



2021-2022 GREAT Grant Partnership Proposals

Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology

Chatham County Board of Commissioners

March 21, 2022

Purpose of the GREAT Program

- To facilitate economic development through the deployment of broadband to unserved areas of the state

Eligible Projects

- An eligible project is a discrete and specific project located in an unserved area of an economically distressed county seeking to provide broadband service to prospective broadband recipients

Application Window

- Opened: January 31, 2022
- Deadline: April 4, 2022

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Federal ARPA-funded program

\$350M in total funds available

Private providers or cooperatively organized entities

Unserved areas without access to 25:3 speeds

Tier 1,2, and rural census tracts in Tier 3 counties

A single grant award cannot exceed \$4 million

Awards for projects in any one county cannot exceed \$8 million

Matching awardee funds required

Minimum speeds of 100:20, scalable to 100 symmetrical by Dec. 31, 2026

5-year service agreement

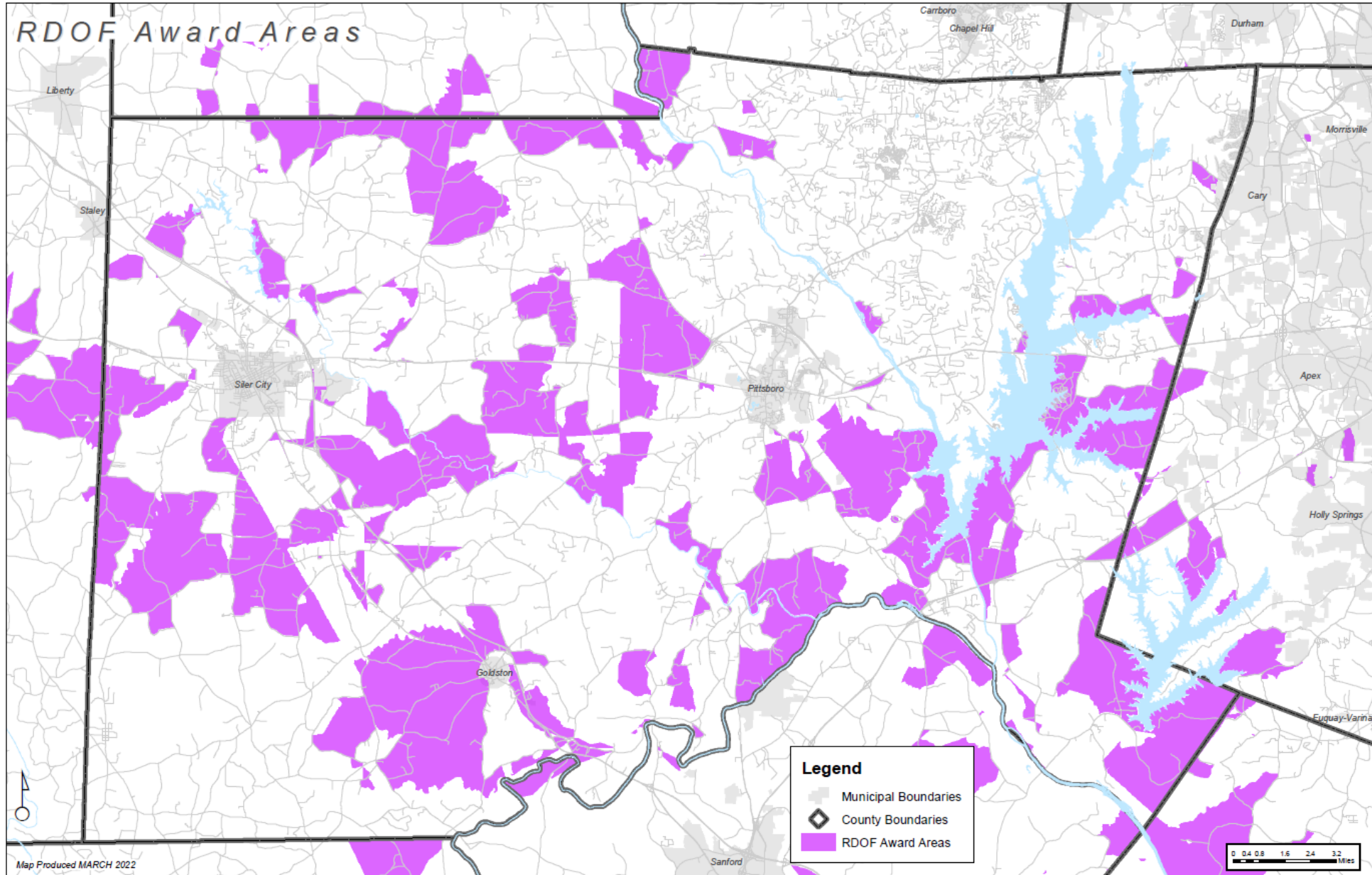
Required participation in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

