



BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM
Sandhill Telephone Cooperative

Sandhill Telephone Cooperative (Sandhill) provides local and long-distance phone, high-speed broadband, digital television, and security-system services to consumers in Marlboro, Chesterfield, and Kershaw county.

With five total projects, Sandhill received over \$1.1 million in CARES Act funding to help expand broadband infrastructure in South Carolina.

Impact to Community

Receiving CARES Act funding allowed Sandhill to install infrastructure that delivers high-speed fiber broadband to customers. The CARES Act project installed fiber to the premises, providing a maximum speed of 1 Gbps/1 Gbps.

Marlboro County government has partnered with Sandhill to develop an initiative to improve broadband access. The plan has received widespread support from government, faith-based organizations, and other community groups.

Sandhill plans to use the local newspaper, billboards, direct flyers, and yard signs to let residents and businesses know that broadband is available.

AT A GLANCE

Number of Projects: 5

Total Project Cost: \$2,249,400

CARES Act Funding: \$1,124,700

Households Passed*: 3,428

Businesses Passed: 234

Health-Care Facilities Passed: 12

Community Anchor Points Passed: 108

Educational Institutions Passed: 8

Technology deployed:
Fiber to premises

Minimum download/upload speeds:
250 Mbps/250 Mbps

**The residence or business is eligible to subscribe to services.*



“ Currently, Marlboro County ranks near the bottom with regard to access to broadband internet. The CARES Act-funded improvements will dramatically improve our situation – providing access to students, families, and businesses. Sandhill’s development of a special rate structure during the COVID crisis also will be very impactful as our citizens often live at or near poverty levels. ”

*Ron Munnerlyn
Marlboro County Administrator/Economic Developer*



Helping Consumers During COVID-19

The only hospital in Marlboro County closed in 2015. With limited access to health-care facilities, many residents previously had to travel out of their immediate area to health-care centers. Sandhill's CARES Act projects allow residents the ability to perform virtual telehealth visits with health-care facilities and hospitals using high-speed internet, thereby reducing the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus to others.

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Many students in the Marlboro County School District and at Northeastern Technical College are attending classes virtually. High-speed internet allows students to continue learning while at home.

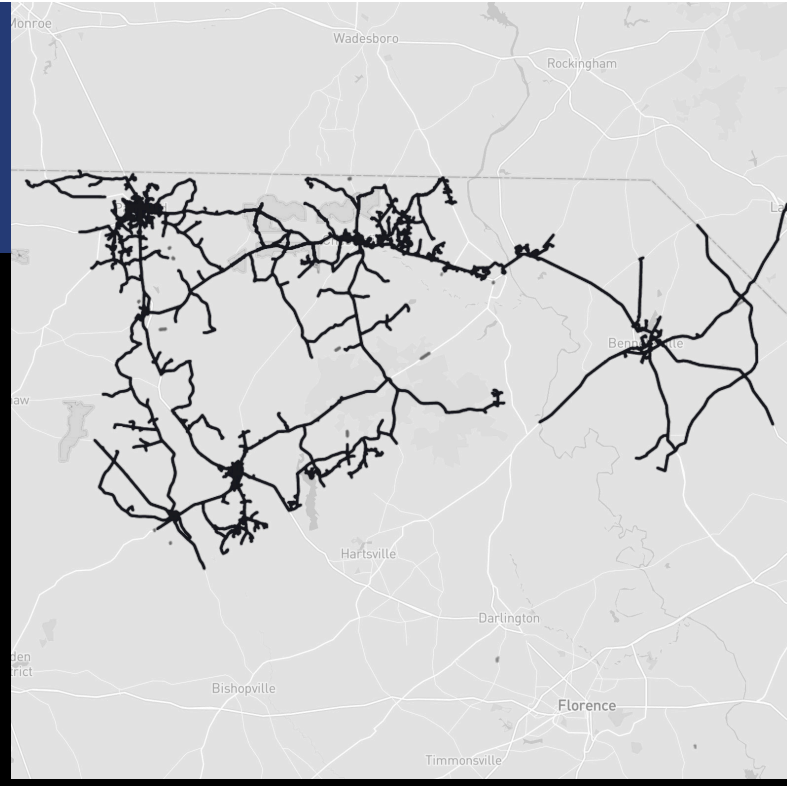
Many companies have required employees to work from home. Employees are now able to complete work previously hindered by the lack of access to broadband. Additionally, these employees are able to share bandwidth with their children who may be attending school virtually.



Project Area

Sandhill's projects were completed in the following county:

- Marlboro



Average Cost

The average cost is determined by taking the total cost of the project and dividing by the number of locations. This is the average cost based on the amount of CARES Act funding received and not what a consumer would pay.

Per Location Served: \$653.19

Per Housing Unit Served: \$653.19

Per Business Served: \$653.19

CARES Act

The South Carolina General Assembly passed Act 142 authorizing the ORS to expend up to \$50 million for broadband initiatives related to COVID-19. The expansion of broadband infrastructure emphasized services to rural communities and communities with a high prevalence of COVID-19 or with demographic characteristics consistent with risk factors for COVID-19.



About the Office of Regulatory Staff

The ORS represents consumers of investor-owned utilities in South Carolina before the PSC. The PSC is the state agency that sets utilities' rates. The ORS must look at the impact to the consumer and utilities' continued investment in reliable and high-quality services.

