



APPLICATION

South Carolina 2021 Rural Broadband Grant Program

Applicant Information

Applicant Name/Organization **Aiken Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

Applicant FCC Registration Number (FRN) **0030202733**

Primary Contact Name **Brooke Bickley**

Title **Manager of Accounting**

Mailing Address **PO Box 417**

Phone Number **(803) 502-2674**

City, State, Zip **Aiken, SC 29802**

Email **bbickley@aikenco-op.org**

Broadband Service Provider Experience

Date of Applicant's Initial FCC Form 477 Submission **6/30/2017 (CarolinaConnect)**

Date of Applicant's Most Recent FCC Form 477 Submission **12/31/2020 (CarolinaConnect)**

Applicant and/or Project Partner has Experience:

- Delivering broadband service via fiber and/or hybrid fiber-coax infrastructure
- Delivering broadband service via fixed wireless infrastructure
- Building and operating broadband networks in rural areas
- Operating broadband networks in low-moderate income areas

Project Area Information

Eligible County Impact

Counties
(list)

Cities/Towns/Municipalities
(list)

Households

Businesses

Health Care Facilities

Community Anchor Institutions

Educational Institutions

Contiguous County Impact

Counties
(list) Aiken

Cities/Towns/Municipalities
(list)

Households 925

Businesses 58

Community Anchor Institutions

Health Care Facilities

Educational Institutions

Broadband Infrastructure Information

Indicate the type(s) of broadband infrastructure technology to be deployed in the project area.

- Fiber to the Premises* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds 1Gbps
- Hybrid fiber-coax (symmetrical upload/download speeds)* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds 1Gbps
- Hybrid fiber-coax (non-symmetrical upload/download speeds)* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds
- Fixed wireless* Minimum Sustainable Download/Upload Speeds

Broadband Pricing Schedules or Tiers

Indicate all rate tiers for wireline projects of at least 100/20 Mbps or fixed wireless at 50/5 Mbps or faster that will be offered to customers in the project area:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates less than \$10/month | <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$20 - \$24.99/month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$10 - \$14.99/month | <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$25 - \$34.99/month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rates between \$15 - \$19.99/month | |

Project Timeline

Project Start Date 1/1/2022	Customer Premises
Project Construction Activity Begins 1/1/2022	Installations Begin 4/1/2022
Project Construction Activity Complete 9/30/2022	Installations End 10/31/2022
	Overall Project Completion Date 10/31/2022

Project Cost Information

Total Project Cost \$4,290,290	Average Cost per Location Served (all locations or structures) \$4,364
Upfront Cost Requirements \$3,671,000	
Cost of Building and/or Extending Infrastructure to Customer Premises \$619,290	Average Cost per Housing Unit \$4,364
	Average Cost per Business \$4,364

Project Funding Information

South Carolina Rural Broadband Grant Program Funds requested (\$) \$2,145,145

Applicant-Provided Funding (\$) \$2,145,145

Non-Public Funding

Amount (\$) 0

Source(s) N/A

Additional Information

- 1) Describe Applicant's and/or project Partner's experience building and/or operating broadband networks.

In 2020, Aiken Electric Cooperative received funding from the CARES Act in order to build the broadband infrastructure and provide Wi-Fi to local schools in Aiken and Orangeburg counties. Aiken Electric has also installed over 250 miles of 288 fiber count backbone with a plan to install an additional 350 miles of 288 fiber to be ready to add residential customers by June 2021 to unserved and underserved in our service territory. By partnering with CarolinaConnect which was formed in 2016, we have significant experience operating the fiber-optic network for our members and provide affordable high-speed internet.

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

With the majority of our members residing in unserved or underserved areas, the Rural Broadband Grant will help us achieve our goal of empowering communities by providing high-speed internet that grants greater access to education, technology, conferencing and more. AEC will have the ability to offer 1GB of speed to our consumers which will enhance their daily lives.

- 3) Describe any plans or programs you have developed to improve adoption in the community described in this proposal. Please include letters of support from key community partners that indicate their awareness of your project.

As referenced above, our Wi-Fi installation project for the schools was successful since students were able to learn virtually in this unprecedented year. We have statements from several school officials including Dr. Shawn Foster, Superintendent of Orangeburg County School District, "We appreciate Aiken Electric Cooperative for reaching out to us to discuss how their fiber infrastructure upgrade, if planned in collaboration with our school district, could also serve to increase wireless internet access for many of Orangeburg's students. Having additional access points help ease internet connectivity challenges for all students and families, which is especially critical as we continue teaching and learning amidst the coronavirus pandemic."

Please see the attached letters of support from county officials from our eligible counties list.

- 4) Provide documents that demonstrate your organization currently has the necessary funds (50% of total project cost) to complete this project/proposal. List documents here and attach documents to this proposal.

AEC is currently in the final stage of approval for a loan application and is expected to receive funds in the coming weeks.

Please see the attached audited financial statements.

- 5) List any lease, franchise agreement, interconnection agreement, authorization, permit, or other items needed to complete this project.

N/A

Attachments and Exhibits

Please attach the following items to application:

- Map of project area (*PDF and Shapefile formats*)
- Letters of support evidencing community need and strategic partnerships
- Any additional information evidencing community need for project
- Most recent FCC Form 477 filing

Certification and Signature

CERTIFICATION: The Applicant certifies that information included in this application is factual to their knowledge.

Signature:



Print Name of Signatory:

GARY L. STEO KSTOANY

Title of Signatory:

CEO

Date:

5-14-21

All questions and completed applications should be submitted to Broadband@ORS.SC.GOV

Facsimile signatures and email signatures shall be as effective as original signatures to bind any party.





