

NYS Consolidated Funding Application # 135445
Organization Name: Southern Tier Network
Project Name: Southern Tier Network MIP Application
City: **State:**

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Region

Southern Tier

Questionnaire Questions & Answers

Standard Question

ConnectALL – Municipal Infrastructure Program (MIP)

Q_15017 Do you acknowledge that the project(s) you are proposing for grant funding will meet the minimum project requirements as stated in the RFA and any subsequently published updates?

Yes

Applicant Information

	Applicant
Name of the Primary Applicant Organization	Southern Tier Network, Inc.
Applicant Street Address	8 Denison Parkway East, Suite 205
Applicant City	Corning
Applicant State	NY
Applicant ZIP Code (please use ZIP+4 if known)	14830
Applicant organization website	http://www.southerntiernetwork.org

Q_14435 Is the applicant "Doing Business As" (DBA)?

No

Primary Contact Information

	Primary Contact
Primary Contact First Name	Jeff
Primary Contact Last Name	Gasper
Primary Contact Title	CEO
Primary Contact Telephone	607-454-7429
Primary Contact Email Address	jgasper@southerntiernetwork.org

Q_14736 What is the type of entity for the lead applicant?

Eligible Public Applicant

Q_14693 Please specify the Public entity type for the lead Applicant:

(This question is associated with your answer selection in question: [Q_14736](#))

Not-for-profit entity with authorization from public entities

Q_14443 Select an applicant ID type from the list below that you normally use to identify your organization on application forms.

Federal Tax ID Number

Q_14444 Based on your selection from the previous question, enter the associated ID number.

274516734

Q_14445 If you are a business, have you been certified as a New York State Minority or Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE)?

No

Q_14695 What is the expected infrastructure ownership structure?

Public

Q_14696 Based on your selection from the previous question, please specify the entity or entities and entity type that will ultimately own the proposed infrastructure.

Ownership Entity: Southern Tier Network. Entity Type: A Nonprofit Organization

Q_14446 Please indicate if this application is submitted by a partnership or joint venture.

No

Q_14766 Please provide brief description of the operating model, specifying whether and how the infrastructure will be used by one or more internet service providers and what will be required of those ISPs.

Southern Tier Network, Inc. Operates an Open Access Fiber Network. STNs Fiber to the Home Deployment will be configured to allow multiple ISPs to provide service to our customers. We will utilize standard VLAN tagging from our OLT to the ISP's core equipment. STNs OLT and Routers will be configured to forward tagged packets from the customer ONT to the selected ISP. STN will be able to scale to multiple ISPs for all of our XGS-PON Deployments. ISPs will need to have a router at one of STN colocation locations to hand traffic to STN; Our equipment will then tag the traffic and send it over our MPLS network to the OLT, where it will be sent to the customer ONT and

untagged once it passed to the ethernet port of the ONT.

Q_14697 How many years has the Primary Applicant's organization been operating in New York?

13

Q_14458 Briefly describe the history of the Applicant or team as well as ownership and legal structure.

STN is a non-profit 501c(3) organization and established over 10 years ago to promote economic development, provide critical health, public-safety, and emergency management (NG 911) infrastructure and facilitate access to affordable broadband services particularly in un-served and underserved areas in the region. Formed through a public-private collaboration among Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board, Corning Incorporated, and Chemung, Schuyler, and Steuben Counties; a total of eight counties are now part of a broader alliance that includes Allegany, Yates, Tioga, Tompkins, Broome in addition to the three founding municipalities. The STN middle mile and last mile network has grown to over 750 route miles across the 8-County service region.

Q_14459 Briefly describe the Applicant's experience in broadband deployment in New York.

STN has been constructing, owning, and operating a fiber optic network in New York state for over 10 years and has grown our network from its initial 250-mile 3-County network to a 750-mile 8-County network. We have in-house network engineering and operations managers and work closely with several local contractors for our construction and maintenance needs. STN has primarily provided municipalities, schools, libraries, hospitals, and ISPs with dark fiber connectivity on our network. Recently STN has started to provide open-access FTTH services and is looking to expand our service offerings to include lit services in order to support additional customers and offer existing customers more services via our ever-growing fiber network footprint.

Q_14698 How does the Applicant or team plan to staff for the project?

Applicant or team have a defined staffing plan to ramp up the resources for the project

Q_14764 Does the primary applicant have experience in broadband deployment – planning, project managing, delivering and/or operating broadband infrastructure?

Successful broadband deployment in New York

Q_14751 For aerial construction of the proposed broadband deployment, what is the applicant teams' ability to mitigate cost and timeline risks as it relates to pole make-ready and licensing?

None of the above

Q_14467 Describe prior experience coordinating with permitting authorities, utility pole owners, and existing utilities.

Over the last 12 years, the STN team has worked closely with and created relationships with multiple township, city and county authorities for permitting of infrastructure placement IE Aerial, underground and highway. We have also overseen multiple projects within New York State DOT, railroad and waterway; right of way- having to submit application for, provide mapping and project manage, according to the specifications put forth of the right of way we are working within. Our team submits multiple municipal permits on an annual basis from construction within a ROW for a specific project to maintenance of our existing facilities within ROW. The relationships our team has built with municipalities, NYS DOT, Railroads, etc. over the last 13 years is a huge part of our success within the Upstate New York region we service. The STN team is intimately familiar with the pole

owner (NYSEG, Steuben Rural Electric, Verizon and Frontier) application, make ready and attachment process with a team combined 40 years of experience of all facets. The STN team has multiple FTTx and backbone projects under our belt and approximately 750 miles of STN owned and maintained plant in various areas of NY & PA. STN engineering has processed from inception to completion over 150 NYSEG pole applications with related joint owner (Verizon & Frontier) applications to coincide and complete in a cost effective and efficient manner.

Q_14700 For underground construction of the proposed broadband deployment, what is the applicant teams' ability to mitigate cost and timeline risks as it relates to pathway to receive expedited permitting for right-of-way (ROW)?

No underground work anticipated

Q_14468 Do you have experience managing state or federal grants or loans for broadband deployment?

Yes

Q_14469 Have any of your grants or loans for broadband deployment been suspended, paused, or rescinded at any time due to lack of performance or compliance with program rules or applicable law?

(This question is associated with your answer selection in question: [Q_14468](#))

No

Q_14470 Briefly outline the Applicant's background in overseeing state or federal grants or loans for broadband deployment. If applicable, explain the circumstances that led to any grants or loans that faced suspension, pause, or rescission due to performance issues or non-compliance with program regulations or relevant laws.

(This question is associated with your answer selection in question: [Q_14468](#))

STN has worked with several state and federal agencies (EDA, ARC, ESD) on several grants over the course of STN's 10-year history. In 2015 the New York State Empire State Development Agency awarded STN \$5.0M to extend its dark fiber backbone network 100+ miles. This project extended STN's open access, dark fiber network east from Chemung County, through the counties of Tioga and Broome, to Kirkwood, NY; north to Tompkins County from Owego, NY, into Ithaca, NY, and west from Steuben County, Greenwood, NY, into Allegany County, Alfred, NY. The project also connected Alfred University, SUNY Binghamton University, and Cornell University to STN's dark fiber infrastructure. The network expansion was completed in Spring of 2019 and is now fully operational. In 2019 STN applied to and was awarded three grants for the design and construction of diverse and redundant pathways to strengthen STN's existing fiber backbone. STN collaborated with regional health care, education, and emergency management internet service providers, businesses and emergency managers to assess the region's telecommunication network vulnerabilities. This group designed the 83.5 miles of new diversity pathways to protect against potential interruptions in network availability. The \$3.9M project funding was secured through the Economic Development Administration, Appalachian Regional Commission and New York State Empire State Development. STN received funding from ESD-ConnectALL for the Nichols FTTH project that was just completed at the end of 2023. STN was able to complete all these grant funded projects on-time and at or under budget.

Q_14473 Describe past record of responding to information requests to share data with the NYS Department of Public Service concerning broadband mapping initiatives, including the length of time taken to furnish the requested information.

STN has worked in conjunction with STC (Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board) to provide NYS DPS with broadband map challenge data and support. STN has also provided DPS with all of the STN fiber network maps in a timely manner such that STN's fiber network infrastructure can be referenced.

Q_14701 Describe your current or past participation in the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) or other public subsidy programs.

STN works closely with our ISP partner, Fiberspark with the assistance in education and enrollment in the ACP program for the residents in Nichols. STN has also partnered with Tioga County and the local school districts with disseminating flyers and enrollment information for the ACP program to families in Nichols. We have also held Town Hall meetings with the residents to provide background on the ACP program and assist residents with questions on the enrollment process.

Q_14702 Is the applicant team local to the proposed broadband deployment region in the New York State?

Yes

Approach and Scope of Services

Q_14703 Describe the broadband infrastructure project and the specific geography and locations it would service (the Project Area(s))?

