

**Rural Broadband I.D. Trust Fund Program  
Cover Sheet**

**Applicant Name:** City of Tull, AR

**Applicant Address:** 8208 N. Main Tull, AR 72015

**Applicant Phone Number:** 501-778-3546

**Applicant Email Address:** williamdavis357@gmail.com

**Applicant Tax ID or EIN Number:** 71-0578244

**Key Contact Person:** Mayor William Davis

**Total Amount Requested:** \$40,000.00

**Project Description:**

The city of Tull has a population of 465. There are 291 individual address locations in the city of Tull. First Electric Cooperative serves 100% of the city limits of Tull and provides electric service to 258 locations.

The city of Tull must partner with a company to bring reliable and affordable broadband service to all citizens and promote economic growth and stabilization. The COVID-19 Pandemic has accentuated the need for rural broadband. Schools, businesses, farmers, and medical facilities are suffering due to the lack quality broadband services. This is the reason the city of Tull approached First Electric and its subsidiary Connect 2 First Internet and asked them to consider deploying a fiber to the home broadband network in the city limits of Tull. The city of Tull will:

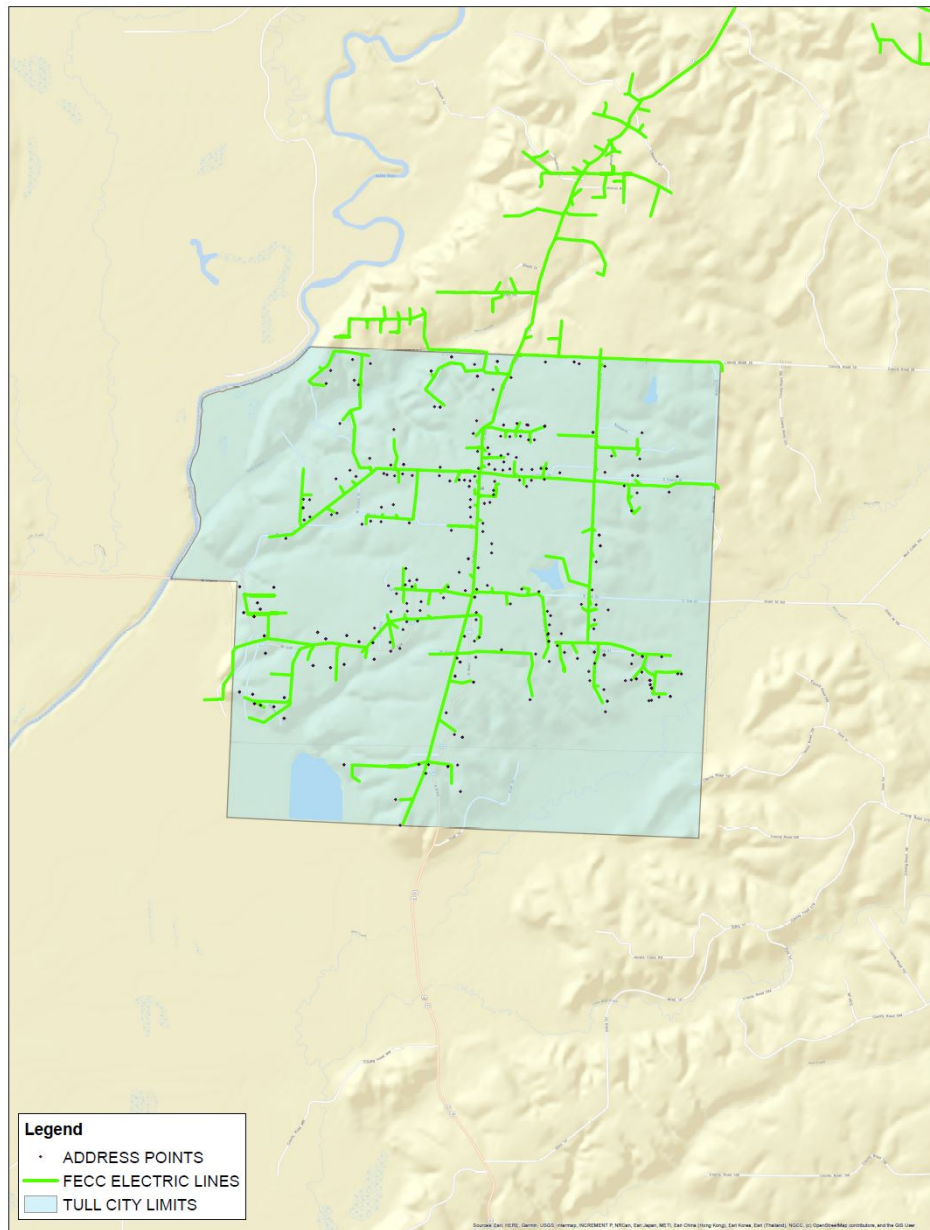
- Contract with FECC and C2FI to develop strategies for designing and deploying a fiber broadband network
- Work with FECC and C2FI to promote and broadband initiatives to local businesses and residents
- Continue to look for other funding and partnership opportunities relating to broadband development.

