NEWBERRY COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

A Roadmap for Kickstarting Our Digital Economy Ecosystem (DEE)

AUGUST 2023

"WE THINK BIGGER THAN WE ARE."

NEWBERRY COUNTY AT A GLANCE

- **Population: 37,719 (2020)**
- **Unemployment Rate: 2.8% (2022 SCDEW)**
- **In Commuters: 43.8%; Work/Live in County: 56.2%**
- **Racial Demographics: 29.7% Black; 66.6 % White**
- **Number of Households: (2017-2021): 15,137**
- **Median Household Income: (2017-2021): $50,950**
- **Per Capita Income: (2071-2021): $28,591**
- **People Living in Poverty: 14.9%**
- **Primary Industries: Manufacturing, Health Care, Retail, Admin, Accommodation &Food Service (SCDEW 04/01/23)**
- **Top Occupational Openings: Retail Sales, Industrial Engineering Technologists and Technicians, Supervisors in Retail, Food Service Managers, Janitorial, Production Labor (SCDEW 04/01/23)**
- **Education: 34.1% High School Graduates; 7.2% Post-Graduate Degrees; 13.8% Bachelor's Degrees; 31.1% Some College; 13.8% 9-12 Grade No Diploma (Census Reporter 2021)**
- **Households with a Computer (2017-2021): 85.8%**
- **Households with Broadband Internet Subscription (2017-2021): 76.8%**
- **Broadband Coverage: 90.5% (Broadband Now)**

Newberry County
South Carolina

Areas of Need
March 31, 2023

Speed Tiers (download / upload)
- ■ >= 100 Mbps / 100 Mbps (symmetric)
- ■ >= 100 Mbps / 20 Mbps

Unserved Housing Units
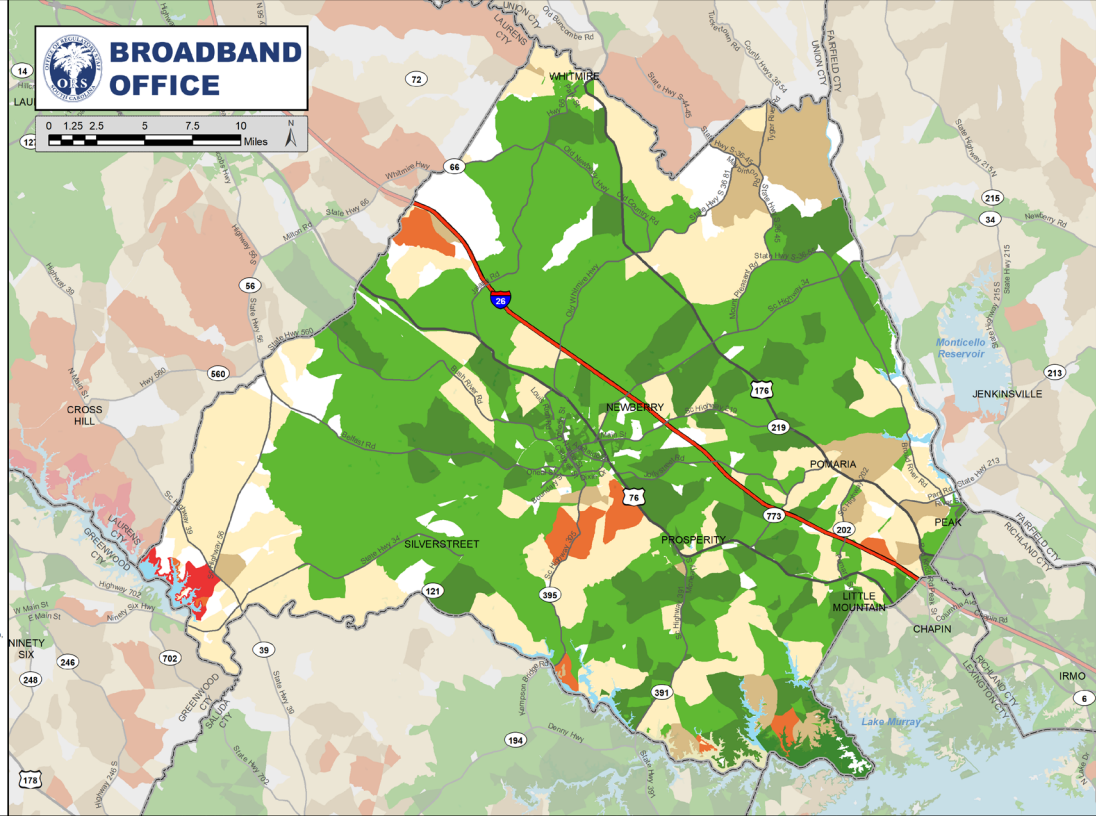- ■ 100 or More
- ■ 26 - 99
- ■ 11 - 25
- ■ 1 - 10
- □ Zero