STN's broadband infrastructure project is designed in a very similar manner to our successful Nichols Fiber network. By leveraging STN's existing middle mile network STN will construct several open-access FTTH networks in adjacent areas to our existing fiber network to be able to quickly start servicing customers in overlap areas while we construct new fiber to over 4, 800 homes across several counties that STN's middle mile network serves. The areas of Tyrone, NY and Beaver Dams, NY in Schuyler County, Hornby, NY in Steuben County, Brooktondale, NY in Tompkins County, Newark Valley, NY and Smithboro, NY in Tioga County, Millport, NY and Pine Valley, NY in Chemung County will be built out with STN's open-access FTTH network in this project. STN would construct POPs (Point of Presence) sites in each of these areas to service all the residents included in our application. In addition, these POPs are designed in a future proof manner to be able to service additional areas for future expansion with little additional CAPEX required.

Q_14704 What are the wealth and income demographics for the proposed Project Area(s)?

Predominantly low-income non-investment area

Q_14705 Provide a list of the existing Internet Service Provider(s) in the Project Area(s) along with their advertised range of speed (download and upload) in Mbps and any other services offered.

In the proposed STN Project Areas there are limited areas where Charter-Spectrum cable internet is available. Most of the Project Areas are only serviced by low-speed DSL (Frontier) or Satellite (HughesNet) internet access. STN reviewed and utilized the FCC June 30, 2023 map data to identify the most un/underserved address locations that STN could reach from our existing middle mile fiber network.

Q_14706 Describe any patterns of non-investment or past challenges preventing Internet Service Provider(s) to provide services in the Project Area(s).

STN have been meeting with the County and local municipality representatives in the proposed Project Areas for several years to work with their un/underserved communities to bring in high-speed broadband services. Since these areas are high build cost and rural areas of New York State the existing ISPs in the region have not been able to afford to expand into these areas due to the high cost and low number of homes. The STN MIP project will finally be able to conquer these challenges and provide the residents and businesses in these areas with high-speed affordable broadband options.

For the proposed Project Area(s), please provide the numbers of broadband serviceable locations (unserved, underserved, & served locations).

Note: Total is auto-populated after saving & moving to next page.

Broadband Serviceable Locations

	Number of Locations
Unserviced Locations	1650
Underserved Locations	406
Served Locations	2620
Total	4,676

For the proposed Project Area(s), please provide the numbers of broadband serviceable locations (residential, business, & community anchor institutions).

Note: Total is auto-populated after saving & moving to next page.

Broadband Serviceable Locations Type

	Number of Locations
Residential Locations	4299
Business Locations	370
Community Anchor Institutions	7
Total	4,676

For the proposed Project Area(s), please provide the total miles of new fiber construction being proposed (aerial fiber construction, underground fiber construction, & drop fiber (aerial and underground) for the last-mile).

Note: Total is auto-populated after saving & moving to next page.

Miles of New Fiber Construction Proposed

	Total Miles
Aerial Fiber Construction	239
Underground Fiber Construction	0
Drop Fiber (Aerial & Underground) For the Last-Mile	425
Total	664

For the proposed Project Area(s), please provide the financial details (MIP grant requested, available or earmarked public funds, & available private funds). The "Total" should represent the Total Project Cost.

Note: Total is auto-populated after saving & moving to next page.

Financial Details

	Total Dollars
MIP Grant Requested	\$19,435,000
Available or Earmarked Public Funds	\$0
Available Private Funds	\$0
Total	19,435,000

Q_14707 Briefly provide the information about the available or earmarked public funds and/or the available private funds.

STN is working with Schuyler, Chemung, and Steuben Counties on an EMO, Emergency Management Office project that if fully awarded to the three Counties would be able to assist with the fiber backbone build from Monterey, NY to Beaver Dams, NY. This fiber backbone is included in the cost of the STN fiber network build in our Project Areas design and budget. Since the EMO project is still under review and consideration it is unknown exactly how many miles and how much costs would be able to be removed from the STN budget to service the Project Areas in our application. We anticipate having this information in the April-May, 2024 timeframe.

Q_14708 Describe Applicant or teams' access to capital to address any potential debt or operating revenue shortfalls.

While STN is a non-profit 501c(3) organization we maintain a strong fund balance that can be leveraged for funding network build projects and any operating revenue shortfalls that may arise. However, STN is proficient in the build and sell model to ensure that we are achieving operating revenues as soon as possible once our fiber is constructed in any areas. Hence STN has not needed to tap into our savings to offset any operating revenue shortfall in our history.

Q_14709 Describe the methodology and any assumptions made to determine the cost estimates.

Over ten years of calculations have gone into the outside plant aerial construction cost per mile-including but not limited to: permitting, pole application, make ready construction and splicing costs. This calculation also includes prevailing and non-prevailing wage projects, materials, contractor costs as well as rural versus urban scenarios. Hundreds of miles of construction projects have allowed our team to compute a cost basis involving any/all variables that may impact the price. As for the electronics and customer premises equipment, prior projects, installations and current material costs are all taken into account to create our estimates.

Q_14710 What is the projected take-rate % in the first five years of broadband service?

50

Q_14711 What is the take-rate % to break-even the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) expenses?

25

Q_14712 Describe efforts that will be made by the Applicant or team to keep costs reasonable and competitive.

The STN team will take all construction and electronic variables into account to achieve maximum

cost efficiency of our projects. These items include but are not limited to the engineering of aerial pole routes with least amount of make ready, the pole owners and other attachers involved, the lowest bidder of construction contracting and outside plant materials (fiber cable costs, splice enclosure costs, splitter costs, etc). We will also select specific vendors for our electronics and CPE to verify the best effort costs are agreed upon for our projects.

Q_14753 Please describe the revenue sharing model between the Applicant and partner(s), including but not limited to the Internet Service Provider (ISP).

The STN revenue share model on our open-access FTTH network is very straightforward and easy for ISPs to understand. The ISP and STN split the internet access revenue 50% to each party. For example, a \$40/mo 100/100 Mbps internet access would result in \$20/mo to STN and \$20/mo to the ISP. If the ISP sells the customer any additional services such as managed Wi-Fi, home security, phone service, or video services the ISP would receive 100% of the revenues from these additional services.

Q_14713 For any proposed public-private partnership, what is the minimum duration in years of shared public ownership?

25

Q_14714 For any proposed acquisitions as a part of the project (e.g. fiber leases), describe the age and remaining useful life of the infrastructure.

N/A, STN project does not have any proposed acquisitions.

Q_14715 Within how many months of the project kick-off are the first connections expected?

3

Q_14716 Within how many months of the project kick-off will the project complete?

24

Q_14717 Describe the work that has been done to date in developing the project and explain why this grant is necessary to advance the Applicant's project to implementation.

During the Nichols Pilot project (approximately a year to year and a half ago) STN started to develop this next phase of open-access FTTH Project Areas in conjunction with the NYPA team and the municipal contacts in these regions. At that time STN developed the fiber designs, budgets, and POP build out details for the Project Areas in anticipation of the MIP program's rollout. The MIP grant is imperative to STN's ability to build and operate the open-access FTTH network in these Project Areas. Without the capital and assistance from the ConnectALL office on this STN project it would not be feasible to proceed with and thousands of New York's residents would continue to have poor broadband speed services, very limited or no provider options, and no access to affordable pricing.

Q_14718 How does the Applicant plan to share the newly built network infrastructure?

Open-access network with transparent pricing and unbiased availability for multiple ISP(s)

Q_14719 Describe the identified risks for the proposed project and plans to mitigate those (if identified).

For the outside plant portion of the STN projects, the biggest risks and issues we have foreseen, is

the need for underground or new pole line facility placement due to existing disgruntle/ high make ready pole lines that we may not be able to surpass. The STN team is fully capable of designing “work arounds” to these issue locations with underground and/or new pole placements to bypass the location/area in need. Our current relationship with the local villages, townships, counties and NYS DOT will allow for these changes to be seamless and not cause any delay in our project construction.

Network Design

Q_14720 Is the network design of the proposed Project Area(s) complete or close to complete? Please ensure to upload the network design in whatever stage it is at in the Documents tab.

Shovel-ready project design

Q_14755 Is the proposed network design completely fiber?

Yes

Q_14721 Are there any interconnection plans with the existing publicly controlled middle mile and/or last mile infrastructure assets?

Contiguous with public infrastructure

Q_14722 Describe whether any existing infrastructure would or has been integrated into the design.

Existing infrastructure has been integrated into the current design as the STN team is fully capable of utilizing and calculated in the use of the existing NYSEG pole lines. Our team has access to the existing NYSEG pole line database, that we have overlaid with our current design to verify paths for backbone and distribution.

Q_14723 Describe performance metrics of your proposed network, including the speeds, latency, average outage, network uptime, and existence of data caps or throttling.

