

Applicant Information

Company Name	Randolph Telephone Membership Corporation
Address	317 E Dixie Drive Asheboro, NC 27203
Website	www.rtmc.net
Federal Tax ID	
DUNS #	053485702
System Award Management (SAM.Gov) ID	6QN76

Authorized Representative		Authorized Representative (Alternative)	
Full Name	Kimberly L. Garner	Full Name	Stephanie B. Gee
Contact Title	CEO & General Manager	Contact Title	Marketing Director
Phone Number	336-879-7911	Phone Number	336-879-7964
E-Mail	kgarner@rtmc.coop	E-Mail	sgee@rtmc.coop

Grant Administrator & Company Name(if applicable):

Randolph Telephone Membership Corporation

Full Name	Kimberly L. Garner
Contact Title	CEO & General Manager
Telephone	336-879-7911
E-Mail	kgarner@rtmc.coop
Website	www.rtmc.net
Federal Tax ID	
Address	317 East Dixie Drive, Asheboro, NC 27203

Project Information

Project Title	Broadband for Randolph County		
Project Cost	\$4,033,910.55		
County	Randolph	Tier #	001
Estimated # of Households with improved access	696		
Estimated # of businesses with improved access	111		
Base Speed - Minimum Download/Upload	100 Mbps, symmetrical		

Project Description (provide a brief summary of the project)

The Broadband for Randolph County GREAT Grant project will help close the digital divide by delivering high-quality and reliable broadband service with a minimum of 100 Megabits per second (Mbps) symmetrical service and up to 1 Gbps symmetrical service to unserved areas of Randolph County via a 100% fiber to the home network, constructed and owned by Randolph Communications. Randolph Communications is partnering with Randolph County to assist in meeting the needs of their citizens who are pleading for reliable and quality high-speed internet.

The Broadband for Randolph County GREAT grant project will expand FTTP in rural Randolph County—a 50.6-mile project contiguous to our current fiber network. Broadband for Randolph County will serve approximately 807 eligible addresses and among those are 95 agriculture operations. Out of the 16 additional businesses in the proposed areas, three businesses—Providence Grove High School, Captain Tom's Seafood and Whitaker Farms & Garden Center—boast more than 31 employees. The estimated project cost of the Broadband for Randolph County is \$4,033,910.55, or \$4,998.65 per eligible location. In an effort to maximize the reach of the grant funding, RTMC selected the areas in Randolph County because these rural areas were found to be unserved and in critical need of reliable broadband connectivity.

Has the applicant entered into a partnership for this project as defined in S.L. 2019-230?

Yes

Checklist Details

1) Statement of Qualifications (Please provide a detailed description of qualifications and experience with the deployment of broadband):

Randolph Telephone Membership Corporation, dba Randolph Communications, has 67 years of experience operating in rural areas. Founded in May 1954, Randolph Communications' mission is to bring services to the unserved and sparsely populated areas. Randolph Communications is more than qualified to receive funds through the NC GREAT Grant program to further rural NC's goal of bridging the digital divide because it has proven its ability to serve rural communities with data and voice with excellent service while maintaining healthy financials. Randolph Communications is a cooperative, owned by its members and is headquartered in Asheboro, NC. The company currently operates an Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier (ILEC). Randolph Communications also operates a fully owned subsidiary: Randolph Telephone Telecommunications Inc. (RTTI) which offers service outside the Randolph Communications cooperative area. Both Randolph Communications and RTTI provide data and voice services in their respective service territories in rural North Carolina.

Randolph Communications area serves parts of eight counties—Alamance, Chatham, Davidson, Guilford, Lee, Montgomery, Moore and Randolph counties,

Checklist Details

all located within central North Carolina. In August 2014, Randolph Communications formed Randolph Telephone Telecommunications Inc. (RTTI), a Competitive Local Exchange Carrier (CLEC) and fully owned subsidiary, to offer services to residents and businesses contiguous to Randolph Communications' boundaries. RTTI operates in over twenty rural communities. The cooperative footprint is comprised of 534.14 square miles. The CLEC footprint adds another 137.17 square miles of advanced fiber facilities. Both entities combine for an impressive 671.31 square miles of coverage and provides broadband access to over 20,000 locations.