- **Project Narrative**

### **Introduction (up to 30 points)**

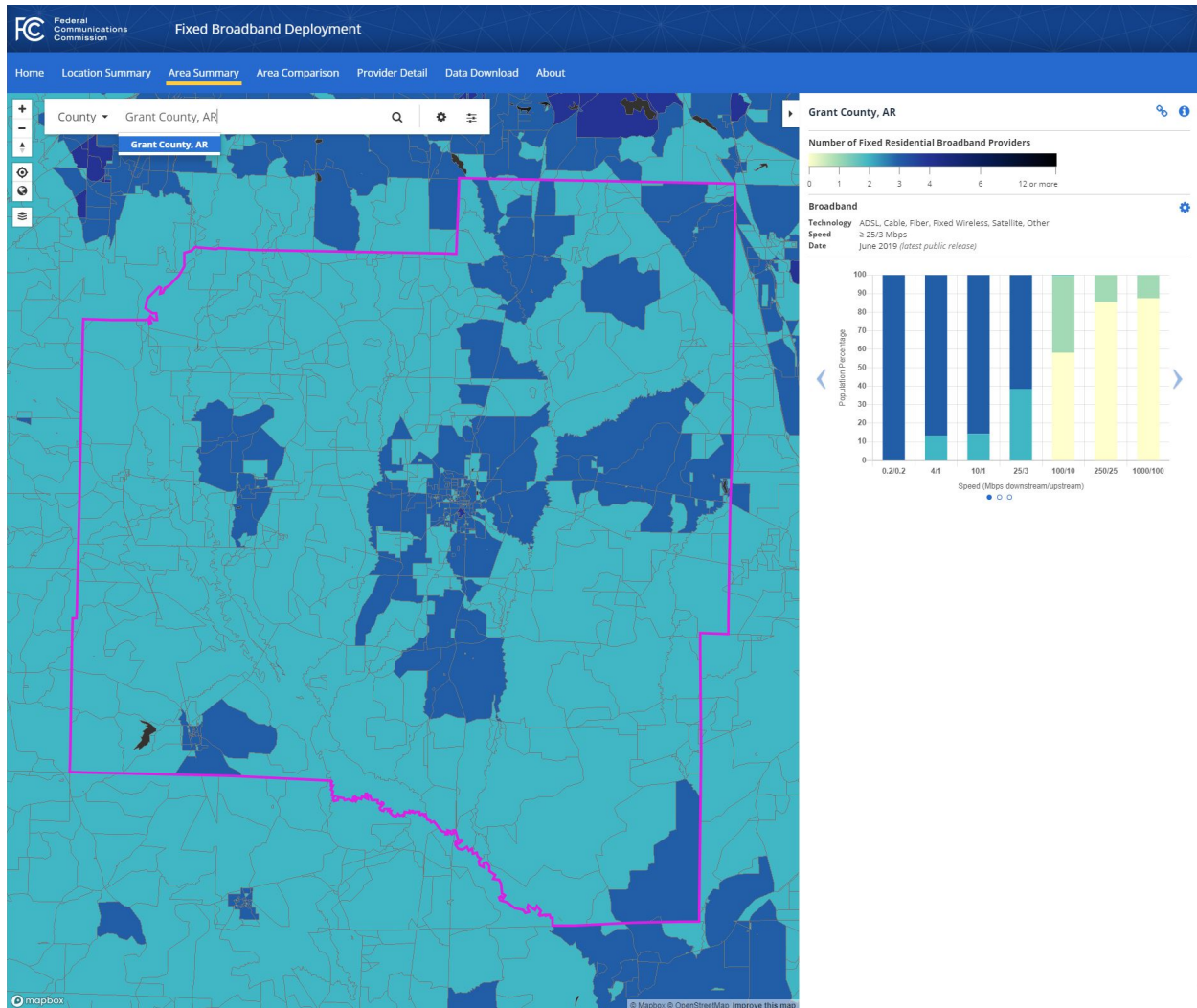
#### **Proposed Service Area**

The service area for this application will cover 100% of the individual address points inside Tull city limits. Connect 2 First will deploy fiber to the home to all First Electric members that desire to subscribe to broadband services offered by Connect 2 First that are inside Tull city limits.



## Percent of your proposed service area that is unserved by 25/3 broadband

This is the broadband coverage for Grant County:



According to the FCC, three or more providers offer 25/3 broadband to 61.49% of our county's residents. Two providers offer 25/3 broadband service to 38.51% of our county's residents.

## Total population, number of residents who are rural and urban

According to United States Census Bureau on 7/1/2019, Grant County had a population of 18,265. Grant County population is 24.6% Urban and 75.4% Rural. Tull has a population of 465. The city of Tull is classified as 100% rural.

## Percent of individuals in your proposed service area who are living in poverty

According to the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), 13.1% of Grant County individuals are considered to live in poverty and 17.6% for the citizens inside Tull city limits.

## Medically underserved

Data was not available from data.HRSA.gov website. This could be an indication a severe Medically Underserved Area. Grant County appears to be one of the only counties that does not have data available for MUA.

### **Description of need (up to 30 points)**

#### Staffing needs:

Tull city officials have no experience in broadband deployment. However, we do have experience in evaluating and hiring consultants and contractors, managing budgets, and completing projects in a timely manner.

