Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund
2021 Grant Application and Guide

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2021 Grant Application Guidelines

An application workshop will be held at 10:00 A.M. on Monday, November 9, 2020. The meeting will be held virtually. To join the meeting, make sure that you have signed up to be on the Broadband Alabama Mailing List which can be found at https://adeca.alabama.gov/Divisions/energy/broadband and you will receive instructions on how to join. An online version of the workshop and questions and answers from the workshop will be posted on the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) website after the workshop, at http://adeca.alabama.gov/broadband.

Applications shall be submitted in PDF format by email to broadband.fund@adeca.alabama.gov. Applications will be accepted starting on November 9, 2020. Completed applications must be submitted by 11:59 PM, CST, on February 8, 2021. Any applications received after the deadline will not be considered. All applications must be complete; however, ADECA reserves the right to contact applicants for additional information and/or clarifications. All applications received will be posted on ADECA's website at http://adeca.alabama.gov/broadband.

Existing service providers shall have from February 9, 2021 through March 23, 2021 to file objections to the eligibility of the proposed projects. All objections must be filed by email to broadband.fund@adeca.alabama.gov and must include verifiable documentation to support the challenge.

An applicant may submit more than one application; however, each project must have a separate application and budget. Each project must stand alone in meeting the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund program requirements.

Eligibility

An eligible applicant is a non-government entity that is a cooperative, corporation, limited liability company, partnership, or other private business entity that provides broadband service.

Funding

Projects must be completed within two years of the effective date of the grant agreement. The grant will be in the form of a reimbursement of eligible costs up to the award amount in the grant agreement. Providers' grants shall be paid within 30 days upon ADECA receiving written certification of the completion of the project and evidence of compliance with the terms of the grant as prescribed by ADECA. ADECA shall condition the release of any grant funds on operational testing, when possible, to confirm the level of service proposed in the grant application. Such regulations shall not exceed in degree or differ in kind from testing and reporting requirements imposed on the grant recipient by the Federal Communications Commission, as adjusted for the service specifications in the ADECA grant agreement.

All projects will be scored based on the established rating criteria. The criteria can be found at http://adeca.alabama.gov/broadband. Those eligible projects receiving the highest scores will be selected for funding. The number of projects funded will be determined by the funds available and the

total amount of requests made. ADECA may request amended projects and/or offer reduced grant participation.

ADECA shall ensure that Not less than 40% of funds appropriated for grants be utilized in unincorporated areas of the state. Further, grants awarded for middle mile and anchor institution projects shall not exceed 40% of the total funds appropriated for grants on an annual basis. Individual grant awards will be for projects in unserved areas, and may not exceed the lesser of 35 percent of the project cost, or $1,500,000 for projects that will be capable of transmitting broadband signals at or above the minimum service threshold.

Definitions

END USER. A residential, business, institutional, or government entity that uses broadband services for its own purposes and does not resell such broadband services to other entities. An internet service provider (ISP) and mobile wireless service provider are not an end user for the purposes of this act.

MIDDLE MILE PROJECT. A broadband infrastructure project that does not provide broadband service to end users or to end-user devices.

MINIMUM SERVICE THRESHOLD. A connection to the Internet that provides capacity for transmission at an average speed per customer of at least 25 megabits (25 Mbps) per second downstream and at least three megabits (3 Mbps) per second upstream.

RURAL AREA. Any area within this state not included within the boundaries of any incorporated city or town having a population in excess of 25,000 inhabitants, according to the last federal census.

UNSERVED AREA. Any rural area in which there is not at least one provider of terrestrial broadband service that is either: (1) offering a connection to the Internet meeting the minimum service threshold; or (2) is required, under the terms of the Federal Universal Service Fund or other federal or state grant, to provide a connection to the Internet at speeds meeting the minimum service threshold by March 28, 2023.

APPLICANTS MUST USE THE FOLLOWING APPLICATION FORM, COMPLETE IT IN ITS ENTIRETY, AND LABEL ATTACHMENTS AS INSTRUCTED. FAILURE TO DO SO, MAY RESULT IN A LOSS OF POINTS.

2021 Grant Application

Applicant Information

Project Name: Chambers County Community Broadband Project

Legal Name of Entity: Roanoke Telephone Company, Inc., dba: TEC

Mailing Address: 236 East Capitol St, Jackson, MS 39201

Name and Title of CEO: James Garner, Vice President of Operations

Name and Title of Contact: Lisa Wigington, Vice President of Strategic Operations

Phone Number and Email of Contact: 601-354-9070 LisaW@TEC.com

Note: All successful applicants will be required to complete and submit the Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act Certification, submit a complete copy of their E-Verify Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), complete and submit the State of Alabama Disclosure Statement, complete and submit the Signatory Authority Form, and register in the State of Alabama Accounting and Resource System (STAARS).

