



Contact:

Cheryl Meadows
SKED Communications Director
606-677-6101
cmeadows@centertech.com

Moving Eastern Kentucky Forward with Broadband Project Receives Good Response; Project Analysis Under Way

SOMERSET, Ky. – Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation (SKED) put out the call for projects designed to Move Eastern Kentucky Forward with Broadband at the end of 2016, and leaders and business owners from across the region answered with some of their best ideas.

A total of 15 project proposals were submitted for consideration. Following an extensive review, the field has been narrowed to 11. Those 11 have been advanced for further due diligence: including economic impact analysis, engineering analysis and fiber/broadband connectivity analysis.

Project semi-finalists will be invited to present their projects for final review in March.

Through Moving Eastern Kentucky Forward with Broadband, SKED is identifying short and long-term economic development projects in 26-coal impacted Kentucky counties that may be eligible for approximately \$500,000 to \$2,000,000 in funding from various sources. The projects will leverage the KentuckyWired I-Way and other broadband networks in the eligible counties. SKED will prioritize the selected project finalists and seek resources, funding, and partnerships to see that the projects are realized and produce new jobs and investment for the region.

SKED is being assisted by Thomas P. Miller & Associates (TPMA) and MSE of Kentucky, along with representatives from the Center for Rural Development.

The 30-year-old non-profit organization received a \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) in September 2016 to conduct a feasibility study to identify short and long-term economic development projects leveraging broadband infrastructure.

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SKED is providing \$25,000 in matching funds for the project to identify economic development projects that can capitalize on the high-capacity telecommunications infrastructure to create jobs in the 26 Eastern Kentucky counties.

These counties include: Bell, Boyd, Breathitt, Clay, Elliott, Floyd, Harlan, Jackson, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Laurel, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Magoffin, Martin, Menifee, Morgan, Owsley, Perry, Pike, Rockcastle, Whitley, and Wolfe counties.

The process consists of data analysis on available workforce, business sites and buildings; broadband utilization plan; and other planned activities related to the KentuckyWired project and other broadband providers in the region. Projects are ranked based on number of created jobs, cost, timeline and local support and work in conjunction with other SOAR initiatives.

SKED Executive Director Brett Traver says the initiative is designed to guide Eastern Kentucky business owners and leaders in the use of broadband infrastructure to create jobs in the region.

“We are pleased with the response from our Request for Proposals in November and are looking forward to further developing these potential projects by meeting with the stakeholders in these Eastern Kentucky counties over the next month,” Traver said.

For information about SKED, Moving Eastern Kentucky Forward with Broadband, its direct loan programs, or Entrepreneurial SMARTS classes, visit: www.southeastkentucky.com.

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Formed 30 years ago by Fifth District Congressman Hal Rogers to create jobs in Southeast Kentucky, the economic development organization, based in Somerset, serves a 45-county region in Kentucky. Staff works with business owners, small and large, throughout its service area to identify financing solutions to fund their location, expansion and working capital needs.

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Moving Eastern Kentucky Forward with Broadband Service Area

