Project Information

Company: Lafayette City Parish Consolidate Government dba LUS Fiber

Project Description

General Info

Project #: 256

Project Name: LUS Fiber - Point Coupee Parish

Total Project Cost:	18,454,626.96
Total project cost per prospective broadband recipient:	3,823.21
Infrastructure cost per prospective broadband recipient:	2,961.80
Number of households to be served:	4827
Number of businesses to be served:	0
GUMBO cost per prospective broadband recipient:	2,485.22
Number of GUMBO households to be served:	4827
Number of GUMBO businesses to be served:	0
General Location/Parishes:	Pointe Coupee
Base Speed (Minimum Download/Upload):	10Gbps/10bps
Supported Scalability Speeds (Minimum Download/Upload):	25Gbps/25Gbps

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

Lafayette Utilities System Fiber (LUS Fiber or LUS), a division of the Lafayette City-Parish Consolidated Government (LCG), is a community-owned telecommunications system, providing broadband Internet, high-definition television and phone service to residents and businesses over a 100% fiber-optic network. LUS Fiber was one of the first municipal Fiber-To- The-Home (FTTH) systems in the United States. LUS has been engaged in providing fiber optic services for more than 20 years. In 1999, Lafayette upgraded its electric transmission grid control and monitoring technology by building a 65-mile, 96-strand fiber optic ring around Lafayette. By 2002, LUS expanded high speed connectivity between governmental buildings and "last mile" connectivity to local businesses. In 2005, Lafayette voters— by a 62-38 percent margin— gave LUS the authority to sell up to $125 M in necessary bonds to build a municipally-owned fiber project to bring fiber optic network access to every home and business within its service area. The phased fiber build-out began in early 2008, with the first residential and business customers receiving service in 2009, and the build-out completed several months ahead of schedule. Within three years, LUS provided access to broadband service to over 14,000 people. In the past five years alone, LUS has received many accolades for its activities to close the digital divide. In 2017, Mozilla designated Lafayette as one of the five Mozilla Gigabit Communities, bringing $300K in private grants to Lafayette. In 2018 LUS Fiber launched a 10 GIGS to the home; at one of the lowest prices in the country. And in 2020, in collaboration with Lafayette Parish School System, LUS helps was able to scale up to meet the increased demand for broadband service to support remote learning urgently connecting the approximately 10,000 students lacking reliable, high-speed broadband access under the Link and Learn program. LUS Fiber has grown into a catalyst for local economic development, education innovation and enhanced Internet, television and home phone services for the residents and businesses of Acadiana and continues to expand across the region. With more than a decade of innovative service delivery, LUS Fiber is proud to serve nearly 25,000 household and business customers with reliable affordable home voice, video, and internet services over our 100% all-fiber network. LUS has been a key participant and partner for internet service infrastructure projects funded, including projects funded in part through federal or state grant programs. Appendix A is a table identifying the infrastructure projects, the total cost and the dollars provided under federal or state grants, and the role of LUS Fiber as Prime/General Contractor. • Neither LUS Fiber, nor any subsidiary or affiliate of the applicant, or the holding company, has paid any penalties relative to internet service infrastructure projects funded, in part, through federal or state grant programs, prior to the date of application submittal. LUS Fiber, nor any subsidiary or affiliate of the applicant, or the holding company, 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 projects.

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

LUS Fiber first began in 1999 and is on solid financial ground. Five years of financials are included as Appendix B. to provide assurances of LUS's financial and organizational strength regarding its ability to successfully meet the terms of the GUMBO grant requirements. Please see Qualifications and Experience for further information on LUS history. Neither LUS Fiber, a subsidiary or affiliate, or a holding company has 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.

