



Adopted Policy Resolution 02.2023

Southern States Interoperable Grid Network for Advanced Applications (SSIGNAA) Project

Sponsors

Representative William E. "Bill" Sandifer, South Carolina
Representative Bobby Payne, Florida

WHEREAS, in 2019, 2020, and 2021, the Southern States Energy Board unanimously adopted a resolution focusing on advanced technologies to support grid modernization; and

WHEREAS, each of those three resolutions built upon the prior one, increasingly focusing on the importance of private broadband communications networks to enable the applications that will create the modern grid, as follows:

- Policy Resolution 4.2019, "Modernization of the Electric Grid," supported "utility investments in advanced energy infrastructure, energy storage, and other non-wires alternatives to help ensure all citizens have access to, and may take part in the benefits of, a smarter electric grid, as well as spur innovation and technology deployment;"
- Policy Resolution 1.2020, "Broadband for Grid Modernization," urged—
 - "the region's utilities to deploy private, cyber-secure broadband communications networks to support the 'new technologies and smarter energy infrastructure' of the modern electric grid envisioned in Resolution 4.2019";
 - "the use of infrastructure deployed for grid-management communications to also support consumer broadband services to rural homes and businesses";
 - "the region's utilities that deploy private wireless broadband networks for grid-management communications ... to adopt a common spectrum band and technology for such networks to enable wireless network interoperability, increased functionality, and cost savings across the region"; and
- Policy Resolution 3.2021, "Project Advancing Grid Modernization Technologies," directing staff to
 - "develop a project proposal demonstrating the value to utilities and their customers of:

- “grid modernization applications enabled by utility private broadband communications networks,
 - “utilities sharing such wired and wireless communications infrastructure to support broadband internet access for underserved rural communities, and
 - “interoperability among disparate utility private broadband networks through adoption of a common spectrum band and technology;” and
- “seek federal grant or cooperative agreement opportunities to fund the project, undertake to obtain such funds, and if successful, proceed to manage and implement the funded project”; and

WHEREAS, Southern States Energy Board staff has been working to develop the project described in Policy Resolution 3.2021 and has identified a federal funding opportunity in the U.S. Department of Energy’s Grid Innovation Program, for which states and combinations of states are eligible; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to legislation adopted in each of its member states, the Southern States Energy Board is an agency of each of its member states and thus is a combination of states eligible for funding under the Grid Innovation Program, which provides federal funds for up to half of the cost of the project; and

WHEREAS, the project in its current form would create the Southern States Interoperable Grid Network for Advanced Applications (SSIGNAA), a single interoperable, utility-grade private wireless broadband network providing modern, robust grid communications for utilities across the southern states; and

WHEREAS, for participating utilities, the SSIGNAA project would enhance grid efficiency, security, reliability, and resilience by using the private wireless broadband network to deploy smart grid applications supporting functions such as real-time situational awareness, service restoration, mutual aid, wildfire mitigation, and integration of distributed energy resources; and

WHEREAS, all utilities participating in SSIGNAA would be able, with appropriate authorization, to use the network to communicate with each other, sharing data and applications; and

WHEREAS, the SSIGNAA project would provide an opportunity for utilities to efficiently deploy additional wired and wireless communications infrastructure to support broadband internet access for underserved rural communities; and

WHEREAS, thus far, cooperative utilities in Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, and Tennessee have expressed interest in potentially participating in the project; and

WHEREAS, the SSIGNAA project would substantially benefit the economic and community well-being of the southern region by enhancing the efficiency, security, reliability, and resilience of electricity service for utility customers in the southern states and by providing a modern technology platform enabling the transition to a cleaner energy future.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Southern States Energy Board directs staff to continue its efforts to develop and obtain funding for the SSIGNAA project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Southern States Energy Board urges the U.S. Department of Energy to encourage submission of a full application for the SSIGNAA project and strongly consider the project for funding; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Southern States Energy Board urges any utility in a member state that deploys a private wireless broadband network for grid communications to adopt the same radio frequencies and network technology as those adopted by the SSIGNAA network to facilitate interoperability among the networks.