**Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund**

**2022 Grant Application Rating Criteria**

**A. Project Description - This section is worth up to 45 points.** **Up to 25 points will be awarded for all applicants adequately answering the questions, up to 10 bonus points for applicants adequately demonstrating the criteria listed in italics, and up to 10 bonus points for applicants applying for service areas where the existing connection to the Internet provides capacity for transmission at an average speed per customer of less than 25 megabits (25 Mbps) per second downstream and three megabits (3 Mbps) per second upstream (25 Mbps/3 Mbps). 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, higher points may be awarded to projects providing higher internet speeds, no data caps, low-cost offerings, etc.

The applicant may submit multiple attachments with the application to provide a thorough response. Each attachment should be sent as a separate electronic file titled “Attachment A, Project Description. The title should also include subtitles such as Census Maps, Preliminary Engineering Evaluation, etc.

The applicant shall clearly discuss the proposed project area, including boundaries, the number of households, businesses, and any community anchors (libraries, schools, police and fire stations, hospitals, etc.). The applicant 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 AREA as described in the Grant Application and Guide. The applicant shall include a map of the proposed project area shown as a polygon. The polygon must encompass all proposed new customers. Other depictions such as lines or points will not be accepted. Maps shall be in either .kmz, .kml, or shapefile formats.

If the applicant chooses to request the bonus points for an area with existing connection speeds less than 25 Mbps/3 Mbps, the applicant shall provide documentation confirming that the existing connection speeds of the proposed project area are below 25 Mbps/3 Mbps. Applicants may reference the Alabama Broadband Map, provide speed tests (run while connected via Ethernet to the modem), or submitted an engineering analysis of the network’s performance characteristics.

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 a discussion of broadband service options to be offered, including pricing data for each proposed service speed, which must include pricing for at least one service offering at 100 Mbps symmetrical. The applicant should also provide a description of the terms and conditions of each service offering including data metering and cap fees, and other service details. Applicant should also describe any low-cost options meeting or exceeding the FCC’s definition of broadband and its current or intended participation in any federal programs that provide low-income consumers with subsidies on broadband internet access services, including the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP).

The applicant shall provide a preliminary technical evaluation of the project that is certified by a licensed Professional Engineer. The evaluation should include a description of how the proposed infrastructure will provide the promised speeds required (no less than 100 Mbps/100Mbps) to all potential END USERS in the project area, how the network will work using the proposed equipment, and how the network will be connected to sufficient backhaul infrastructure to support the proposed maximum speeds. The evaluation should also include a project cost estimate (the cost estimate shall include construction costs, any “make ready” costs, costs associated with easements and permits, and a contingency of 10-15 percent), project schedule and timeline.

Whether in the engineering evaluation, in the narrative, or as a separate attachment, the applicant may establish that the proposed project is in an unserved area in a rural area by using the Alabama Broadband Map (<https://broadband.alabama.gov/broadband-maps/>).

Applicants are strongly encouraged to conduct a field review. If an area is showing as unserved on the Alabama Broadband Map at the time of the application but becomes served prior to the execution of the grant agreement, the project may not be eligible for funding.

The applicant shall discuss any easement and/or permitting requirements for the proposed project area. Additionally, the applicant shall identify any easement and/or permitting requirements that will necessitate coordination with the Alabama Department of Transportation.

The applicant shall discuss the operator’s technical and managerial capabilities to complete the project within two years of the effective date of the grant award. Applicants who demonstrate project complexity may request more than two years to complete the project. Any proposal for an increased grant period must be part of the application and must be approved by ADECA. ADECA may accept the increased period of performance, propose an alternate period of performance, or reject the proposed period of performance. The applicant may request an extended period of performance if the applicant can demonstrate the project complexity is such that additional time is required.

Recipients will be required to report progressive completion quarterly until closeout. Grants for projects not showing progress may be rescinded by ADECA.

