Project Information

Company: Conexon Connect LLC

Project Description

General Info

Project #: 225

Project Name: Bossier Parish FTTH Project

Total Project Cost:	1,582,626.09
Total project cost per prospective broadband recipient:	5,346.71
Infrastructure cost per prospective broadband recipient:	5,346.71
Number of households to be served:	252
Number of businesses to be served:	44
GUMBO cost per prospective broadband recipient:	4,277.37
Number of GUMBO households to be served:	252
Number of GUMBO businesses to be served:	44
General Location/Parishes:	Bossier
Base Speed (Minimum Download/Upload):	100 Mbps/100 Mbps
Supported Scalability Speeds (Minimum Download/Upload):	2 Gbps/2 Gbps

Qualifications and Experience:

Provide the following details:

- Number of years the applicant has provided internet services;
- A history of the number of households and consumers, by year of service, to which the applicant has provided broadband internet access, as well as the current number of households to which broadband internet access (at least 25:3 Mbps) is offered;
- The number of completed internet service infrastructure projects funded, in part, through federal or state grant programs, prior to the date of application submittal;
- Whether the applicant has ever participated in an internet service infrastructure project funded, in part, through federal or state grant programs, and if so, for each project, the nature and impact of the project, the role of the applicant, the total cost of the project, and the dollar amount of federal or state grant funding;
- The number of penalties paid by the applicant, a subsidiary or affiliate of the applicant, or the holding company of the applicant, relative to internet service infrastructure projects funded, in part, through federal or state grant programs, prior to the date of application submittal; and
- The number of times the applicant, a subsidiary or affiliate of the applicant, or the holding company of the applicant has ever been a defendant in any federal or state criminal proceeding or civil litigation as a result of its participation in an internet service infrastructure project funded, in part, through federal or state grant programs, prior to the date of application submittal

• Number of years the applicant has provided internet services; o Answer: >1.5 year as Conexon Connect • A history of the number of households and consumers, by year of service, to which the applicant has provided broadband internet access, as well as the current number of households to which broadband internet access (at least 25:3 Mbps) is offered; o Answer: >1.5 year as Conexon Connect with current service implemented in the states of Georgia and Missouri, and more to come in 2022 in the state of Colorado. Currently there are >5,000 households connected from projects that began in the spring of 2021 - an exponential increase from our initial GUMBO submission number of 141 households at the end of 2021. • The number of completed internet service infrastructure projects funded, in part, through federal or state grant programs, prior to the date of application submittal; o Answer: as Conexon, there are numerous infrastructure projects completed with funding through Connect America Fund II and have attached a marketing copy of those awards. We also won CARES act funding in the state of Mississippi for our 6 electric cooperative clients. As Connect, we have been awarded 1.2 billion for the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. These funding efforts have been all initiated by Conexon and award requirements are handled by Conexon. Recently, Conexon Connect won ~98 million within the State of Georgia, 10 million in the State of Kentucky, 10 million in the State of Arkansas, and anticipating ~13 million in the State of Oklahoma. Funds less than 10 million within Indiana and South Carolina were also awarded. • Whether the applicant has ever participated in an internet service infrastructure project funded, in part, through federal or state grant programs, and if so, for each project, the nature and impact of the project, the role of the applicant, the total cost of the project, and the dollar amount of federal or state grant funding; o Answer: see marketing attachment for Connect America Fund II auction where we won $186 million. We won $1.2 billion in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. We won $78.2 million for CARES awards in Mississippi. As for the impact of these projects where money for electric cooperatives was won through a consortium led by Conexon, the goal was to keep the projects viable as the cooperatives took on the daunting task to provide FTTH broadband to 100% of their members and beyond. This goal continues to be the mission and the funding helps tremendously in fulfilling the fiduciary responsibility that cooperatives have to their members. The greater effect is that rural communities can participate in the ever-increasing digital economy. • The number of penalties paid by the applicant, a subsidiary or affiliate of the applicant, or the holding company of the applicant, relative to internet service infrastructure projects funded, in part, through federal or state grant programs, prior to the date of application submittal; and • The number of times the applicant, a subsidiary or affiliate of the applicant, or the holding company of the applicant has ever been a defendant in any federal or state criminal proceeding or civil litigation because of its participation in an internet service infrastructure project funded, in part, through federal or state grant programs, prior to the date of application submittal o Answer: neither this question nor the previous question is applicable. The answer is zero. See attachment on the number of projects Conexon has completed. Since the creation of our online repository, conexonbuilds.com, and using our custom network design software, Conexon has constructed more than 250 fiber networks. The actual number is unknown as we have switched from CrescentLink to our own software. We estimate closer to 1,000 fiber networks have been constructed by Conexon.

