WILLIAMSBURG COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

A Roadmap for Kickstarting Our Digital Economy Ecosystem (DEE)

JULY 2021

"IT'S TIME TO BRING WILLIAMSBURG COUNTY INTO THE FUTURE."

# WILLIAMSBURG COUNTY AT A GLANCE

- **Population: 30,368**
- **Unemployment rate: 8.1%**
- **In-commuters: 35.7%; Out-commuters: 40.4%; Work and live in county: 23.8%**
- **Racial demographics: 66.4% Black; 31.6% White**
- **Number of households: 12,686**
- **Median household income: $32,485**
- **Per capita income: $18,257**
- **People living in poverty: 27.8%**
- **Primary industries: Manufacturing, agriculture, public administration, healthcare and social assistance, retail**
- **Top occupational openings: Retail supervisors, retail sales, construction workers, truck drivers, nurses, material moving workers**
- **Educational attainment: 40.02% high school graduates; 7.63% bachelor's degree; 7.63% associates degree; 17.75% some college; 12.09% 9th to 12th grade no diploma**
- **Households with a computer: 68.9% (2015-2019)**
- **Households with broadband: 51.3% (2015-2019)**
- **Broadband coverage: 81.9%**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the digital economy included 5.1 million jobs in 2017 with an average compensation of $132,223, but rural communities like Williamsburg – those with a population of fewer than 50,000 people – have been largely left behind.

Like most rural counties of its size, Williamsburg struggles with high unemployment, an aging population, low access to healthcare services, and poor educational outcomes. Other challenges include too few skilled workers, a lack of local jobs, and a digital literacy gap that's been holding the county and its residents back for far too long.

Sources: S.C. Department of Employment & Workforce (May 2021), BROADBANDNOW & U.S. Census Bureau (July 2019 & May 2021)

Williamsburg County
South Carolina
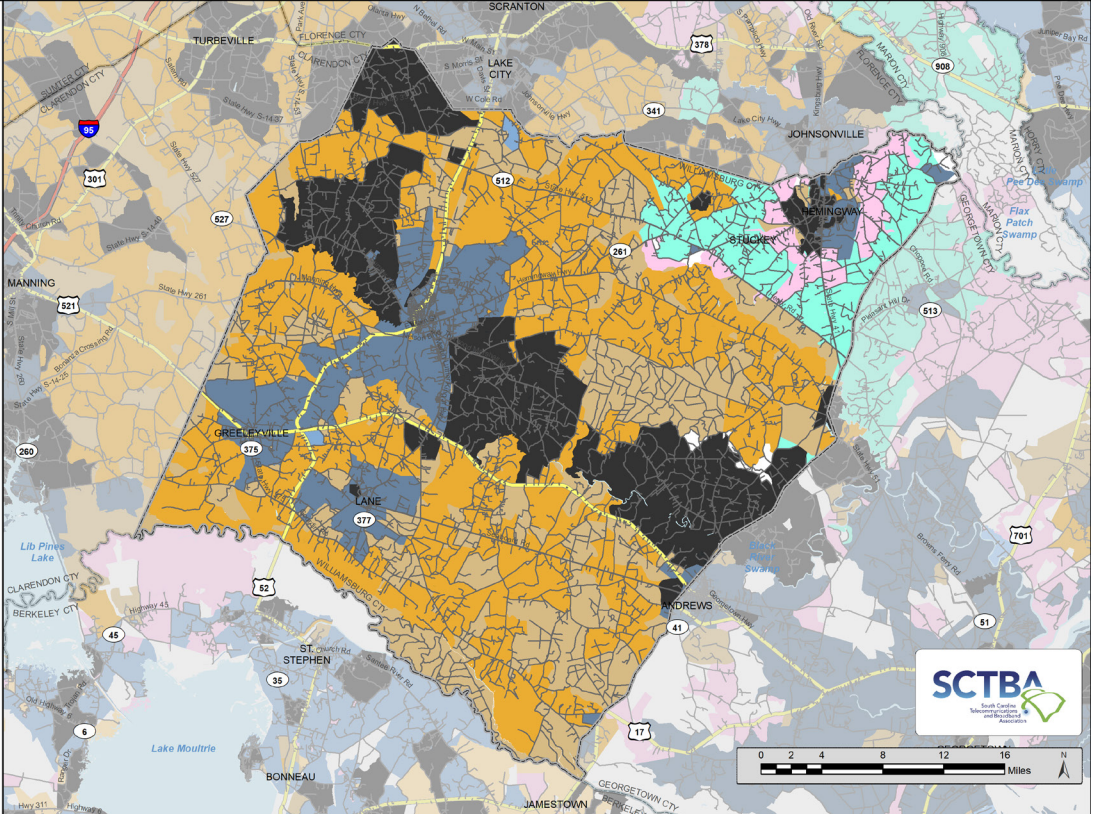## Best Available Technology
March 31, 2020
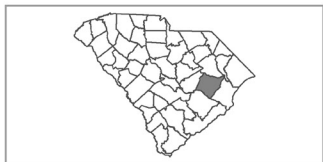
Best Available Technology (type | capability)

- Fiber | Speeds >= 300 Mbps/10 Mbps
- Cable (DOCSIS 3.1+) | Speeds >= 300 Mbps/10 Mbps
- Cable (DOCSIS 3.0) | Speeds >= 100 Mbps/3 Mbps
- Cable (DOCSIS < 2.0) | Speeds >= 25 Mbps/3 Mbps
- VDSL (Fiber-To-The-Curb) | Speeds >= 25 Mbps/3 Mbps
- ADSL2, ADSL2+ | Speeds >= 10 Mbps/1 Mbps
- Fixed Wireless | Speeds >= 10 Mbps/1 Mbps
- ADSL | Speeds >= 3 Mbps/768 kbps
- No Internet Service Available
- Zero Households

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Williamsburg County
South Carolina
Areas of Need
March 31, 2020

