



## Hartsville Community Joins Innovative Broadband Expansion Effort

*Leaders enlist in South Carolina's Connected program to bridge technology gap, boost economy, seed ground for innovations*

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**Hartsville, SC** – Hartsville community leaders have enrolled their community in an innovative program that seeks to boost the local economy and quality of life for residents through increased access, adoption, and use of broadband.

On Friday, August 2, Connect South Carolina Community Technology Advisor Lindsay Conrad led Hartsville community leaders through the steps of the new Connected Community Engagement Program that offers a comprehensive and localized way for communities to bridge the digital divide impacting many communities. The kickoff meeting was held at the Hartsville City Council Chambers.

The Connected Community Engagement Program entails building a comprehensive Technology Action Plan for developing a technology-ready community by reviewing the landscape, developing regional partnerships, establishing local teams, and conducting a thorough community assessment.

Hartsville community leaders gathered at this round table event for an overview of the community's broadband inventory and attendees were presented with the Connected goals and objectives. Attendees discussed the current state of broadband in the community by reviewing mapping data provided by Connect South Carolina and committed to take part in the Connected program to assist the City of Hartsville in completing the technology assessment.

Attendees at the meeting represented various community groups such as the City of Hartsville, the Community Foundation, the Butler Heritage Foundation, SC Works, the Byerly Foundation, Darlington County Library, Duke Energy, and Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center.

“We are excited to be a part of this important initiative that will put our residents on the information superhighway,” said Natalie Zeigler, Hartsville city manager. “As our world becomes increasingly technology-driven, we don’t want to be left behind. The Connected community certification process will help us achieve a better business environment, more effective community and economic development, improved healthcare, enhanced education, and more efficient government.”

The Steering Committee will gather the data obtained from the event and begin putting it into the Connected community online assessment portal. Following this entry, a comprehensive technology plan will be developed for Kershaw County, which will be presented at a future meeting.

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**About Connect South Carolina:** As the State Broadband Initiative designated entity, Connect South Carolina is leading the effort to increase high-speed Internet access, adoption, and use to ensure South Carolina’s competitiveness in the connected global economy of the twenty-first century. Connect South Carolina is a public-private partnership designated by the state to work with all broadband providers to create South Carolina’s first interactive map of broadband coverage. This work serves as a foundation for addressing remaining service gaps while also engaging state, regional, and local leaders in workforce development activities designed to bridge South Carolina’s digital divide. For maps, research, or to get involved with efforts in your community, please visit: [www.ConnectSC.org](http://www.ConnectSC.org).

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Connected Nation developed the Connected Community Engagement Program to help guide a community through an assessment of its overall broadband and technology status. Connected Certified Communities have measurably demonstrated their proficiency for effective Access, Adoption, and Use of broadband supported technologies. Connected Nation, through its partners, provides a national platform for recognizing those communities that excel across these important benchmarks. Funded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), this effort is part of the State Broadband Initiative. <http://www.connectednation.org/get-connected>.