LUS Fiber believes strongly in collaborative partnerships to achieve advancements in broadband accessibility, improved economic and social conditions, and the goals and broad intent of the GUMBO initiative. LUS is partnering with six (5) parishes (Vermillion, Acadia, Iberia, Evangeline, Point Coupee) that have areas meeting the GUMBO requirements. Each parish is identified of being an “Economically Distressed Parish” with unserved area(s) that are in need of expansion of business and industry and the creation of jobs, giving consideration to unemployment, per capita income, and the number of residents receiving public assistance within that unserved area. All five parishes have executed formal agreements and/or letters of support or have firmly committed to the partnership, along with two economic development boards. LUS has received, or expects to receive prior to the project commencing, additional letters of support with and without financial commitments, from community members and entities. In addition to funding provided by the partner parishes and economic development groups, the proposed projects facilitate access to and use of broadband for telehealth services and distance learning both of which entail broadband at speeds included in this GUMBO application. LUS Fiber’s 100% fiber broadband service enables communities to offer new job opportunities, improve options for healthcare and education, and connect each region with the rest of the world. Currently, LUS Fiber is supporting local government efforts to build a safer, more resilient community by providing the connectivity needed for deployment of an IOT hub focused on providing emergency services in a timely manner; flood mitigation; alleviating traffic and public transit issues; automated meter reading; and tracking critical city assets.

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

LUS Fiber is affiliated with the Lafayette Consolidated Government (LCG) which has official policies that strongly encourage subcontracting plans to contract with or employ a small business entrepreneurship certified by the Hudson Initiative (R.S. 39:2001 et seq.) or the Veteran Initiative (R.S. 39:2171 et seq.) to substantially participate in the performance of the project. The participation of SEBs (Small Emerging Business Enterprise) in all contracts or procurements led by the LCG for goods and services and labor and material. To that end, all contractors and suppliers are encouraged to utilize SEBs in the purchase or subcontracting of materials, supplies, services and labor and material in which disadvantaged businesses are available. LUS Fiber is a locally established business providing broadband service to local Louisiana

markets with a history of employing local workers and firms. As stated in the Partnerships section, LUS Fiber's business practice is to prioritize the hiring of local Louisiana resident workers through the Hudson and Veteran Initiatives and SEB program. Several broadband infrastructure and expansion projects have included hiring local firms. For the GUMBO effort, LUS Fiber strongly commits to continue good faith efforts to meet the intent and goals of the Hudson and Veteran initiatives. Information on SEBs, the Hudson and/or Veteran Initiatives, are included in all LUS Fiber Contract Documents including the Notice to Bidders, Information for Bidders, General Conditions, Special Conditions, Specifications, Drawings, Contractor's Bid Form, Bid Security, Contract Form, Affidavit of Non-Collusion, Performance and Payment Bonds, Insurance Certificate, Addenda, etc. Also, as an affiliate of the LCG, and under civil service rules, veterans are strongly encouraged and receive added hiring "points" for job vacancies at LUS Fiber. Our Hudson partners include AdWorks, Ntense and Gator Supply.

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.

The current level of service and the data source for speed levels is shown in attached file.

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	100x100Mbps	See construction timeline	0	4827	29.95
Fiber Optic Broadband	500x500Mbps	See construction timeline	0	4827	49.95
Fiber Optic Broadband	1000x1000Mbps	See construction timeline	0	4827	69.95

Marketing

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

LUS Fiber partners with a marketing firm that engages residents about the benefits of broadband and LUS's service offerings that best meet the need of residents. LUS will expand this effort in the GUMBO parishes to enhance its education and outreach efforts, using community ambassadors to address the opportunities of broadband. LUS Fiber will create a variety of educational materials that "meet residents where they are" to use and distribute to local libraries, school districts, and town hall meetings. LUS will then work with local media outlets to further communicate the GUMBO program; coordinate editorial deskside briefings to provide more in-depth information to residents; and as communities learn of the deskside briefings to provide more in-depth information to residents; and as communities learn of the GUMBO expansion of broadband in their area, LUS Fiber will move into a media marketing program which will include print, outdoor, radio, TV, and social media efforts. See the Adoption section for additional marketing and educational forums for low-income and rural 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.