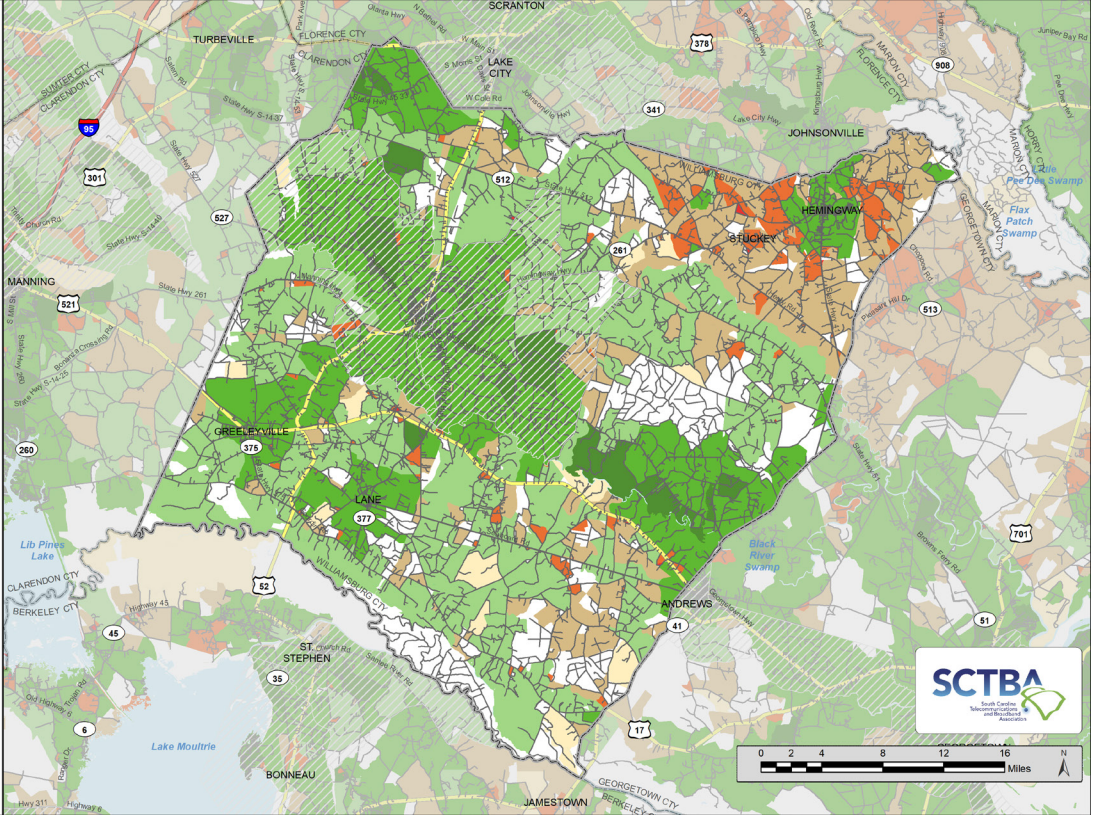**Speed Tiers (download / upload)**

- 300 Mbps / 10 Mbps
- 100 Mbps / 3 Mbps
- 25 Mbps / 3 Mbps

Density of Unserved Households (sq. mi.)

- 200 or More
- 25 - 199
- 1 - 24
- > 0 and < 1
- Zero Households
- Opportunity Zone

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DEFINING A DIGITAL ECONOMY ECOSYSTEM

A DEE is an interconnected system of people, programs, and structures working together to make it possible for technology-based entrepreneurs, businesses, and workers to thrive. As a result, a DEE generates good jobs, launches startup companies and builds wealth in the local community.

THE CRITICAL INGREDIENTS FOR BUILDING A DEE COMMUNITY ARE:

•   High-speed internet
•   Available space
•   Low cost of living
•   Attractive downtown
•   Outdoor amenities
•   Colleges and universities
•   Strong community connections