Newberry County
South Carolina
Majority Best Available Technology
March 31, 2023

Best Available Technology (type | speed)
- ■ Fiber | Speeds >= 100 Mbps/100 Mbps (symmetric)
- ■ Cable (DOCSIS X.X) | Speeds >= 100 Mbps/20 Mbps
- ■ xDSL | Speeds < 25 Mbps/3 Mbps
- ■ Fixed Wireless | Speeds >= 10 Mbps/1 Mbps
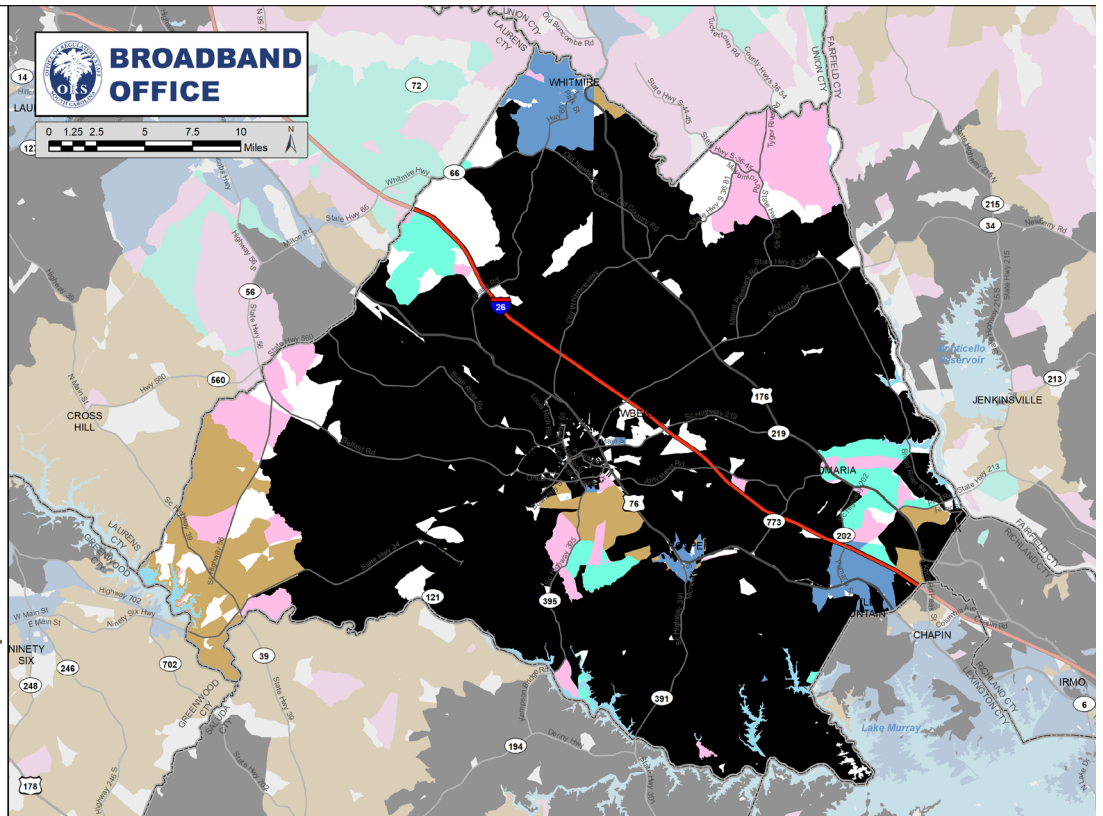- ■ No Internet Service Available
- □ Zero Households

DEFINING A DIGITAL ECONOMY ECOSYSTEM (DEE)

A Digital Economy Ecosystem is an interconnected network of people, programs, and structures working together to enable technology-based entrepreneurs, businesses, and individual workers to thrive. It generates new talent, jobs, remote work opportunities, entrepreneurial activities, and start-up companies. A DEE builds local wealth for strategically engaged communities.

THE PRIMARY GOALS OF A DEE:

• 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

CRITICAL INGREDIENTS FOR BUILDING A DEE COMMUNITY:

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

Every community kickstarts the DEE revitalization process from a different starting point, using a formal readiness assessment as a guide. Leading opportunity assets quickly surface to spark the creation of a strategic action plan that becomes the framework - or roadmap - for igniting community buy-in, attracting funding/investors, and building momentum for a new economy and culture.

INNOVATION HUB

HOUSING FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER

JOB SKILLS TRAINING FUTURE OF WORK

ARTS, CULTURE AMENITIES

COFFEE SHOP | GALLERY

HIGHER EDUCATION | BROADBAND NETWORK | FINANCING
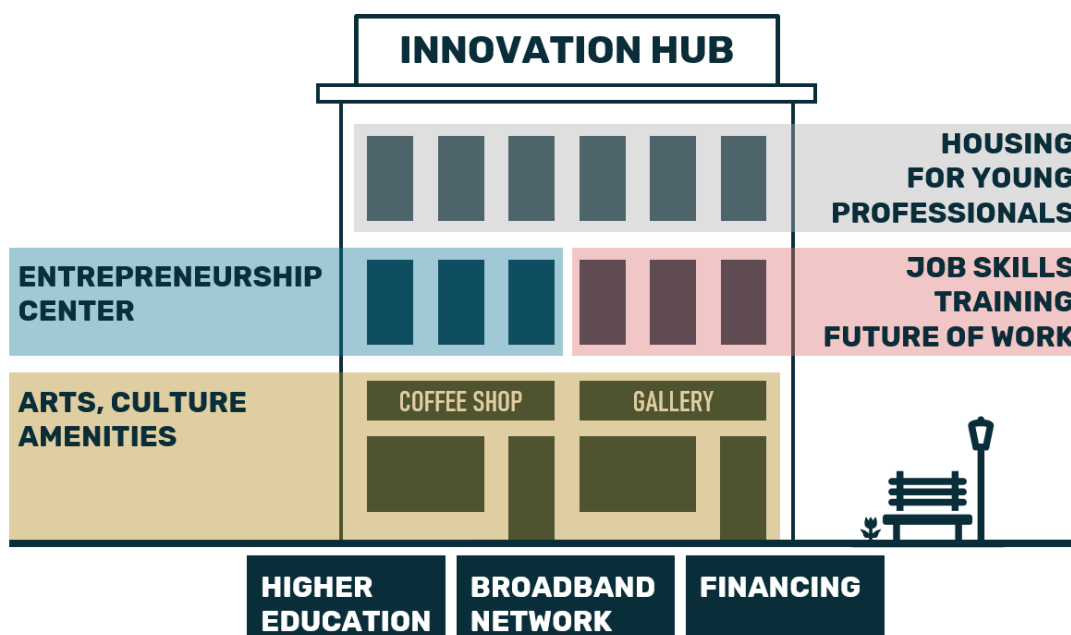
UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL ECONOMY JOBS

Google. Uber. Amazon. Airbnb. PayPal. TikTok. LinkedIn. YouTube. Slack. Asana.
The digital economy is the financial output of the worldwide network of economic activities, commercial transactions, and professional interactions enabled by information and communications technologies. If you purchase groceries online, pay your water bill, or download a yoga app, you participate in the digital economy.

While technology is making some jobs obsolete, many never-before-imagined jobs continue to emerge, forcing companies of all sizes and types to change how they do business. This shift causes people of all ages to keep honing their skills to seek remote and flex-work digital job opportunities.

In a February 2023 remote work survey, the Pew Research Center found that approximately 35% of U.S. employees work remotely 100% of the time.