STN's XGS-PON Network allows for max throughput to a customer's ONT to be 10Gbps Download by 10Gbps Upload. STN's ISP has agreed to a minimum service of 100Mbps/100Mbps and a max of 2.5Gbps/2.5Gbps, with the ability to scale up as the need arises. Our 100% all-fiber infrastructure will ensure single-digit latency to our ISP's Core. Our current ISP's 6-month network uptime is 99.99%. There will be no Data Caps or Throttling on any STN Owned Network Infrastructure.

Service Quality

Q_14760 In addition to completing the Service Tiers and Pricing template under the Documents tab of this application, please also describe the service speeds and means of delivery of any free service tiers or free introductory periods available to end-users. Specify if such options will be generally available without ACP utilization or will require additional qualification.

STN and Fiberspark are reviewing the feasibility of offering residential customers a free introductory period of 1-2 months of service within the first 6-12 months that service is available in the customer's area. STN and Fiberspark have offered this promotion in the Nichols pilot areas and are open to offering the promotion in the Project Areas of the MIP as well. This potential offer would be open to customers that do or do not qualify for ACP.

Q_14724 Describe plans to market the service to customers and plans to work with customers to enroll.

STN had a very successful marketing strategy in our Nichols Fiber pilot market. We had a website

(NicholsFiber.com) created with all the information on the project, deployment updates, and ISP information available for the residents to review. They could also sign up for interest forms right on the website as well. STN also utilized flyers, mailers, banners, and yard signs to make the community members aware of the project. We also held numerous Town Hall meetings where STN provided updates on the project, answered questions, and allowed customers to sign up for service on the spot. These marketing efforts yielded a high take rate for services in the Nichols area.

Q_14480 Specify the type and daily operating hours for all types of customer service provided for broadband subscribers including phone, email, SMS, and/or in person customer assistance (if provided). How is customer support provided outside of regular working hours and on weekends?

Southern Tier Network has a 24x7x365 NOC Call Center for customer questions/concerns. Our call center takes the call and forwards the information to the operations team via e-mail, text message, or phone call, depending on the severity. STN also actively monitors our network; when an outage is detected, we are notified via email and phone from our Call Center. STN has contractors who are on-call and provide emergency repairs on the STN Network.

Q_14481 What aspects of the customer service experience are automated and which are provided through live customer support?

Southern Tier Network actively monitors our entire fiber network. If a customer PON goes down, we are automatically notified, and fix-agents are engaged 24/7/365. STN will partner with our ISP to provide billing and in-home customer support services via phone, email, or text message. STN will utilize our automated systems to monitor the physical fiber plant. STN also has a dashboard that shows any alarms from our FTTx networks showing ONT status; if we notice an ONT alarm that has not been called in, we email our ISP and ask them to reach out to the customer to let them know we notice a problem and to start the troubleshooting process.

Q_14482 What is the scope of any subcontractors providing customer support?

STN will utilize existing subcontractors for our network buildouts. We have strong relationships with reputable local companies that have worked with STN for years. Customer support will start with the customer reaching out to STN or the ISP who provides service. If the customer is requesting billing support, the ISP will handle that internally. If the customer has a service issue, STN will create a ticket with our contractor to schedule a service call. If the ticket is escalated, a member of the STN Operations Team will go out and address the issue(s).

Q_14725 Describe how Applicant will ensure long-term, high-quality connectivity and support for residents, including a proposed Service-Level Agreement.

STN's proposed XGS PON FTTH network is designed upfront with future growth in mind. STN deploys a 10Gbps CPE at each customer's premise to ensure that service upgrades to 10Gbps to each customer can be done with no additional PON network or CPE cost to STN or the customers. STN works with our ISP partners to continually monitor customer SLAs to ensure these standards are continuously met. STN also has internal network engineering and operations personnel ride out the STN network to ensure that the fiber plant is maintained and serviced before any potential issues arise.

Q_14484 How will the Applicant adhere to net neutrality principles, including commitments to no blocking, no throttling, no unreasonable discrimination in the transmittal of lawful internet traffic, and no paid prioritization?

STN's open-access FTTH network provides the physical FTTH connectivity to the customer's premise but does not control, throttle, or block any content or services that the customer accesses on the Internet. We work with our ISPs to ensure that they also adhere to the same rules to not limit any customer access to any information they request from the Internet.

Q_14485 What measures and strategies will the Applicant take to safeguard the privacy and cybersecurity of residents and other end-users?

STN works with the ISPs that utilize our open-access FTTH network to ensure that sensitive customer data and information is held securely on internal servers. STN works with our contractors and our ISP's contractors to ensure that any customer-related information is securely stored and not shared with any other 3rd parties.

Digital Equity Impact, Workforce Development and Diversity Practices

Q_14726 Describe Applicant or teams' outreach targets, including any plans to engage the community with any non-English-speaking residents.

STN has been and continues to be engaged in the existing Southern Tier Digital Inclusion Coalition led by Southern Tier Library System (STLS). STN has a long-standing partnership with STLS as well as Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board (STC) and anticipates utilizing these partnerships and coalition meetings and members to ensure that all members of the anticipated build community are reached. STN anticipates an extensive outreach campaign to all eligible resident customers before, during and after the anticipated build. A series of regular mailings to eligible resident customers will be conducted, regular attendance at municipal board meetings with updates on the build progress and advertisements utilizing each County's social media. Further, to reach non-english speakers, STN will have a QR code on all flyers and publications that when scanned will showcase an advertisement and information in Spanish. The average non-english speaking population hovers around 3.2% in the Project Areas where proposed builds are located. With those non-english speakers primarily speaking Spanish. Further to reach those with disabilities, all informational meetings will be held at town and county offices that are fully accessible and the STN website (that will be populated with all relevant information) has full ADA accessibility options available.

Q_14727 Describe Applicant or teams' prior experiences adopting community support programs and the outcomes of such programs.

STN was part of the first round of NYPA funded last mile pilot programs building out in the Town of Nichols NY. In that process, STN built 38 miles of fiber and served 800 households. STN had a take rate of over 40%. STN was successful in completing the build and achieving these metrics in less than 18 months from grant award to completed build. The outreach process to complete this project is very similar to the proposed process outlined above in Q14726. For the Nichols FTTH project, close coordination with Tioga County and the Town was necessary to ensure adequate public outreach and successful outcomes.

Q_14728 Describe any plans to provide devices, skills and safety trainings, or provide other support to the community.

The proposed last-mile fiber build needs little safety training, device and skills training is planned for and expected. For safety regular public outreach through social media and municipal / county-wide meetings will occur to notify residents of upcoming construction and to be aware of construction vehicles during builds. For device and skills training, all new customers will be trained on how to use their CPE when placed in their house and how to operate the newly installed system. Additionally, a customer help line is available for all STN customers that will provide additional assistance on-demand should it be needed. STN also has a strong and long-lasting partnership with both the Southern Tier Library System (STLS) and Southern Tier Network Regional Planning and Development board (STC). Through this partnership, STN will utilize services provided by STLS for digital literacy and coordinate efforts to do so with STC. Regular digital literacy is provided by STLS and advertisement of these services to all existing, new, and potential customers should help to close the digital literacy gap.

Q_14729 Describe any accessibility plans to the community residents with disabilities.

All public meetings will be held in ADA compliant structures and STN website will be ADA accessible. Through these means, use of the existing partnerships described in previous questions (Q_14728 & Q_14726) with STLS, Southern Tier Digital Inclusion Coalition and STC, STN anticipates reach all eligible residents including those with disabilities and providing adequate training on CPE with ability to call for technical assistance at any time. Regular digital literacy

education will be provided through the STLS and in coordination with the Coalition.

Q_14730 Describe the projected economic development and job creation impacts from the proposed project.

It is known that the availability of high-speed internet can result in the creation of jobs, the ability for entrepreneurs to open businesses and giving individuals the opportunity to work from home, or stay in the region while employed out of town, out of state or even out of country. While it is very difficult to calculate how many jobs will be created from the installation of fiber, we can use articles and past experiences to estimate what the economic impact could be from the installation of fiber in rural communities that currently do not have high speed internet.

1) Rural entrepreneurship will be fueled by access to high-speed fiber – According to the US census (<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/research-matters/2018/02/bfs.html>), New business formation rates in NY state are .27-.29/ 1, 000 and 1/5 new businesses will have an employee. The population that will be served by the proposed build is a total of 4, 676 residences. Estimation via Census is 2.6 individuals per household. Total population served by this last mile services is 12, 157. Based on this population number we can estimate that within the next year 3.5 businesses will be created (.29 x 12). Some of these businesses may also have an employee. All of these businesses will benefit from access to broadband internet where there previously was none.

2) According to 21st century economic development: Telework and its impact on local income “the percentage of residents working from home in both salaried and self? employed jobs had a positive and significant impact on median household income” (<https://rsaiconnect.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/rsp3.12117#rsp312117-bib-0060>). Increased rural fiber access will increase the telecommuting employment opportunities for rural residents.

