South Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Program

The South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) is working to expand broadband infrastructure and emphasizes services to rural communities and communities with a high prevalence of COVID-19 or with demographic characteristics consistent with risk factors for COVID-19.

$50 million of the Coronavirus Relief Fund for South Carolina included in the CARES Act has been allocated for broadband initiatives related to COVID-19. A portion of this funding will be used to provide financial assistance to install and deliver broadband infrastructure and service to increase capacity for distance learning, telework, or telehealth.

→ Application and Guidelines

The ORS is currently soliciting applications for expanding broadband infrastructure in South Carolina. Applicants should refer to the Program Application Guidelines when completing the application. Applications are not limited to Priority Program Target areas.

Applicants can submit more than one application, with one project per application. Applicants submitting more than one project can prioritize their projects in a cover letter submitted with each application.

→ Application Selection

Project applications will be reviewed and ranked according to the following criteria:

- CARES Act Funding Objectives
- Evidence of Community Need
- Type of Broadband Infrastructure
- Subscription Packages for Low-moderate Income Households for 12+ Months
- Applicant Broadband Adoption Strategy
- Broadband Service Provider Experience
- Project Cost
- Public/Private Funding Leveraged
- Proof of Funding

Applicant must provide evidence that projects will be completed by December 18, 2020

Applications will be available beginning August 5, 2020, with applications due by 3 PM (EDT) on August 14, 2020. Applications received after the deadline will <u>NOT</u> be considered.

→ COVID-19 Need

Each application must be accompanied by evidence of need and support from the community and is directly related to COVID-19. Per U.S. Department of the Treasury guidelines, project costs for any project not expected to enhance capacity until after the health emergency has passed are ineligible. Therefore, costs related to infrastructure that would not facilitate internet access prior to December 30, 2020, are not eligible.

The South Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Project Application and the South Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Program Application Guidelines are available on the ORS website at *ORS.SC.GOV/broadband*.

Timeline

Areas of Need published on ORS website	8/5/2020
Application Period Opens	8/5/2020
Challenge Period Opens	8/5/2020
Challenge Period Closes	8/12/2020
Application Period Closes	8/14/2020
Submitted Applications posted on ORS website	8/18/2020

→ Eligible Costs

Any project currently under contract or under construction is not eligible to apply.

Eligible costs include, but are not limited to:
- Construction and materials (e.g., fiber, conduit, photonics, electronics, etc.)
- New and rehabilitative construction contracts
- Architect and engineering services and legal and professional services
- Permitting fees
- Validation of service expenses
- Equipment related to broadband infrastructure
- Equipment installation

Applicant must fund no less than 50% of the total project cost, but may use funds from other sources (community, local and other public funds) to make its 50% match.

→ Challenges

Any current broadband provider can challenge the designation of unserved; however, any challenge must be supported by evidence that service is being provided throughout area and not just to a few customers. Challenges must be submitted by August 12, 2020.

Questions?

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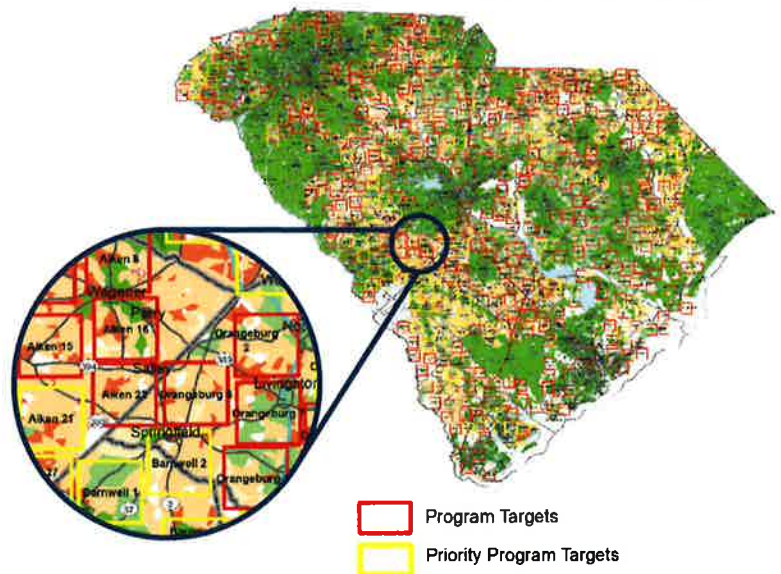*Broadband@ORS.SC.GOV*

→ Areas of Need

The ORS engaged Revolution D, Inc. to identify areas of the state that are unserved, impacted by COVID-19, and that if broadband were available, would support distance learning, telehealth, and/or teleworking.

Program Targets
Revolution D identified approximately 550 areas as having a substantial need for broadband improvement. Of those, approximately 150 areas are designated as priority areas (Priority Program Targets). These priority areas were established based on demographic, socioeconomic, and other attributes (e.g., low-moderate income communities). Program Targets and Priority Program Targets are available in a list format.

Bids or proposals to serve unserved areas of South Carolina that have not been identified as high-priority Areas of Need will be accepted, reviewed, and scored with all other proposals.

Areas of Need with Priority and Program Targets Map

Program Targets
Priority Program Targets

More information can be found at ORS.SC.GOV/broadband