A sampling of digital job opportunities in the Palmetto State includes:

- App designer
- PR and social media manager
- Digital content creator
- Virtual assistant
- Web designer
- Transcriptionist
- Search engine evaluator
- Virtual recruiter
- Paid search specialist

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.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEED FOR DEE ROADMAPS IN RURAL SOUTH CAROLINA

The Center on Rural Innovation (CORI), headquartered in Springfield, Vermont, launched in 2017 to address the dramatic opportunity gap between rural and urban communities. Since then, CORI has empowered rural communities to build thriving digital economies supporting scalable entrepreneurship and local tech job creation.

In 2018, South Carolina's Rural Innovation Network (SCRIN) invited CORI founder Matt Dunne to visit the Palmetto State to discuss utilizing CORI's model to build a statewide network of Digital Economy Ecosystem (DEE) communities. CORI gave SCRIN the green light.

In 2019, CORI partnered with a taxable nonprofit, Rural Innovation Strategies, Inc. (RISI) and a seed fund, CORI Innovation Fund (CIF), to deploy data-driven strategies and digital economy expertise to advance its rural equity and opportunity work and invest in early-stage companies. Today, nearly 40 DEE communities have formed across the U.S., not including the five originating in South Carolina or others in the pipeline.

By 2030, CORI wants 12% of the nation's digital jobs to match each rural region's race & gender demographics.

> **"Technology talent can be found everywhere. And now is the time we must invest in rural America to ensure rural people can get high-paying, resilient jobs and, in doing so, bring our nation back together in the digital age."**
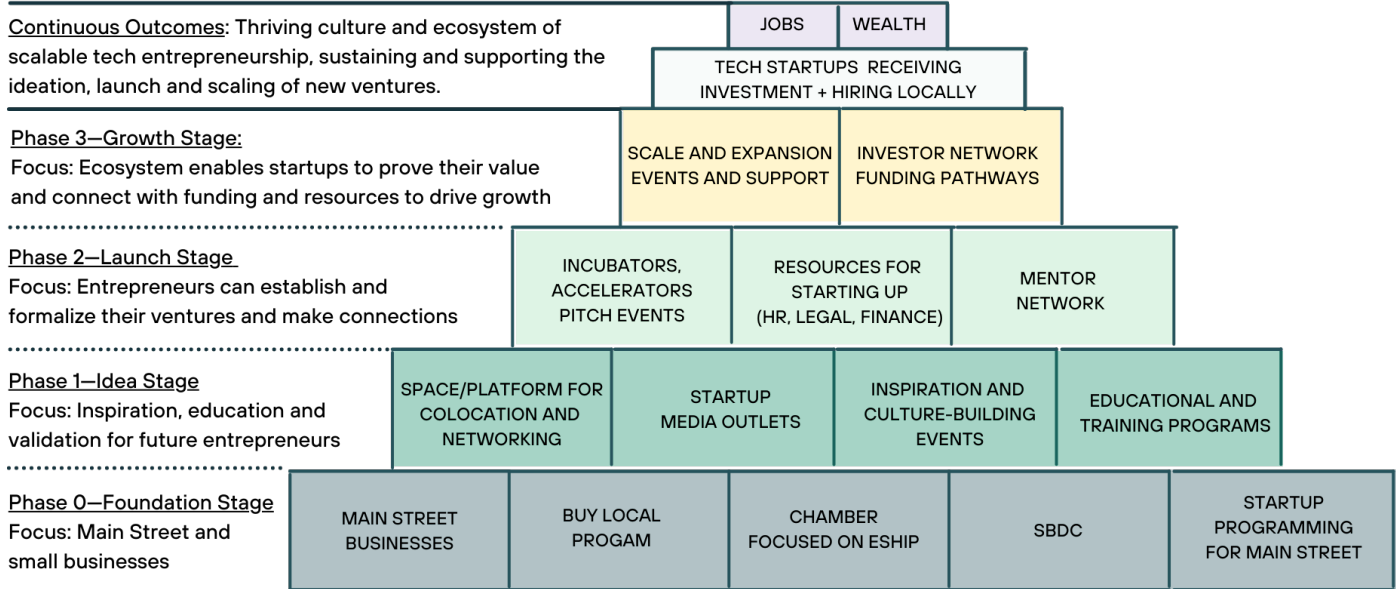>
> - Matt Dunne, CORI Founder

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

SOUTH CAROLINA'S GROWING DIGITAL ECONOMY SUCCESS

South Carolina's Rural Innovation Network (SCRIN) and the South Carolina Office of Rural Health (SCORH) joined forces in 2019 to close the digital equity gap, increase digital skills and jobs, and create healthier rural communities. With financial support from USDA, the organizations assessed 20 prospective communities before selecting Barnwell and Williamsburg Counties as the state's inaugural DEE communities to develop custom DEE Roadmaps to guide local transformation through economic and workforce development.

Today, there is a growing network of DEE Roadmap Communities across South Carolina and a waiting list of others eager to join.

In each community, groups of 10-20 diverse thinkers and leaders converge to form what is known as the local "DEE Dream Team." The Dream Team meets regularly for ten months to address the challenges and opportunities in building a digital economy and to create a custom Roadmap with action plans specific to their community's unique needs and goals. The Roadmaps encompass strategic projects to kickstart a digital economy and build momentum for a sustainable ecosystem.

BARNWELL COUNTY'S DEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- The Palmetto Innovation Center in downtown Barnwell with co-working, training, and memberships programs
- Just Co-Work co-working center in Williston
- New staff: director of programs and a membership coordinator
- DEE communications plan
- Telehealth partnership

BARNWELL COUNTY'S DEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS (CONTINUED):

- Annual bridge event for public schools to showcase academic progress, including digital and STEM programs, to the business and manufacturing communities
- Summer Tech Institute for rising 7th-9th graders
- Digital skill training courses for adults
- Digital pipeline programs for elementary and middle schools
- Power Call, a monthly digital meeting for women leaders
- Propel Business Lab, a 12-week business accelerator

"The groundwork for our DEE roadmap in Barnwell was laid before I joined the Southern Palmetto Regional Chamber in 2022, but it has nonetheless been a crucial document for shaping the work I've done in building the Palmetto Innovation Center and subsequent programming. DEE helped our town prioritize work around the digital economy, and the roadmap gave us a way to easily articulate goals for an effort that can sometimes feel amalgamous. Now three years into our DEE work, we've made headway on every goal of our roadmap and are seeing excitement and growth with the work and organization as a whole. For instance, our organization has grown its budget from $30k a year to just over $400k in the last two years, largely due to creating programs through a DEE lens. The roadmap gave us a way to get county and city stakeholders (like County Council and the EDC) involved and demonstrate the importance of this work. Ultimately, their investments paired with grant dollars from the USDA and our great programs have made rapid growth possible."