4) Investments of \$8.9 million in STN’s Fiber backbone and middle mile from 2016-2018 resulted in Empire Access (a local fiber provider) hiring 40 new employees. Investments of 18 Million in 2024, should result in the creation of 80 new employees for the fiber & telecom providers.

These above equations are just an example of ways we can measure jobs created. But doesn’t take into account the number of residents that choose to stay in these regions regardless of job changes or the exact dollar of increased revenue an individual family can bring in now with side jobs completed using high speed internet. Or even the number of individuals that now can stay in the region to complete their education rather than leaving town, only to never return. The potential for positive economic impact in these rural areas are quite significant, while the cost of not building out high speed internet to these areas may further contribute to rural brain drain and the Southern Tier’s decline.

Q_14731 Describe Applicant or teams’ current practices aligning with NYS “good job” definitions and safety standards by committing to appropriate policies and investments to recruit, train, hire, retrain, and upskill a diverse workforce, particularly local workers and/or workers from historically disadvantaged communities, into good jobs that pay the prevailing wage.

The proposed budget was developed based upon analysis by Southern Tier Network (STN) with an estimated cost of approximately \$60, 000 per mile, which includes provisions for highly competitive labor rates. This cost per mile is consistent with other recent municipal broadband construction projects in the Southern Tier of New York which have utilized prevailing wage. If awarded, the project team will issue an RFP for fiber build and will utilize local hiring as a factor in evaluation.

STN is currently in compliance with the U. S. Fair Labor Act, STN is not subject to consent-orders or findings from the DOL/DOJ; STN operates wholly within NYS and is in compliance with the strict labor laws of New York State. STN will do all work in compliance with U.S. Fair Labor Act.

STN has a long history of compliance with federal and state labor and employment laws. STN requires the same level of compliance with all contractors through their procurement process. Further, contractors will be required to submit staffing plans along with all bids during the procurement process.

STN is working on adopting a fair labor plan that includes: Basic Wage standards that far exceed

and federal standard. A policy for paid vacation, holiday, severance, sick time, fringe benefits, travel, work from home, maternity and paternity leave and equal pay provisions.

STN is not aware of any instances in which it, its contractors or subcontractors working on its projects have been found to have violated laws such as OSHA, the Fair Labor Standards Act, or any other applicable labor and employment laws for the preceding three years.

Southern Tier Network has a highly experienced and skilled workforce capable to carrying out the proposed last-mile build out. Southern Tier Network will continue to attract new workforce as needed and described below and is committed to providing all necessary training and professional development needed for the proposed project to be successful.

Southern Tier Network as a small non-profit has a current staff of 6 is not unionized but is adequately credentialed for the work to be completed.

Jeff Gasper, Chief Executive Officer, BS Telecommunications Engineering

Tony Marzolino, Fiscal Officer, BS Accounting & MBA

Ben Rydzewski, Outside Plan Manager, Broadband Premise Expert (BPE) certified

Susan Cratsley, Administrative Support, Notary

Patrick Miller, Outside Plant Engineering Manager, BS Communications and Media Studies

Melanie DeGraw, Business Development-Project Manager

For completion of the proposed build out, Southern Tier Network anticipates subcontracting for the fiber construction services. All of this work will be competitively bid out following standard state and federal procurement procedures and necessary and appropriate credentialing will be outlined in the RFP and required for any successful bid.

Should the proposed project required the attraction of new employees from the broadband sector, the Southern Tier region is well positioned to do so. The Southern Tier of New York currently has an average supply of jobs, yet pays above the national average at \$171, 095, giving the region a competitive advantage for attraction of workforce over other areas (LightCast). Further, the current job postings currently in the region are quite low compared to the national average, meaning the Southern Tier Region has room to grow these job postings. The last bit of good data on attraction of skilled workforce for the region is that the retirement risk in the Southern Tier region also is lower than the national average. Should Southern Tier Network or any subcontractors need to hire new staff to complete this project, the workforce appears to be available in the region.

New employees of Southern Tier Network will be hired with all appropriate training, certification and license necessary to complete the job and will meet all state and federal laws to do so. Should the new hire not have these credentials STN will obtain them for the employee before the employee is permitted to complete required work.

If awarded, Southern Tier Network (STN) looks forward to using this proposed grant as an opportunity for additional engagement with the region's workforce investment board (WIB) to better create and develop existing on-ramps into broadband related jobs. STN, working through the WIB will communicate with existing educational institutions, broadband sector employers and participate in job training, shadowing and job fairs. STN will lean on the region's workforce agencies and existing partnerships with Southern Tier Central Regional Planning & Development Board (STC) to participate in and grow any apprenticeship programs and/or training programs offered by Corning Community College, BOCES, Workforce NY, the Career Development Council or STC. Workforce needs will be communicated to these agencies and regular communication will occur to ensure that the workforce is available to complete this buildout. STC and all of the workforce partners mentioned above are committed to "Good jobs" and attracting new workforce from historically disadvantaged communities. This will utilize the tools and connections at Workforce New York to reach those populations and ensure that training and job announcements is available though Workforce NY.

Southern Tier Network offers very competitive wages with robust benefit packages. Offering

average salaries higher than the national average, inclusive low-cost health insurance and retirement incentives available to all employees. STN prioritized hiring local workforce in all job searches. Advertising through existing local university alumni networks and on local job boards. When possible, preference is always given to the local employee.

-
- Q_14496 Describe current and planned future workforce training, certification, and licensure (e.g., in-house training, safety training, industry-recognized certifications, and offer of vocational training, apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, or other “earn and learn” opportunities) that are part of the Applicant’s workforce development strategies.

STN anticipates working closely with the region’s WorkforceNY (WIB) to identify any additional trainings, certifications or licensures that needs to be offered to grow the telecommunications workforce in the region. This training may be offered by the WIB using existing WIOA funding or by partnerships with Corning Inc, Corning Community College or the region’s latest workforce program Twin Tiers ARISE program (TTAP) that will identify industry needs to develop trainings, so that youth can be trained and placed in the workforce out of high school. The Southern Tier has been successful in meeting the needs of employers by utilizing these networks of organizations and STN continues to plan on utilizing those strategies to fulfill any future workforce needs.

-
- Q_14732 Explain current and planned future efforts to diversify the talent pipeline by engaging underrepresented and/or underserved individuals, including any statewide, regional, or local partnerships in place to support recruitment and hiring.

Diversity in the workforce is of the upmost importance to STN. Underrepresented populations in telecommunications sector such as women and individuals of color will be actively recruited through the use of existing organizations for job postings such as: Women in Communications Engineering, Women in Technology, Blacks in Technology, National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering, National Society of Black Engineers, and others. Working though these organizations in addition to specifically targeting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) for job postings and career fairs.

Workforce Development

- Q_14486 Describe the Applicant’s current employee engagement strategy as it relates to ensuring good jobs for the Applicant’s employees. Include an overview of compensation and benefits, job security, working conditions, worker engagement, and the organizational culture.

STN provides a well-rounded and flexible workplace. STN’s salary compensation is at or above the industry standard in order to attract the best caliber talent in the workforce. All employees are provided with 3 weeks of vacation, 13 holidays, and 5 sick days per year. STN provides full Health Care and Dental coverage at no cost to all employees. All employee’s travel and mileage expenses covered by the company at federal mileage rate. Each employee is provided with their own office in our Corning office space and provided all necessary technology in order to provide maximum flexibility for work from home, on the road and in the office. STN provides training and approved classes to be paid for in partial or in full depending on the type and scope of the requested training. The STN team is small in size but constantly growing so there is an opportunity for all employees to grow and learn, and with time opportunities for promotions within the organization. Due to small size of organization, all employees are managed by the CEO who is present and available for guidance, structure, discussions daily. In STN’s 13 years of operation no employee has ever been laid off and work has continued to grow. Regular opportunities for employee enrichment and socialization occur on a monthly basis and average employee stay at STN is: has been 5.2 years to date.

-
- Q_14733 Describe the interest of one or more eligible partners and vendors to support the project. Detail any specific commitments that have been made.

STN has been engaging and working with our fiber cable, network equipment (Nokia), and POP hardware vendors already in anticipation of the STN project areas. We have also been engaged with our electrical contractors, our One-Touch vendor, fiber installation contractors, and in-home installation contractors in anticipation of the STN project areas so they are aware of STN’s application and scope of the project. All of the vendors and contractors have expressed their interest in working with STN on the Project Areas upon award.

Q_14734 Please specify the level of commitment from the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to operate on the proposed network build. For open-access network, the Applicant must have commitment from one or more ISPs to operate on the network.