INNOVATION HUB

ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER

ARTS, CULTURE AMENITIES

COFFEE SHOP   GALLERY

HOUSING FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

JOB SKILLS TRAINING FUTURE OF WORK

HIGHER EDUCATION

BROADBAND NETWORK

FINANCING
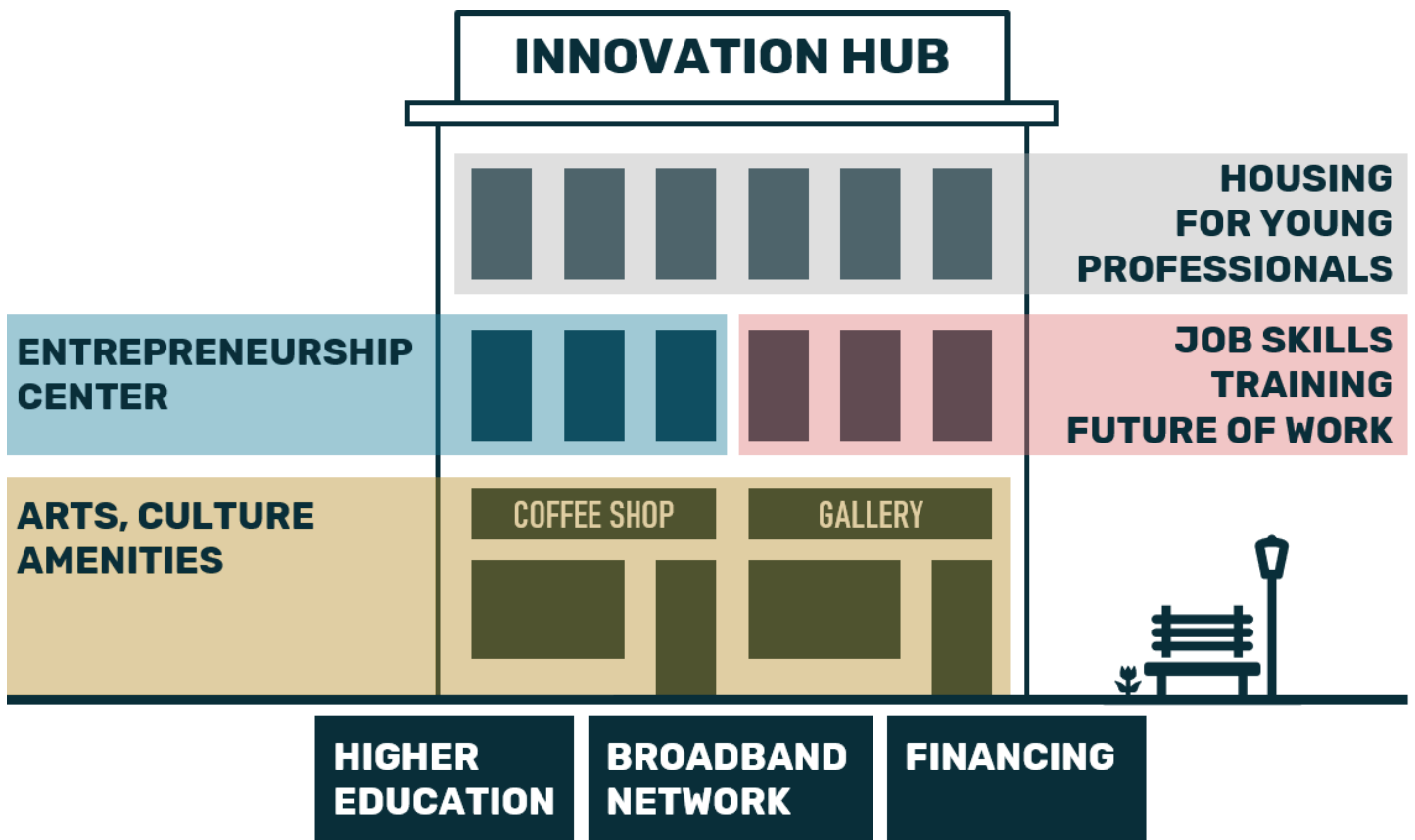
THE PRIMARY GOALS OF A DEE INCLUDE:

- Improve digital literacy
- Establish digital skills training
- Introduce remote work opportunities
- Identify and support entrepreneurial efforts
- Change the conversation and culture around the future of work

Every community launches a DEE project from a different starting point, using a community assessment tool and identifying leading opportunity assets to guide the process. A readiness assessment leads to strategies, timelines, and an action plan that organically becomes the framework or roadmap for igniting community buy-in, attracting funding/ investors, and building momentum for a new way of life.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEED FOR DEE ROADMAPS IN RURAL SOUTH CAROLINA

The Center on Rural Innovation (CORI), headquartered in Springfield, Vermont, is an innovative non-profit committed to addressing the dramatic opportunity gap between rural and urban communities that grew out of the Great Recession. CORI empowers rural communities to build thriving digital economies that support scalable entrepreneurship and local tech job creation.

CORI founder Matt Dunne visited South Carolina in May 2018 at the request of the S.C. Rural Innovation Network (SCRIN) to discuss the possibility of utilizing CORI's model to build a statewide network of Digital Economy Ecosystem (DEE) communities across the Palmetto State. Once these communities are established, they can benefit from CORI's growing footprint and resources.

In 2019, CORI partnered with a new sister organization, Rural Innovation Strategies, Inc. (RISI), to deploy data-driven strategies, leading-edge geospatial tools, and digital economy expertise to advance its work to pursue rural equity and opportunity. Since that time, as many as 20 DEE communities have formed across the U.S.

CORI'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE

By 2030, CORI wants rural America to have 15% of the nation's digital jobs distributed equitably among each region with an emphasis on race and gender. Today, only 5% of our nation's tech employment calls rural America home. The organization plans to achieve its goal by supporting the creation of rural DEE communities and by helping to:

- Build capacity through technical assistance
- Connect communities to national caliber resources
- Deliver data-driven tools to provide insights to community leaders
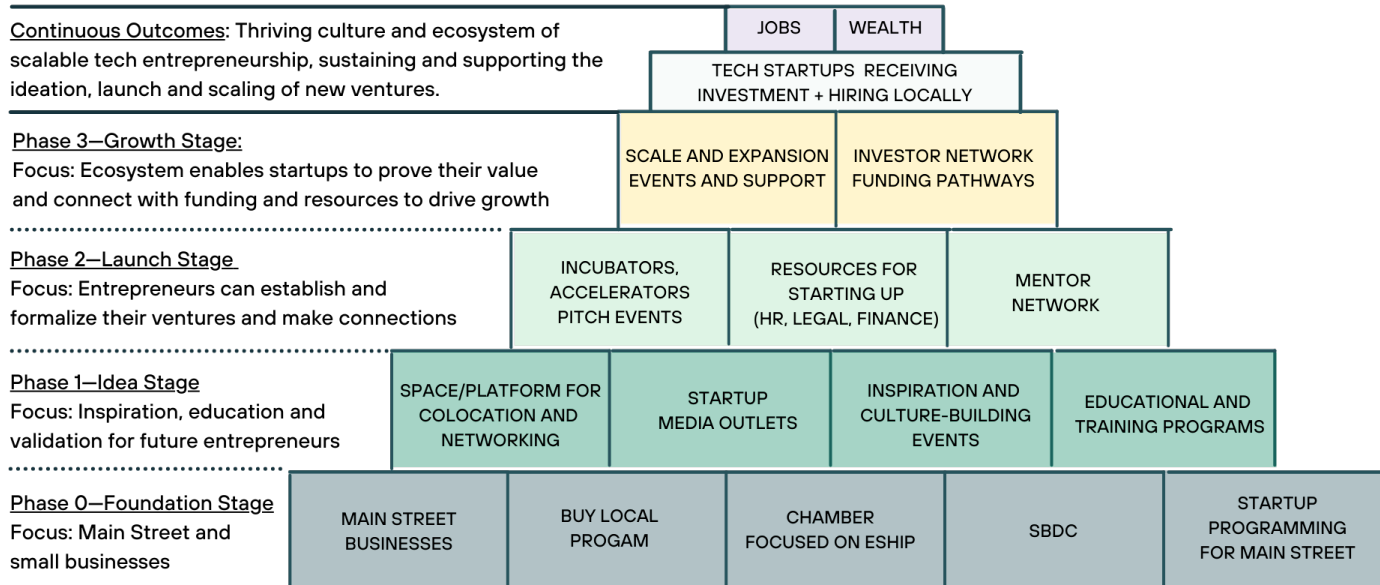- Ensure early-stage investment flows to rural entrepreneurs