- Bob Snead, President, Southern Palmetto Regional Chamber

WILLIAMSBURG COUNTY'S DEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Digital Lane Innovation, Co-Working & Training Center in the Town of Lane
- Telehealth Center in Lane
- Farmer's Market in downtown Kingstree
- New drone courses at Williamsburg Technical College
- New website design course at Williamsburg Technical College
- SC Great Community Award 2023 + $100,000 for Lane
- Summer Tech Institute for rising 7th-9th graders
- Digital skill training courses for adults
- Tech Connects networking program
- Tech support programs for farmers
- Introductory work-from-home training programs

"Digital Lane is creating opportunities to improve the lives of our citizens. We offer support services to low-income and disadvantaged individuals that improve their quality of life. We bring tomorrow's work opportunities to today."

-Mayor Charlie Fulton, Town of Lane

ORANGEBURG COUNTY'S DEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Apprenticeship program for college students
- Apprenticeship program for high school students
- DEE advisory council
- Digital skills training courses for adults
- IT management services for the local business community
- Crowdfunding Invest League

"The Orangeburg Regional Innovation Center was in its infancy when we were first introduced to the DEE Project and joined the team in January 2022. Although use and development have always been a part of our mission, the DEE project introduced us to a whole new world and perspective to view and engage the digital economy. Working on the roadmap helped to refine the process and brought new team players to the table. Through our work with the DEE network, we have collaborated with numerous other agencies and organizations on programs and grant submissions. We are excited about where the roadmap will lead us and look forward to engaging even more across the state."

-Gary Robinson, Executive Director, Orangeburg Regional Innovation Center

GREENWOOD COUNTY'S DEE PLANS - LAUNCHING FALL 2023:

- Create an Innovation, Co-Working & Training Center
- Hire a DEE Director
- Launch a Co-Working Program
- Launch a Digital Skills Training Program
- Launch an Entrepreneur Support Program
- Partner with Self Regional Hospital and the Greenwood Genetics Center to Create Non-Traditional Training Programs for Digital & Tech Skill Workforce Needs
- Create a Tech Talk Networking Program
- Create a Marketing & Communications Plan

PARTNERING FOR PROSPERITY IN NEWBERRY COUNTY: A COLLABORATION TO BUILD A DIGITAL ECONOMY ECOSYSTEM ROADMAP

Developing a vibrant Digital Economy Ecosystem is critical to the future of Newberry County. A DEE will expand the workforce, create local digital jobs and remote-work opportunities and spark wealth creation through countywide efforts focused on entrepreneurship, innovation, and the launch of tech-based businesses.

In August 2022, 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 Newberry County for the development of a customized DEE Roadmap.

Collaboration among community leaders encompassed four crucial steps: 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.
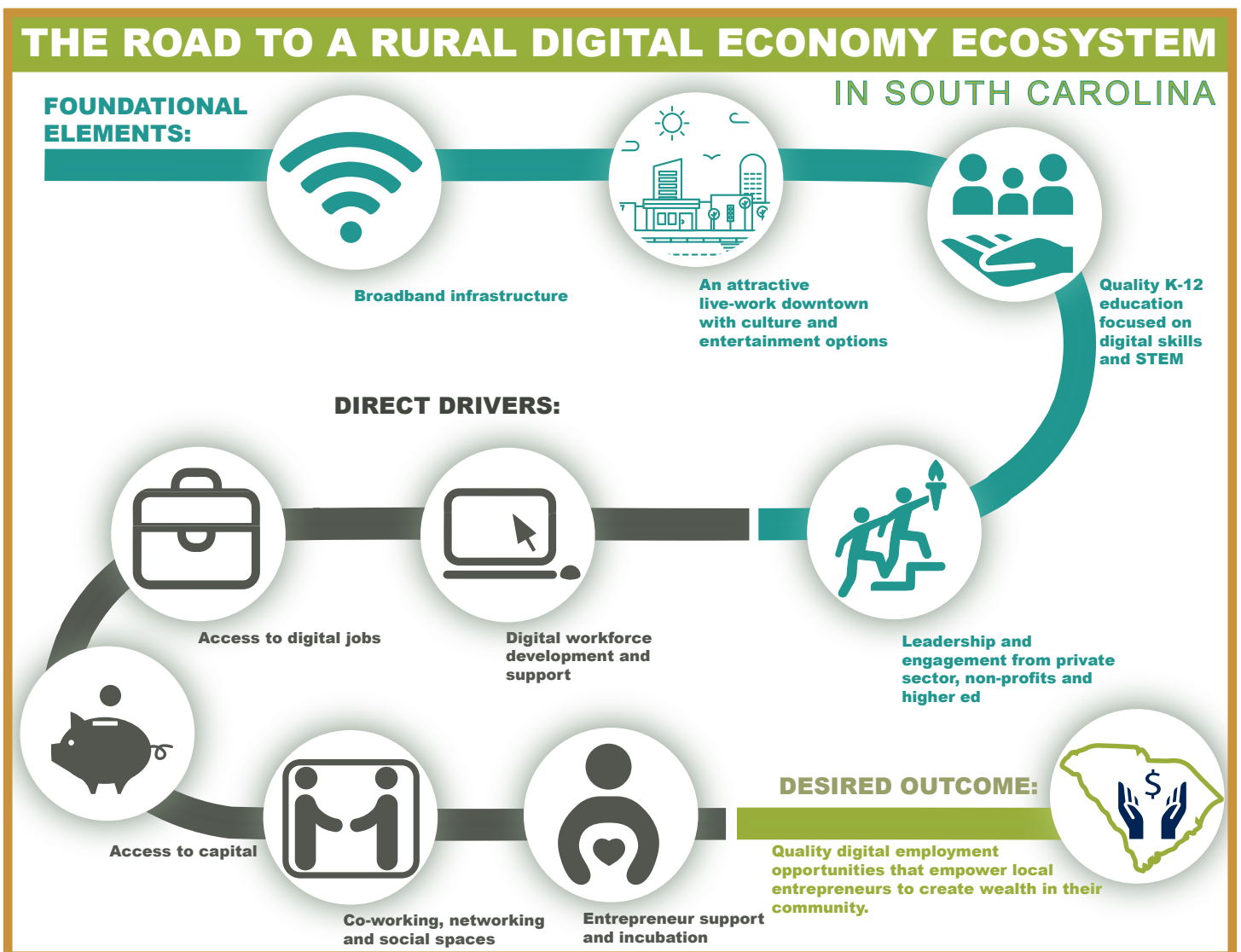
TIMELINE