A. Project Description

This section is worth up to 25 points. Up to an additional 10 bonus points may be available to applicants adequately demonstrating the criteria listed in number seven (7) below. Points will be awarded based on verifiable information only.

Please complete the project description sections below. Any additional documentation can be included in an attachment file titled Attachment A, Project Description.

1. A discussion of the area served including boundaries, number of households, businesses, and any community anchors (libraries, schools, police and fire stations, hospitals, etc.). This response shall also identify if the project area is located within an unincorporated area and provide information regarding how the area meets the definition of rural (US Census data). Please complete the following table.

Number of Households to be Served	150
Number of Businesses / Industries to be served	2
Number of Community Anchors to be served	0

2. A discussion of the technology to be deployed (fiber, cable, DSL, etc.). Additionally, include a discussion of future usage projections and the ability to upgrade.

3. A discussion of internet speeds, service tier and pricing levels, data caps, etc.

4. A preliminary technical evaluation of the project that is certified by an engineer. This evaluation should document the ability of the proposed infrastructure to provide the minimum speeds required to all potential customers in the project area. The evaluation shall also include a project cost estimate, project schedule and timeline to include a completion date of no more than two years, and maps showing the proposed project area. Furthermore, the evaluation should demonstrate how promised speeds will be delivered consistently to the project area, show how the network will work using the proposed equipment, and demonstrate how the backhaul will be provided. **Maps shall be in .shp, .kml, or .kmz formats.**

   Additionally, maps shall clearly show area eligibility (unserved areas and rural areas). Generally, applicants may establish that an area is unserved by using the ADECA Broadband map showing unserved areas (http://adeca.alabama.gov/broadband). However, applicants are strongly encouraged to conduct a field review. If an area shown as unserved on ADECA's map but becomes served prior to the execution of the grant agreement, the project may not be eligible for funding. **An applicant will be required to receive approval from ADECA for methodology prior to submitting an application. Generally, the methodology will include testing or documentation at both ends of a street in question. A map showing all test sites must be included in the application.**

5. A discussion of the operator's technical and managerial capabilities to complete the project within two years of the effective date of the grant award. Please be aware that grants shall be conditioned on project completion within two years of awarding of the grant. If a recipient fails to complete a project within the two-year deadline due to reasons other than delay caused by a government entity, ADECA may revoke the grant in its entirety.

6. A discussion of the applicant's average pole attachment rates charged to an unaffiliated entity (does not apply to a utility as defined under Section 37-4-1 (7)a).

7. A discussion of the applicant's plan to use vendors and subcontractors that have been certified as a Minority Business Enterprise by the Alabama Minority Business Enterprise program and/or certified by another government entity as being a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise. Please be advised if an applicant chooses to claim consideration under this criterion, a quarterly report documenting activities will be required.

8. A discussion of Middle Mile Projects (if applicable). The applicant shall demonstrate that the project will connect other service providers eligible for grants under this section with broadband infrastructure further upstream in order to enable such providers to offer broadband service to end users; provided that eligible projects under this subdivision may include projects in (i) an unserved area or (ii) a rural area that does not meet the definition of an unserved area but otherwise meets the requirements of this section, for which the grant applicant demonstrates, by specific evidence, the need for

greater broadband speeds, capacity, or service which is not being offered by an existing service provider. An example of specific evidence can be found in the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Frequently Asked Questions.

9. A discussion of hospital, public school, public safety, or economic development projects that do not meet the definition of unserved area, but otherwise meets the requirements of the program (if applicable). The applicant must demonstrate by specific evidence, the need for greater broadband speeds, capacity, or service which is not being offered by an existing service provider. Specific evidence may include documentation such as letters from local hospitals, public schools, and public safety institutions. An example of specific evidence can be found in the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Frequently Asked Questions.

B. Application Budget

This section is worth up to 25 points. Points will be awarded based on verifiable information only.

For the table, please complete the shaded boxes. The unshaded boxes will populate automatically. If you are unable to use the formulas in the table, use the following formulas to calculate the percentages: i) 65 percent of total project cost is calculated by multiplying the total project cost by .65, ii) 35 percent of total project cost is calculated by multiplying the total project cost by .35. The total grant amount cannot exceed the lesser of 35 percent of total project costs, or $1,500,000. If federal funds are involved in the project, please see number 4 below.

Total Project Cost	$552,060.00
65% of Total Project Cost (minimum match)	$358,839.00
35% of Total Project Cost (grant maximum)	$193,221.00
Total Grant Amount Requested (not to exceed $1.5 million)	**$193,221.00**

Please complete the project budget sections below. Any additional documentation can be included in an attachment file titled Attachment B, Project Budget.

