

DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY SUMMIT

Chattanooga Convention Center

July 23, 2024



Department of
**Economic &
Community Development**

Agenda

8:15 AM **Breakfast** | Ballroom

9:00 AM **Welcome Address** | Ballroom
Hamilton County Mayor Weston Wamp and State
Broadband Director Taylre Beaty

State of Infrastructure
Donovan Spann and Emily Hale

State of Digital Opportunity
Codi Drake and Leah Mims

10:00 AM **General Session** | Ballroom
Digital Opportunity Envisioning Session

Breakout Sessions 1

10:45 AM **Breakout Session A** | Ballroom
Leveraging Partnerships to Achieve Digital Opportunity

Breakout Session B | Conference Room G
Workforce Development in the Digital Age

11:45 AM **Lunch and Fireside Chat** | Ballroom
Chattanooga Ecosystem Conversation

Breakout Sessions 2

Breakout Session A | Ballroom
Broadband 101 and Fiber Splicing

Breakout Session B | Conference Room G
Train-the-Trainer Simulation

2:35 PM **Breakout Sessions 3**

Breakout Session A | Ballroom
Closing the Digital Divide in Rural Tennessee

Breakout Session B | Conference Room G
Entrepreneurship and Navigating the Digital Economy

3:35 PM **DE Capacity Grant and BEAD Program Updates** | Ballroom

4:00 PM **Networking** | Ballroom



About ECD

The Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development's mission is to develop strategies that help make Tennessee the No.1 location in the Southeast for high quality jobs. To grow and strengthen Tennessee, the department seeks to attract new corporate investment to the state and works with Tennessee companies to facilitate expansion and economic growth.

About Broadband Office

The State Broadband Office supports TNECD's mission through infrastructure and digital opportunity grant programs that aim to close the digital divide in Tennessee. Since 2017, the Broadband Office has awarded over \$500 million in broadband infrastructure and \$65.5 million in digital opportunity grants. The office is currently managing Tennessee's BEAD funds, which will invest over \$800 million in infrastructure grants, and the DE Capacity Grant Program, which will secure an additional \$15.8 million for digital opportunity programs.

ecd.broadband@tn.gov | tn.gov/broadband

Speakers

Leveraging Partnerships to Deliver Digital Opportunities

Clifton Harris is the President and CEO of the Urban League of Middle Tennessee, where he oversees the organization's vision and mission. Formerly leading the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission, he initiated Nashville's first Project Homeless Connect and implemented the "Housing First" approach, significantly transforming the city's support for the homeless. Recognized as one of Nashville's Most Admired CEOs by the Nashville Business Journal and one of the "2024 In Charge Leaders" by the Nashville Post, Harris has also made significant contributions to Shelby County's housing and homelessness sectors. He serves on several boards, including the Center for Non-Profit's CEO Advisory Board and the Nashville Electric Service's Board of Directors, and is involved with the Rotary Club of Nashville and the Urban Land Institute. Harris, an alumnus of Leadership Nashville and Elder at Strong Tower Bible Church, hails from Cary, North Carolina, and holds a business administration degree from St. Augustine's College.

Clifton Harris



Katie Cour



Katie Cour serves as the President and CEO of the Nashville Public Education Foundation with over 25 years of experience in the education, political, and nonprofit sectors. Previously, she was the executive director of Talent Strategy for Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), where she developed and implemented strategies for the recruitment, selection, evaluation and retention of great teachers and school leaders. Prior to joining MNPS, Katie was a senior consultant with Education First, a national education policy consulting firm, and also served as a senior analyst and

assistant director at the Office of Education Accountability for the Tennessee Comptroller. She has worked for a variety of education nonprofits, including Reading Is Fundamental, Inc., Close Up Foundation, Achieve, Inc., and the YMCA of Middle Tennessee.