In 2015, Randolph Telephone Membership Corporation began operating as Randolph Communications, as our technology evolved into so much more than a telephone company. We are a broadband provider that provides not only traditional local and long-distance telephone service, but also a host of other highly demanded telecommunication services. Lee County was introduced as the eighth county we serve in 2016.

In 2021, NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, designated Randolph Communications as a Smart Rural Community, Gigabit Certified provider, certifying that Randolph Communications' network is capable of delivering broadband at speeds of 1Gbps to at least 95% of one or more of its service territories. Smart Rural Community Providers have built broadband networks across their service areas and provide technological innovation to their residential and business customers.

Randolph Communications prioritizes future proof speeds in its projects to ensure communities have broadband that enables them to access economic, educational, health, and other opportunities today and in the future. According to BroadbandNow.com, Randolph Communications is the 88th largest fiber-optic provider in the United States by coverage area. Randolph Communications has made tremendous strides investing over \$62 Million in its FTTH plant over 24 years, an average of \$2.5 million per year. Through 2021, 90% of Randolph Communications customers and 100% of RTTI customers have FTTH available. Randolph Communications FTTH network consists of optical transport services capable of supporting broadband with speeds up to 1Gig symmetrical internet and voice. This solution is designed to meet any current and future bandwidth needs. Randolph Communications manages and maintains its own network. With over 154 years of combined experience, the management team members are more than qualified to meet the needs and demands of the Broadband for Chatham County GREAT Grant project.

Randolph Communications and RTTI have also successfully completed other projects based on demand from communities. Recent examples include:

- USDA awarded Randolph Communications a \$2.3 million grant in 2020 to construct 48 miles of fiber, over a three-year period, to northern Moore County, NC. These funds will allow Randolph Communications to deploy a FTTH network that will provide high-speed internet to approximately 1,300 residential addresses in rural Moore County. In addition to the residential addresses, this project will also be able to serve at least 18 businesses, 9 educational facilities, and 17 agricultural operations. Randolph Communications is contributing over \$767,000 in matching funds to bring the total project investment to over \$3 million.
- As part of Lee County, NC's Broadband Expansion Economic Development initiative, RTTI won the bid to further the good works of RTTI in Lee County to build fiber optic broadband services to the Central Carolina Enterprise Park in Sanford, NC.
- Randolph Communications answered a plea from local residents and businesses who created a petition at a local country store to expand fiber broadband into the Silk Hope community of Chatham County. Through extensive community outreach and engagement, the Silk Hope project has been one of their most successful and profitable. This is an ongoing project as Randolph Communications continues to add last mile connections due to interest by the residents for faster broadband. Through November 2021, 75.87 miles of fiber have been plowed in Silk Hope.
- The last example is a partnership with North Carolina Electric Cooperatives (NCEMC) and Randolph Electric Membership Corporation (REMC). RTTI constructed 31 miles of fiber facilities from Randolph County through Chatham County to Lee County to link REMC's corporate office to the NCEMC network.

These projects alone demonstrate the combined effort of the marketing team to qualify the area and opportunity, the finance department to evaluate and quantify the financial impact of the investment; the engineering and construction department to design, build the plant infrastructure; the sales department to offer the services to the end user; and the operational groups to maintain the services provided to the customers. The team works together toward the common goal of serving data, voice and telecommunication services in rural North Carolina where there is a need. Randolph Communications is committed to growing rural economies with access to technology.