August 2022 - Broadband Champion Training

• Introducing community members to what's available and what's lacking with broadband connectivity

September - November 2022 - Interviews with Community Residents

• Gathering information, history and personal accounts of community strengths and weaknesses through conversations about assets, gaps, and goals

November 2022 - April 2023 - Small Group Work Sessions

• Educating community members on what a DEE is and how a roadmap will guide implementation
• Exposing members to active DEE communities and leaders in South Carolina and 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 and further engage community stakeholders

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.

TIMELINE (CONTINUED)

May-June 2023 - Strategy Development and Creation of an Action Plan
- Defining the challenge and opportunity
- Creating mission and vision statements
- Identifying the approach and focus areas
- Creating a team structure
- Outlining execution plans and metrics
- Determining resources/budget
- Explaining why Greenwood County will achieve success

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

The Newberry County DEE Dream Team comprises a diverse group of 12 community champions. This committed group of visionary leaders collectively represents an inclusive assortment of individuals of different ages, backgrounds, occupations, skill sets, and life experiences working together toward a common goal.

Through a combination of regular bi-monthly and weekly work sessions, the Dream Team collaborated to create a strategic Roadmap for kickstarting a new economy and ecosystem.

- Jerry Alewine EdD, RRT, Dean of Nursing and Health Science, Newberry College
- Rebekah Clevenger, Manager, Genesis Hub Coffee
- Alan Davis, Owner, Alan B. Davis Consulting, LLC
- Rick Farmer, Director, Newberry County Economic Development
- Abigail Fuller, Director, Newberry County Library System
- Michelle Long, Executive Director, Newberry County Chamber
- Robert Matheson, Artist, Organizer of the Community Made Registry and founder of the NFT Museum of Newberry
- John W. Pugh, Pharmacist and Owner of Prosperity Drug Co.
- Jimmy Stephens, Head Men's & Women's Track & Field/Cross Country Coach, Newberry College
- Stephanie Sullivan, Operational Support Manager, Newberry Electric Cooperative
- Jeff Wicker, Assistant City Manager, Newberry

HOW WILL GREENWOOD COUNTY BE DIFFERENT?

Create a Center of Gravity

Build a Dedicated Talent Pipeline

Launch 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 AND MAPPING OUR COMMUNITY'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, local champions, and readily available, easily accessible high-speed internet. To better understand Newberry County's position of readiness, we evaluated the framework of existing Foundational Elements and Direct Drivers. This exercise guided the Dream Team on where to prioritize opportunities to build momentum based on areas where gaps are limited.

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 Newberry County to maximize the full impact of a DEE, it must develop seven critical Foundational Elements and five Direct Drivers. Through a series of question-and-answer sessions, worksheets, and group discussions, we narrowed the scope of the 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 essential to creating a DEE are 1) Attractive Live-Work Downtown; 2) Culture & Entertainment Options; 3) Quality K-12 Education Focused on Digital Skills & STEM; 4) Broadband Infrastructure; 5) Public Safety; 6) Community Leadership & Engagement; 7) Public-Sector Leadership & Engagement.

We evaluated these elements and ranked them in order of their capacity to accelerate efforts to develop the main drivers of our DEE. Our top four include **Broadband Infrastructure, Attractive Live/Work Downtown, Culture & Entertainment, and Quality K-12 Education.**

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.

The five Direct Drivers critical to creating a DEE are 1) Digital Workforce Development & Support; 2) Access to Digital Jobs; 3) Scalable Tech Entrepreneur Support & Incubation; 4) Access to Capital; 5) Inclusive Tech Culture Building or Co-Working, Networking, and Social Spaces.

We evaluated these drivers and ranked them in order of existing efforts, new opportunities, and critical priorities for growth. Our top three include **Scalable Tech Entrepreneur Support & Incubation, Digital Workforce Development & Support, and Inclusive Tech Culture Building, also known as Co-Working, Networking, and Social Spaces.**

ASSET MAPPING OUR STRENGTHS

Across the U.S., rural communities are planning and implementing innovation and economic development strategies and leveraging their strengths to create digital economies. They're charting a new course to prosperity.

Because evaluating critical assets motivates communities to acknowledge existing capabilities and competitive advantages, we utilized Asset Mapping to help prioritize short and long-term goals and create Roadmap strategies and projects.

We evaluated eight 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 Newberry County's primary assets into these concentration clusters:

Leading Education Assets
Newberry College, Piedmont Technical College, Newberry County Career Center, Newberry County Library, SBDC, and Digital Wallets Training Program

Leading Cultural Assets
Newberry Opera House, Festivals & Uptown Events, Museums Gardens & Arts Organizations, Firehouse Conference Center, Tennis, Golf, Lakes & the Palmetto Trail, and our ranking as the "Most Charming Small Town in America."

Leading Enrichment Assets
Committed Group of Community Champions, Newberry County Chamber of Commerce, Newberry County Economic Development, Newberry County Library

IDENTIFYING LEADING OPPORTUNITY ASSETS

We identified five leading Opportunity Assets to use in building our DEE strategies and action plan because successfully launching a DEE depends on access to support, talent, ideas, opportunities, and a community's commitment to change. These assets represent projects already in motion with growing visibility.