Remembering the Past, Preparing for the Future

J Clay Killian
County Administrator

April 29, 2021

South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff
1401 Main Street, Suite 900
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

RE: SC Rural Broadband Grant

To whom it may concern:

It is my privilege and pleasure to write in support of Aiken Electric Cooperative's (AEC) application for the Rural Broadband Grant Program. As Aiken County Administrator, I am keenly aware of the lack of adequate internet access in our county, which has been made more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting distance learning conducted by our school district. Unfortunately, those most impacted by this lack of service are those caught up in lingering generational poverty living in areas least likely to have the resources to address the matter. We support AEC and its partner, Carolina Connect, because of their effective and efficient use of funds, as well as the measurable outcomes and impact their internet service will provide.

A large majority of AEC's members reside in underserved rural areas with little or no adequate internet service placing them at a disadvantage economically and personally. Through the Rural Broadband Grant Program, internet speeds of up to 100/20 Mbps will be provided to residents and businesses throughout Aiken, Orangeburg, Barnwell and Calhoun Counties. Additionally, high-speed internet will be provided to essential facilities that contribute to the well-being of these counties, including emergency response, medical, emergency shelters, lifelines, transportation, telecommunications, computer centers, financial institutions, major industrial/commercial, and other related services.

It is noteworthy that this investment will enable the construction of a high-speed, active Ethernet fiber-optic network that allows AEC (and its affiliates) to offer voice, video, and data services to households and businesses in four counties. This technology will also lead to greater opportunities for access to economic development, health care, educational, and quality of life resources.

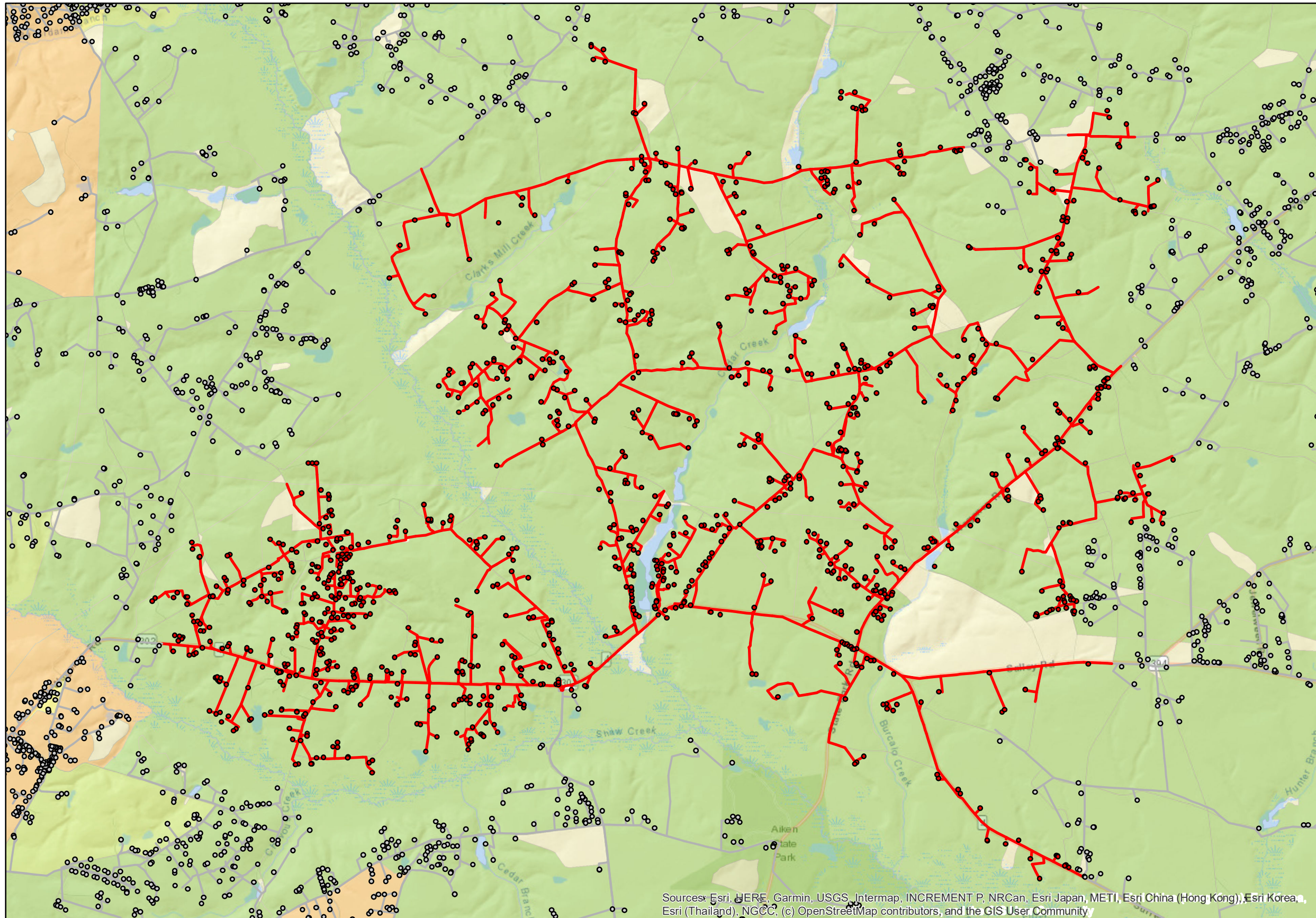
With this grant, Aiken Electric Cooperative and Carolina Connect will have the ability to expand the impact improved access to the internet will have in our community and enhance the quality of life for individuals in need. It is my hope and request that you give favorable consideration to this grant application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Clay Killian".

J. Clay Killian
County Administrator

ORS - Aiken County



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community