2) Assessment of the current level of broadband access in the proposed deployment area – supporting data may be uploaded if applicable:

Randolph Communications examined areas within Randolph County where residents and businesses have pleaded for us to bring reliable, high speed internet. We compared those locations to the NCDIT map to determine availability. Randolph Communications determined all areas within the Broadband for Randolph County GREAT Grant to be "unserved" according to the definition given in the guidance materials. This finding is based on a number of factors including feedback received from a postcard mailing to residents and businesses in the grant area, emails to residents and businesses who had already reached out to us prior to this grant round, along with personal conversations with these unserved citizens. On-site inspections were conducted throughout the proposed areas. Another aspect of our research utilized the incumbent's website and plotting specific addresses along our proposed routes. Evidence of our findings of unserved and unreliable service is included to validate our conclusion.

Through the use of our existing website, www.myrandolphfiber.net, which was designed to identify unserved areas around our Cooperative footprint and previous fiber build-out campaigns, potential customers submitted interests and emails pleading for high-speed internet in their rural community. We utilized that data and contacted each resident and business along the proposed deployment area. They completed an on-line survey that was developed to gain additional information on their internet access and provided speed tests.

Data collected from their responses was compared against NCDIT data. Of the total 807 addresses to be served through our grant, 100 percent of these residential and business addresses fell within the blocks where internet availability was said to be less than the 25 Megabits per second (Mbps) download and 3 Mbps upload. There were a few areas based off the NCDIT mapping tool (one side of road) that showed part of the census data to be served; but, those areas were included after we verified the road we are proposing to serve did not have access to over 25/3. Evidence of our findings is included in the attached documents.

Some providers in Randolph Communications' Grant areas offers satellite service, such as HughesNet, Broad Band Q and Carolina Airlink, which is very unreliable due to potential disruptions caused by inclement weather and latency issues. The availability of satellite service in the grant areas is likely overstated. Customer testimonials and multiple speed tests made by residents verify the unreliability of satellite service. The cost of satellite service in the grant areas ranges from \$69.99 to \$350.00 per month for speeds less than 25/3 Mbps. (Supporting data has been uploaded as evidence of unreliability.)

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Reliability is key for broadband connectivity and our 100 percent fiber-to-the-home network will provide the reliable connectivity to all proposed areas with a sustainable fiber optic network.

Randolph Communications conducted field assessments to identify adequate broadband network facilities were not in place by incumbent providers. Our team did identify one location on New Salem Road where Spectrum had been paid a premium to run a dedicated line to service a business years ago; but, no additional customers are being served, and cannot be served on that service. There was no FTTH or fixed wireless broadband services in place that met the 25/3 requirement reliably.

Below are customer testimonies attesting that they not have access to high-speed internet. These people are the ones at a great disadvantage because they do not have access to reliable and quality broadband:

- Whitaker Farms & Garden Center of 2991 Providence Church Road, Climax stated, "My family owns and operates a large agriculture business, Whitaker Farms & Garden Center, and we are in desperate need of faster internet speeds. Farming is a stressful occupation and with the inability to have adequate internet services, it leads to an even greater stress. As a farmer, people often overlook our broadband needs. However, farms are an industry in dire need of high speed internet. We frequently rely on internet access for up-to-date information on everyday equipment and technology to help us stay competitive in our industry. Yet, our business, along with numerous other farms and business in parts of Randolph County lack adequate broadband access and are unable to keep up with others in our industry. Randolph Communications has a reputation as a reliable broadband company that will allow us to operate our family business efficiently."
- Debra Vernon of 6615 Burgess Kivett Road stated, "I have satellite and it is woefully inadequate. But it is better than CenturyLink, as their reliability is completely unstable. Heavy rain, out of internet. Wind blows, out of internet. Please Help!"
- Samuel Hicks of 5399 Brookhaven Road stated, "I have six children. With COVID it has been horrible. My children are so frustrated. We have to drive to town just to do basic things. I've tried CenturyLink and HughesNet and both are barely enough to check email. I've called and begged for services to improve."
- Pamela Redden of 4663 Peace Forest Lane states, "My kids are homeschooled and the internet effects their attendance and participation. My son is an avid gamer and constantly lags."
- Jaylon Lineberry of 3593 New Salem Road states, "We would love to have faster high speed internet from you. We struggle with the internet we have now. It tops out at 3 mbps and no one can be on the internet if we are wanted to stream videos and or play video games. It also effects my fiancé's work at home job with slow internet."

