

Project Information

Company: Star Communications

Project Description

General Info

Project #:	252
Project Name:	Pointe Coupee -- False River
Total Project Cost:	19,223,221.00
Total project cost per prospective broadband recipient:	3,497.20
Infrastructure cost per prospective broadband recipient:	3,497.20
Number of households to be served:	4596
Number of businesses to be served:	241
GUMBO cost per prospective broadband recipient:	2,781.94
Number of GUMBO households to be served:	4596
Number of GUMBO businesses to be served:	241
General Location/Parishes:	Pointe Coupee
Base Speed (Minimum Download/Upload):	100meg/100meg
Supported Scalability Speeds (Minimum Download/Upload):	10gig/10gig

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

See attachment

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

Neither STAR Communications, her affiliates, or subsidiaries of the applicant have ever filed for bankruptcy. Please see attached financials below

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.

STAR is partnering with Ponte Coupee Parrish to expand the reach of fiber optic broadband internet to most of the un & underserved portions of the Parish. The Parish has committed both funds and facilities to the completion of this project. The Parish has granted access to utility easements, is allowing for attachment to bridge crossings, made available all Parish owned vertical assets, and other important service to facilitate the completion of this project in both a timely and cost-effective manner. The Parish has also committed to a financial contribution in the amount of \$500,000 Both Star & Pointe Coupee Parish have had extensive discussion with the local Hospital and School Districts. Both groups have expressed a willingness and desire to utilize this new fiber network in the deployment of their life changing services. This partnership will help to bring life saving services and life altering educational opportunities to rural areas of Iberville Parish. As a current provider in other parts of Pointe Coupee Parish we are constantly approached, contacted, emailed, and asked to provide better services in other areas of the Parish. These requests have become even more regular as we have begun to deploy fiber assets as part of our Reconnect project. Between this project, ReConnect and Star's network upgrades we have an opportunity to complete eradicate the digital divide in Pointe Coupee. Local officials, clubs, school districts, economic development groups, police juries, and others have been excited and helpful in developing plans and efforts. Please see attachment for examples of support.

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

Above we have attached Hudson, Veteran Initiative qualified companies that are prepared to bid on different elements of this project. These contractors could do as much as 80 - 85% of the project.

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.

see attachments

Services

Provide a description of service options to be provided:

Service Name	Upload/download speed	Date of 1st Availability	Data Cap	# of recipients	Price
Fiber Optic Broadband	gig symmetrical	11/1/2023	N/A	3960	59.95

Marketing

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

STAR COMMUNICATIONS MARKETING STRATEGIES 1) GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT a) Press release to local media outlining grant and recipient locations b) Website links c) Facebook push in recipient areas 2) GRANT APPROVED AND READY TO BEGIN CONSTRUCTION a) Press conference with local media, local officials, schools, and community members b) Allow questions and answers and drum up excitement about the future of fiber c) Website update with links and photos d) Social media coverage 3) MAINLINE FIBER CONSTRUCTION FOR EACH CONTRACT AREA a) Doorhanger #1 on each home in contract area outlining project and describing the benefits of fiber optics. 4) AFTER MAINLINE FIBER TEST IN CONTRACT AREA a) Fiber open house - meet and greet with community members to go over the benefits of fiber optics. b) Door hanger #2 on each home in contract area, encouraging pre-registrations c) Maps and fiber 1-sheet at community locations d) Bi-weekly updates to local community officials about construction i) Community social media updates 5) CONSTRUCTION OF FIBER DROPS TO HOME IN CONTRACT AREA a) Door to door sales - answer questions and encourage customers to get fiber drop to the home (for free) even if they don't subscribe to fiber. Fiber will be accessible at a later date or by future residents.

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.

See Attached

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

STAR is partnering with Ponte Coupee Parrish to expand the reach of fiber optic broadband internet to most of the un & underserved portions of the Parish. The Parish has committed both funds and facilities to the completion of this project. The Parish has granted access to utility easements, is allowing for attachment to bridge crossings, made available all Parish owned vertical assets, and other important service to facilitate the completion of this project in both a timely and cost-effective manner. The Parish has also committed to a financial contribution in the amount of \$500,000 Both Star & Pointe Coupee Parish have had extensive discussion with the local Hospital and School Districts. Both groups have expressed a willingness and desire to utilize this new fiber network in the deployment of their life changing services. This partnership will help to bring life saving services and life altering educational opportunities to rural areas of Iberville Parish. As a current provider in other parts of Pointe Coupee Parish we are constantly approached, contacted, emailed, and asked to provide better services in other areas of the Parish. These requests have become even more regular as we have begun to deploy fiber assets as part of our Reconnect project. Between this project, ReConnect and Star's network upgrades we have an opportunity to complete eradicate the digital divide in Pointe Coupee. Local officials, clubs, school districts, economic development groups, police juries, and others have been excited and helpful in developing plans and efforts. Please see attachment for examples of support.