#### Population needs:

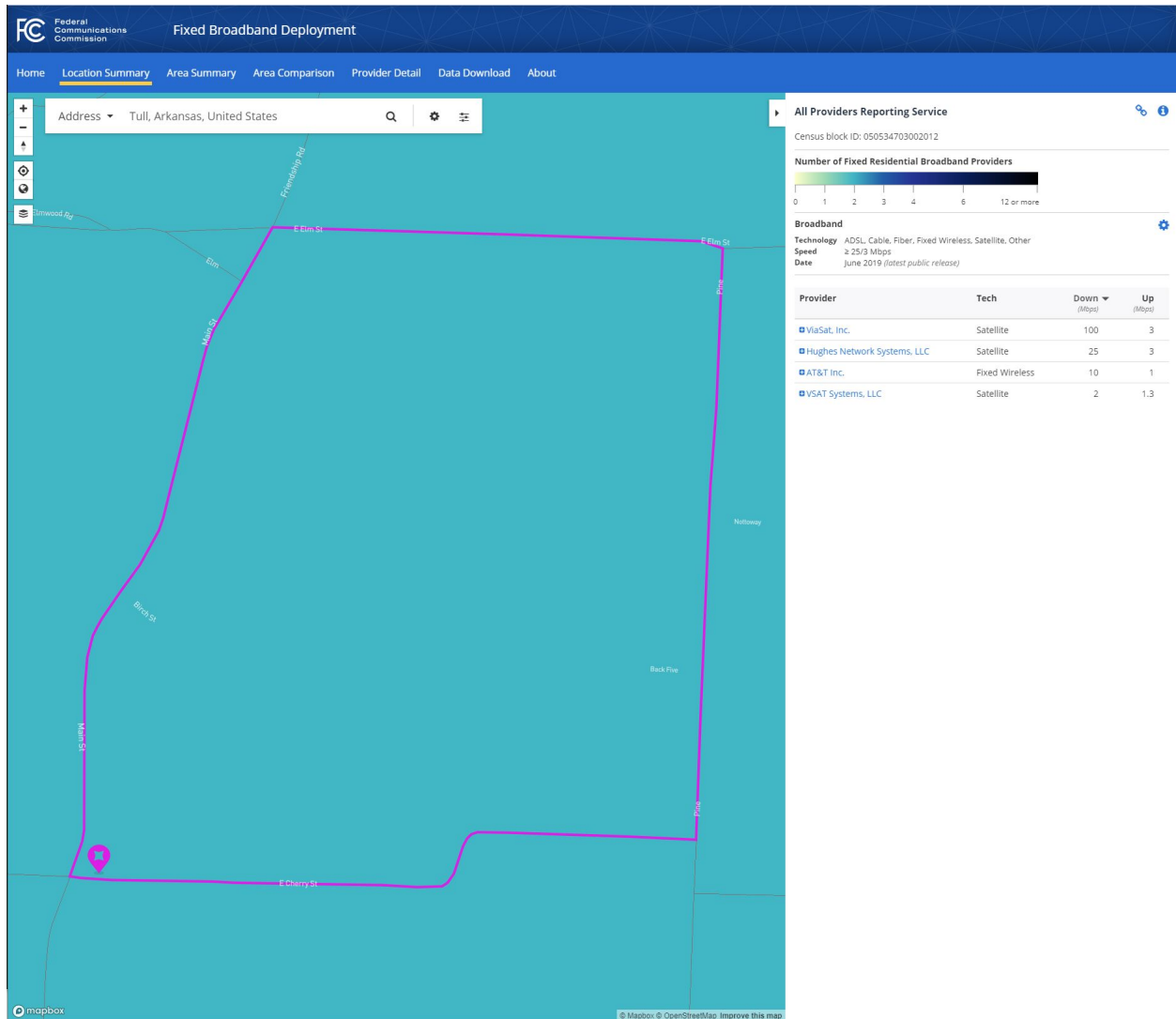
According to the US Census Bureau QuickFacts, 10.8% of Tull population is over the age of 65. Tull has a mix of 94% White, 2.4% Black or African American, 0% American Indian and Alaska Native, 0% Asian, 2.8% Two or More Races, and .9% Some other race alone. The median household income for years 2014-2018 was \$51,299.00. 18.4% hold a Bachelor's Degree or higher.