1. Broadband + Gig City
2. Newberry College + Piedmont Tech + NFT Museum
3. Cost of Living + Recreation + Digital Transplants
4. City & County Buy-In
5. Vacant/Available Downtown Buildings

ASSET MAP HIGHLIGHTS

ASSET CONCENTRATIONS

Healthcare
Education
Industry/Manufacturing
Small Business
Tourism/Recreation

LEADING OPPORTUNITY ASSETS

Broadband + Gig City
Newberry College + Piedmont Tech + NFT Museum
Cost of Living + Recreation + Digital Transplants
City & County Buy-In
Vacant/Available Downtown Buildings
Incubator Interest

EDUCATION ASSETS

Newberry College + Piedmont Technical College
Career Center + Adult Ed
Newberry County Library + Literacy Council
SBDC + SC Works
Digital Wallets Training Program
First Steps + Bright Beginnings

CULTURAL ASSETS

Newberry Opera House + Firehouse Conference Center
Festivals + Uptown Events
Museums + Gardens
Arts Council + Arts Center
"Most Charming Small Town in America"
Newberry College Sports
Tennis, Golf, Lakes, Palmetto Trail

ENRICHMENT ASSETS

Committed Group of Community Champions
Chamber of Commerce
Newberry County Economic Development
Non-Profit & Civic Organizations

SOUTH CAROLINA'S
RURAL INNOVATION NETWORK

SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF
RURAL HEALTH
Investment. Opportunity. Health.

scruralinnovation.org

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL GAP:
DEFINING OUR PROBLEM AND SOLUTION

By zeroing in on the gaps holding us back, we identified essential assets to leverage in developing our DEE. A better understanding of our weaknesses and strengths clarified our aspirations and reminded us WHY we are leading a charge for change.

Working collaboratively, we assembled the community's critical challenges into a singular overarching problem and devised a robust solution to guide the creation of strategies and action plans.

OUR PROBLEM
Newberry County is poised to leverage its high-speed internet infrastructure and lifestyle quality to build a thriving digital economy ecosystem. However, we need a cohesive plan and funding to spark this revolution. We need broader awareness, training opportunities, dedicated space for innovation, and coordinated efforts among all related events, projects, programs, and communication.

OUR SOLUTION
To create a world-class digital economy ecosystem that attracts existing and new residents, companies, and organizations, we must develop a master plan to execute our critical objectives and recruit a diverse group of champions countywide to help us achieve our goals through coordinated projects, funding, visibility, and sustainability.

> "The establishment of the Digital Economy Ecosystem (DEE) for Newberry County will provide future opportunities for technological growth and development and improve the quality of life for its citizens. Technical education, job training and an expansion of the remote work environment are several benefits that Newberry will accrue. The project in Newberry is part of a statewide focus on rural economic development financially supported by federal and state resources. I was pleased to be a member of the DEE team that began work in November of 2022 to develop and prioritize the projects that will most benefit the citizens of Newberry County and South Carolina."
>
> - Alan Davis, DEE Dream Team Member

CREATING STRATEGY:
DEVELOPING OUR VISION AND MISSION

The successful development of workforce talent, quality digital employment, and wealth creation through local entrepreneurship characterizes a thriving Digital Economy.

Despite external barriers to creating DEE success, such as access to tech talent and capital, we are committed to eliminating internal obstacles first, like fear of change, lack of knowledge or understanding, perceived competition, organizations working in silos, and poor communication.

Other internal barriers include closed mindsets and a lack of awareness of the opportunities that can and will be available to residents in a digital economy, such as skills training, networking, coaching, and mentoring, plus changing the scope of what's possible regarding employment, employability, and building a concentration of start-up companies.

Referencing the mantra "Creating jobs and careers you can be proud of in a community that you love", we recognize the significance of building a culture that will grow and support a DEE. It's why we strive for inclusivity, resource development, and a countywide communications plan that keeps residents interested, informed, and engaged.

VISION STATEMENT
We will leverage our Gig City and rural fiber infrastructure to unite our community in modern ways and create access to information, resources, and opportunities that embrace innovation, entrepreneurism, and the future of work. Our DEE will establish a higher quality of life for our individuals, families, and businesses.

MISSION STATEMENT
To successfully develop a thriving digital economy ecosystem with a world-class innovation centerpiece supported by high-caliber projects, programs, funding, and intentional growth strategies while mindfully preserving our small-town charm and quality of life.

"Providing digital literacy programming and creating an innovation/co-working space in our rural community will help us bridge the digital divide by fostering collaboration, attracting talent, and driving economic growth. It will enhance community engagement, knowledge transfer, and social cohesion, paving the way for a prosperous and inclusive future."

- Robert Matheson, DEE Dream Team Member

CREATING FOCUS AREAS:
DEVELOPING CORE STRATEGIES

With well-defined problem and solution statements to explain the critical gaps facing our community and vision and mission statements to frame our aspirations, we took strategy development to a higher level by narrowing our scope of concentration clusters and primary focus areas for Roadmap strategy development.

These Focus Areas represent themes for short-term priority projects that we will implement throughout 2023-24 and beyond. As other projects emerge, they will become part of our core Roadmap structure.

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 CONCENTRATIONS CLUSTERS

COHESIVE STRUCTURE
Harnessing and aligning existing and new initiatives to create a connected, cohesive approach to building a successful DEE while leveraging our Gig City and broadband capabilities.

KPIs: Organizational and operational structure; Qualified and effective leadership team; Network of community partners and supporters; Number of programs we offer & the number of participants benefitting; Number of training opportunities we make available; Number of jobs filled or created; Number of new businesses; Consistent countywide communication

CENTER OF GRAVITY
Creating a primary center of gravity with other spaces and/or satellite locations that signify action, innovation, and movement toward establishing an inclusive DEE with opportunities to participate, benefit, lead, and succeed.

KPIs: Secure short-term space for Phase 1 and long-term ownership space for Phase 2; Be operational, effective & sustainable; Number of members, participants, sponsors & supporters; Number of training courses, programs & events; Community visibility & media mentions; Budget, staff & sustainability

LEADERSHIP & SUSTAINABILITY
Establishing quality leadership to sustain the DEE through fundraising, grant writing, special events, and other diverse revenue streams, such as memberships, rentals, and unique programs.

KPIs: Hiring talented leaders for Phases 1 & 2; Amount of dollars raised and earned; Number of successful partnerships & collaborations; Community engagement & DEE ambassadors

TALENT PIPELINE, READY-TO-WORK & INCREASED INNOVATION
Creating education initiatives that expose the talent pipeline to DEE skills and careers, training initiatives that prepare our ready-to-work population for local and remote jobs, innovation initiatives that help small businesses grow with the help of digital tools, and encouraging an expanding entrepreneurial culture.