Committed one or more ISPs for last-mile

Certification

Q_1038 By entering your name in the box below, you certify that you are authorized on behalf of the applicant and its governing body to submit this application. You further certify that all of the information contained in this Application and in all statements, data and supporting documents which have been made or furnished for the purpose of receiving assistance for the project described in this application, are true, correct and complete to the best of your knowledge and belief. You acknowledge that offering a written instrument knowing that the written instrument contains a false statement or false information, with the intent to defraud the State or any political subdivision, public authority or public benefit corporation of the State, with the knowledge or belief that it will be filed with or recorded by the State or any political subdivision, public authority or public benefit corporation of the State, constitutes a crime under New York State Law.

Jeffrey Gasper

Q_14767 By entering your name in the box below, you the Applicant acknowledges the following:

-Applicant will meet all Project Requirements and Applicant Requirements per the RFA.

-Application is not receiving funding from other federal or state sources for the same activities proposed for MIP funding.

-Applicant will provide additional cost estimates, if requested, for Properties in the portfolio agreed upon with CAO, including total grant amount requested and matching funds.

-Application will work with all appropriate agencies to obtain all required right of way approvals.

-Application will obtain all required permits and private easement approvals.

-Application will coordinate project deployment with all utilities.

-Application will obtain any necessary subcontractors.

-Application will provide on-site construction inspections to ensure proper design and execution.

-Application will coordinate and resolve third-party or private claims.

-Application will repair any and all damage to private and government property.

-Application will at all times, maintain an adequate staff of experienced and qualified employees for efficient performance.

-Application will at all times, furnish or perform any services in a safe, proper, and professional manner.

-Application will comply with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

-Application must submit a performance report to the State that includes the following key performance indicators, if selected to be a Grantee:

- Project milestones and percentage of project/site completion, including construction milestones, quantity of fiber deployed, problems/issues encountered, and actions taken to resolve construction issues

- Description of changes, challenges, or risks to project timeline, including environmental compliance and permitting challenges

- Detailed reporting of actual construction costs, as compared to approved construction costs

- Speed and latency test data at the address level for all locations served in the project area--including maximum download speed offered, maximum download speed delivered, maximum upload speed offered, maximum upload speed delivered, and latency.

- Maps and associated data for all locations served, including all buildings/sites where service was installed.

- Compliance with Prevailing Wage requirements, as determined during negotiations

- Implementation progress of Digital Equity, Workforce Development, and Diversity Practices plans

- Other reporting as required by grantor agencies or as mutually agreed upon by the Applicant and State.

- Subscription information including the number of paying subscribers enrolled in the service, the number of low-income subscribers enrolled in ACP, and the number of subscribers enrolled in a low-cost service plan

- Information about customers' Internet access prior to enrolling in the service including whether or not the customer had a previous fixed Internet subscription and the speed of that previous subscription

-Applicant acknowledges receipt of and compliance with addenda to this RFA.

Jeffrey Gasper

Q_2365 By entering your name in the box below, you are acknowledging that ESD's Contractor & Supplier Diversity policy will apply to this project. You are further acknowledging that you are aware of ESD's agency-wide Minority and Women Business Enterprise ('MWBE') utilization goal of 30%. Please note that each project will be assigned an individual contract-specific goal, which may be higher or lower than 30%. Furthermore, you understand that, should this project receive a funding award, the Applicant shall be required to use good faith efforts to achieve the prescribed MWBE goals assigned to this project and failure to attain MWBE goal could result in grant amount being reduced.

Jeffrey Gasper

Q_4182 By entering your name in the box below, you certify and agree that you are aware that your award will be reduced in proportion to the reduction of jobs and/or total project costs. Furthermore, you understand that, should this project receive a funding award, the Applicant will maintain such records and take such actions necessary to demonstrate such compliance throughout the completion of the project.

Jeffrey Gasper

Q_7341 By entering your name in the box below, you certify, under penalty of perjury, that the information given herein is true and correct in all respects for the company or organization applying for funding (the "Company"), presently and for the past five years: -the Company is not a party to any litigation or any litigation is not pending or anticipated that could have an adverse material effect on the company's financial condition;

-the Company does not have any contingent liabilities that could have a material effect on its solvency;

-the Company, its affiliates or any member of its management or any other concern with which such members of management have been officers or directors, have never been involved in bankruptcy, creditor's rights, or receivership proceedings or sought protection from creditors;

-the Company is not delinquent on any of its state, federal or local tax obligations;

-No principal, officer of the Company, owner or majority stockholder of any firm or corporation, or member of the management has been charged or convicted of a misdemeanor or felony, indicted, granted immunity, convicted of a crime or subject to a judgment, or the subject of an investigation, whether open or closed, by any government entity for a civil or criminal violation for: (i) any business-related activity including, but not limited to, fraud, coercion, extortion, bribe or bribe receiving, giving or accepting unlawful gratuities, immigration or tax fraud, racketeering, mail fraud, wire fraud, price fixing or collusive bidding; or (ii) any crime, whether or not business related, where the underlying conduct relates to truthfulness, including but not limited to, the filing of false documents or false sworn statements, perjury or larceny;

-the Company or any of the Company's affiliates, principal owners or Officers has not received a violation of State Labor Law deemed "willful";

-the Company or any of its affiliates has never been cited for a violation of State, Federal, or local laws or regulations with respect to labor practices, hazardous wastes, environmental pollution or other operating practices;

-there are not any outstanding judgments or liens pending against the Company other than liens in the normal course of business.

-the Company or any of its affiliates, principal owners or officers the company has not been the subject of any judgments, injunctions, or liens including, but not limited to, judgments based on taxes owed, fines and penalties assessed by any governmental agency, or elected official against the Company.

- the Company or any of its affiliates, principal owners or officers the company has not been investigated by any governmental agency, including, but not limited to, federal, state and local regulatory agencies

-the Company or any of its affiliates, principal owners or officers the company has not been debarred from entering into any government contract; been found non-responsible on any government contract; been declared in default or terminated for cause on any government contract; been determined to be ineligible to bid or propose on any contract; been suspended from bidding on any government contract; received an overall unsatisfactory performance rating from any government agency on any contract; agree to a voluntary exclusion from bidding or contracting on a government contract.

- the Company or any of its affiliates, principal owners or officers the company has not failed to file any of the

required forms with any government entity regulating the Company. By entering your name in the box below, you agree to allow the Department of Taxation to share the Company tax information with ESD. By entering your name in the box below, you agree to allow the Department of Labor to share tax and employer information with ESD. Note: If any of the statements above are not true, in addition to entering your name, also include an explanation in the box below, indicating which issue you are addressing.

Jeffrey Gasper

Net New Jobs

No job answers necessary due to your associated programs.

Qualified Investments

No investment answers necessary due to your associated programs.

Total Project Cost

Total project cost: \$ 19,435,000

Funding Requested from Program

Program	Amount Requested
ConnectALL – Municipal Infrastructure Program (MIP)	\$ 19435000

Attachment Questions & Answers

ConnectALL – Municipal Infrastructure Program (MIP)

Project Summary

Q_14740 Provide a summary of the following key points of the project [Not to exceed two pages]:

- List of applicants and any eligible partners
- List of the proposed project areas with a percentage of unserved and underserved locations
- Total miles of proposed new fiber construction
- Brief overview of the proposed project approach
- Proposed infrastructure ownership model
- Approach for sharing the newly built infrastructure as open-access or reserved for exclusive use
- Total project budget with the amount requested from MIP grant funds

Name your file using the following naming convention: "ApplicantName_Project-Summary_MM.DD.YY"

Please note that the accepted file type for this question is PDF. If you have an issue with uploading any files, please reach out to cfa-programs@ny.gov and MIP@esd.ny.gov.

[STN_Project-Summary_02.26.24.pdf](#)
[Download](#)

Financial Capability

Q_14686 Upload the Applicant's most recent financial statements prepared in accordance with standard accounting procedures of the Applicant and all principals of the organization. Eligible Private Applicants should provide three years of audited financial statements.

Name your file using the following naming convention: "ApplicantName_Finances_MM.DD.YY"

Please note that the accepted file type for this question is PDF. If you have an issue with uploading any files, please reach out to cfa-programs@ny.gov and MIP@esd.ny.gov.

[STN_Finances_02.26.24.pdf](#)
[Download](#)

Experience and Relevant Qualifications

Q_14687 Please provide two case studies of relevant past work done by the Applicant or team, with preference to work conducted in New York State. Include reference to adhering to relevant state and federal regulations.

Case studies shall be brief and include the following for each:

- Number of addresses served
- Number of businesses subcontracted
- Route miles constructed, and costs incurred by category (e.g., make-ready, permitting, engineering/design, labor, construction)
- Description of the technology deployed and why it was the appropriate choice for the project
- Service level commitment offered
- Advertised download speed in megabits per second
- Advertised upload speed in megabits per second
- Monthly, non-promotional price for each service offered over the funded infrastructure
- Specifications of signal latency and service reliability parameters
- Descriptions of any delays or changes made to project timeline

Name your file using the following naming convention: "ApplicantName_Experiences_MM.DD.YY"

Please note that the accepted file type for this question is PDF. If you have an issue with uploading any files, please reach out to cfa-programs@ny.gov and MIP@esd.ny.gov.