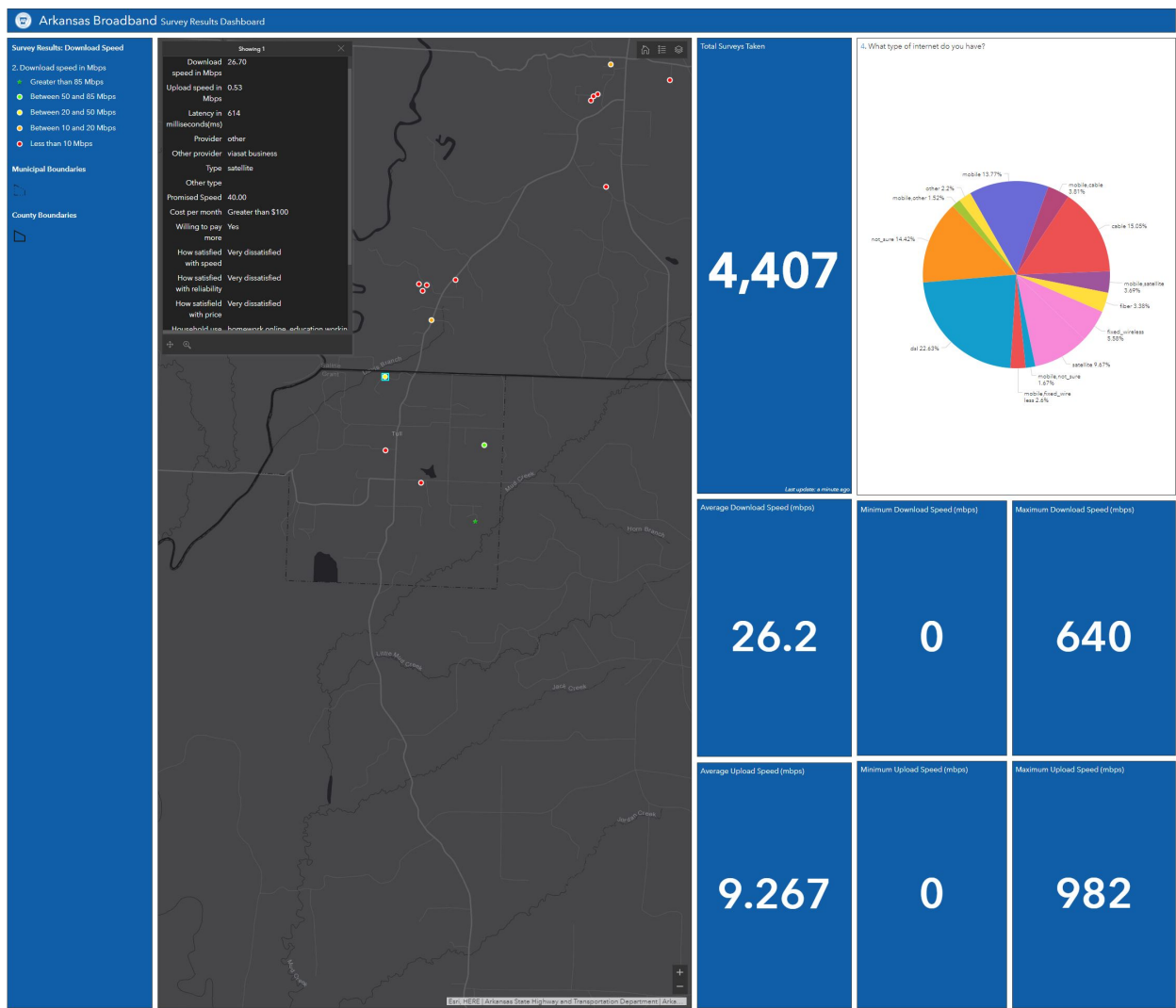
For Grant County, most of the city population (age 25+) have a High School diploma or greater (91.5%). 18.3% (age 25+) hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Grant County had a median household income of \$51,920.00 for that same time frame.

#### Broadband needs:

By looking at the broadband coverage in Tull it appears that adequate (25/3) broadband service is available across the entire city and 100% is covered by at least 2 or more providers. However, it has been well documented that broadband speeds have been overstated in reports to the FCC for years and that these coverages and speeds are unreliable. The citizens of Tull are in dire need of quality broadband service that exceeds the FCC minimum requirements of 25/3. With the recent events revolving around the COVID-19 Pandemic, the lack for bandwidth, broadband speed, and coverage has been exposed. Teachers, students, employers, employees, and healthcare workers struggle to be able to utilize the online alternatives due to insufficient broadband availability. These are the reasons why Tull has taken the initiative to pursue grants such as the Rural ID Expenses Trust Fund. The map below comes from the Arkansas Broadband Speed Test. Even though the FCC website shows multiple ISPs provide service at or above the 25/3 level, there are multiple speed test results that show differently. Results from tests show that users are generally not satisfied with their service and would even pay more for a different option. Citizens in Tull are limited to fixed wireless or satellite providers for broadband services. These services are not reliable, very costly, and coverage is limited. Even when the download speeds exceed 25/3Mbps, the user's comments strongly suggest that they are Somewhat Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied in reliability and cost.