Nancy Nabors



Nancy Nabors is the Director of Regional Enhancement for the Knoxville Chamber. Her focus is on initiatives involving infrastructure and entrepreneurship/small business. In 2022-23 she led a digital literacy pilot program for adults in Knox County's underserved communities. With the help of Community Schools, Knoxville Parks & Recreation, KnoxWorx, and Centro Hispano; fifty working-age adults received free basic computer skills training and took home an affordable laptop. The eKnox Community Digital Literacy Program

is now being scaled with the help of the pilot partners and new partners, including Knox County, a recipient of the Broadband Ready Communities Grant. Nancy is a University of Tennessee graduate and a lifelong resident of Knoxville and Lenoir City.

Holly Rachel



Holly Rachel is an experienced executive, educator, and entrepreneur with over 15 years in her field. She began her career as a special agent, forensic scientist, and data analyst at the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. In 2017, Rachel co-founded Rachel and Winfree, a technology consulting firm aiding small to mid-size businesses in scaling with data, consulting for over 30 companies worldwide. In response to the lack of diversity in Nashville's tech scene, she co-launched the Nashville chapter of Blacks in

Technology in 2021, growing its membership to 750 and securing substantial funding to support educational initiatives. Under her leadership, the chapter has hosted numerous events and created seven successful education programs, serving underrepresented Tennesseans from elementary age to executive level.

Evann Freeman



Evann Freeman joined EPB as Director of Government Relations in December of 2019. Evann leads EPB's government relations efforts. Evann has spent the past decade as a government relations professional, most recently for U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander. At EPB, he works closely with local, state, and federal stakeholders, as well as local entrepreneurs and area businesses.

Workforce Development in the Digital Age

Sabrina Parker



Sabrina Parker is a seasoned nonprofit leader with over 30 years of experience in strategic fundraising, grant writing, marketing, and business development. As the Founder and President of the Board of Helping Hands of Tennessee (HHT), she has successfully secured diverse funding sources and organized impactful events like the annual Mission of Mercy, which attracts 300 volunteers and serves over 1,000 under-served patients. Parker also developed a dental clinic at HHT that has provided affordable services to over 9,000 low-income individuals. Active in the

community, she is a member of the NAACP, Rural Health Association of Tennessee, Tennessee Public Health Association, and the Jackson Rotary Board. Recognized for her leadership with the Leadership Jackson Diamond Award in 2018 and the 2022 Leadership Jackson Alumni C.O.P.E. Award, Parker's dedication and accomplishments highlight her as a respected nonprofit leader.

Nakeisha Ricks-Pettyjohn



Nakeisha Ricks-Pettyjohn is a Senior Fellow at the National Skills Coalition, where she specializes in federal and state workforce development policy and strategy. She leverages her extensive state policy expertise and relationships to support NSC's advocacy campaigns and provide technical assistance to state leaders and workforce stakeholders. Previously, she was the Senior Director of Workforce Programs for the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, managing statewide Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs and overseeing Tennessee American Job Centers. Nakeisha is dedicated to innovative program development, system alignment, and policy changes that address equity, access, and economic mobility barriers, particularly for workers of color, those with children, and justice-involved individuals. She has a strong track record in promoting workforce diversity, equity, and inclusion and implementing services for adult learners and workforce participants. Nakeisha holds a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and Biology from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and is based in Tennessee.

Nye Hodge



Nyerere "Nye" Hodge is a senior research analyst at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. With a background in news, Nye considers himself a journalist and a quantitative researcher. He uses data to uncover barriers to economic mobility and reports it to practitioners and policymakers who are hungry to make a change. His research focuses on the future of work, labor market policy disruptions, demographic trend analyses, and career pathways analyses. Nye holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Rutgers University and a master's

degree in political economy from the University of Central Florida. Before joining the Atlanta Fed, he was a research analyst for a leading international workforce analytics firm, formerly known as Burning Glass. In a former life, he developed his journalism chops as an associate news producer for the ABC News affiliate in Orlando, FL.