LUS Fiber understands and fully supports the intent of the GUMBO program to provide opportunities and services for low-income households that foster digital equity and literacy support. LUS provides turnkey, action based and hands on assistance to communities and stakeholders at all levels through digital inclusion, literacy efforts, education, resource planning, funding research, infrastructure leveraging and stakeholder engagement. To that end, LUS plans an adoption plan to include, but not limited to specific outreach for: • Low-income households whose children are in the free and reduced lunch are eligible for Lifeline and Linkup--develop partnerships with school districts within the parish to publicize this reduced cost program and sign-up residents. • Develop literacy programs with the South Louisiana Community College (See Appendix F. letter of support) to conduct outreach efforts within their communities. • Work with parishes to identify social service organizations in their communities such as entities that conduct LIHEAP (heat and air conditioning federal funding) and as they work with people to apply for LIHEAP, provide education on the GUMBO broadband program and sign-ups for Lifeline/Linkup. • Work with low-income (Section 8) housing managers to conduct on-site forums. • Conduct zoom calls with social service agencies to provide education on benefits of broadband and the GUMBO program. • Create “6th grade education” level materials to meet consumers where they are. • Expand the materials and outreach used for the Link and Learn initiative that connected students who did not have broadband in their homes to high-speed broadband. (See Experience Section for a description of this program.) • Develop and use PSAs on GUMBO program and benefits of broadband. • Meet with State legislators and public officials to develop talking points electronic communications to constituents and citizens on GUMBO. • Coordinate editorial deskside briefings to provide more in-depth information to residents. • LUS commits to assisting the State of Louisiana in developing a digital inclusion and equity plan as promoted and potentially funded under the recent federal infrastructure statute. LUS participates in the federal Lifeline program and will enhance its outreach and marketing efforts to emphasize the importance of the Lifeline program to low-income residents, and to sign them up for the program.

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

LUS has extensive support and backing for the GUMBO initiative from citizens, local government, businesses, and institutions in the community, in the form of partnerships with parishes including letters of 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. Additionally, an Acadiana broadband survey and a series of focus group meetings with key stakeholder groups were conducted in March and April 2021. These groups focused on economic development, education, and healthcare and highlight the problems that can be attributed to poor access in the region’s rural communities and demonstrated strong support for a connected all-fiber broadband network envisioned by the GUMBO program. Highlights are summarized below: Education Focus Group: Student access to reliable broadband Internet was the largest problem reported by participants, with rural areas included in LUS Fiber’s proposed grant application where students struggle to find adequate access. The Education Group supported funding and the expansion of access to, and increased broadband speeds, such as those offered by the GUMBO program and included in LUS Fiber’s application. Economic Development Focus Group: The group agreed that there is a critical need for, and they strongly support, a regional fiber optic backbone to support business and industry. Group members reported that available services were

baseline but not really adequate in most larger incorporated areas and completely lacking in smaller communities. For example, limited/decreased bandwidth results in businesses having trouble processing a lot of web orders during peak hours and have to wait until the evening or overnight. HealthCare Focus Group: Broadband access to smaller rural healthcare clinics and hospitals often have limited access to broadband and much of their patient population lacks good, reliable access to broadband services at home which prevents them from accessing telehealth services. This deficiency creates a healthcare access gap for poor, rural residents. During COVID, many of the patients had other minor ailments that did not need an emergency room visit, but an ambulance had to be called to transport the COVID- positive patients to the emergency room which was costly and resulted in delay of heath care services. The Health Care Group believes that a strong fiber-based broadband initiative such as the GUMBO grant will greatly assist economically disadvantaged parishes and communities. Roundtable sessions with State Broadband Director. The first session consisted of representatives from the APC board; the highest elected official (parish or police jury president) from each parish in the Acadiana region and representatives from the major institutions of higher education in the region. The conversation centered on the need for a fiber to the home initiative (FTTH) throughout the region, with fiber being the only technology capable of supporting not only the current needs of the community but the only technology that can support future growth and needs, such as that being promoted by the GUMBO Program. The second session included the economic development leaders from each parish as well as major local business leader who emphasized the importance of fiber broadband access to the viability of the regional economy, to education, and to healthcare. For example, Acadian Ambulance has more than 650 vehicles operating around Louisiana which depends upon reliable broadband access to coordinate the logistics of their business and improve patient care. The LUS Fiber GUMBO initiative builds on business leaders' support of all-fiber projects in all regions. The third session focused on research by the Blanco Public Policy Center and economists from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette which show that communities that increased their broadband speeds (up to levels required under the GUMBO program), saw an increase in population whereas communities that did not improve lost population. LUS Fiber's GUMBO application builds on the support expressed by this research for the type of fiber project that LUS is applying for under the GUMBO program. In sum, LUS Fiber has developed and carried out a well-thought out business strategy to gather data on the current state of broadband, followed by significant outreach to the communities to gather input on broadband needs and desires, and development of a detailed and thorough GUMBO application that will result in efficient and timely use of scarce resources while bringing a much needed boost to economically disadvantaged, and low-income access and adoption of broadband throughout the parishes.