KPIs: Number of programs; Number of participants; Number of people trained; Number of jobs secured; Number of new businesses; Number of existing companies helped; Countywide reach

COMMUNICATION & CONNECTIVITY
Developing strategies for sharing news, information, opportunities, and successes across various platforms, including email, social media, website, word-of-mouth, public relations, and print assets like flyers and posters.

KPIS: Number of posts & followers; Number of emails & opens; Number of website visits and clicks; Number of participants via print assets; Number of media mentions; Number of survey takers

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:

CREATING ACTION GROUPS: DEVELOPING A SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP MODEL

Newberry County's leadership team identified nine strategies and priority projects with descriptions, budgets, and action plans, using our Focus Areas as a guide. We aim to grow each Action Group with new members from outside the DEE Dream Team to continue enhancing our Roadmap with fresh perspectives, energy, and programs while expanding visibility and buy-in.

OUR ACTION GROUPS:

- Cohesive Structure &Framework
- Center of Gravity
- Leadership & Sustainability
- Education: Training & Innovation
  - Adults
  - Youth
  - Job Access & Networking Support
- Education: Entrepreneurs
  - Business & Industry
  - Healthcare & Telehealth
  - Tourism & Entertainment
- Communication & Connectivity

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

SOUTH CAROLINA'S
RURAL INNOVATION
NETWORK

SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF
RURAL HEALTH
Investment. Opportunity. Health.

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

OUR DEE ROADMAP: KICKSTARTING OUR DIGITAL ECONOMY

Nine strategies with aligned technical projects and an estimated budget of $543,829 comprise Newberry County's inaugural DEE Roadmap. Throughout the Roadmap, critical themes of workforce development, entrepreneurial support, and community innovation emphasize the importance of our priority projects and short and long-term goals. By implementing this custom framework, we will kickstart a new economy, ignite transformation, alter mindsets, and create a modern path to prosperity for all residents of Newberry County.

Our DEE budgets reflect a combination of Phase 1 and 2 expenses, with some project budgets still under development.

CREATE THE SPARKHIVE INNOVATION, CO-WORKING & TRAINING CENTER

Focus Area
Center of Gravity + Cohesive Structure

Description
In Phase 1, we will establish a temporary innovation hub where we will work to develop an action plan for creating a permanent hub in Phase 2. We will offer several digital skills training programs, launch our networking group, begin our entrepreneurial support efforts, raise money, and build awareness.

Most importantly, we will develop an operational structure, budget, and long-term sustainability plan.

In Phase 2, we will provide a space where people can 1) discover opportunities to grow their digital & tech skills to position themselves for higher-paying local or remote jobs, 2) find inspiration for creating a new business or launching a new venture, and 3) establish a community presence for an existing small business.

Action Group
Center of Gravity

Action Group Leaders
Michelle Long and Jeff Wicker

Resources
Funding, Temporary Location (College Street), Agreement with City, Modest Interior Improvements, Furnishings, Technology, Equipment, Marketing

Timeline
6 Months

KPIs
Number of Training Courses Offered, Number of Paying Members, Number of Survey Participants, Amount of Dollars Raised, Deadlines/Timelines Met or Exceeded, Number of Community Presentations, Public Visibility

Action Steps
Present a Temporary Space Request to the City, Make Interior Improvements, Raise Funds, Purchase Furnishings and Technology, Launch Public Relations, Launch Training Sessions and Networking Events, Survey and Evaluate, Create an Operating Budget and Staffing Structure for Phase 2

Budget
$122,089 - Phase 1, Year 1

HIRE A PART-TIME PROGRAM COORDINATOR (PHASE 1) & A FULL-TIME DIRECTOR (PHASE 2)

Focus Area
Leadership & Sustainability + Cohesive Structure

Description
Hire a capable professional to serve as a part-time program coordinator of the SparkHive Innovation Center for Phase 1 and a full-time director for Phase 2. We will seek passionate, talented individuals to align DEE projects with community needs, create a brand/culture for our new ecosystem, and successfully carry out our chief Roadmap objectives, including fundraising.

Action Group
Leadership & Sustainability

Action Group Leaders
Alan Davis and Michelle Long

Resources
Funding, Job Description + Expectations, Talented Candidates, Community Interest, Word-of-Mouth Support, Onboarding, Reporting Structure, Office Space, Laptop

Timeline
4-6 Months

KPIs
Number of interested candidates; Number of interviews, Time it takes to hire; Time it takes to raise money for a salary; Time it takes to hire for Phase 2

Action Steps
Develop job descriptions for Phases 1 and 2; Raise seed money; Post job opening #1; Identify and interview candidates; Hire, onboard and evaluate; Repeat in Phase 2

Budget
$34,843 - Phase 1, Year 1

CREATE A THRIVING CO-WORKING PROGRAM

Focus Area
Digital Training + Innovation Culture

Description
Create a co-working program for our SparkHive Innovation Center targeted at individual business owners, remote workers, aspiring entrepreneurs, and visiting professionals from in and outside the county. The program will include office and desk rental, education and networking opportunities, and a culture of innovation that inspires higher levels of creativity and collaboration.

Action Groups
Center of Gravity + Cohesive Structure + Education

Action Group Lead
Robert Matheson

Resources
Funding, Program and Membership Models, Sustainable Operating Structure and Budget, Space, Furnishings, Technology, Membership App, Access System, Programming, Marketing

Timeline
18 Months

KPIs
Amount of money raised; Level of community interest; Number of co-workers, members and sponsors; Number of programs; Publicity; Sustainability and growth

Action Steps
Review other co-working models and budgets; Identify membership apps and access systems; Survey the community for interest; Create staffing and programming plans; Hire a program manager; Create an event calendar; Create a marketing and PR plan

Budget
$90,396 - Phase 2, Year 2

CREATE A THRIVING DIGITAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM

Focus Area
Center of Gravity + Digital Training & Innovation Culture

Description
In Phase 1, we will create a digital skills training program that addresses the community's diverse needs, offering everything from digital literacy 101 to software developer training. Our unique program will fill existing gaps and zero in on the specific needs of healthcare, tourism, small businesses, and aspiring entrepreneurs. We will test several course offerings in Phase 1 and make adjustments and additions in Phase 2. Ultimately, we will align our current and future strategies with the local labor market's digital/tech workforce development goals and the aspirations of local citizens to create a thriving innovation culture with top-tier talent.