[STN_Experiences_02.20.24.pdf](#)
[Download](#)

Deployment Timelines

Q_14688 Please provide a project management plan with timelines clearly identifying the time to first connections and the time to project completion.

Name your file using the following naming convention: "ApplicantName_Deployment-Timelines_MM.DD.YY"

Please note that the accepted file types for this question are PDF and XLSX. If you have an issue with uploading any files, please reach out to cfa-programs@ny.gov and MIP@esd.ny.gov.

[STN_Deployment-Timelines_02.28.24.pdf](#)
[Download](#)

MIP RFA Templates

Q_14765 Please provide the following information by filling out all four tabs of the MIP RFA Templates file (link to download below).

1. Project budget with a breakdown of costs using the "MIP Budget Templates" tab
2. Services and products that will be offered to the end-users, and pricing of those by completing the "MIP Service Tiers and Pricing" tab:
 - a) Include description of service tiers, speeds, and pricing, inclusive of all taxes and fees.
 - b) Indicate price, upload speed, and download speed for a product at or below \$30 per month, if such a price point is planned
 - c) Include description, including service speeds and means of delivery, of any free service tiers or free introductory periods, if available

3. Details on the intent to hire additional employees if the Applicant is selected to be a Grantee by filling out the “MIP Workforce Development” tab

4. A list of locations the project will serve by filling out the “MIP Location Data” tab. Provide all available location data such as FCC Location ID, address, and latitude/longitude for each location

- a) Indicate which locations are Unserved, Underserved or Served
- b) Business, Residential or Mixed
- c) Community Anchor Institutions

Name your file using the following naming convention: “ApplicantName_MIP-RFA-Filled-Templates_MM.DD.YY”

Please note that the accepted file type for this question is XLSX. If you have an issue with uploading any files, please reach out to cfa-programs@ny.gov and MIP@esd.ny.gov.

Please use the link below to download the templates file.

[MIP RFA Templates](#)

[STN_MIP-RFA-Filled-Templates_02.28.24.xlsx](#)
[Download](#)

Network Design

Q_14689 Please provide a complete or close to complete network design and architecture, including:

- Network elements (both active and passive)
- Connectivity to the internet backbone
- Delivery to each served address with the required throughput and capacity
- Engineering decisions required to achieve service speeds and latency, such as:
 - Backhaul connectivity
 - Head end deployment
 - Core network electronics
 - Fiber capacity and strand counts on each segment of the network
 - Maximum line speed at the premises
 - Oversubscription ratio
 - Split ratios
 - Splice points
 - Drop installation
 - In-unit termination specification
 - CPE or router model and capabilities (including Wi-Fi interface)

Name your file using the following naming convention: “ApplicantName_Network-Design_MM.DD.YY”

Please note that the accepted file type for this question is PDF. If you have an issue with uploading any files, please reach out to cfa-programs@ny.gov and MIP@esd.ny.gov.

[STN_Network-Design_02.20.24.pdf](#)
[Download](#)

Maps and Addresses

Q_14690 Please provide Maps and address lists indicating the fiber routes and accompanying infrastructure (e.g., poles and huts) that the MIP grants would fund. Include a list of publicly controlled assets the project may use to support deployment. Include a .kmz or shapefile of the proposed routing with clearly defined layers for the various types of infrastructure and any other information relevant to the design, including:

- Fiber routes and segment types (backbone, distribution, etc.)
- Installation method (direction bore, micro-trenching, etc.)

Name your file using the following naming convention: “ApplicantName_Maps-Addresses_MM.DD.YY”

Please note that the accepted file types for this question are kmz, kml, shp, and shx. If you have an issue with

uploading any files, please reach out to cfa-programs@ny.gov and MIP@esd.ny.gov.

[STN_Maps-Addresses_02.28.24.kmz](#)
[Download](#)

ISP Letters Of Commitment

Q_14691 For an open-access infrastructure, please provide Letters of Commitment to operate on the network from one or more ISP, indicating details of the ISP's planned technology approach and demonstration of a currently functional network meeting CAO requirements elsewhere. Other supporting documentation may include letters of endorsement from ISP(s) currently operating on infrastructure built by the applicant elsewhere, and documentation from an operator using infrastructure built by the Applicant to host ISPs that meet CAO's service requirements.

Name your file using the following naming convention: "ApplicantName_ISP-LOC_MM.DD.YY"

Please note that the accepted file type for this question is PDF. If you have an issue with uploading any files, please reach out to cfa-programs@ny.gov and MIP@esd.ny.gov.

[STN_ISP-LOC_02.26.24.pdf](#)
[Download](#)

Workforce Development

Q_15016 Attach letter(s) of commitment, if available, from partner organization(s) that demonstrate(s) Applicant's current engagement, or future intent to engage, with partner(s) through advising on curriculum or program design, providing program funding, interviewing talent, hiring talent, building an apprenticeship or other program, or upskilling existing workers. Letters can be from labor unions, workforce development organizations, state and local workforce boards, educational institutions, community-based organizations, or others relevant organizations.

Name your file using the following naming convention: "ApplicantName_WorkforceLOCs_MM.DD.YY"

Please note that the accepted file type for this question is PDF. If you have an issue with uploading any files, please reach out to cfa-programs@ny.gov and MIP@esd.ny.gov.

[STN_WorkforceLOCs_02.29.24.pdf](#)
[Download](#)

Additional Document(s)

Q_15018 Provide any additional document(s) to strengthen your application (e.g. letters of endorsement from the proposed area municipality).

Name your file using the following naming convention: "ApplicantName_AdditionalDocs_MM.DD.YY"

Please note that the accepted file types for this question are PDF and ZIP. If you have an issue with uploading any files, please reach out to cfa-programs@ny.gov and MIP@esd.ny.gov.

[STN_AdditionalDocs_02.29.24.pdf](#)
[Download](#)

Legend

[x] = Expired Program

Nichols Fiber Case Study

1. Executive Summary

In the spring of 2022, the STN management team met with NYPA (New York Power Authority) to discuss the NYS Broadband Office (ConnectAll) pilot project in which they were looking to launch FTTH (Fiber To The Home) networks in various areas of New York State. STN had already been engaged with Tioga County for a USDA ReConnect grant for Nichols, NY so this was a natural fit to ConnectAll’s pilot project. Within a short period of time the Nichols Fiber project was approved and initiated. Funding for the project was provided by both ConnectAll/NYPA (\$1.6M) and Tioga County/Town of Nichols (\$643,000) for a total project budget of \$2,243,000. The final network design for the Nichols Fiber network included approximately 37-miles of new fiber network and 750 residential passings. STN started construction of the Nichols network in the fall of 2022 and fully completed the fiber network buildout in June of 2023. The project involved over \$5M of electrical grid upgrades in Nichols that NYSEG paid for along with 299 full pole replacements, yielding an upgraded electrical grid for the residents of Nichols.

2. Technical Summary

STN operates the Nichols Fiber network in the same open-access manner as the rest of the STN network. STN can accommodate multiple ISPs to service the residents of Nichols. Early in the project, Fiberspark, an ISP primarily in the Ithaca area came onboard to be the initial ISP on the Nichols Fiber network. STN selected the latest XGS-PON technology which allows for service up to 10 Gig to each customer day one, and up to 25 Gig or 50 Gig speeds in the future without requiring any network upgrades. Each Nichols Fiber customer is provided with a CPE (Customer Premise Equipment) that is 10 Gig capable, so no truck rolls are required to enable 10 Gig service in the future. STN worked closely with the Nichols Fire Department to establish a network POP (Point of Presence) in their fire station. This site was selected because of its central location in Nichols and its generator availability. Below is a map of the final fiber network that was constructed to be able to reach the 750 passings.



3. Nichols Fiber Network Outcomes and Potential Next Steps

During the construction of the network STN, NYPA, Fiberspark, and Tioga County representatives held multiple town hall meetings at the Nichols fire station in which the public was invited to receive updates on the project and ask questions about the service. STN provided updates on the progress of the network buildout and Fiberspark provided information on their available services. These town hall meetings were well attended and well received by members of the community. One of the requirements of the project was to provide a 100 Mbps service for \$40/month so the residents had a high-speed but low-cost option. The chart below shows the current Fiberspark service options on the Nichols Fiber network.