"When we talk about the digital economy, we're talking about the jobs created by automation which are largely programming-related. We believe those will be the growth sectors moving forward and skill sets that will have the most applicability even if the particular occupation might get automated itself. This skill set can continue to grow and evolve. We also talk about scalable tech companies to create that new generation of wealth that can take place anywhere as long as you have a good internet connection."

- Matt Dunne, CORI Founder

Building Blocks of a Scalable Tech Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

How can rural communities create and support local scalable tech startups? By providing targeted efforts at every stage of a startup's journey, communities can elevate their startup ecosystem by focusing on key assets and initiatives to support founders through all phases of growth and maturity. The Center On Rural Innovation is a nonprofit action tank working to advance economic prosperity in rural America through the creation of inclusive digital economy ecosystems that support entrepreneurship and job creation.

Continuous Outcomes: Thriving culture and ecosystem of scalable tech entrepreneurship, sustaining and supporting the ideation, launch and scaling of new ventures.

JOBS	WEALTH

TECH STARTUPS RECEIVING INVESTMENT + HIRING LOCALLY

Phase 3—Growth Stage:
Focus: Ecosystem enables startups to prove their value and connect with funding and resources to drive growth

SCALE AND EXPANSION EVENTS AND SUPPORT	INVESTOR NETWORK FUNDING PATHWAYS

Phase 2—Launch Stage
Focus: Entrepreneurs can establish and formalize their ventures and make connections

INCUBATORS, ACCELERATORS PITCH EVENTS	RESOURCES FOR STARTING UP (HR, LEGAL, FINANCE)	MENTOR NETWORK

Phase 1—Idea Stage
Focus: Inspiration, education and validation for future entrepreneurs

SPACE/PLATFORM FOR COLOCATION AND NETWORKING	STARTUP MEDIA OUTLETS	INSPIRATION AND CULTURE-BUILDING EVENTS	EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

Phase 0—Foundation Stage
Focus: Main Street and small businesses

MAIN STREET BUSINESSES	BUY LOCAL PROGAM	CHAMBER FOCUSED ON ESHIP	SBDC	STARTUP PROGRAMMING FOR MAIN STREET

PARTNERING FOR PROSPERITY: A NINE-MONTH COLLABORATION TO BUILD A DIGITAL ECONOMY ECOSYSTEM ROADMAP

Developing a vibrant digital economy in Williamsburg County is more important today than ever before. A DEE will create digital jobs locally and through remote-work opportunities, and spark wealth creation through countywide entrepreneurship, innovation, and digital businesses.

In August 2020, the S.C. Office of Rural Health (SCORH), in partnership with the S.C. Rural Innovation Network (SCRIN), received a Rural Business Development Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide technical assistance to Williamsburg County for the development of a customized DEE Roadmap.

Williamsburg County was selected from a pool of more than 20 communities seeking to modernize their economic development. Williamsburg County demonstrated an eagerness to support digital transformation, along with a genuine commitment from local leaders to carry it out. It was selected to become one of South Carolina's first rural communities to be DEE Certified.

Because the inaugural DEE project occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for reliable broadband connection for individual households became more evident than ever before as businesses and organizations accepted remote work, distance learning, and telehealth as the new norm. Moreover, as the pandemic unfolded and gaps widened, Williamsburg County leaders increasingly recognized that long-term prosperity would be highly dependent on kickstarting and growing a digital economy.

The nine-month collaboration among Williamsburg County community leaders, SCRIN, and SCORH encompassed several critical steps, which included 1) understanding the availability and accessibility of high-speed internet; 2) identifying leading foundational elements, direct drivers, and community assets; 3) developing key strategies and action plans, and 4) building a visionary team of leaders to carry the roadmap across the finish line and into an active implementation phase.

OUR TIMELINE

September 2020 - Broadband Champion Training
• Introducing community members to what's available and what's lacking with broadband connectivity

September-November 2020 – Interviews with 50+ Community Residents
• Gathering information and personal stories through conversations about assets, gaps, and goals

November 2020-February 2021 – Small-Group and Joint Work Sessions with Community Leaders
• Educating community members on what a DEE is and how a roadmap will guide implementation
• Exposing members to active DEE communities and leaders in other states
• Conducting a readiness assessment to evaluate existing foundational elements and direct drivers
• Performing an asset mapping exercise to highlight community strengths
• Providing resources, such as videos, one-pagers, articles, and guest speakers to educate further and engage community stakeholders

April-May 2021 – Strategy Development and Creation of an Action Plan

• Defining the challenge and opportunity
• Creating mission and vision statements
• Identifying the approach – four focus areas
• Creating a team structure
• Outlining execution plans and metrics
• Determining resources/budget
• Explaining why Williamsburg County will achieve success

> **"If Williamsburg County doesn't skill-up its people, it's going to continue to fall further behind."**
>
> Gilleon Frieson, executive director, Williamsburg County Economic Development Board

THE ROAD TO A RURAL DIGITAL ECONOMY ECOSYSTEM
IN SOUTH CAROLINA

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS:

Broadband infrastructure

An attractive live-work downtown with culture and entertainment options

Quality K-12 education focused on digital skills and STEM

DIRECT DRIVERS:

Access to digital jobs

Digital workforce development and support

Leadership and engagement from private sector, non-profits and higher ed

Access to capital

Co-working, networking and social spaces

Entrepreneur support and incubation

DESIRED OUTCOME:

Quality digital employment opportunities that empower local entrepreneurs to create wealth in their community.