1. Itemize eligible project expenses. Generally, eligible expenses will be limited to construction and construction related costs of broadband infrastructure. For the table below, please complete the shaded boxes. The unshaded boxes will populate automatically. Operating expenses will not be eligible expenses. Any additional expenses associated with the project, but not part of the grant budget, should be included in the narrative.

Budget Item	Total Cost	Grant	Match
Engineering/Design	$68,060.00	$23,821.00	$44,239.00
Materials	$143,700.00	$50,295.00	$93,405.00
Labor	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Construction/Installation	$340,300.00	$119,105.00	$221,195.00
Other (Please Specify)	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Total	$552,060.00	$193,221.00	$358,839.00

2. A discussion of the applicant's necessary financial resources to:

    a. sustain service to the project area (business model); and

b. provide adequate project financing (additional documentation may be requested by ADECA).

3. A discussion of any partners or subcontractors associated with the project's deliverables including but not limited to adoption, deployment, and service delivery. Please describe each party's role in the project.

4. A discussion of any funds associated with the project. Please explain if the following provisions apply to your project:

    a. Projects to serve unserved areas in which the grant applicant is either or both: (i) an existing or future service provider which has or will receive support through federal universal service funding programs designed specifically to encourage broadband deployment in an area without broadband access; or (ii) an existing or future service provider which has or will receive other forms of federal or state financial support or assistance, such as a grant or loan from the United States Department of Agriculture.

    b. Any award of state funds under this act, when combined with other forms of state or federal support or assistance dedicated to the project, other than interest—bearing loans, may not exceed 60 percent of the total project costs.

C. Other Program Priorities

Please answer each of the following questions either "yes" or "no." For each "yes" answer, please provide a brief narrative and any supporting documentation in an attachment labeled Attachment C, Other Program Priorities. Any claims that cannot be verified will receive zero points in our scoring system. "No" answers will receive zero points in our scoring system. **"Yes" answers (that can be verified) will receive up to 10 points**.

Does this project seek to leverage grant funds through private investment?	YES ☒	NO ☐	If yes, include an explanation and documentation in a file titled Attachment C
Will this project be an extension of existing infrastructure?	YES ☒	NO ☐	If yes, include an explanation and documentation in a file titled Attachment C
Does this project serve locations with demonstrated community support?	YES ☒	NO ☐	If yes, include an explanation and documentation in a file titled Attachment C

	YES	NO	
Will this project serve the highest number of unserved homes, businesses, and community anchor points for the least cost?	☒	☐	If yes, include an explanation and documentation in a file titled Attachment C
Does this project emphasize the highest broadband speeds?	☒	☐	If yes, include an explanation and documentation in a file titled Attachment C
Will this project provide material broadband enhancements to hospitals located in rural areas?	☒	☐	If yes, include an explanation and documentation in a file titled Attachment C
Will this project support local libraries in this state for the purpose of assisting the libraries in offering digital literacy training pursuant to state library and archive guidelines?	☒	☐	If yes, include an explanation and documentation in a file titled Attachment C
Is the applicant a certified Minority Business Enterprise under the Alabama Minority Business Enterprise Program? Or is it certified under another Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program?	☐	☒	If yes, include an explanation and documentation in a file titled Attachment C

D. Certifications

1. The applicant certifies that it is a non-governmental entity.

2. The applicant certifies all new customers served as a result of this project will have access to an internet connection that provides a capacity for transmission at an average speed per customer of at least 25 Mbps download and at least 3 Mbps upload.

3. The applicant certifies that all new customers served as a result of this project are not located within the boundaries of any incorporated city or town having a population in excess of 25,000 inhabitants, according to the last federal census.

4. The applicant certifies that it has the technical and managerial capabilities to complete the project within two years of the effective date of the grant agreement.

5. The applicant certifies that the area to be served does not have at least one provider of terrestrial broadband service that is either: (1) offering a connection to the Internet meeting the minimum service threshold; or (2) is required, under the terms of the Federal Universal Service Fund or other federal or state grant, to provide a connection to the Internet at speeds meeting the minimum service threshold by March 28, 2023.

Certification	
I the undersigned am authorized to obligate my entity and enter into agreements for my organization. I understand that the above certifications do not guarantee funding and a grant agreement will be executed prior to project funds being expended. I further understand that if the above statements cannot be verified, no grant funds will be awarded under this program. Finally, to the best of my knowledge the above certifications are true and correct.	
Signature of Applicant: Lisa Wyatt	Date: 2-5-2021
Title of Applicant: VICE PRESIDENT OF STRATEGIC OPERATIONS	

For more information regarding the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund, please send questions to Chris Murphy at broadband.fund@adeca.alabama.gov, or call (334) 242-5292 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.