The applicant shall provide a description 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 Points: The applicant shall discuss plans to use vendors and subcontractors that have been certified by the Office of Minority Business Enterprise or that are Disadvantaged Business Enterprises. Please be advised if an applicant chooses to claim consideration under this criterion, a quarterly report documenting activities will be required. Vendor and subcontractor self-certification of Minority, Female Owned, or Disadvantaged Business Enterprise status will not be accepted.*

If applicable, the applicant should discuss any Middle Mile Projects. This discussion should 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 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, for which the applicant demonstrates, by specific evidence, the need for greater broadband speeds, access, capacity, resiliency, 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. <https://adeca.alabama.gov/grant-application-and-implementation/>

If applicable, the applicant should discuss if the project will include hospitals, health care facilities, public schools, public safety facilities, or economic development areas 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, access, capacity, resiliency, 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.

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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.

For the table, please complete the unshaded boxes. The shaded boxes will populate automatically. In the alternative, applicants may use the following formulas to calculate the percentages: i) 20 percent of total project cost is calculated by multiplying the total project cost by .20, ii) 80 percent of total project cost is calculated by multiplying the total project cost by .80. Fund requests exceeding the lesser of 80 percent of total project costs or $5,000,000.00 shall not be considered.

Applicants should provide project budget details in the table in the Grant Application and Guide. Applicants should include any additional documentation in a separate electronic 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. In the table, applicant should 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. Any additional expenses associated with the project, but not part of the grant budget, should be included in the narrative.

\*Please note, the applicant may break out materials and labor costs, ***or*** use a lump sum for construction/installation. They should not complete both.

1. Applicants shall discuss the 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).
2. Applicants shall discuss any partners or subcontractors associated with the project’s deliverables including but not limited to adoption, deployment, and service delivery. They should also describe each party’s role in the project.
3. Applicants shall provide a description of any funds that will be used by the applicant to complete the project that are from sources other than the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund. If applicable this description shall include funding from:
	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 entity that currently provides service 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 under the Accessibility Fund, when combined with other forms of state or federal support or assistance dedicated to the project, other than interest—bearing loans, may not exceed 90 percent of the total project costs.

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**C. Other Program Priorities –** **This section is worth up to 100 points. Points will be awarded based on verifiable information only. Claims that cannot be verified may receive “0” points.**

For each “Yes” answer, the applicant should include a brief narrative and any supporting documentation in a separate electronic attachment titled Attachment C, Other Program Priorities 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, including, but not limited to, documented support from local governments? The applicant is required to include a local government resolution if the applicant is relying on financial support from a local government to meet its proposed budget. *In addition, an applicant may seek bonus points by demonstrating a commitment to serve the local community through a project or supported partnership that supplements and complements the applicant’s proposal to deploy broadband to the area. The applicant should include a letter from the local community documenting any community projects and support for the proposed grant proposal. The Grant Application and Guide, Appendix B, includes a list of qualifying community support programs as examples. This list is not intended to be exhaustive but rather to provide guidance on the necessary scope, scale, and intended impacts of these projects. Appendix B also include a sample Local Entity resolution and letter of community support.*  Yes [ ]  No [ ]
4. Is the proposed project the most cost effective and technically efficient proposal to serve the highest number of unserved homes, businesses, and community anchor points for the least grant fund cost and best level of service? Yes [ ]  No [ ]

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| 1. Does the project emphasize the highest broadband speeds (at least 100 Mbps/100 Mbps)? Yes [ ]  No [ ]
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| 1. Will the project provide material broadband enhancements to hospitals, clinics, and other medical facilities located in rural areas? 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. Will the project provide support for the deployment of infrastructure to be owned and operated exclusively by internet service providers serving subscribers in Alabama for at least three years or organizations incorporated, headquartered, or with a principal place of business in Alabama? Yes [ ]  No [ ]
4. Has the applicant committed to improving the adoption rate of broadband services by offering programs to households that meet guidelines established by ADECA or the funding source, including, but not limited to, special service rates, internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user, and digital skills training? Yes [ ]  No [ ]
5. Has the applicant been certified by the ADECA Office Minority Business Enterprise or otherwise as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise? Documentation of certification does not include self-certification as provided in SAM.gov. Yes [ ]  No [ ]
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