**Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund**

**2021 Grant Application Rating Tool**

**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 italics below. Points will be awarded based on verifiable information only.**

Rating in this section will be focused on the applicant’s explanation of the project details. Quantifiable and verifiable details will score higher than descriptions that use terms such as, many, some, few, etc. Additionally, projects providing higher internet speeds, no data caps, special community pricing, etc. will receive additional scoring consideration.

The applicant may use multiple attachments to provide a thorough response. However, each attachment should be titled “Attachment A, Project Description,” but it may have subtitles that include additional information such as Census Maps, Preliminary Engineering Evaluation, etc.

The applicant shall clearly identify the number of households, businesses, and community anchors in the proposed project area. Maps are useful, but if the information is clearly depicted on the maps prepared by the engineer, no additional maps are necessary. A narrative response that references the engineer’s map will be sufficient.

The applicant shall explain the technology to be deployed (fiber, cable, DSL, etc.). Additionally, the applicant shall include a discussion of future usage projections and the ability to upgrade. This response does not need to be highly technical.

The applicant shall provide information about internet speeds, service tier and pricing levels, data caps, etc. This information shall be specific to the proposed project.

The applicant shall provide a preliminary technical evaluation of the project that is certified by an engineer. The 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 should 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.

Whether in the engineering evaluation, in the narrative, or as a separate attachment, the applicant shall provide maps that clearly show 1) the project boundary, 2) the US Census boundaries (rural), and 3) unserved area. Generally, applicants may establish that an area is unserved by using the ADECA Broadband map showing unserved areas (<http://adeca.alabama.gov/broadband>). Other methodology to document an area as unserved, such as household surveys, may be acceptable, but shall be approved by ADECA prior to submitting an application for funding.

The applicant shall provide 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.

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

*Bonus: The applicant shall discuss plans 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 Disadvantages Business Enterprise. Please be advised if an applicant chooses to claim consideration under this criterion, a quarterly report documenting activities will be required.*

If pertinent, the applicant should provide a discussion of Middle Mile Projects. This description should demonstrate that 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. Projects may include an unserved area or a rural area that does not meet the definition of an unserved area but otherwise meets the requirements of this section, if the 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.

If pertinent, the applicant should discuss if the project will serve hospitals, public schools, public safety, or economic development projects that do not meet the definition of unserved area, but otherwise meet the requirements of the program. The applicant must then 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.

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**B. Application Budget -** **This section is worth up to 25 points. Points will be awarded based on verifiable information only.**

Rating in this section will focus on how clearly the applicant identifies project costs and sustainability. Costs should be as accurate as possible. No additional grant funds will be awarded if the project incurs cost overruns.

Identify the amount of grant funds it is seeking. Grant funds may not exceed the lesser of 35% of total project costs or $1,500,000 per project. Fund requests exceeding 35% of total project costs or the established cap will not be considered. If federal funds are involved in the project, please see number 4 below.

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.

Please complete the project budget sections. Any additional documentation can be included in an attachment file titled Attachment B, Project Budget. If multiple attachments are required for this section, the applicant may add additional information to the title (for example, Attachment B, Project Budget – Business Model Diagram).

1. Itemize eligible project expenses. Generally, eligible expenses will be limited to construction and construction related costs of broadband infrastructure. Operating expenses will not be eligible expenses and any additional expenses associated with the project, but not part of the grant budget, should be included.
2. Provide a discussion of necessary financial resources to:
   1. sustain service to the project area (business model); and
   2. provide adequate project financing (Additional documentation may be requested by ADECA).
3. Provide 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. Provide a discussion of any federal funds associated with the project. An explanation should be provided if the following provisions apply to the proposed project:
   1. 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.
   2. 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.

Applicants with additional local match or leveraged funds will receive additional consideration in the scoring process. Federal grant or other federal broadband funding is not an eligible match.

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**C. Other Program Priorities –** **This section is worth up to 80 points (up to 10 for each question). Points will be awarded based on verifiable information only.**

For each “Yes” answer, the applicant should include an explanation and documentation in a file titled Attachment C. The applicant may use multiple attachments, but each should be labeled as Attachment C and should include the question as the subtitle. Some of the priority areas have been partially addressed in other sections of the application. The applicant may reference previous answers and add additional information here, if applicable.

1. Does this project seek to leverage grant funds through private investment? Yes  No
2. Will this project be an extension of existing infrastructure? Yes  No
3. Does this project serve locations with demonstrated community support? This may include a discussion of community support for the project including letters or petitions from residents, businesses, government officials, or other stakeholders. Resident surveys and local government resolutions may also be used to demonstrate support. The applicant may provide information from any studies that have been done to assess the number of residents, businesses, and community anchors that are likely to become customers. A discussion of any activities planned to increase adoption awareness. This may include digital literacy training, marketing campaigns, or surveys. Yes  No
4. Will the project serve the highest number of unserved homes, businesses, and community anchor points for the least cost? Yes  No

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| 1. Does the project emphasize the highest broadband speeds? Yes  No |
| 1. Will the project provide material broadband enhancements to hospitals located in rural areas as defined in Section 22-21-20, Code of Alabama 1975? Yes  No 2. Will the 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? Yes  No 3. 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? Yes  No |

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