Financial Background:

- Provide five years of financial statements, pro forma statements, or financial audits to ensure financial and organizational strength regarding the ability of the applicant to successfully meet the terms of the grant requirements and the ability to meet the potential repayment of grant funds. If the applicant has been in business for less than five years, provide documentation for the number of years in business
- Indicate whether the applicant, a subsidiary or affiliate of the applicant, or the holding company of the applicant has ever filed for bankruptcy

Attached is our 5-year Financial Summary as well as our 2019/2020 Financial Audit. Neither Conexon, Conexon Connect nor its affiliates have ever filed for bankruptcy.

Partnerships:

Provide the identity of any partners or affiliates if the applicant is proposing a project for which the applicant affirms that a formalized agreement or letter of support exists between the provider and one or more unaffiliated partners where the partner is one of the following:

- a separate private provider of broadband service, requiring a formalized agreement; or
- a nonprofit or not-for-profit, or a for-profit subsidiary of either, and the applicant is:
  - being allowed access and use of the partner's infrastructure, on special terms and conditions designed to facilitate the provision of broadband services in unserved areas, requiring a formalized agreement;
  - utilizing a matching financial and/or in-kind contribution provided by one or more partners, requiring a formalized agreement; or
  - a parish, municipality, or school board, or any instrumentality thereof, may qualify as a nonprofit for the purposes of the GUMBO grant program. Letters of support by a parish, municipality, or school board, or any instrumentality thereof, supporting an application may be submitted as part of an application. A letter of support does not require a formalized agreement.
- Provide a brief narrative explaining how the partnership or affiliation will facilitate deployment and reduce cost per prospective broadband recipient. For applications or project areas where the nonprofit or not-for-profit partner provides only matching financial support, that information can be documented in the budget section within the relevant application or project area.

See attached Letter of Support.

For work being performed by Hudson Initiative or Veterans Initiative qualified applicants or contractors, provide documentation and/or a formalized agreement.

The applicant will strongly encourage contractors during the Request for Proposals period to seek out and hire businesses certified by the Hudson or Veteran Initiative.

Project Area

Assessment of the Current Level of Broadband Access in the Proposed Deployment Area

Describe the current level of service within the area and provide the data source or methodology used to capture this information. Raw data may be submitted as part of the assessment. If data is available to support differences between advertised and transmission speeds, applicants may also submit applications for areas where transmission speeds are less than 25:3 Mbps.

Open-sourced FCC 477 provider data from June 2020 was used to query for the blocks of eligible locations. The attached zip file of map graphics show the availability of various types of internet service – fiber, DSL, cable, etc. – color shaded by provider. The raw data utilized to make these map graphics is also provided. The broadband assessment includes what type of Internet service is available across all GUMBO eligible FCC blocks of the parish and what companies offer that service. Each map shows one type of service broken down by all the providers that offer that service. The assessment does not include service tier information due to the greatest resolution of pricing information we could attain is by zip code. Zip codes can include a large geographic area, including both rural and more densely populated areas; and service tier offerings can vary in these very different areas. However, further analysis using Delta Regional Authority (DRA) speed tests aide in determining potential under and unserved status. It is well-known that incumbent providers have overstated coverage areas and broadband availabilities throughout the

United States, especially in rural areas. The DRA speed tests used to determine additional eligible areas for the GUMBO application are a quintessential testament to the scope of incumbent providers overstated services. Bossier Parish is a broadband desert. The project area, which encompasses Plain Dealing and its surrounding areas, is completely lacking in providers of fiber or cable. Bossier Parish is ripe for a broadband buildout.

Services

Provide a description of service options to be provided:

Service Name	Upload/download speed	Date of 1st Availability	Data Cap	# of recipients	Price
Standard Service	100/100	contingent upon award	none	296	49.95
Gigabit Service	1000/1000	contingent upon award	none	296	79.95
2 Gig Service	2000/2000	contingent upon award	none	296	99.95

Marketing

Provide documentation for applicant engagement to connect consumers with community education forums, multimedia advertising, and marketing programs.

