

Connecting the Nation Starts in Kentucky

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http://www.app-rising.com/gdblog/2007/09/connecting_the_nation_starts_i.html

Had a colleague pass along a nice article on the ConnectKentucky project earlier today.

ConnectKentucky's been getting a lot of press recently for their efforts to map broadband in their state. One of their primary goals is to make affordable broadband accessible to all.

At the Broadband Properties Summit I had the great fortune to listen to and chat with Joe Mefford, the program's statewide broadband director, and I came away very impressed.

What I found most significant in what they're doing is how they've taken something that's historically been seen as radioactive to network operators—divulging where their networks reach and customers are—and turned it into something that has inspired these same network operators to invest more money in infrastructure across the state (over \$600 million).

ConnectKentucky accomplished this because through their mapping process, they unearthed numerous underserved areas, many of which the incumbents seemingly never knew existed. And now that these areas have been identified there's a rush to serve them as the incumbents try to expand their customer bases.

Also noteworthy is the fact that mapping broadband, while the most widely touted aspect of what they're doing, is actually only a small sliver of the overall ConnectKentucky effort.

They've set and achieved the goal of equipping counties with websites, believing this to be a crucial step in engaging citizens with broadband and creating stronger bonds of awareness within communities.

They've set up teams across all facets of communities—like education, healthcare, and government—to address and pursue opportunities to encourage the use and adoption of broadband.

And they're working on spearheading statewide projects like the implementation of an EMR system.

They truly understand that having the networks in place is not the last step but the first.

It will be interesting to watch their progress as they continue to realize greater successes in Kentucky. And their influence is already reaching beyond their home state through the creation of ConnectedNation, which is helping other states interested in following this model to resolve their own broadband issues.

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