Arkansas Rural Connect (ARC) Broadband Program

What does this program do?

- The ARC program provides funding to assist in the deployment or improvement of broadband infrastructure into unserved or improvement to underserved communities. Award recipients will provide broadband tier packages at a minimum of 25Mbps Down/3 Mbps Up to its subscribers.

Who may apply for this program?

- A municipality (via a mayor) partnered with an internet service provider (ISP)
- A county (via a county judge) partnered with an ISP
- An unincorporated community (via a county judge as local official) partnered with an ISP
- A community partnered with multiple ISP's
- Multiple communities (via a county judge as local official) partnered with one ISP

What is an eligible area?

- Applicant communities must meet the following criteria to be eligible:
    - A single community with a population of at least 500
    - Multiple communities (via a county judge as local official) with a combined total population of at least 500
    - Communities with no more than 80% of the total population currently served with broadband by an ISP that offers at a minimum of 25Mbps Down/3 Mbps Up to its subscribers

- ARC allows project footprints that are at least 20% unserved or underserved. As stated, as an eligibility, a group of smaller communities (via a county judge as local official) can apply together to meet the population criteria

How may the funds be used?

Disbursement for broadband deployment costs, including the following:

- Costs of infrastructure equipment required to provide broadband network service
- Payroll for staff or contract labor working on awarded project footprint
- Lease and/or provide a location to educate and teach citizens how to use and utilize the broadband service
- Engineering costs for project design
- Legal costs related to the acquisition of real estate rights or easements necessary for broadband deployment
- Costs of media, electronics, cabling and communications equipment necessary to build and provide broadband service
- Make Ready costs for utility pole attachments
- Boring and splicing costs for infrastructure construction

What must be submitted in the application?

By communities or municipalities:

- Contact info for local officials partnering with the ISP (city mayor, or county judge)
- A commitment to help the state monitor the project

By ISPs:

- Proof of a successful track record in broadband deployment
- A narrative about how the project was developed

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Proof of adequate customer service

- A thorough and detailed network design
- Business projections to show project sustainability
- A detailed budget and project implementation plan with milestones, dates and deliverables (Gantt chart)

Are there other requirements?

- See the full list of program requirements in the ARC Rules document (pages 12 – 15) on AEDC's website under the "Data & Reports" section, "Rules" subsection.
- https://www.arkansasedc.com/docs/default-source/default-document-library/arkansas-rural-connect-rules-for-public-comment-round-2---12-4-198cbd8c94b7f94133b537a61da9f057a8.pdf?sfvrsn=337ac189_0

How do we get started?

- Discussions about the lack of adequate broadband service with citizens, businesses and local officials
- Discuss with ISP's that are interested in serving your community
- Engage with community residents, businesses and local officials

Who do I contact if I have questions?

- Broadband Office Contact: Steve.Boyster@arkansas.gov (501)682-5464
- Arkansas Department of Commerce Broadband Office: broadband.arkansas.gov