Conexon and Conexon Connect use a multi-pronged approach to marketing aimed at educating end-users on the benefits of fiber broadband in their communities and encouraging them to sign up for service. Among the key messages we communicate: 1. The economic and community benefits of FTTH networks, include increased home values, enhanced ability to attract new businesses and residents to the community, and overall local infrastructure enhancements. 2. FTTH enables: telemedicine, remote learning, work-from-home opportunities, and smart home technology. To communicate these messages, we use a variety of tactics including: - community forums and festivals - local sponsorships - print, radio, digital advertising - direct mail - public relations - Social media Marketing activities for electric cooperatives beginning their fiber broadband journey typically include the following steps: - Announce service is coming - Live community event if desired and feasible - Organize marketing schedule and timelines by determining the order of feeders for service deployment - Create tailored logo and branding for all marketing efforts, including website and creative collateral - Develop website, including hosting, updates, and maintenance - Launch social media page with weekly updates - Develop marketing collateral - Customer direct mail packet and/or bill inserts - Door hangers, construction signs, digital advertising - Begin regular customer communications

Adoption

Provide documentation that shows low-income household service offerings, digital equity or literacy support, or programs or partnerships to provide these services. The applicant should also indicate current participation in, or plans to, accept the federal Lifeline subsidy.

Due to Conexon’s ETC filing with the FCC, Conexon can participate in a number of programs offered by the FCC. The Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program aims to help households struggling to pay for Internet service. The EBB program would provide a discount of up to $50/month for eligible households and up to $75/month for qualifying Tribal households. The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) will soon replace EBB but will continue to offer up to $30/month for eligible households and up to $75/month for qualifying Tribal lands. Additionally, ACP also offers eligible households a one-time discount of up to $100 toward the purchase of a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet. The FCC also offers the Lifeline program whereas the ETC would have to participate in the program to provide discounted Internet service to subscribers.

Community Support

Evidence of support for the project from citizens, local government, businesses, and institutions in the community, including letters of correspondence from citizens, local government, businesses, and institutions in the community that supports the project

Local Workforce

Documentation of a workforce plan prioritizing the hiring of local, Louisiana resident workers, to include a signed letter of intent with a post-secondary educational institution that is a member of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, containing an obligation upon the applicant, and contractors or subcontractors of the applicant, to put forth a good-faith effort to hire, when possible, recent graduates of broadband-related programs.

Conexon strives to establish relationships with local community members at all levels to ensure the adoption and deployment of the broadband infrastructure project is successful and reaches as many unserved members of the community as possible. One such partnership that was established for the GUMBO projects is with Louisiana's Community and Technical Colleges (LCTC). In the 2019/2020 school year alone, Louisiana's Community and Technical Colleges (LCTCS) graduated 33,428 students and managed 1,951 business partnerships. Throughout the state, Conexon Connect is partnering with this highly capable education institute to create a pipeline from workforce programs and technical jobs skills training to meeting the construction needs of this broadband deployment. By coordinating and facilitating conversations with contractors and administrators/directors at the community college level, Conexon Connect is better able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the manpower and technical skills required for deployment. LCTCS can use this information to tailor its workforce training and education programs to the current and upcoming needs. Potential students will benefit from a better understanding of the job availability post-program completion. Through this partnership, local Louisiana labor is utilized as much as possible, benefiting the local economy and keeping deployment costs down.

Technical Report

Reporting Requirements

Explain in technical detail the technologies to be used in the proposed project and the broadband transmission speeds offered to prospective broadband recipients as a result of the project. If it would be impracticable, because of geography, topography, or excessive cost to design a broadband infrastructure project that would deliver 100:100 Mbps, the applicant must provide an explanation. Transmission speeds of 100:20 Mbps are the minimum allowable under this grant program.

See attached Technical Report.

Explain the scalability of the broadband infrastructure to be deployed to meet future bandwidth needs.

See attached Technical Report.

Provide a proposed construction timeline and duration of the deployment project period. The deployment project period is the time from award of the grant agreement to the time that service is available to the targeted prospective broadband recipients under the grant. Describe estimated timeline, deployment roll-out and number of end-users to be served in each phase (10 percent, 35 percent, 60 percent, 85 percent, 100 percent).

See attached Project Timeline.