## Tull Broadband ISP Providers





#### Internet Service Provider relationship needs:

The city of Tull has had a longstanding relationship with First Electric Cooperative. Electric Cooperatives were created to provide electric service to those rural areas where large investor owned electric companies refused to go. The citizens of Tull feel very strong that if rural broadband is successful, it will be on the backs of those that brought electricity to rural America 80+ years ago. We are confident that by partnering with our local Electric Cooperative that we will help to extend high speed broadband to the rural areas of our community.

#### Financial needs:

The 2018 Tull budget was \$38,193.00. The opportunities for a town of our size to attract business are very limited. With our limited revenue it is very difficult to apply and be awarded grants and this is why we feel that it is important for us to pursue this partnership with Connect 2 First.

Tull officials do not have the expertise to begin a broadband project but a grant like this could help offset feasibility costs for a qualified Internet Service Provider. This grant would help identify the needed infrastructure, design, feasibility, and deployment schedule needed to extend



broadband service throughout our community. We understand that there are federal grants available for broadband construction and expansion, and we feel that this grant may strategically position us to compete for these funds.

#### **Community relationship needs:**

Tull is a small community that has largely been overlooked by big telco providers. High speed broadband access is becoming one of the top priorities of businesses and residential locations. Where location used to drive where a business would be located, it is becoming increasingly more important to have high speed broadband. The lack of highspeed internet is yet another detriment to small communities and towns like ours. Small towns are disappearing across the country because of the need for high speed internet for home, school, and businesses. Our community must partner with someone like Connect 2 First to bring high speed internet to rural areas and small communities like ours. It is our belief that rural communities like ours would again become a desirable location to raise a family and develop businesses if high speed broadband were available.

A letter of recommendation sponsored by the Mayor of Tull and signed by all members of the city council is attached. We have spoken with First Electric and Connect 2 First on numerous occasions about possibilities of providing high speed internet. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with them and develop a plan to bring fiber to the home to our community.

#### **Description of plan (up to 25 points)**

Through this study, we plan to achieve the following:

- Contract with FECC and Connect 2 First Internet to educate our leaders of broadband options and develop strategies to extend broadband into the city of Tull.
- The feasibility study and design completed by FECC and Connect 2 First Internet are necessary components of their due diligence business study to bring broadband services to the city of Tull. To complete this, a low-level design is needed to identify the equipment, material, routes, and labor.

Our objectives and timeline are as follows:

Month 1 Objective – Launch city of Tull Broadband Due Diligence Study

Month 1 Goals:

1. Meet with FECC and Connect 2 First Internet to review due diligence study
2. Contract FECC and Connect 2 First Internet to complete a low-level design
3. Assign a city official to document and create reports as needed to UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation

Month 2 Objective – Make Decisions Related to the Broadband Due Diligence Study

Month 2 Goals:

1. Work with FECC and Connect 2 First on the low-level design
2. Continue holding meetings with FECC and Connect 2 First Internet

Month 3 Objective – Expanding Broadband Due Diligence

Month 3 Goals:

1. Continue holding meetings with FECC and Connect 2 First Internet

#### Month 4 Objective – Continuing Documenting Needs

##### Month 4 Goals:

1. Continue holding meetings with FECC and Connect 2 First Internet
2. Receive monthly update about low-level design

#### Month 5 Objective – Sharing Documented Needs

##### Month 5 Goals:

1. Share the first draft of the city of Tull low-level design and UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation
2. Make revisions as needed
3. Continue holding meetings with the FECC and Connect 2 First Internet
4. Receive monthly update about low-level design

#### Month 6 Objective – Receive Findings of the Feasibility Study

##### Month 6 Goals:

1. Share final draft of the low-level design with Tull Mayor and UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation
2. Determine next steps for further broadband grants, loans, or other necessary steps

##### Final Products:

1. Low-level design for broadband deployment in FECC service areas in the city of Tull.

While we are not familiar with the available broadband grants and programs, we are confident, that FECC and Connect 2 First Internet are in tune with that landscape and will work with us to pursue those opportunities.