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.

Supporting Louisianans is a major priority of Star Telephone Company. That is why STAR employs 24 local personnel in various capacities to provide all necessary functions of a telephone company and broadband ISP. STAR's employees have the talent and skills to perform all regular, ongoing operational and maintenance functions for the existing and proposed network. When needed, STAR hires contractors and consultants who are in the region for special projects. STAR also utilizes local engineering firms for larger projects and any specific tasks requiring PE certifications see attachment for additional information

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.

Wired Infrastructure Deployment Reporting Requirements Today, Star meets the communications needs for customers within a 700 square mile area that extends over six parishes. Star's facilities serve these customers with five telephone exchanges (Maringouin, Livonia, Rosedale, Innis, & Cheneyville). The Maringouin, Livonia, Rosedale, and Cheneyville exchanges' switches are served by fiber optic cable into the switch which provides the high bandwidth required by state-of-the-art telecommunication applications today such as video conferencing, data transmission, and internet. Star provides and maintains services in these exchanges through the work of employees, each with many years of telecommunications experience, and each dedicated to providing quality services to meet the communications needs of the customers. STAR is currently working to extend the reach of our Fiber Optic Network. In 2019 Star was awarded \$15.5 million in Loan/Grant combination funding to bring fiber to our southern exchange residents south of Rosedale, LA and extend into the communities of Melville, LA and Krotz-Springs, LA. This award is currently under construction and is planned to bring almost 2400 households fiber optic internet and other services. So far, \$4.5 million in construction contracts are in various stages of construction. Over 140 customers have been turned up, 320 customers are on the installation schedule, and roughly 400 customers are under construction. In 2020, Star was also awarded \$12.3 million in Loan/Grant combination funding to bring fiber optic cable to our Northern exchange customers around Innis, LA, and Batchelor, LA as well as bringing fiber to the rural communities of Lone Pine, LA and Poland, LA. Funding for this award has recently been released for construction and Star is in the staking and contract development stages. There will be roughly 150 miles of fiber deployed and just over 1700 households served. We expect construction to begin in February of 2022. Star has also been awarded a USDA Community Connect Grant. This project is designed to provide high quality internet via fiber optics to an area west of the Mississippi river that is critically underserved. The project award for \$1.5 million will be matched with \$270K of internal funds to provide roughly 170 households in rural Louisiana with much needed broadband service. Moreover, this project will include a 2-year operating Community Center with internet, computers, and printers for residents to use free of charge. Construction will begin midyear 2022. The proposed project is strategically designed to build off of these current efforts and existing network. While STAR has a significant, existing, fiber-optic broadband network the PFSA will be an entirely new network extension. The PFSA will consist of 126 miles of new fiber optic construction. Our existing networks will be utilized to provide data, backhaul, and redundant service connections. Star proposes to deploy FTTP via GPON/XGS-PON/NG-PON2 (Gigabit Passive Optical Network) and Active Ethernet architectures to serve homes, businesses, and critical community facilities in the proposed service areas. The existing main Star central office (located in Maringouin, Louisiana) will be the main aggregation point for traffic from the proposed subscribers and areas. The traffic will be combined at redundant Cisco routers. Voice and data traffic services are provided by the CO equipment or transported to upstream facilities via Eatel and AT&T links of 10 Gbs optical fiber paths (scalable) and existing TDM trunks. This network design will be immediately capable of 1gig/1gig to all customers. The proposed equipment includes battery backup power designed to provide a minimum of 8 hours of support and include provisions for standby generators. Subscribers will be offered options for ONT battery UPS units that will provide a minimum of eight or up to 24 hours of local power back-up. Each type of equipment deployed will include redundant capabilities for the main transmission interfaces and paths. Additional spares are strategically located throughout the network, both for critical components and basic parts. Network monitoring includes hardware and software that can identify and locate the causes of any service outages. Trained personnel are on site and on call and will be notified automatically if there is an outage that directly affect service to our customers. The proposed broadband infrastructure to be deployed can immediately provide 1G symmetrical speeds and is scalable to 10G symmetrical services with minor OLT port upgrades. This network is designed to be futureproof and capable of providing high-quality, high-speed broadband to all customers for decades to come. The construction of the proposed Network will require an "all of the above" approach. STAR and her parent company, Direct Communications, have always on the leading edge of construction and deployment technologies. We intend to deploy construction methods on this project. We fully anticipate that the bulk of the construction on this project will be deployed underground we understand that may not always be the ideal method. When the situation calls for it we will utilize vertical assets to extend our network. This project will require a significant number of local and state easements. A public/private partnership on

projects of this nature become imperative. Our current relationships with municipalities in the PFSA will help us to build in the most effective manner. Our public partners have agreed to make utility easements available throughout their areas of influence. They have also agreed to streamline the application process and limit the expense associated with these applications. They have also agreed to work with our engineers to determine the best paths and to make vertical assets available when necessary.