<p>STARTER PACKAGE</p> <p>A great choice for basic Internet surfing and video streaming. Load pages seamlessly and download documents quickly.</p> <p>\$40 per month</p> <p>100 Mbps Download speed</p> <p>20 Mbps Upload speed</p>	<p>FIBERSPARK 100</p> <p>Increased upload speeds for video calls (Zoom, FaceTime, etc.) and other 2 way communication.</p> <p>\$55 per month</p> <p>100 Mbps Download speed</p> <p>100 Mbps Upload speed</p>
<p>FIBERSPARK 500</p> <p>The perfect option for connecting with many devices at once and more demanding applications.</p> <p>\$65 per month</p> <p>500 Mbps Download speed</p> <p>500 Mbps Upload speed</p>	<p>FIBERSPARK GIGABIT</p> <p>The ultimate option for extensive Internet usage. Stream videos in 4K HD, experience low latency gaming, and download huge files in seconds.</p> <p>\$80 per month</p> <p>1,000 Mbps Download speed</p> <p>1,000 Mbps Upload speed</p>

In addition to offering a \$40/month plan, Fiberspark also participates in the federal ACP (Affordable Connectivity Program) that provides qualifying individuals and families with a \$30/month reduction on their Internet Service. Fiberspark currently has over 30 customers that are utilizing the ACP benefit and only pay \$10/month for their Internet Service at home.

STN continues to add more Nichols Fiber customers every month through our various marketing efforts of door hangers, postcards, and door-to-door resident visits. As of October 18th, 2023, STN has a 53% take rate for the overall network. The map below shows the take rates for the West and East side Unserved areas and the Spectrum served areas.



Anticipated Project Start Date:

6/1/2024

Milestone description	Duration (Days)
Procurement	90
Fiber Ordered/Received	
Strand Ordered/Drop Cable/CPE	
Received Strand & CPE	
NOKIA Equipment Ordered/Received	
Servers Ordered	
Servers Received & Installed	
Fiber Termination Panels Ordered/Received	
Construction	
Construction Contractor Pricing & Commitment	30
<u>Phase 1 (Overlash) Areas:</u>	
Overlash backbone cable installed	90
Overlash connectivity to POP	90
Installation of splice cases	90
Installation of customers	90
<u>Phase 2 (Construction) Areas:</u>	
Electrical and Telecom Make Ready	180
New Build backbone cable installed	365
New Build connectivity to POP	365
Installation of splice cases	365
Installation of customers	365

Anticipated Project Start Date:

6/1/2024

Milestone description	Duration (Days)
POP/Co-Location Site Construction	180
Co-Location Agreement Signed	
Fiber Termination Panel Installed	
NOKIA Equipment Installed	
Fiber Run/Spliced Pole to POP Termination Panel	
Maarketing/Public Outreach/Communication	Ongoing
Project website designed and ready	
Send out press releases about public meeting / social media / contact organizations / fliers out / start sign ups	
Create Public Flyer and Edit, Finalize	
Create and order door hangers	
Yard Signs Designed/Ordered	
Internet Service Provider	90
Select Initial ISP - Fiberspark	
Provision STN fibers from Project Areas to Ithaca	
Fiberspark equipment install & Turn-up in STN POPs	
Establish operating agreement between STN and Fiberspark	
NOTE: Many of the Milestones descriptions will be occurring simultaneously.	

STN Network Design and Architecture:

Southern Tier Network, Inc. will use an all-fiber optic XGS-PON Infrastructure, Utilizing a 1x32 cascade network. STN will be using Nokia XGS-PON equipment with 10Gig compatible ONTs. The Nokia OLT will be backhauled to a local ISP utilizing Southern Tier Network Fiber, where we will connect to our ISPs network for IP connectivity to the Internet. STNs XGS-PON design will deliver a minimum of 100mbps to each address and up to a maximum of 10gbps, all symmetrical speeds.

Our head end (POP) equipment will consist of the Nokia FX series OLT, redundant DC rectifiers, Battery backups, and switching equipment. We plan to deploy 144ct fiber from our POPs and will split off to 48ct along the distribution routes. Our design ensures spare fibers for additional expansion or future needs. STN will engineer the PON network for 100% utilization; there will be no oversubscription of the PONs. We will have additional fibers and XGS ports available for future expansion in areas of growth or need. We will be engineering splice cases to be within 1000' of the address points, allowing us to utilize Corning SST 1ct drop cable. We will terminate the fiber into a NID on the side of the house where we will run a pre-terminated Corning 1ct clear curve rugged fiber to the CPE. The CPE will be a 10gig compatible Nokia ONT; our ISP will offer a Managed Wi-Fi Router at the customer's request.



To ConnectALL;

Fiberspark Inc. maintains an ongoing partnership with Southern Tier Network, Inc. (STN) as the Internet Service Provider (ISP) for the ConnectALL Nichols Fiber Network, while also leasing middle-mile fiber from STN. We at Fiberspark are aware that STN is submitting a ConnectALL MIP Application to build-out Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) infrastructure to homes and businesses in multiple areas in the Southern Tier of New York State.

Fiberspark is committed to sustaining our existing Public-Private partnership with STN to deliver high-speed (100Mbps download by 100Mbps upload minimum) reliable internet service to these unserved and underserved households.

The agreement between Fiberspark and STN will have STN construct and retain ownership of the physical FTTH network infrastructure necessary for delivering high-speed broadband services. Fiberspark, in turn, will utilize the STN FTTH network to provide high-speed broadband service to each household.

This letter serves as a commitment from Fiberspark to uphold our existing Services Agreement with STN, acting as an ISP on the STN FTTH network. Fiberspark pledges to provide high-speed, affordable, and reliable internet services to residents and businesses connected to the STN FTTH network.

Sincerely,

Jeff Shaffer, CEO

Fiberspark Inc.



STN's Southern Tier Open-Access FTTH Expansion Project Summary:

- List of applicants and any eligible partners

STN, Southern Tier Network is the lead Applicant. Fiberspark is the initial ISP partner on the open-access FTTH network.

- List of the proposed project areas with a percentage of unserved and underserved locations

The areas of Tyrone, NY and Beaver Dams, NY in Schuyler County, Hornby, NY in Steuben County, Brooktondale, NY in Tompkins County, Newark Valley, NY and Smithboro, NY in Tioga County, Millport, NY and Pine Valley, NY in Chemung County will be built out with STN's open-access FTTH network in this project.

- Total miles of proposed new fiber construction

The STN proposed open-access network is 238.5 miles of new fiber construction.

- Brief overview of the proposed project approach

By leveraging STN's existing middle mile network, STN will construct several open-access FTTH networks in adjacent areas to our existing fiber network to be able to quickly start servicing customers in overlash areas while we construct new fiber to a total of over 4,600 homes across several counties that STN's middle mile network currently serves.

- Proposed infrastructure ownership model

STN will design, engineer, build, own, and operate the open-access FTTH network. STN will partner with multiple ISPs to service the residents and businesses in the Project Areas.

- Approach for sharing the newly built infrastructure as open-access or reserved for exclusive use

Since STN's inception over 10 years ago we have operated an open-access network. STN will continue this model of an open-access network for this project and any future expansion areas. STN's definition of open-access is providing our fiber network infrastructure to any ISP or service provider whose intended purpose is to provide the residents and businesses in the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes areas with reliable and affordable broadband services.

- Total project budget with the amount requested from MIP grant funds

The total project budget amount that STN is requesting from MIP grant funds is \$19,435,000.

9424 Scott Road
Painted Post, New York 14870
(607)962-3141
<https://www.stls.org>



February 2, 2024

Jeff Gasper, CEO
Southern Tier Network, Inc.
8 Denison Parkway East, Suite 205
Corning, NY 14830

Re: ConnectALL MIP Application –Southern Tier Network Open-Access Broadband Expansion

Dear Mr. Gasper,

The Southern Tier Library System is writing to express our unequivocal support and enthusiasm for Southern Tier Network’s ConnectALL MIP, Municipal Infrastructure Program Application to expand Southern Tier Network’s open access fiber to the home network.

Upstate NY currently has large areas with little access to high-speed internet. If awarded, this unique project would build out open-access fiber to the home infrastructure in several areas to provide internet service providers (ISPs), connectivity for community anchor institutions.

Some of the most exciting benefits of this proposed project include:

- **Social Equity:** They would bridge the digital divide for rural communities by reducing the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas that have historically been neglected by service providers.
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- **Economic Development:** Provides residents and businesses across rural New York access to the entirety of the fiber network. Connecting these individuals and small businesses to the 21st century economy. These individuals and businesses can now sale goods and services online, attend virtual educational and professional development programs, virtually collaborate with other businesses and professional associations and work from home.

We are pleased to express our full support for the funding of Southern Tier Network’s application to ConnectALL for the Municipal Infrastructure Program.

Sincerely,

Brian M. Hildreth

Brian M. Hildreth, Executive Director
Southern Tier Library System



SOUTHERN TIER CENTRAL
Regional Planning & Development Board

February 28, 2024

Jeff Gasper, CEO
Southern Tier Network, Inc.
8 Denison Parkway East, Suite 205
Corning, NY 14830

Re: ConnectALL MIP Application –Southern Tier Network Open-Access Broadband Expansion

Dear Mr. Gasper,

On behalf of Southern Tier Central Regional Planning & Development Board (STC), it is with great enthusiasm that we extend our unwavering support for Southern Tier Network's ConnectALL MIP, Municipal Infrastructure Program Application, aimed at expanding the STN's existing open-access network to the homes of unserved/underserved communities.

