



Sumter County 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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Sumter County, SC – Community leaders with Sumter County 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, April 11, Connect South Carolina Community Technology Advisor Leslie Callison led the community leaders through the steps of the Connected Community Engagement Program that offers a comprehensive and localized way for communities to bridge the digital divide impacting many regions.

The kick-off planning meeting was held in the Iris Room at Central Carolina Technical College located in downtown Sumter, with Larry Blanding, Sumter County Council chairman, offering welcoming remarks to the guests in attendance.

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

During the meeting, it was discovered that Sumter County has exceptional Access scores of 39 out of 40, indicating a landscape of good broadband availability, speeds, competition, middle-mile access, and mobile availability.

“Sumter is already a leader in the state for equipping our businesses, residents, and visitors with access to broadband,” said Shelley Kile, City of Sumter Communications & Tourism director.

“By participating in the Connect South Carolina program we are affirming our commitment to support a healthier business environment, an enhanced healthcare and education system, and a more efficient government.”

Also determined during the meeting was that Sumter County has many programs to encourage broadband adoption: one being a program in which children who are unable to attend school due to medical conditions or ailments are represented in their classrooms by robots with cameras. The children operate the robots from their homes, and in one elementary school there is a robot dressed in pink in place of a young girl.

The next steps include Community Champion Rick Farmer touring the hospital to see firsthand innovative practices, and engaging outlying rural area officials so that the Sumter County Community Technology team can capture information from those communities to include in the assessment.

Photo from left: Leslie Callison, Community Champion Rick Farmer, Shelley Kile, City of Sumter Communications & Tourism director at the Sumter County Connected program kickoff meeting.

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About Connect South Carolina: As the State Broadband Initiative, 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.

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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.

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