LEADERS COMMITTED TO MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN: OUR DIGITAL ECONOMY ECOSYSTEM DREAM TEAM

> **"Loyalty is a big thing for people here. When they commit, they really commit."**
>
> -Martha Burrows, Williamsburg Technical College

The Williamsburg County DEE Dream Team is comprised of a diverse group of 19 community champions working together toward a common goal. This small but mighty group of visionaries collectively represents many races, ages, backgrounds, occupations, skill sets, and life experiences.

Through consistent weekly and monthly virtual meetings, these individuals collaborated to create a strategic roadmap for kickstarting a new economy.

- Allen Abernethy, CEO, Williamsburg Regional Hospital
- Rob Ardis, president & CEO, Santee Electric Cooperative
- Martha Burroughs, public information director, Williamsburg Technical College
- Lisa Coward, operations manager, Farmer's Telephone Cooperative
- Dr. Myron Davis, director of professional development and instructional support services, Williamsburg County School District
- William Freeman, director, Main Street
- Gilleon Frieson, executive director, Williamsburg County Economic Development Board
- Sulondia "Sue-Ham" Hammond, Sue-Ham Entertainment and Williamsburg County Council, District 5
- Spencer Hill, partner, Strategic Asset Management Consultants
- Dr. Veronica Jackson, director of research and planning, Williamsburg Technical College
- James Kirby, VP of public affairs, Santee Electric Cooperative
- Kristen Lesesne, registered nurse and entrepreneur
- Helen McFadden, retired attorney
- Ronnie Rhodes, regional director, SC State University
- Maggie Vaigneur, Realtor, BHHS Carolina Sun
- Torrance Wilson, director, Hemingway Career & Technology Center and Williamsburg County Council, District 2
- Stan Williamson, human resources manager, Palmetto Synthetics
- Dr. Tiffany Wright, supervisor, Williamsburg County
- Ernest Young, director of technology, Williamsburg County School District

Despite our challenges, we're taking our county's future into our own hands by creating a roadmap that will leverage existing community assets to develop a strategic framework for initiating lasting and positive change through the establishment of a digital economy.

HOW WILL WILLIAMSBURG COUNTY WILL BE DIFFERENT?

Create a Center(s) of Gravity

Build a Dedicated Talent Pipeline

Establish Digital Training

Promote Digital Jobs

Open Doors to Remote Work

Support Entrepreneurism

Change the Conversation Culture Around the Future of Work

ROADMAP KICKOFF: ASSESSING OUR READINESS & MAPPING OUR COUNTY'S ASSETS

When it comes to kickstarting a digital economy, some communities have more of what it takes than others — those necessary ingredients like a stable economy and readily available, easily accessible high-speed internet. To more clearly understand Williamsburg County's level of readiness, we evaluated the existing framework of foundational elements and direct drivers, which allowed for the prioritization of areas where gaps are limited, and the opportunity to build momentum stood out.

Foundational elements include STEM education, public safety, and community leadership. Direct drivers encompass resources such as access to tech jobs, effective digital workforce development, and a support structure for entrepreneurs and innovation. For a community to maximize the impact of a DEE, it must develop seven critical foundational elements and five crucial direct drivers. Through a series of polls, question-and-answer sessions, worksheets, and group discussions, we narrowed the scope of our county's assets to create a starting point for strategy development.

A READINESS ASSESSMENT OF FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

Certain critical elements within a community, such as an attractive live-work downtown, enable a digital economy ecosystem to thrive. The seven foundational elements are:

1) Attractive live-work downtown; 2) Culture and entertainment options; 3) Quality K-12 education focused on digital skills & STEM; 4) Broadband infrastructure; 5) Public safety; 6) Community leadership and engagement; 7) Public-sector leadership and engagement

We evaluated seven foundational elements and identified **broadband infrastructure** and **community leadership and engagement** as the highest-ranking in Williamsburg County based on their capacity to accelerate efforts to develop the main drivers of our new DEE.

A READINESS ASSESSMENT OF DIRECT DRIVERS

Direct drivers enable communities to compete in a digital economy by focusing on building local capacity and successfully providing access to jobs, money, and support.

We evaluated five direct drivers: 1) Digital workforce development and support; 2) Access to digital jobs; 3) Scalable tech entrepreneur support and incubation; 4) Access to capital; 5) Inclusive tech culture building or co-working, networking, and social spaces.

We identified **digital workforce development and support,** and **inclusive tech culture building or co-working, networking, and social spaces** as the highest-ranking based on existing efforts, opportunities, and critical priorities for growth.

ASSET MAPPING OUR STRENGTHS

Hundreds of rural communities across our country are planning and implementing innovation and economic development strategies. They're leveraging their strengths to create digital economies that allow them to chart their courses toward prosperity.

Because evaluating critical assets motivates communities to acknowledge existing capabilities and competitive advantages, we utilized an asset mapping strategy to prioritize short- and long-term goals and create roadmap strategies that could leverage existing strengths.

We evaluated eight different community assets: 1) Educational and training programs, 2) Physical spaces, 3) Cultural assets, 4) Economic assets, 5) People assets, 6) Policy levers, 7) Philanthropic and funding sources, 8) Social institutions/ civic groups.

We categorized Williamsburg County's primary assets into five concentrations: 1) Entrepreneurism, 2) Healthcare, 3) Tourism, 4) Agriculture, 5) Business and industry. We highlighted leading education, cultural, and enrichment assets before determining our leading opportunity assets.