Presently, many areas in Upstate NY suffer from inadequate access to high-speed internet, leaving numerous communities underserved. If granted, this transformative initiative will facilitate the establishment of open-access fiber infrastructure in several regions, ensuring internet service providers (ISPs) and community anchor institutions gain vital connectivity.

The proposed project boasts numerous compelling benefits, including:

- **Social Equity:** By significantly reducing the cost of connecting unserved and underserved regions, this endeavor will bridge the digital gap that has long marginalized rural communities.
- **Job Creation & Workforce Development:** The project promises to generate employment opportunities across various sectors, from infrastructure design and deployment to ongoing maintenance, thereby fostering workforce readiness in the region.
- **Economic Growth:** By extending access to the entire fiber network, residents and businesses in rural New York will be empowered to fully participate in the 21st-century economy. This newfound connectivity will enable online commerce, virtual education and professional development, collaborative ventures, and remote work opportunities.

As the Executive Director of STC, I am proud to lend my full endorsement to Southern Tier Network's funding application for the ConnectALL Municipal Infrastructure Program. We firmly believe in the project's potential to drive positive change, utilizing the region's greatest asset in the non-profit broadband provider here in the Southern Tier!

Sincerely,

Chelsea Robertson
Executive Director
Southern Tier Central Regional Planning & Development Board

TEAM TIOGA

we work for you

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

February 9, 2024

Jeff Gasper, CEO
Southern Tier Network, Inc.
8 Denison Parkway East, Suite 205
Corning, NY 14830

Re: ConnectALL MIP Application –Southern Tier Network Open-Access Broadband Expansion

Dear Mr. Gasper,

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Upstate NY currently has large areas with little access to high-speed internet. If awarded, this unique project would build out open-access fiber to the home infrastructure in several areas to provide internet service providers (ISPs), connectivity for community anchor institutions.

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Tioga County is pleased to express full support for the funding of Southern Tier Network's application to ConnectALL for the Municipal Infrastructure Program.

Sincerely,



Director, Tioga County Economic Development and Planning



STEUBEN COUNTY
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY MANAGER
3 EAST PULTENEY SQUARE
BATH, NY 14810
PHONE: (607) 664-2245
FAX: (607) 664-2282

JACK K. WHEELER, MPA
COUNTY MANAGER

CHRISTOPHER M. BREWER
DEPUTY COUNTY MANAGER

February 28, 2024

Jeff Gasper, CEO
Southern Tier Network, Inc.
8 Denison Parkway East, Suite 205
Corning, NY 14830

Re: ConnectALL MIP Application –Southern Tier Network Open-Access Broadband Expansion

Dear Mr. Gasper,

On behalf of Steuben County, I am writing to express our full support and enthusiasm for Southern Tier Network's ConnectALL MIP, Municipal Infrastructure Program Application to expand Southern Tier Network's open access fiber to the home network.

Upstate NY currently has large areas with little access to high-speed internet. If awarded, this unique project would build out open-access fiber to the home infrastructure in several areas to provide internet service providers (ISPs), connectivity for community anchor institutions.

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As Steuben County Manager, I am pleased to express my full support for the funding of Southern Tier Network's application to ConnectALL for the Municipal Infrastructure Program.

Sincerely,

Jack K. Wheeler, MPA
County Manager



Regional Information Center

Supporting the Mission of the Greater Southern Tier BOCES and Partnering Districts

February 26, 2024

Jeff Gasper, CEO
Southern Tier Network, Inc.
8 Denison Parkway East, Ste 205
Corning, NY 14830

Re: ConnectALL MIP Application –Southern Tier Network Open-Access Broadband Expansion

Dear Mr. Gasper,

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I, Steve Andrus, Regional Information Center Director for GST BOCES, am pleased to express my full support for the funding of Southern Tier Network's application to ConnectALL for the Municipal Infrastructure Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Andrus".

Steve Andrus
RIC Director

GST BOCES Regional Information Center

459 Philo Road, Elmira, NY 14903 • Phone: 607-739-3581

"Believe in what we do; deliver what we promise"



February 2, 2024

Jeff Gasper, CEO
Southern Tier Network, Inc.
8 Denison Parkway East, Suite 205
Corning, NY 14830

Re: ConnectALL MIP Application for Southern Tier Network Open-Access Broadband Expansion

Dear Mr. Gasper:

Southern Tier 8 Regional Board is enthusiastic to support Southern Tier Network's ConnectALL MIP, Municipal Infrastructure Program Application to expand Southern Tier Network's open access fiber to the home network in Brooktondale (Tompkins County) & Newark Valley (Tioga County).

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As the Executive Director of the Regional Board, I am pleased to express my full support for the funding of Southern Tier Network's application to ConnectALL for the Municipal Infrastructure Program.

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Jen Gregory
Executive Director
Southern Tier 8 Regional Board

9424 Scott Road
Painted Post, New York 14870
(607)962-3141
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8 Denison Parkway East, Suite 205
Corning, NY 14830

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SOUTHERN TIER CENTRAL
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Executive Director
Southern Tier Central Regional Planning & Development Board

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Director, Tioga County Economic Development and Planning



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CHRISTOPHER M. BREWER
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Regional Information Center

Supporting the Mission of the Greater Southern Tier BOCES and Partnering Districts

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Steve Andrus
RIC Director

GST BOCES Regional Information Center

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February 2, 2024

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8 Denison Parkway East, Suite 205
Corning, NY 14830

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Dear Mr. Gasper:

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As the Executive Director of the Regional Board, I am pleased to express my full support for the funding of Southern Tier Network's application to ConnectALL for the Municipal Infrastructure Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jen Gregory', is positioned below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Jen Gregory
Executive Director
Southern Tier 8 Regional Board



**CORNING-PAINTED POST
AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Students are the center of all we do.

Michelle Caulfield
Superintendent of Schools

February 27, 2024

Jeff Gasper, CEO
Southern Tier Network, Inc.
8 Denison Parkway East, Suite 205
Corning, NY 14830

Re: ConnectALL MIP Application –Southern Tier Network Open-Access Broadband Expansion

Dear Mr. Gasper,

The Corning-Painted Post Area School District is writing to express our unequivocal support and enthusiasm for Southern Tier Network's ConnectALL MIP, Municipal Infrastructure Program Application to expand Southern Tier Network's open access fiber to the home network.

Upstate NY currently has large areas with little access to high-speed internet. If awarded, this unique project would build out open-access fiber to the home infrastructure in several areas to provide internet service providers (ISPs), connectivity for community anchor institutions.

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I, Michelle Caulfield, Superintendent of Schools and the Corning-Painted Post Area School District am pleased to express my full support for the funding of Southern Tier Network's application to ConnectALL for the Municipal Infrastructure Program.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'm. caulfield'.

Michelle A. Caulfield
Superintendent of Schools



Tompkins County Legislature

Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building | 121 E. Court Street, 2nd Floor | Ithaca, N.Y. 14850
Phone: (607) 274-5434 | Fax: (607) 274-5430 | tompkinscountyny.gov

Mr. Joshua Breitbart
Senior Vice President
ConnectALL Office
633 Third Ave., 33rd floor
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Breitbart:

On behalf of Tompkins County, I am writing to express strong support and enthusiasm for Southern Tier Network's ConnectALL Municipal Infrastructure Program grant application to expand their open access fiber to the home network in the Towns of Caroline and Danby.

As we all know, access to high-speed internet is essential for economic development, education, healthcare, and overall quality of life. Unfortunately, many areas of Upstate New York, including significant portions of both the Town of Caroline and the Town of Danby, face significant challenges in accessing reliable broadband services. Southern Tier Network's project seeks to address this gap by providing state-of-the-art internet service in the Towns of Caroline and Danby.

If awarded, this unique project would build out open-access fiber to the home infrastructure in several areas of Tompkins County to provide connectivity for community anchor institutions. Some of the most exciting benefits of this proposed project include:

- **Social Equity:** this investment helps bridge the digital divide for rural communities by reducing the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas that have historically been neglected by service providers.
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I am pleased to express Tompkins County's support for the Southern Tier Network's application to ConnectALL for the Municipal Infrastructure Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan Klein".

Dan Klein, Chair
Tompkins County Legislature



Inclusion through Diversity



Tompkins County Legislature

Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building | 121 E. Court Street, 2nd Floor | Ithaca, N.Y. 14850
Phone: (607) 274-5434 | Fax: (607) 274-5430 | tompkinscountyny.gov

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ConnectALL Office
633 Third Ave., 33rd floor
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