### **Budget**

<b>Budget Categories</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Personnel	\$3,700.00
Supplies	\$300.00
Contractual	\$36,000.00
Total Request	<b>\$40,000.00</b>

#### **Budget Justification (up to 15 points):**

##### ***Personnel:***

Project Director – Our Mayor will act as Project Director, serving as key liaison to the funders and media. He will coordinate meetings and make final decisions on all contractors. Our Mayor will spend an estimated half a day a week on this project for six months. Compensation for his time is valued at \$1,500.00. Request: \$1,500.00

Financial Director – Our Mayor will appoint the Financial Director from his staff. The Financial Director will secure the surety bond and make financial arrangements for all contractors. This person will ensure timelines, objectives, and goals are met, providing troubleshooting as necessary to solve problems while working alongside our Project Director. The Financial



Director will spend an estimated one day weekly on this project for six months. Compensation for the Financial Director's time is valued at \$2,200.00. Request: \$2,200.00

***Supplies:***

The city of Tull will need office supplies (printing paper, printer ink, folders, postage, etc.), bottled water, and other sundry supplies for meetings. An allowance of \$50.00 per month is requested to cover these needs. Request: \$300.00

***Contractual:***

Feasibility Study Contractor, Broadband Consultant, Needs Assessment Author: FECC and Connect 2 First Internet will be the Internet Service Provider to conduct a low-level design to expand its services to our area. They will also provide any consulting work or outsource to another broadband consulting firm if additional research is required. This contractor will conduct market research, engage partners, model/design the network, and conduct a cost analysis and business plan. FECC and Connect 2 First Internet has informed us that to conduct this study, they need at least three months and \$36,000.00. We feel this amount will compensate another ISP or electric cooperative should we decide to pursue another feasibility study contractor. Request: \$36,000.00

**Supporting Documents (up to 10 *bonus* points):**

**TOWN OF TULL**  
GRANT COUNTY ARKANSAS  
8208 Main Street • Tull, AR 72015 • Phone: (501) 778-3546

*"Home of Old Folks Singing"*

Email: [williamdavis357@gmail.com](mailto:williamdavis357@gmail.com)

William Davis, Mayor

November 2, 2020

Mr. Randy Everett, General Manager  
Connect2First Internet, LLC

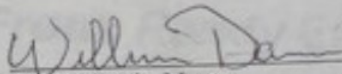
Dear Mr. Everett:

We, the Town of Tull leadership, would like to thank you for the opportunity to receive broadband service for this town and community.

Without your continued support, our Town would not be able to afford these projects.

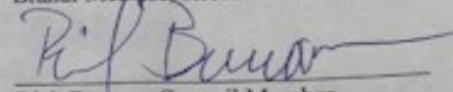
So we, therefore, would like to thank you with the utmost sincerity for helping us achieve these goals and accomplishments.

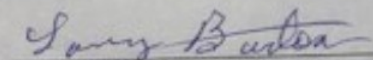
**Town of Tull, Arkansas**

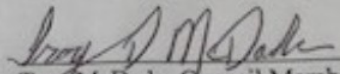
  
William Davis, Mayor

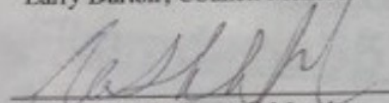
  
Brandi McDade, Recorder/Treasurer

  
Terry Brumbelow, Council Member

  
Rick Burrow, Council Member

  
Larry Burton, Council Member

  
Troy McDade, Council Member

  
Nathan Welch, Council Member