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

To provide a truly scalable network there are three measurable areas. Each of these areas are connected and intertwined to provide a future proof network. These areas are Network Scalability, Consumer Scalability, and Customer Capacity. Network Scalability speaks to the larger capacity of the entire network. The backbone network in this project will tie back into STAR Communications larger, regional network. The existing main Star central office (located in Maringouion, Louisiana) will be the main aggregation point for traffic from the proposed subscribers and areas. The traffic will be combined at redundant Cisco routers. Voice and data traffic services are provided by the CO equipment or transported to upstream facilities via Eatel and AT&T links of 10 Gbs optical fiber paths (scalable) and existing TDM trunks. While the backbone network will be immediately run on a 10 Gbs system it will be constructed and immediately capable of being upgraded to 100Gbs. Routers, cards, shelves, optics, etc. will be designed and constructed with the ability to operate at 100Gbs. Consumer Scalability references the end consumers service, data, and speed capabilities. Star proposes to deploy FTTP via GPON/XGS-PON/NG-PON2 (Gigabit Passive Optical Network) and Active Ethernet architectures to serve homes, businesses, and critical community facilities in the proposed service areas. This network design will be immediately capable of 1gig symmetrical to all customers. This network design also provides for immediate and affordable upgrade to 10gig symmetrical delivery to all customers, both commercial and residential. In addition to raw speed the proposed network is designed to operate without data caps, speed throttling, or overages. As consumer demand increases Star Communications is committed to making the necessary upgrades to optics, PON shelves, network uplinks, etc. The third leg is Customer Capacity. At peak usage how many customers can our network service. The proposed network is designed to meet the peak usage at 150% take rate. Meeting this future demand will require no additional cost or investment. The proposed GPON network is designed on a 1:32 split. This fiber split ratio will allow us to meet demand at 150% of proposed service locations. The designed PON network and utilized splitter will allow for an easy transition to a 1:64 split ratio. This would allow our network easy scalability to a 300% capacity. As consumer demand increases STAR Communications is committed to making the necessary upgrades. Together Network Scalability, Consumer Scalability, and Customer Capacity create a fully scalable network. The proposed network is designed with the ability to meet the current consumer demands and the ability to meet the requirements of tomorrow.

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).

Project Milestones Date Milestone Assigned To 05/31/2023 Begin assembling and submitting for all required project permits STAR Communications (these steps will begin within 30 days of award)
10/1/2023 Horizontal boring of duct throughout entire project -- Continuous until project completion Contractor
7/15/2023 Initial community engagement campaigns STAR Communications
8/1/2023 Hand Hole installation -- Continuous until project completion Contractor
8/15/2023 Gather property Access forms from property owners in initial phases STAR Communications
9/1/2023 Pulling and blowing of mainline cable and 2 strand drop -- continuous Contractor
10/1/2023 begin installation of drop conduit from curb to home Contractor
10/15/2023 Begin marketing and Residential Sales Efforts STAR Communications
11/1/2023 Begin splicing all mainline cable and drop cable Contractor
12/1/2023 Inspection and sign off initial phases -- 10% completed Contractor
1/1/2023 Begin splicing all mainline

cable and drop cable of additional phases -- continuous Contractor 1/1/2024 Begin installation of fiber switching and transport equipment -- continuous STAR Communications - 1/15/2024 Begin marketing and Residential Sales Efforts in additional phases including property access forms -- continuous until project completion STAR Communications 2/1/2024 begin installation of drop conduit from curb to home in additional phases -- continuous Contractor 3/1/2024 Inspection and sign off secondary phases -- 35% completed STAR Communications 7/1/2024 60% project completion STAR Communications 11/1/2024 85% project completion STAR Communications 2/1/2025 all splicing tested and complete STAR Communications 4/31/2025 Cleanup and restoration Contractor 04/31/2025 Project Fully completed and signed off on -- 100% STAR Communications (Project will be completed within 23 months from award)

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.