_X_ Wired Infrastructure **__ Fixed Wireless**

Wired Infrastructure Deployment Reporting Requirements

Describe the general design of the project and deployment plan and include the following:

- Explanation of the existing networks and equipment to be used for the project. If assets are owned by another entity, explain how they will be used for this project and, if applicable, provide a copy of the agreement between the applicant and the owner.
- Total number of miles of project infrastructure deployment, and the number of miles of project infrastructure deployment accounted for by preexisting infrastructure
- Detailed explanation of how the new or upgraded infrastructure will serve the prospective broadband recipients. In the case of the installation or upgrade of a specific site infrastructure, such as a point of presence or fiber hut (fiber), pedestal (cable), or a remote exchange/DSLAM (DSL), the applicant must include:
  - The number of prospective broadband recipients that will be served by that site infrastructure
  - The distance from the specific site infrastructure such as a POP, pedestal, or DSLAM to the end user(s) and the expected broadband speed that will be effectively delivered
- Detailed description of the design work needed for deployment, such as, but not limited to, pole work, acquiring or updating easements, and/or property acquisition.

• Explanation of the existing networks and equipment to be used for the project. If assets are owned by another entity, explain how they will be used for this project and, if applicable, provide a copy of the agreement between the applicant and the owner. o Conexon Connect is going underground for this project within Bossier Parish. Therefore, no existing electrical infrastructure will be utilized for this project. • Total number of miles of project infrastructure deployment, and the number of miles of project infrastructure deployment accounted for by preexisting infrastructure o The project will utilize a total 11 miles of fiber optic cable. This will all be underground. No preexisting infrastructure will be utilized. • Detailed explanation of how the new or upgraded infrastructure will serve the prospective broadband recipients: In the case of the installation or upgrade of a specific site infrastructure, such as a point of presence or fiber hut (fiber), pedestal (cable), or a remote exchange/DSLAM (DSL), the applicant must include: o The number of prospective broadband recipients that will be served by that site infrastructure - the number of prospective broadband recipients that will be served by each hut is contingent upon the number of potential subscribers in a given area. Density of locations is considered as well. For this project within Bossier Parish, we expect 296 households to be served. o The distance from the specific site infrastructure such as a POP, pedestal, or DSLAM to the end user(s) and the expected broadband speed that will be effectively delivered - Conexon standard service drops will be no more than 1,000 feet from any access point. This is applicable across the board for all projects in any state, regardless of terrain. There is no change in service speeds. • Detailed description of the design work needed for deployment, such as, but not limited to, pole work, acquiring or updating easements, and/or property acquisition. o See attached “Easements and Right-of-Way Acquisition” • Detailed Business Continuity or Disaster Recovery Plan • See attached “Detailed Business Continuity or Disaster Recovery Plan”

Wired Assets

Existing Network	Existing Equipment	New/Upgraded Infrastructure	Installation Type	Num of Recipients	Avg Distance in Miles Between Prospective Recipients	Expected Speed
0	0	0	FTTH	296	0.003	1000

Budget

Budget

The project budget should reflect all eligible project costs to be funded through the GUMBO Grant Program. Additionally, the project budget should include the minimum provider funding match of at least 20%, any local government funding match from a parish, municipality, and/or school board, or any instrumentality thereof, and the requested GUMBO Grant Program funding.

Attached are the following documents for the budget portion of the application: Detailed Budget Justification - This spreadsheet contains the detailed budgetary items for the overall network build as well as the GUMBO eligible portions of the network. There is a cost breakout for the MRE, Construction, Site Work, Equipment, as well as Contingencies. The total project cost as well as GUMBO project cost, cost-share amount, total project cost per recipient, GUMBO cost per recipient and infrastructure cost per recipient are all detailed within the spreadsheet. Budget Narrative - This document provides detailed information regarding each of the cost categories from the Detailed Budget Justification. Each section includes the cost breakdown for the entire network project costs as well as the cost related to the GUMBO eligible locations and portions of the network. Also included is a synopsis regarding the RDOF funding awarded within the parish and the impact on the total network build that those funds will have over the course of the 10-year timeframe. Projected Income Statement - This pdf shows the projected income over the next 10 years.

Proof of Funding Availability

Provide a signed letter of funding availability from each source of funds committed for the project. If loan or other grant funds are pledged, a loan/grant commitment letter from each source of funds must be included. Should an applicant be an awardee of Universal Service, Connect American Phase II, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, or other federal or non-federal funds for the deployment of broadband service, the applicant shall attest as to whether or not the applicant's GUMBO application and associated project's buildout is dependent upon such awarded funds.

The applicant is wholly dependent on awards from the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. For Bossier Parish, the applicant has been awarded $289,362.60 annually. These funds are for maintenance and operational costs for the network and not for capital expenditures as they are disseminated over a ten-year period.