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.

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. As stated in the Hudson and Veterans section above, LUS Fiber is a locally established business has a history of employing local workers and firms. Several LUS broadband infrastructure and expansion projects included a workforce plan that included hiring local firms. Additionally, LUS Fiber takes affirmative steps to assure that small, minority and women's businesses are used when possible as sources of supplies, equipment, construction, and services. (b) Affirmative steps shall consist of: (1) Placing qualified small and minority businesses and women's business enterprises on solicitation lists; (2) Ensuring that small and minority businesses and women's business enterprises are solicited whenever they are potential sources; (1) Dividing total requirements, when economically

feasible, into smaller tasks or quantities to permit maximum participation by small and minority businesses and women's business enterprises; (2) Establishing delivery schedules, where the requirements of the contract permit, which encourage participation by small and minority businesses and women's business enterprises; (3) Using the services and assistance of the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Minority Business Development Agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, and State and local governmental small business agencies; (4) Requiring each party to a subcontract to take the affirmative steps of this section; and (5) procuring goods and services from labor surplus area firms. The LUS Fiber application includes a signed letter of intent with a post-secondary educational institution, South Louisiana Community College that signifies not only an obligation, but an opportunity for LUS and its subcontractors of the applicant, to put forth a good-faith effort to hire, when possible, recent graduates of broadband-related programs. The letter also outlines an effort to be undertaken between the Community College and LUS to bring that intent to fruition

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.

LUS Fiber is the only ISP in Louisiana that provides 100% fiber to the home. 100% fiber to every household in its service territory. LUS' has a PON and MPLS based network, to provide residential triple-play (IPTV, VOIP, HSI and VOD), business Internet. LUS' Triple Play Service Delivery Architecture (TPSDA) advocates the optimal distribution of service intelligence over the Access nodes and BNG, rather than concentrating on fully centralized or decentralized BNG models which artificially define arbitrary policy enforcement points in the network. This 100% FTTH system utilizes the standard called NGPON and XGS-PON and is delivered across Nokia's 7360 Access Network. The network core is comprised of redundant Nokia's 7750 distribution routers. The optimized enforcement of subscriber policies across nodes allows a more flexible, optimized, and cost-effective deployment of services in a network, guaranteeing high quality and reliable delivery of all services to the user. They keystone of LUS' TPSDA is that it has been designed to support fully dynamic provisioning of Access, QoS and security aspects for subscribers.

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

As an all-fiber network, LUS broadband levels of speed have the capacity and scalability of up to 25x25Gbps.

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).

With LUS's workforce and experience, it is committed to begin construction quickly—within two to four months of the grant execution and program guidelines for payment. LUS "lives" in the communities to be served under the GUMBO initiative and is extremely familiar with the local governments, education and healthcare entities, and businesses including communications' firms. LUS has a comprehensive marketing and outreach plan as described in the application, which will greatly enhance efforts to work with residents and businesses in the varied neighborhoods.

_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.