Randolph Communications' fiber network guarantees all customers within its grant areas reliable and affordable broadband that would put them well above what the FCC considers sufficient broadband as we currently provide 100x100 symmetrical as our lowest internet option.

3) Description of Proposed Services, Advertised Speeds, and Pricing Structure for proposed broadband recipients in the eligible project area:

Randolph Communications is a full-service communications provider that will provide reliable, high-quality broadband internet, delivered over a 100% fiber optic network. The speeds offered by Randolph Communications will range from 100 megabits per second (Mbps) symmetrical, up to 1 gigabit per second (Gbps) symmetrical for both residential and business customers. Our broadband will not be limited with data caps. In addition to broadband internet, Randolph Communications will provide quality residential and business telephone services over the same fiber optic connection.

Randolph Communications meets the needs of its low-income customers by participating in the FCC's Lifeline Program. For those that qualify, a discount of \$9.25 or \$5.25 credit is applied to the customers' monthly internet or telephone bill based on their services. Lifeline is available on either internet service (home or wireless) or phone service (home or wireless). Randolph Communications also participated in the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB), offering a monthly broadband discount of \$50 to eligible households. Randolph Communications actively promoted and advertised the EBB Program to ensure customers could access the discounted rate. In addition, Randolph Communications participates in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), offering its customers an internet discount of up to \$30 per month.

Residential & Business Broadband Speed Offerings:

Speeds will begin at 100 Mbps download and 100 Mbps upload, and go up to 1 Gbps download and 1 Gbps upload. Pricing per package will be based on the level of speed selected. There will be up to three speed levels offered to residential and business customers. The prices and speeds are as follows:

- Residential & Business Internet Only Plans: 100x100 - \$82.95; 500x500 - \$102.95; 1GIGx1GIG - \$142.95
- Residential Bundles (Internet and Unlimited Voice): 100x100 - \$87.95; 500x500 - \$107.95; 1GIGx1GIG - \$147.95
- Residential and Business a La Carte: 100x100- \$67.95; 500x500 - \$87.95; 1GIGx1GIG - \$127.95
- Residential Unlimited Voice Only: \$48.00
- Residential Basic Voice: \$22.77
- Business Bundles (Internet and Unlimited Voice): 100x100 - \$89.95; 500x500 - \$109.95; 1GIGx1GIG - \$149.95
- Business Voice Only at \$0.06/minute: \$39.95
- Business Voice Only, Unlimited Long Distance: \$49.95

Additional residential services available include voice, home security, computer services, wireless and unlimited nationwide long distance calling. Other Business level services offers include Managed Services, Phone Systems, IT Support Services, Hosted Solutions, Firewall Protection, Data Backup and Business Class Ethernet Packages.

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented need for internet service as schools abruptly transitioned to remote learning and many jobs transitioned to remote work. In 2020, Randolph Communications established free drive-up WI-FI hotspots throughout the eight counties it serves. Randolph Communications continues to operate these hotspots. School children, teachers, and remote workers all use these hotspots to participate in remote work or remote learning that they could not access from their homes due to lack of sufficient internet service.

4) Description of Adoption Plan:

Randolph Communications will utilize a variety of marketing tactics and resources to inform and educate customers of the availability of high-speed internet. These tactics will include:

