

**§ 153A-459. County broadband acceleration.**

A county may provide grants to unaffiliated private or nonprofit providers of broadband service, as that term is defined in G.S. 143B-1373(a)(2), for the purpose of expanding broadband service in unserved areas in the county. The grants shall be awarded on a technology neutral basis, shall be open to all private or nonprofit providers of broadband service, and may require matching funds by the private or nonprofit providers. A county shall seek and consider requests for proposal from providers prior to awarding a broadband grant and shall use reasonable means to ensure that potential applicants are made aware of the grant; provided, however, a county is not required to seek and consider requests for proposal when providing financial or other support in connection with an application from a private provider for a broadband service grant under G.S. 143B-1373. The county may use general fund revenue as well as State or federal funds for the grants. For purposes of this section, the term "unserved area" has the same meaning as in G.S. 143B-1373(a)(14). For any grants awarded pursuant to this section after the date this section becomes effective, the term "unserved area" shall not include any location where a private provider has been designated to receive funds through State- or federally funded programs designed specifically for broadband service deployment if the recipient of the funding is in good standing with the grantor agency's requirements regarding construction build-out and time lines. Nothing in this section authorizes a county to provide high-speed Internet broadband service. (2019-111, s. 2.7; 2020-3, s. 4.33(a); 2020-25, s. 51(a), (b), (d); 2021-180, s. 38.10(a).)