LUS has a PON and MPLS based network that provides residential triple-play (IPTV, VOIP, HSI and VOD), business Internet. LUS' Triple Play Service Delivery Architecture (TPSDA) advocates the optimal distribution of service intelligence over the Access nodes and BNG, rather than concentrating on fully centralized or decentralized BNG models which artificially define arbitrary policy enforcement points in the network. This 100% FTTH system uses NGPON and XGS-PON standards delivered across Nokia's 7360 Access Network. The network core is comprised of redundant Nokia's 7750 distribution routers. The optimized enforcement of subscriber policies across nodes allows a more flexible, optimized, and cost-effective deployment of services in a network, guaranteeing high quality and reliable delivery of all services to the user. The keystone of LUS' TPSDA is that it has been designed to support fully dynamic provisioning of Access, QoS and security aspects for subscribers. Assets are owned by LUS. There are no pole attachment agreements as the fiber will be run underground. There will be some areas where municipal right of ways will be used; the applicable situations are covered in the partner agreements. Approximately 125 new fiber route miles of fiber are proposed for this GUMBO initiative. In terms of design and engineering work, over 320 hours of engineering time has been dedicated with an additional 1,000 to 1,500 hours allocated to the GUMBO initiatives to ensure prompt build out and access to fiber services. The design work has been and will continued to be completed by the LUS 10-member design team with the option of augmenting LUS staff with the LUS Fiber engineer of record. The availability of LUS and engineering contractors provides the capacity to quickly supplement LUS staff to meet all timelines and project milestones. LUS will follow its highly refined work plan elements that it has used for previous broadband expansion projects for the GUMBO initiative. Disaster recovery: LUS Fiber has emergency contracts in place to expedite recovery efforts. For example, in the case in natural disasters such as hurricanes, the entire LUS Fiber staff and emergency contract crews are operational as soon as winds die down to 40 MPH and restoration efforts are continued on a 24-hour basis until all services are

restored to all customers.

Wired Assets

Existing Network	Existing Equipment	New/Upgraded Infrastructure	Installation Type	Num of Recipients	Avg Distance in Miles Between Prospective Recipients	Expected Speed
1 new POP + Fiber	1 New Access Node	New	Underground	4827	0.026	10Gbps

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.

LUS's budget for the GUMBO initiative reflects the extensive time and effort LUS has spent garnering support from each of its partners and communities that have submitted letters of support. The fact that each of the GUMBO projects reflects at least a 40% (or more) match (Parish plus LUS) demonstrates the relationships and trust that LUS has secured with the broad community. Also, it means that the LUS application is asking for far fewer funds than just providing the company 20% match. The total ask of the GUMBO grant for the Acadia project is $4915811.40 which is $3277207.60 less than the total project costs. The $ cost-avoidance to the GUMBO program is very significant. Unlike many of the GUMBO applications submitted (most of which build out last mile from an existing spoke), LUS's applications include large swaths that require middle mile build-out to get to the unserved areas. In that respect, LUD's applications are unique when compared to many of the applications where ISPs only need to provide last mile access. While those ISPs are to be applauded for extending broadband service from middle mile, it is not fair to penalize LUS which will expand broadband into even more rural and low-income communities through the build-out of middle mile and last mile meeting the intent of the GUBMO program. As stated in the rule, "tragically a third of rural Louisianans are without access to high-speed broadband, threatening their health, limiting their educational opportunities, and constraining their economic competitiveness in the digital world." LUS applications mitigate those threats, and we believe that our applications should be judged in accord with the rule, yet recognized for their innovation and more important, the fact that LUS projects will lead the way to even more rural and economically distressed areas receiving broadband services that promote the goals of the ConnectLA initiative.

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.

LUS is committed to leveraging other federal and state grants and funding opportunities to further expand high-speed broadband access to economically disadvantaged communities in Louisiana. LUS recognizes and accepts that federal funding such as that awarded for the GUMBO initiative, shall not be used as a “match” requirement for another federal grant, and that other federal grant requests shall not duplicate services funded by another federal grant/funding.