



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) **Barnwell**

Cities/Towns/Municipalities

(list)

Households **213**

Businesses **28**

Health Care Facilities

Community Anchor Institutions

Educational Institutions

Contiguous County Impact

Counties
(list)

Cities/Towns/Municipalities
(list)

Households

Businesses

Health Care Facilities

Community Anchor Institutions

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	4/1/2022	<i>Installations Begin</i>	7/1/2022
Project Construction Activity Complete	9/30/2022	<i>Installations End</i>	10/31/2022
		Overall Project Completion Date	10/31/2022

Project Cost Information

Total Project Cost	\$968,630	Average Cost per Location Served <i>(all locations or structures)</i>	\$4,019
Upfront Cost Requirements	\$816,800		
Cost of Building and/or Extending Infrastructure to Customer Premises	\$151,830	Average Cost per Housing Unit	\$4,019
		Average Cost per Business	\$4,019

Project Funding Information

South Carolina Rural Broadband Grant Program Funds requested (\$) \$484,315

Applicant-Provided Funding (\$) \$484,315

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 I. STOOKSBURY

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.





Barnwell County, South Carolina
County Administration Building
57 Wall Street, Room 126
Barnwell, SC 29812
Phone (803) 541-1000
Fax (803) 541-1104
May 5, 2021



RE: SC Rural Broadband Grant

To whom it may concern:

I am delighted to be writing in support of Aiken Electric Cooperative's (AEC) application for the Rural Broadband Grant Program. As a County Administrator, I am concerned about lingering generational poverty and the lack of adequate internet access in our county. 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.

The majority of AEC's members reside in underserved rural areas lacking adequate internet service or having none at all. 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 create opportunities to access economic development, health care, educational, and quality of life resources.

Receiving this grant will give Aiken Electric Cooperative and Carolina Connect the ability to expand the impact made in our community and enhance the quality of life for individuals in need.

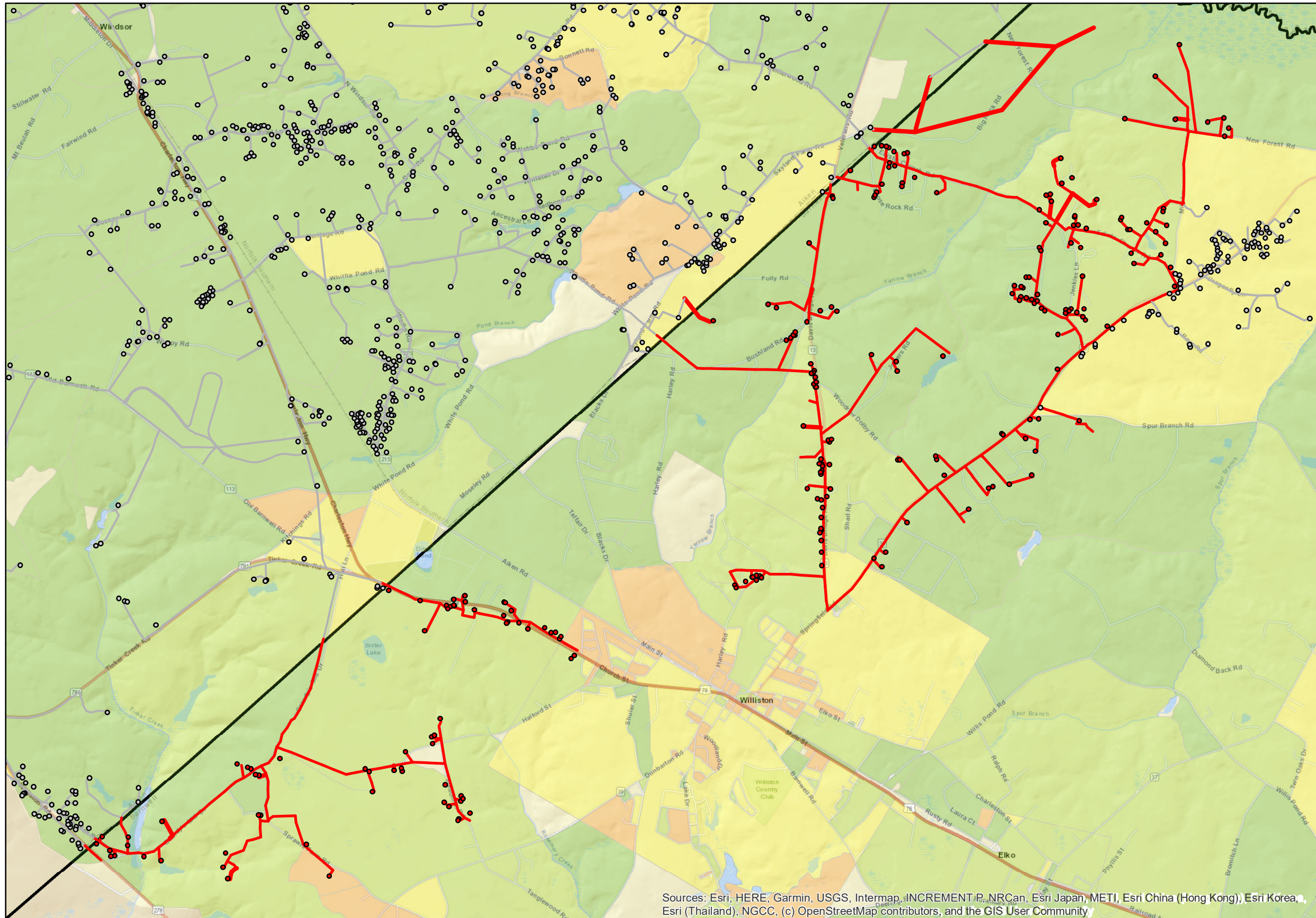
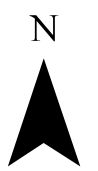
Please give this application favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

Laura R. Filling, Bus. Mgr. for Tim Bennett

Tim Bennett, County Administrator
Barnwell County

ORS - Barnwell 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