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- **Crowd-sourcing via myrandolphfiber.net Website** – Randolph Communications created a high-speed internet crowd-sourcing webpage in 2016. This website has been critical to our company's efforts to build-out and reach those unserved areas. Not only can customers complete a survey which provided us baseline data; but, customers will also be able to sign up for our services if an NC GREAT grant is awarded. Once a grant is awarded, then Randolph Communications employees will reach out to each pre-registered customers to advise them of service availability and help process their application.
- **Yard Signs** – Randolph Communications will distribute Yard Signs throughout the grant application area. This method has proven highly successful in every fiber build-out campaign we've launched.
- **Emails** – By capturing email addresses of residents and businesses on www.myrandolphfiber.net, we will send out mass emails to these potential customers who reside within the grant application area. From this site, customers can also learn about our product offerings and sign up for services.
- **Social Media** – We will launch a social media campaign to inform customers of the grant and availability of high-speed internet made possible by NCDIT in their area.
- **Door-to-Door Campaign** – Randolph's team will visit homes making them aware of the availability of high-speed internet in their area, with an application to submit.
- **Newspapers** – Randolph Communications will utilize local newspapers to promote the availability of service through press releases and advertising.

By checking the appropriate box, you will upload the following documents:

5) Description of Project Area, Identification of locations to be served, relevant maps and mapping files:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6) If submitting other data sources, including field data, to identify unserved locations (households and businesses) outside of the fully unserved census blocks provided on the NC One Map, please provide a narrative describing your methodology for determining the proposed funding area is unserved and eligible for funding in this round.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7) Excel Spreadsheet (NO PDF) that itemizes the eligible activities and cost estimates. Please provide an explanation of how you estimated the costs:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8) Please provide your methodology or explanation of how you calculated cost per location (Households/Businesses):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9) Proof of Financial Solvency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10) Technical Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11) Evidence of Support for the Project (i.e. Letter of Support)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12) Evidence or proof a partnership based on the definition in the guidance document and the authorizing legislation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SCORING

The GREAT Program is a competitive grant program. Applications shall be scored based upon a system that awards a single point for criteria considered to be the minimum level for the provision of broadband service, with additional points awarded to criteria that exceed minimum levels. Applications receiving the highest score shall receive priority status for the awarding of grants.

The tool below is being provided to Applicants so that they may estimate their score to determine estimated match requirements. All final and official scores will be determined by the BIO during the review process.

	Reviewer	Score
a1) Partnership - One point shall be given for a proposed partnership that will make available existing infrastructure that has been installed for the partner's enterprise, non-consumer broadband purposes, or any other property, buildings, or structures owned by the partner, for a proposed project.	Choose One	0
a2) Partnership - A county or nonprofit entity that proposes to provide a financial match shall be given one point. Notwithstanding Article 8 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes, or any provision of law to the contrary, a county may use unrestricted general funds or federal American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117 1) funds allocated to it for the purpose of improving broadband infrastructure for a financial match.	Choose One	0
a3) Partnership - An applicant shall receive two additional points for a proposed partnership where the county's financial match is comprised entirely from federal American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117 2) funds intended for broadband infrastructure.	Choose One	0
b) Unserved Households(HH) – Using most recent FCC Data or other information or supporting data, estimated number of unserved households within the eligible county (TIER ONE)	500 or Less	1

NC DIT GREAT Program

Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology Program

c) Unserved Households (HH) to be Served – Using most recent FCC Data or other information supporting data, the percentage of the total unserved households with the eligible project area	Less than 15%	1
d) Unserved Business – Using most recent FCC Data or other information by NC BIO, provide broadband service to unserved business within eligible county (TIER ONE) and project area (Documentation)	1 and 4	1
e1) Piedmont or Coastal Plain Region	Choose One	
e2) Mountain Region	Choose One	
f) Base Speed – Min Download : Upload	100:20 Mbps to 100:100 Mbps	1.00
Total Score		3
g) Community Broadband Plan defined by NCBIO	No	0
h1) For counties that received an aggregate of eight million dollars (\$8,000,000) or more directly from the federal government, the following points shall be added to the application score:	Choose One	
h2) For counties that (i) received less than an aggregate of eight million dollars (\$8,000,000) directly from the federal government from the American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117 2) and (ii) are providing a portion of a project's matching funds using the entirety of the federal funds the county received, together with any other unrestricted general fund monies, if needed, the following points shall be added to the application score:	Choose One	
i1) Are the matching funds partially comprised of ARPA funds a county received directly from US Treasury?	Choose One	
i2) Are the matching funds entirely comprised of ARPA funds a county received directly from US Treasury?	Choose One	
Final Score		3

List all expenses related to the project, the amount of each expense, and the corresponding funding source(s) in the table below. The table should include all of the eligible costs such as: installation, acquiring or updating easements, equipment, fiber, construction, backhaul infrastructure for the end user, and testing costs. Ineligible costs should not be included in the project budget. The table should clearly show all planned expenditures and all funding sources for the project.