Action Groups
Education: Training & Innovation

Action Group Leaders
Abby Fuller and Stephanie Sullivan

Resources
Funding, Short-Term Training Space(s) + Agreements, Technology/Software, Trainers and Facilitators, Marketing

Timeline
6-8 Months

KPIs
Number of courses offered in Phase 1; Number of participants in Phase 1; Amount of funds raised; Community Engagement; Publicity; Revenue

Action Steps
Finalize short-term training locations and agreements; Research courses offered at other innovation centers; Determine training course menu, frequency and cost; Hire teachers and facilitators; Market, promote and gather feedback; Survey community regarding interests

Budget
$38,959 - Phase 1, Year 1

CREATE A THRIVING ENTREPRENEURIAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

Focus Area
Center of Gravity + Digital Training & Innovation

Description
Design a niche program that supports the needs of current and aspiring digital and tech entrepreneurs and builds a community of scalable digital and tech companies. Our agenda will assist individuals through one-on-one consultations and mentoring programs, training classes and workshops, and special incentives like boot camps, pitch competitions, and access to capital. We will collaborate with like-minded partners, organizations, and institutions with similar goals.

Action Group
Education: Entrepreneurs

Action Group Leaders
Rick Farmer and Jimmy Stephens

Resources
Space, Talent to Run the Program, Community Buy-In, Technology, Collection of Engaging and Beneficial Programs, Mentors and Coaches, Special Events, Marketing

Timeline
18 Months

KPIs
Number of participating entrepreneurs; Number of new companies started; Number of new employees hired; Number of training programs and mentor sessions; Amount of money raised; Access to capital & investors

Action Steps
Research other programs; Identify like-minded community partners, Create a list of courses and program offerings; Build a calendar and Phase 2 budget; Survey the community for feedback; Develop a job description for a manager; Identify mentors and coaches; Develop a marketing plan

Budget
$18,970 - Phase 1, Year 1 (Phase 2 - $198,277.50)

CREATE A SUMMER TECH INSTITUTE FOR OUR TALENT PIPELINE

Focus Area
Digital Training & Innovation Culture

Description
Create a hands-on summer camp that exposes rising 8th and 9th graders to digital skills and careers and partner with guidance counselors to showcase digital and tech job opportunities via Career Day events.

Action Group
Education: Training & Innovation

Action Group Leader
Beth Jaeger

Resources
Funding, Location, Technology, Curriculum, Instructors, Administrative Support, Lunch/Snacks, Career Booth, Marketing

Timeline
12 Months

KPIs
Launch summer 2024, Amount of money raised; Number of participants; Program effectiveness; Teacher recruitment, Partnership effectiveness; Publicity and growth

Action Steps
Meet with school districts, guidance counselors, and the career center; Develop camp plans for year one; Develop career day promotional structure; Develop curriculum, Raise money, Hire teachers, Recruit participants; Evaluate and grow

Budget
$7,775 Phase 1, Year 1

PARTNER WITH NEWBERRY COUNTY HOSPITAL TO CREATE NON-TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS FOR DIGITAL & TECH SKILL WORKFORCE NEEDS

Focus Area
Digital Training & Innovation Culture

Description
Partner with the Newbery County Hospital to identify digital workforce needs and design a training and mentoring program that aligns to help meet those needs.

Action Group
Education: Training & Innovation

Action Group Leaders
John Pugh and Jerry Alewine

Resources
TBD

Timeline
8-12 Months

KPIs
TBD

Action Steps
Meet with hospital officials; Research training programs, Survey the community; Develop a course list; Identify Instructors; Develop a marketing plan

Budget
TBD

CREATE A COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING PLAN

Focus Area
Communication & Connectivity

Description
Develop a comprehensive communications and marketing plan that addresses the importance of the new SparkHive Innovation Hub and our expectations for Phases 1 and 2. The project will include creating and delivering presentations to the community, public relations, email marketing, social media, advertising, graphic design, photography, videography and copywriting.

Action Group
Communication

Action Group Leader
Michelle Long

Resources
Funding, Marketing and Design Talent, Brand Identity, Promotional Materials, Website, Social Media Presence, Programs like Mailchimp, Hootsuite, and Canva

Timeline
4 Months for Phase 1

KPIs
Community awareness; Community participation; Number of presentations; Volume of online engagement via web, email, and socials; Media mentions

Action Steps
Finalize plans for Phase 1; Create rollout calendar; Create brand identity + assets; Develop website landing page; Launch social media presence; Create news releases, flyers, posters, and giveaways; Create pitch deck for launching public presentations

Budget
$33,995 Phase 1, Year 1

CREATE A TECH TALK NETWORKING PROGRAM

Focus Area
Communication & Connectivity

Description
Create a program that offers regular gatherings and educational opportunities for individuals interested in digital skills, remote work, entrepreneurship, and growing our digital economy ecosystem.

Action Group
Communication

Action Group Leaders
Robert Matheson and Rebekah Clevenger

Resources
Funding, Speaker and Mileage Stipends, Operational Model and Budget; Meeting Locations; Calendar of Events and Speakers

Timeline
4 Months

KPIs
On-Time Launch, Local Publicity, Amount of Money Raised, Number of Sponsors, Number of Members, Number of Programs, Feedback and Evaluation, Plan for Growth

Action Steps
Develop a calendar of topics and potential speakers; Identify locations and a regular meeting time; Determine the cost to participate; Develop a sponsor plan; Develop a marketing plan, Launch and evaluate

Budget
$2,300 - Phase 1, Year 1

OUR FORMULA FOR SUCCESS
THE WHY BEHIND OUR ROADMAP

"We're a picturesque county with an abundance of natural beauty and opportunities for outdoor recreation. At the same time, we have a gig city, a maturing fiber network, and a mindset for igniting innovation, entrepreneurship, and prosperity. The bottom line, we think bigger than we are.

Working together, we will implement our DEE Roadmap strategies and seek new programs and partners to expand our ecosystem countywide.

We love where we live and want every resident to benefit from having the same opportunities as our neighbors in larger, more urban communities. We are committed to making our DEE a reality."

- Greenwood County Dream Team