Our leading education assets include:

- Williamsburg County School District
- Williamsburg Academy
- Hemingway Career & Technology Center
- Williamsburg Technical College
- SC State Extension Programs

Our leading cultural assets include:

- Black River
- Fishing and kayaking
- Hunting preserves
- Pig Pickin' Festival and King's Tree Trials
- Scott's BBQ and Brown's BBQ

Our leading enrichment assets include:

- Committed group of community champions
- New interest in digital skills training, jobs and remote work
- Action-oriented Economic Development Corporation and Chamber of Commerce
- Fiber internet, airport, Amtrak, land
- Downtown Opportunity Zone

ASSET MAP HIGHLIGHTS

ASSET CONCENTRATIONS

Entrepreneurism
Healthcare
Tourism
Agriculture
Business & Industry

LEADING OPPORTUNITY ASSETS

Emerging Innovation Center & Co-Working Space in Kingstree
Emerging Telehealth Access Center in Lane
New MUSC Hospital Project
Main Street Program & Downtown Entrepreneurs
Black River Recreation & Tourism Project
SEC, FTC & Manufacturing Companies

EDUCATION ASSETS

Williamsburg County School District
Williamsburg Academy
Hemingway Career & Technology Center
Williamsburg Technical College
SC State Extension Programs

CULTURAL ASSETS

Black River
Fishing & Kayaking
Hunting Preserves
Pig Pickin' Festival & Kingstree Trials
Scott's BBQ & Brown's BBQ

ENRICHMENT ASSETS

Committed Group of Community Champions
New Interest in Digital Skill Training, Jobs & Remote Work
Action-Oriented Economic Development Corporation
   & Chamber of Commerce
Fiber Internet, Airport, Amtrak, Land

IDENTIFYING LEADING OPPORTUNITY ASSETS

We identified six leading opportunity assets to use in building our DEE strategies because successfully kickstarting a DEE relies on support, talent, ideas, opportunities, and a community's commitment to change. Some strategies are short-term; others may be added once roadmap implementation is underway.

1. Emerging innovation center and co-working space in Kingstree
2. Emerging telehealth access center in Lane
3. New MUSC hospital project
4. Main Street program and downtown entrepreneurs
5. Black River state park development project
6. Santee Electric, Farmer's Telephone and manufacturing companies

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL GAP: DEFINING OUR PROBLEM & SOLUTION

By zeroing in on the gaps preventing our community from establishing a digital economy, we were able to identify essential assets to leverage in developing one. Our weaknesses and strengths brought clarity to our aspirations and reminded us WHY we are leading a charge for change.

Working collaboratively, we assembled the county's critical challenges into a singular overarching problem and devised a robust solution to help guide future strategies and action plans forward.

> "We've always been known as the Sportsman's Paradise, but that doesn't lend itself to a digital economy, and it needs to. We need to find a way to capitalize on the best of what we've got."
>
> **-Stan Williamson, Palmetto Synthetics**

OUR PROBLEM

Our digital economy is in the early stages of development because a large population of Williamsburg County residents lacks knowledge and exposure to what's available or possible, and the skill development and job opportunities that may exist for them.

OUR SOLUTION

To expose Williamsburg County residents to the basics and benefits of a digital economy; to educate them on new and existing education, training, jobs, and entrepreneurial opportunities; and to encourage them to take action. We want to help people launch.

CREATING STRATEGY: DEVELOPING OUR VISION & MISSION

A thriving digital economy is characterized by the creation of quality digital employment and wealth creation through local entrepreneurship.

Despite external barriers to creating DEE success, such as access to high-speed internet, capital, and tech talent, we are committed first and foremost to eliminating internal obstacles – like fear of change – which often cause more damage than external barriers.

Other examples of internal barriers include closed mindsets and a lack of awareness about the opportunities that can and will be made available to residents in a digital economy. These opportunities, including skills training, networking, coaching, and mentoring, change the scope of what's possible in terms of employment, employability, and building a concentration of startup companies.

We also recognize the significance of building a culture that will hold up and support a growing DEE. It's why we are striving for inclusivity, resource development, and a countywide communications plan that keeps residents interested, informed, and engaged. Our mantra is, "Creating jobs and careers you can be proud of in a community that you love."

VISION STATEMENT

To be a unified, fully connected community with a thriving digital economy, high-performing schools, growing entrepreneurial activity, and unlimited potential for a prosperous future.

MISSION STATEMENT

To be the fastest growing rural community in the state by creating a collaborative digital corridor with world-class programs, startup companies, and job opportunities in telehealth, tourism, agribusiness, and more.

DIGITAL ECONOMY JOBS

JOBS OF THE FUTURE

- Are tech-based and often remote
- Modernize the travel, education, healthcare, housing, and agriculture industries, among others
- Integrate e-commerce, online shopping, social media marketing, and other digital advances
- Require new and evolving skills

CRITICAL SKILLS FOR DIGITAL ECONOMY JOBS

- Digital literacy
- Strong written & oral communication skills
- Eager to learn new things & interested in current events
- Strong organization & time management skills
- Problem solver, team player, creative thinker

EXAMPLES OF DIGITAL ECONOMY JOBS

- App Developer
- Cloud Computing Programmer
- Consumer Experience Manager
- Cybersecurity Specialist
- Product Designer
- Research Specialist
- Software Engineer
- Web Developer
- Bookkeeper
- Customer Service
- Data Entry Specialist
- Graphic Designer
- Medical Billing & Coding
- Search Specialist
- Social Media Manager
- Virtual Assistant

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 4.3 million people in the USA work remotely, including for these major companies:

- Amazon
- CVS
- Google
- Microsoft
- Shopify
- Walmart

Source: Guthrie Jensen Consultants

50% of jobs
are vulnerable to automation.
Food preparation is the industry most vulnerable to automation, followed by construction and cleaning jobs.

