive Pricing:** Based on throughput - speed measured in Mbps - we offer the lowest prices in the area. Our service offerings are symmetrical speeds, which most competitors do not provide.

WCFIBER utilizes the following measures to eliminate barriers to service adoption:

- **Affordable services offering designed to meet the needs of all users, from basic browsing and email to those that have fully engaged in a digital lifestyle.**
- **No data caps or speed throttling**
- **No installation charges**
- **No contracts**
- **No deposits**
- **No credit checks**
- **1st month free**

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

We maintain multiple equipment points of presence throughout our service area with a distributed core routing infrastructure that provides geo-redundancy in the event of an outage affecting a single location. Core routing and switching sites are connected via multiple fiber routes to ensure network availability during fiber cuts. Individual core network components are designed with internal redundant components (power, cooling, processing) and are placed in such a way that customer-access points are serviced by redundant and diverse core network devices and locations configured for rapid failover in the event of a hardware or transport failure. Our redundant components and diverse fiber routes are sized to handle the full capacity of our network needs. So, there is no impact to our customers if the network is in a degraded state.

We have geo-redundant backbone routes to 3 Internet Peering locations. Columbia, Charlotte, and Atlanta. We have BGP peering sessions with 3 different Internet providers at these locations for redundancy.

Each of our equipment sites are equipped with battery backup and a backup generator. This ensures uninterrupted power to each of our sites if there is a loss of commercial power.

Capacity planning is achieved via continuous monitoring of utilization on core transport and customer access links and additional capacity is added where needed by combining multiple individual network connections to increase bandwidth capacity on network paths. Additionally, we continuously monitor and modify traffic routing mechanisms within the network to best utilize all available network capacity. Our network is very scalable with additional 10 Gig connections available at the edge, 100 Gig connections available in the core, and 400 Gig wavelengths at the transport level. We can quickly adjust to demand increases by turning up additional ports at the edge or in the core, and we can turn up additional wavelengths as needed at the transport level.

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	Pickens County School District
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental
Role within proposed project	Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Dr. Daniel Merck
Title	Superintendent
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	1348 Griffin Mill Rd., Easley, SC 29640
Phone Number	864-397-1000
Email	

5.2 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Pickens County Administration
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Government
Role within proposed project	Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Ken Roper
Title	Pickens County Administrator
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	222 McDaniel Ave. B-2, Pickens, SC 29671
Phone Number	864-898-5844
Email	kenr@co.pickens.sc.us

5.3 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Appalachian Council of Governments
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental - Non-Profit
Role within proposed project	Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Steven R. Pelissier
Title	Executive Director
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	30 Century Circle, Greenville, SC 29607
Phone Number	864-242-9733
Email	

5.4 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Anderson School District 4
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental
Role within proposed project	Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Dee Chistopher
Title	Superintendent
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	315 East Queen St, Pendleton, SC 29670
Phone Number	864-403-2000
Email	

5.5 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Anderson County School District 3
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental

Role within proposed project	Third Party Funding / Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Kathy Hipp
Title	Superintendent
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	335 West Front Street, Iva, SC 29655
Phone Number	864-348-6196
Email	hippk@acsd3.org

5.6 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Anderson County School District 1
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Government
Role within proposed project	Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Robert Binnicker
Title	Superintendent
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	P.O. Box 99, Williamston, SC 29697
Phone Number	864-847-7344
Email	binnickr@apps.anderson1.org

5.7 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Anderson County Administration
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental
Role within proposed project	Third Party Funding / Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Rusty Burns
Title	Administrator
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	PO Box 8002, Anderson, SC 29622

Phone Number	864-260-4031
Email	rburns@andersoncountysc.org

5.8 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Anderson County Fire Protection Commission
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental
Role within proposed project	Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Jimmy Sutherland
Title	Fire Chief
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	210 McGee Rd., Anderson, SC 29625
Phone Number	864-260-4016
Email	bmooon@acfd.org

5.9 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Tri-County Technical College
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental
Role within proposed project	Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Galen DeHay
Title	President
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	PO Box 587, Pendelton, SC 29670
Phone Number	864-646-1774
Email	

5.10 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Clemson University
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental
Role within proposed project	Third Party Funding / Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Brian Voss
Title	VP & CIO
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	120 McGinty Court, 2121 Barre Hall, Clemson, SC 29634
Phone Number	864-656-8135
Email	

5.11 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Pickens County Legislative Delegation
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental
Role within proposed project	Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Neal Collins
Title	Chairman
Mailing Address City, State, Zip	201 S 5th St, Room 205, Easley, SC 29640
Phone Number	
Email	

5.12 - Project Sponsors

Entity Name	Anderson County Legislative Delegation
Entity Type (.e.g. Corporation, non-profit, cooperative, governmental entity)	Governmental
Role within proposed project	Letter of Support
Primary Contact Name	Anne Thayer - Chairman

Title

Chairman

Mailing Address City, State, Zip

2404 North Main St., Anderson, SC 29622

Phone Number

864-260-4025

Email

cpiasio@andersoncountysc.org

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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

No