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SKED Awarded Grant to Assist in Broadband Expansion

SOMERSET, Ky. – Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation (SKED) has received a \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) to conduct a feasibility study to identify short and long-term economic development projects leveraging KentuckyWired I-Way Broadband network infrastructure plans.

SKED is providing \$25,000 in matching funds for the project called: Moving Eastern Kentucky Forward with Broadband. The project will identify economic development projects that can capitalize on the "KentuckyWired" initiative and create jobs in 26 coal counties in the region that have been negatively impacted by the coal industry.



Executive Director Brett Traver says the planning grant will be used to give Eastern Kentucky communities and business owners and leaders an opportunity to take greater advantage of what KentuckyWired has to offer in the coming months and years.

“With this project, we want to identify the communities with the leadership to develop, support and implement economic development projects that will have the greatest impact on the region by utilizing the broadband technology,” Traver said. “There are a lot of good ideas out there that need to be developed. This project will identify the best, objectively, and develop a plan to help make them happen.”

The project area includes: 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.

**Southeast Kentucky
Economic Development** 
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These projects must have strong community support, be completed in six to 24 months with a cost from \$500,000 to \$2,000,000 and have a high-impact on job creation. Project partners will also identify three to five long-term projects that require additional planning and funding.

The process will consist of data analysis on available workforce, business sites and buildings; KentuckyWired fiber installation plan; and other planned activities related to the KentuckyWired project. Projects will be ranked based on number of created jobs, cost, timeline and local support and work in conjunction with other SOAR initiatives.

SKED has contracted with Thomas P. Miller & Associates and MSE of Kentucky to conduct the feasibility study designed to identify important development projects that can capitalize on the installation of broadband fiber to create jobs in the negatively impacted coal counties.

Tom West, senior vice president at Thomas P. Miller & Associates, says his company is excited to have been selected to work with SKED on this important project.

“Like most of SKED’s work, this project has the potential to transform the region in a very positive way by creating opportunities for new, good jobs and diversifying the economy of Eastern Kentucky,” West said.

“The TPMA/MSE team was attracted to this project because we know the leadership at SKED is fully committed to improving the quality of life and vitality of the region through economic development and employment opportunities and we believe this project will have a huge impact for the people, communities and businesses of Eastern Kentucky.”

For information about SKED, Moving Eastern Kentucky Forward with Broadband, its direct loan programs, Entrepreneurial SMARTS small business training classes and more, 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.