By 2030, 63%
of jobs will center on soft skills.

CREATING FOCUS AREAS:
DEVELOPING OUR CORE STRATEGIES

> "We had an independent third-party analyze our strengths and weaknesses. They told us we couldn't pursue certain companies in our economic development efforts because we don't have a large enough trained workforce. We can't continue to let these gaps hold us back."
>
> -Rob Ardis, Santee Electric Cooperative

With a well-defined problem and solution in place to explain the critical gaps facing our community, along with vision and mission statements to frame our future transformational aspirations, we took strategy development to a higher level by narrowing our scope to four primary focus areas for our roadmap strategy development.

These focus areas represent themes for short-term priority strategies and projects that will be implemented throughout 2021 and 2022. They will remain part of our core roadmap structure as new projects, plans and deadlines emerge.

In order to effectively evaluate our progress through the implementation and operation of our DEE, we also established key performance indicators (KPIs) for each focus area.

ROADMAP FOCUS AREAS

1. COHESIVE STRUCTURE
Harnessing and aligning existing and new initiatives to create a connected, cohesive approach to building a successful DEE.

KPIs: Having a DEE director in place and meeting objectives. Number of people participating. Number of training opportunities. Number of new businesses. Number of jobs filled or created.

2. CENTERS OF GRAVITY & TECHNOLOGY
Growing entrepreneurs, businesses, and people skills through technology; utilizing our centers of gravity or place and spaces that signify action, innovation, and movement toward establishing an inclusive DEE.

KPIs: Open and operational centers. Number of members. Number of participants. Number of trainings and events. Profit/Loss. Visibility (media mentions, Google alerts).

3. LEADERSHIP & SUSTAINABILITY
Establishing DEE leadership and funding mechanisms to support projects, collaborations, communication, networking, and long-term sustainability.

KPIs: Dollars raised. Dollars earned. Partnerships and collaborations. Community engagement and ambassadors.

DEVELOPING A DIGITAL ECONOMY ECOSYSTEM: STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

A shared vision and key concepts comprising a community's strategy document are the driving forces behind developing a tech-skilled workforce, promoting innovation-based jobs, energizing entrepreneurship, and establishing an ecosystem that attracts positive attention, investment, and momentum.

Vision

How will we be different?

Mission

What's our big idea?

Challenge & Opportunity

What gaps are we filling?

Approach

What are our 3-4 focus areas, and how will we leverage existing assets?

Team

What is our team's structure, and how will we work together to position our community for success?

Execution Plan

What activities will we deploy, and what's our timeline?

Success Metrics

What are the key performance indicators (KPIs) for each focus area?

Resources/Budget

How much do we need to implement activities critical to achieving our goals?

Conclusion

Why our team and community WILL achieve success.

4. TALENT PIPELINE, READY-TO-WORK & INCREASED INNOVATION

Creating education initiatives that expose the talent pipeline to DEE skills and careers; training initiatives that prepare the ready-to-work population for local and remote jobs; and innovation initiatives that encourage an entrepreneurial culture and related activities.

KPIs: Number of programs. Number of participants. Number of people trained. Number of jobs. Number of new businesses. Number of existing businesses helped.

CREATING ACTION GROUPS:
DEVELOPING A SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP MODEL

Using our focus areas as a guide, Williamsburg County's leadership team identified eight strategies and priority projects with descriptions, action steps, budgets, and action group leaders. Our goal is to grow each action group with new members from outside the DEE Dream Team to continue enhancing the roadmap and each project's perspective, energy, and visibility.

Our action groups are:

- Structure & Leadership
- Education – K-12, adult education, continuing education
- Innovation/Business/Entrepreneurship
- Telehealth
- Agribusiness
- Communication
- Fundraising

OUR DEE ROADMAP:
KICKSTARTING OUR DIGITAL ECONOMY

Eight strategies with aligned technical projects and a total budget of $230,595.74 create the engine that is Williamsburg County's DEE Roadmap. Inclusive of critical themes such as leadership, education, skilling up, and communication, this framework of priority projects will kickstart a new economy, ignite transformation, alter mindsets, and create a welcome path to prosperity for all residents of Williamsburg County.

DEVELOPING A DIGITAL ECONOMY ECOSYSTEM: ACTION PLANNING

Community efforts toward building a digital and innovation-based economy require skilled project management, open communication lines, and an action-tracking system with regular progress reports.

Action Plan Structure

Key Themes, Focus Areas, Descriptions

Team Members, Roles/Assigned Focus Areas, Primary Responsibilities

Action Steps, Due Dates, Objectives, Notes

Phase One

Get Organized

Build Out Action Plan

Assign Roles, Actions & Deadlines

Phase Two

Exploration & Stakeholder Engagement

Example

Key Theme
Innovation Center

Focus Area
Business & Entrepreneurship

Description
Create a visible center of gravity for entrepreneurial activities, resources, and opportunities

Action Steps
Assess innovation centers in urban areas to look for patterns
Assess tech skill needs from local industry
Identify training opportunities, programs, and qualified trainers
Identify technology and space needs
Secure resources & support
Develop a calendar and communication plan
Launch training program

HIRE DEE DIRECTOR

Focus Area
Leadership & Sustainability

Description
Hire a passionate, capable individual to align DEE projects, create a brand/culture for the ecosystem, and carry out roadmap objectives

Action Group
Framework & Leadership

Action Group Leader
Town of Kingstree or Gilleon Frieson

Resources Needed
Salary, laptop and other business essentials, promotional materials

Timeline
August 1

Budget
$46,275

Action Steps
Create job description and expectations, raise funds for salary and expenses for two years, recruit and hire

LAUNCH DEE COMMUNICATIONS: WEBSITE, NEWSLETTER, SOCIAL MEDIA & OTHER MARKETING PROMOTIONS

Focus Area
Cohesive Structure

Description
Create a DEE presence on the Town of Kingstree's or Williamsburg County website; launch social media platforms and a bi-monthly newsletter to share information about training opportunities, events, and resources; present to local clubs and organizations to raise visibility; offer lunch-and-learn educational gatherings to county businesses

