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## **Leaders Learn How to Move the Region Forward with Broadband**

HAZARD, Ky. – City and county leaders from across Eastern Kentucky gathered in Hazard on Thursday, as Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation (SKED) rolled out its new initiative designed to identify economic development projects that leverage broadband infrastructure to create jobs throughout the region.

Nearly 60 men and women from all economic sectors and surrounding counties filled a room at the First Federal Center at Hazard Community & Technical College in Hazard to hear how they could develop projects that would take advantage of the benefits of broadband access in their communities, as part of Moving Eastern Kentucky Forward with Broadband.

Steve Baker drove from London to hear what SKED and its partners had to offer.



“I left the SKED meeting excited at the possibilities this project can provide to our region. It presents the best opportunity, to date, for Eastern Kentucky communities to leverage the KentuckyWired project and create real solutions to our region’s problems,” said Baker, superintendent of the London Utility Company. “Good things are ahead.”

SKED staff was joined by partners: Thomas P. Miller & Associates (TPMA) and MSE of Kentucky, along with representatives from the Center for Rural Development, for the presentation providing detail and selection criteria to attendees seeking to grow their communities.

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 to conduct a feasibility study to identify short and long-term economic development projects leveraging broadband infrastructure.

**Southeast Kentucky  
Economic Development**   
A Regional Growth Corporation

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 26 coal counties in the region that have been negatively impacted by the coal industry.

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.

Eastern Telephone and Technologies owner and Pikeville native Darrell Maynard was on hand for the meeting and played an important role in leading the group discussion near the meeting's end.

“There have been quite a few efforts to help with economic development in Eastern Kentucky over the last few years, but this program has the direction and elements our New Economy will need to replace the waning coal economy,” he said following the meeting.

At the event, business and community leaders were given details on how they can compete to be selected as of three to five short-term projects or three to five long-term projects that require additional planning and funding. 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.

The process will consist 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 will be 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 direction in the use of broadband infrastructure to create jobs in the region.

“This is the first step in identifying 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.

For information about SKED, Moving Eastern Kentucky Forward with Broadband, its direct loan programs, Entrepreneurial SMARTS classes, visit: [www.southeastkentucky.com](http://www.southeastkentucky.com).

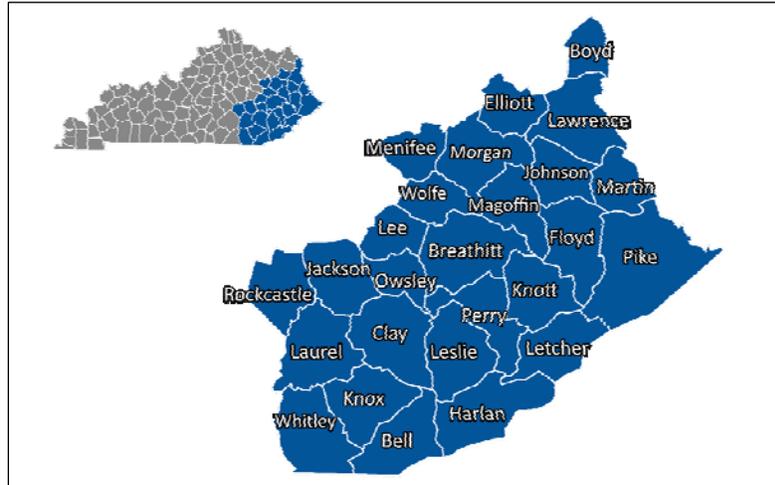
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# Southeast Kentucky Economic Development



## A Regional Growth Corporation

### Moving Eastern Kentucky Forward with Broadband Service Area



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.