Reviewer Score:	3	Matching Requirement (%):	50%
Based on your scoring matrix, Your minimum match requirements:		\$2,016,955.28	
Total Project Cost:	\$4,033,910.55	Grant Amount Requested (\$):	\$0

Please indicate which documents were submitted with your application, by checking the appropriate box.

~ Reference guidelines booklet for document details ~

1) Excel Spreadsheet (NO PDF) that itemizes the eligible activities and cost estimates. Please provide an explanation of how you estimated the costs	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) What is the total cost per location for the project? Please provide your methodology or explanation of how you calculated cost per location (Households/Businesses)	<input type="checkbox"/>
3) Proof of Financial Solvency	<input type="checkbox"/>

Project Expense	GREAT Funds	Matching Funds	Total
Easements (one-time fees)			0
Materials (fiber, equipment, etc.)			0
Construction/Installation			0
Testing			0
Engineering			0
Lease/Collocation Fees (one-time fees)			0
Other 1			0
Other 2			0
Other 3			0
Total Eligible Project Cost			0

Company Certifications

NC DIT GREAT Program

Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology Program

1	Overdue Tax Debts	Does the Company or the Related Member(s) currently have any overdue tax debts with any City, Town or County in, or with the State of North Carolina?	No
2	Occupational Safety and Health Act Violations	Does the Company, or the Related Member(s) have any citation under the Occupational Safety and Health Act that have become a final order within the past three years for willful serious violations or for failing to abate serious violations?	No
3	Loan Defaults	Is the Company, or the Related Member(s) currently in default on any loan or grant previously made by the State of North Carolina?	No
4	Incentive History	Has the Company, or Related Member(s) ever defaulted on an economic development grant or incentive or been sued by a grantor with respect to an economic development grant or incentive from the State of North Carolina?	No
5	Creditor Losses, Litigation, Government Investigations	Has any member of management or any principal of the Company, or the Related Member(s) been involved in a financial reorganization, a bankruptcy, or other situation that led to losses by creditors or bond buyers, investor lawsuits, or government investigation alleging fraud or impropriety?	No
6	Pending or Threatened Litigation	Is the Company, or Related Member(s) subject to any claim, suit, action, proceeding, or government investigation that is pending or threatened that, individually or in the aggregate, would reasonably be expected to have a material adverse effect on the proposed grantee's finances or operations or the ability to conduct the proposed project, or that would reasonably be expected to impact the NC DIT's decision to award a grant?	No

Internet Service Provider (ISP) Certification and Attestation

The attached statements and exhibits are hereby made part of this application, and the undersigned representative of the applicant certifies that the information in this application and the attached statements and exhibits are true, correct, and complete to the best of the signatory's knowledge and belief. The signatory further certifies:

1. as Authorized Representative, the signatory has been authorized to file this application by formal action of the governing body;
2. agrees that if a grant is awarded, the applicant will provide proper and timely submittal of all documentation requested by the Grantor Agency;
3. that the applicant has substantially complied with or will comply with all federal, state, and local laws, rules, regulations, and ordinances as applicable to this project;
4. that the applicant certifies the financial and organizational strength regarding the ability to successfully meet the terms of the grant requirements and the ability to meet the potential for repayment of grant funds; and
5. attests that the proposed project area is eligible.

Authorized Representative

Name:	Kimberly L Garner	Title:	CEO/General Manager	Date:	04/28/2022
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