Action Group
Communication

Action Group Leader
Martha Burrows

Resources Needed
Graphic designer; web developer; writer; subscriptions to Canva, Mailchimp, Hootsuite, and other marketing essentials; printing of posters, mailers and rack cards

Timeline
July 2021

Budget
$43,575

Action Steps
Secure funding, secure talent, develop content and design, develop content calendar, create branded materials

EXPAND DRONE TRAINING

Focus Area
Talent Pipeline, Digital Training, Innovation and Culture

Description
Create and provide a specialized training program dedicated to forestry, herbicide/pesticide application, and new business creation. AINAUTICS will provide the training. The innovation center will provide entrepreneurial support.

Action Group
Education, Agribusiness, Entrepreneurism

Action Group Leaders
Helen McFadden and Dr. Veronica Jackson

Resources Needed
Teachers, drones, scholarships and marketing
Note: Williamsburg Technical College will fund 48 participants via GEAR program funding

Timeline
August 2021

Budget
$120,000 (provided by Williamsburg Technical College via GEAR program funding)

Action Steps
Confirm certified trainer, align all drone training opportunities countywide, establish a budget and timeline, determine criteria for acceptance, market and recruit to participants, partner with innovation center to help new drone-related businesses launch

LAUNCH A SUMMER TECH INSTITUTE FOR RISING 8TH & 9TH GRADERS

Focus Area
Talent Pipeline

Description
Create a pilot-year summer camp experience to expose youth to digital/tech jobs, such as coding, robotics, and drone piloting

Action Group
Education: K-12

Action Group Leader
Torrance Wilson

Resources Needed
Location, teachers, drones and makerbots, meals and snacks, marketing

Timeline
Week of July 12 or 19

Budget
$5,500

Action Steps
Finalize location and budget, seek sponsors, purchase materials, confirm teachers, develop camp structure, create flyer, market the camp, recruit engineer volunteers

PARTNER WITH MAIN STREET ON A FARMER'S MARKET

Focus Area
Innovation Culture

Description
Enhance the quality of life in Williamsburg County and make the community more attractive to potential newcomers while using the market as a vehicle to share information about DEE opportunities and resources

Action Group
Communication and Entrepreneurship

Action Group Leaders
Kristen Lesesne and William Freeman

Resources Needed
Signage, marketing

Timeline
August 2021, Second Saturday of Every Month, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Budget
$6,655

Action Steps
Research markets in other communities; develop an operations structure; confirm location; market the opportunity to local farmers, artists and vendors; set a monthly or annual fee; set a start date (August 7); market to the community

LAUNCH A TRAINING & APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM FOR SOFTWARE ENGINEERS WITH NON-TECHNICAL BACKGROUNDS

Focus Area
Digital Training and Cohesive Structure

Description
Explore the possibility of establishing a workforce development program for software engineers to fill local or remote-work jobs through an organized training and apprenticeship program in partnership with Williamsburg County businesses.

Action Group
Education, Innovation, Business and Entrepreneurship

Action Group Leader
Santee Electric Cooperative

Resources Needed
Funding for a part-time employee (six months) to assess viability and interest from local business community

Timeline
Fall 2021

Budget
$30,000

Action Steps
Meet with Create Opportunity and Williamsburg Technical College to explore formal partnership, develop job description for part-time employee, recruit and hire, launch formal assessment

CREATE A DATABASE OF LOCAL AND REMOTE-WORK TECH JOBS

Focus Area
Cohesive Structure

Description
Collaborate with county businesses to gather information about local tech job/skills needs; build relationships with companies outside the county seeking remote tech workers; build a database, plus a website, with a jobs portal that also features training opportunities for Williamsburg County residents

Action Group
Business and Entrepreneurship

Action Group Leader
Santee Electric Cooperative

Resources Needed
Web designer, content developer, software, hosting and plug-in subscriptions, database and relationship manager

Timeline
Q1 2022

Budget
$40,159

Action Steps
Meet with county businesses to gather job/skills needs; build relationships with companies hiring remote workers; hire web developer to build website with community jobs portal; hire content developer to create messaging; hire part-time database and relationship manager to grow and maintain accurate listings

LAUNCH "THE BURG" INNOVATION CENTER WITH DIGITAL SKILL TRAINING COURSES & COACHING/MENTORING

Focus Area
Center of Gravity

Description
Create a "center of gravity" where 1) Williamsburg County residents can acquire digital skills and receive job/career coaching, 2) Where startup or existing small businesses can receive entrepreneurial support, 3) Where interested residents can participate in organized tech job/skill networking events

Action Group
Innovation, Business and Entrepreneurship

Action Group Leaders
DEE Director, Gilleon Frieson, Veronica Jackson, Tiffany Wright

Resources Needed
Space and upfitting, technology, software, furniture, website, marketing materials, logo development, signage, funding

Timeline
Q4 2021 or Q1 2022

Budget
$58,431.74

Action Steps
Determine location, finalize budget, seek funding, finalize course offerings, determine student cost and course calendar, hire teachers, buy and install equipment, create marketing materials, launch PR efforts, kick off classes, host networking events, develop a sustainability plan with scholarship opportunities

OUR FORMULA FOR SUCCESS:
THE WHY BEHIND OUR ROADMAP

"We're pulling together as a team to make it work. We've been trying as individuals for 30 years to position Williamsburg County for economic prosperity. For the first time, we're coming together with a diverse combination of ages, races, backgrounds, and life experiences to prove that a dedicated, passionate dream team of community champions can drive engagement, transformation, and success."

- The Williamsburg County DEE Dream Team

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SOUTH CAROLINA'S
RURAL
INNOVATION
NETWORK