



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Louisa
Program Title: Fiber Initiative Partnership
Program Category: Regional Partnersip

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: CHRISTIAN R. GOODWIN
Title: County Administrator
Signature: [Handwritten Signature]



THE COUNTY OF LOUISA

2021 VACo Achievement Awards – Regional Partnership

PROGRAM NAME: FIBER INITIATIVE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW

Broadband deployment in rural areas has been an ongoing challenge across the nation. The most successful approach to this problem has involved leveraging partnerships and combining sources of funding to ensure financial viability where otherwise such might not exist. In September 2020, the Louisa County Board of Supervisors unanimously earmarked \$15 million to incentivize the deployment of end-user fiber on a countywide basis. Efforts to provide broadband internet service in Louisa County took a leap forward when Louisa County facilitated a historic partnership with Firefly Fiber Broadband, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative and Dominion Energy to ensure high-speed internet access is available to all of the homes and business in the County.



Figure 1- County Officials and utility partners announce the partnership at a press conference

PROGRAM DETAILS

Louisa County developed a partnership with Rappahannock Electric Cooperative (REC), Firefly Fiber BroadbandSM (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative (CVEC)), and Dominion Energy Virginia to bring end-user fiber on a countywide basis to Louisa. The County's willingness to consider up to \$15M in incentives was a major catalyst. Given the County's desire for a countywide (fiber to all end users in the County) solution, a shared effort among multiple partners was necessary, so the County is leveraging willing partners in its electric service providers.

Central Virginia Electric Cooperative (CVEC) is embarking on an aggressive buildout of a system-wide fiber optic communication network that will provide high-speed communications across the electric distribution system and allow CVEC to improve electric operations for every CVEC member. The fiber-optic network is being installed on and adjacent to existing overhead and underground electric distribution lines, utilizing the existing infrastructure. CVEC will install and own the fiber-optic cable, and offer retail internet and phone services to its members through Firefly Fiber Broadband, a wholly-owned subsidiary of CVEC.

Serving a critical role in the proposed partnership, REC is providing use of its infrastructure, including significant infrastructure improvements to make the Louisa County broadband initiative a reality. Firefly will be the internet service provider for the partnership and will ensure the availability of fiber broadband on a county-wide basis. Firefly will oversee construction of the fiber in the REC service territory and then be responsible for network operation and fiber maintenance.

As it moves forward with the efforts to modernize Virginia's energy grid, Dominion Energy is working to provide "middle-mile" fiber optic cable infrastructure that can also be used to bridge the digital gap and reduce broadband deployment costs in Louisa County. Firefly will

lease the “middle-mile” fiber installed by Dominion Energy in the company’s electric service area in Louisa County.

Another key contingent of the historic effort is a petition to the State Corporation Commission for regulatory approval later in 2021. The first step will be to complete engineering studies to determine the most efficient deployment plan and finalize funding requirements. The project is underway and some citizens are already receiving service from Firefly. It is estimated that 50% of the County will have access by the end of 2023, 75% by the end of 2024. Project completion is slated by the end of 2025.

Another key function of the partnership was the creation of a blueprint to allow other localities to embark on similar efforts. This facet of the effort has attracted widespread interest in the region, and the partners are collaborating with other localities to expand offerings beyond Louisa’s borders.

Press Release and Project Frequently Asked Questions:

<https://www.louisacounty.com/2386/Fiber-Broadband-Partnership---Press-Rele>

Press conference video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lVEpkgV1tuY>

News coverage regarding the partnership:

- <https://www.nbc29.com/2021/03/02/louisa-county-announces-partnership-bring-internet-all-homes-businesses-by/>
- <https://www.cbs19news.com/story/43427461/update-provided-on-louisa-county-broadband-expansion-efforts>
- https://richmond.com/opinion/editorial/editorial-real-broadband-solutions-require-more-than-money/article_9bf9765b-68b0-57de-99b7-ab1cff852117.html

For more information about the fiber construction project and a map of the project area, visit www.fireflyva.com/partners.