Wired Infrastructure Deployment Reporting Requirements Today, Star meets the communications needs for customers within a 700 square mile area that extends over six parishes. Star's facilities serve these customers with five telephone exchanges (Maringouin, Livonia, Rosedale, Innis, & Cheneyville). The Maringouin, Livonia, Rosedale, and Cheneyville exchanges' switches are served by fiber optic cable into the switch which provides the high bandwidth required by state-of-the-art telecommunication applications today such as video conferencing, data transmission, and internet. Star provides and maintains services in these exchanges through the work of employees, each with many years of telecommunications experience, and each dedicated to providing quality services to meet the communications needs of the customers. STAR is currently working to extend the reach of our Fiber Optic Network. In 2019 Star was awarded \$15.5 million in Loan/Grant combination funding to bring fiber to our southern exchange residents south of Rosedale, LA and extend into the communities of Melville, LA and Krotz-Springs, LA. This award is currently under construction and is planned to bring almost 2400 households fiber optic internet and other services. So far, \$4.5 million in construction contracts are in various stages of construction. Over 140 customers have been turned up, 320 customers are on the installation schedule, and roughly 400 customers are under construction. In 2020, Star was also awarded \$12.3 million in Loan/Grant combination funding to bring fiber optic cable to our Northern exchange customers around Innis, LA, and Batchelor, LA as well as bringing fiber to the rural communities of Lone Pine, LA and Poland, LA. Funding for this award has recently been released for construction and Star is in the staking and contract development stages. There will be roughly 150 miles of fiber deployed and just over 1700 households served. We expect construction to begin in February of 2022. Star has also been

awarded a USDA Community Connect Grant. This project is designed to provide high quality internet via fiber optics to an area west of the Mississippi river that is critically underserved. The project award for \$1.5 million will be matched with \$270K of internal funds to provide roughly 170 households in rural Louisiana with much needed broadband service. Moreover, this project will include a 2-year operating Community Center with internet, computers, and printers for residents to use free of charge. Construction will begin midyear 2022. The proposed project is strategically designed to build off of these current efforts and existing network. While STAR has a significant, existing, fiber-optic broadband network the PFSA will be an entirely new network extension. The PFSA will consist of 125.6 miles of new fiber optic construction. Our existing networks will be utilized to provide data, backhaul, and redundant service connections. Star proposes to deploy FTTP via GPON/XGS-PON/NG-PON2 (Gigabit Passive Optical Network) and Active Ethernet architectures to serve homes, businesses, and critical community facilities in the proposed service areas. The existing main Star central office (located in Maringouion, Louisiana) will be the main aggregation point for traffic from the proposed subscribers and areas. The traffic will be combined at redundant Cisco routers. Voice and data traffic services are provided by the CO equipment or transported to upstream facilities via Eatel and AT&T links of 10 Gbs optical fiber paths (scalable) and existing TDM trunks. This network design will be immediately capable of 1gig/1gig to all customers. The proposed equipment includes battery backup power designed to provide a minimum of 8 hours of support and include provisions for standby generators. Subscribers will be offered options for ONT battery UPS units that will provide a minimum of eight or up to 24 hours of local power back-up. Each type of equipment deployed will include redundant capabilities for the main transmission interfaces and paths. Additional spares are strategically located throughout the network, both for critical components and basic parts. Network monitoring includes hardware and software that can identify and locate the causes of any service outages. Trained personnel are on site and on call and will be notified automatically if there is an outage that directly affect service to our customers. The proposed broadband infrastructure to be deployed can immediately provide 1G symmetrical speeds and is scalable to 10G symmetrical services with minor OLT port upgrades. This network is designed to be futureproof and capable of providing high-quality, high-speed broadband to all customers for decades to come. The construction of the proposed Network will require an “all of the above” approach. STAR and her parent company, Direct Communications, have always been on the leading edge of construction and deployment technologies. We intend to deploy multiple construction methods on this project. We fully anticipate that the bulk of the construction on this project will be deployed underground. We understand that this may not always be the ideal method. When the situation calls for it, we will utilize vertical assets to extend our network. This project will require a significant number of local and state easements. A public/private partnership on projects of this nature become imperative. Our current relationships with municipalities in the PFSA will help us to build in the most effective manner. Our public partners have agreed to make utility easements available throughout their areas of influence. They have also agreed to streamline the application process and limit the expense associated with these applications. They have also agreed to work with our engineers to determine the best paths and to make vertical assets available when necessary.

Wired Assets

Existing Network	Existing Equipment	New/Upgraded Infrastructure	Installation Type	Num of Recipients	Avg Distance in Miles Between Prospective Recipients	Expected Speed
N/A	N/A	125.6	Fiber Optic	4850	0.025	1gig/1gig

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.

See Attachment

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.

See Attachments