And then there is RDOF

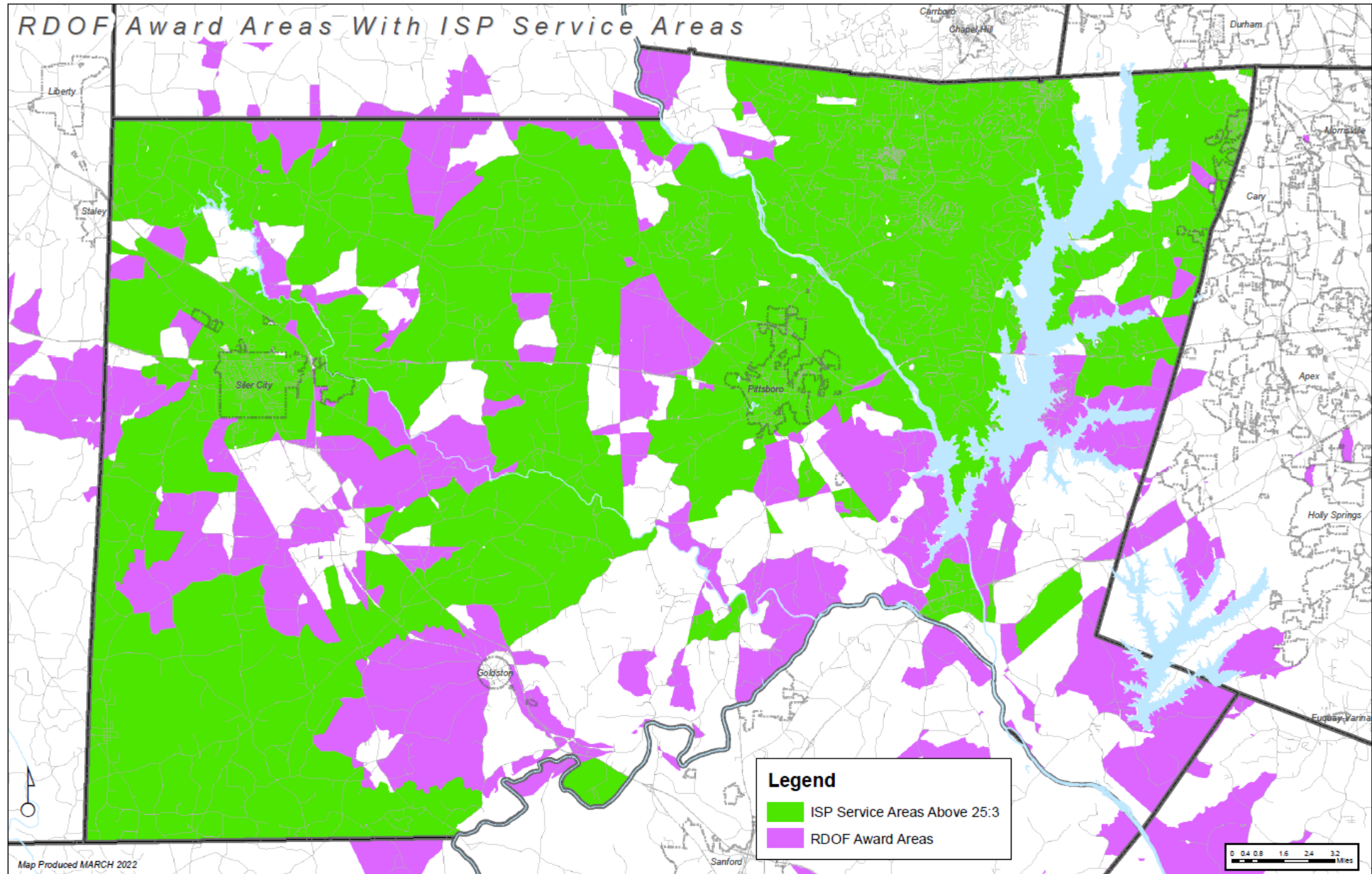
RDOF – Rural Digital Opportunity Fund

- RDOF is a federal program that will provide \$20.4 billion in funding over a ten-year period to support broadband networks in rural communities across the country
- RDOF funds are disbursed through a reverse auction
- GREAT Grant projects are not eligible within areas already awarded through RDOF

Chatham County RDOF Map



RDOF & ISP Coverage Area Map



Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and GREAT

- Chatham County has been approached by several ISPs to potentially partner with them in the latest NC Great Grant cycle, including:
 - AT&T
 - Brightspeed
 - Contera
 - Charter Communications
 - NorthState
 - Randolph Communications
- With exception to Charter Communications, each ISP is requesting the County to enter into an agreement to partner with them in the event they are awarded the GREAT Grant in the current grant cycle

ISP Partnership

- ARPA Funding and Project Match Reduction

APPLICATION SCORE	MATCHING REQUIREMENT
12.0 points or less	50%
Greater than 12.0, but less than 17.5 points	45%
17.5, up to 22.0 points	40%
Greater than 22.0	30%

- Up to 50% of project match can be comprised of third-party funding
- An ISP's proposed project is made more competitive if the ISP partners with the County, where the County would commit to assisting with the project match funding
- The project match can be significantly reduced if the County assists with the project match, particularly if the financial assistance is made with the use of the County's ARPA funds

NEXT STEPS

- Chatham County Board of Commissioners is asked to authorize the County Manager to negotiate and execute an agreement or memorandum of understanding with one or more internet service providers that would use Chatham County American Rescue Plan funds to support applications for Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (G.R.E.A.T.) grants. An agreement or memorandum of understanding may not commit, or state an intent to commit, more than 50% of the grant match or an amount that exceeds \$1,000,000.
- GREAT Grant Applications due April 4, 2022
- Staff will present the proposals submitted for GREAT Grant consideration at the April 18 Board of Commissioners meeting
- The grant standards require a “protest process” where proposed projects can be challenged
- Following the protest period, proposals will be scored, and projects will be awarded
- After the grant is awarded, an agreement will be negotiated between the County and the successful ISP based on factors such as final project scope and the required local match