Aaron Lamey leads Tech901 in its mission to continuously develop the Memphis area IT workforce and launch technology careers. After spending a decade working in local IT, Aaron began teaching part-time until joining as an early instructor of Tech901. During his tenure at Tech901, Aaron led hundreds of students to earn industry certification and begin IT careers. Seeing a need for even more hands-on training, Aaron launched an IT services start-up named MemFi Networks to employ his students to serve the Memphis community.

Aaron Lamey



Broadband 101 and Fiber Splicing

Chris Townson



Chris Townson serves as the Chief Executive Officer of DTC Communications and its subsidiaries. DTC is a member-owned provider of telecommunications services headquartered in Alexandria, Tennessee. Chris holds a Bachelor of Science in Organizational Management, a Master of Business Administration, and a Doctor of Ministry in Organizational Leadership. Serving in the rural telecommunications industry for 30 years, he has held front-line positions in Outside Plant and

Information Systems and senior management roles in Industry Relations & Government Affairs and Customer Service & Sales. Chris serves as Past President of the Tennessee Broadband Association, President of the Tennessee Rural Communications Cooperative Association, President of the Rural Wireless Association, Chairman of iRis Networks, Secretary of Trilight, Chairman of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Foundation Board, Vice President of Nehemiah Teams, Inc., and Elder at The Journey Church of Lebanon, Tennessee. Chris and his beautiful wife, Melissa, live in Middle Tennessee. They have two adult sons and a wonderful daughter-in-law.

Train-The Trainer Simulation

Sammy is the Program Director for Tech Goes Home Tennessee, a digital inclusion program of The Enterprise Center in Chattanooga. Sammy has been a part of the TGH team since 2015 and in the Director role since 2017. In previous roles, he helped create the TN Code Academy and 100 Girls of Code, which were computer coding camps and workshops for middle and high school students. Sammy also spent 8 years as District Director for U.S. Congressman Lincoln Davis.



Velvet Hernandez-Johnson Mock Trainer



Velvet Hernandez-Johnson, a Guatemalan native, graduate in International Business and Marketing from Harding University in Arkansas; she also holds a master's degree in business administration from The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Hernandez-Johnson has had an exciting career as a transformational leader, bilingual cultural coach, and speaker. Recipient of multiple awards for leadership, she is most proud of supporting Irie Love, her daughter's initiative that provides care packages to Guatemalan children working in the streets instead of attending school.

Closing the Digital Divide in Rural Tennessee

Rena Purdy



As Executive Director of Wayne County's Joint Economic and Community Development Board (JECDB), Rena engages in local and regional discussions to address issues in Wayne County and Southern Middle Tennessee. She partners with organizations to develop programs for positive change in this Tier 4 At Risk community. Previously, she was Executive Director of the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce for eight years. Rena holds an A.S. from Columbia State Community College, a B.S. in Communications from the University of North Alabama, and a Master's in Leadership and Public Service from Lipscomb University. A Tennessee Certified Economic Developer, she has

various certifications and has served on multiple boards and committees over her 15-year career, always seeking to improve the economic status of the communities she serves. Rena is a graduate of Columbia State Community College (A.S. General Studies), the University of North Alabama (B.S. in Communications with an emphasis in public relations), and Lipscomb University's Leadership and Public Service Masters program. She is a Tennessee Certified Economic Developer (UT) and holds certifications from the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce Executives Institute, Gattis Leadership, TVA Rural Leadership Institute, and TVA Workforce Institute. Rena has served on multiple boards and committees throughout her fifteen-year career in economic development and is always seeking new and innovative ways to improve the economic status of the communities she serves.

Dr. Cindy Bowman

Dr. Bowman has been in her current position for six years. Previously, she was the high school Principal at South Greene High School for sixteen years. Dr. Bowman began her teaching career at North Greene High School where she taught United States and World History and coached basketball, volleyball, and tennis. Dr. Bowman lives on a farm and raises horses. Dr. Bowman believes the mission of education today, is preparing all students to achieve their career goals by developing problem-solving, communication, interpersonal, critical thinking skills, and teamwork needed by students to be successful in either college or career opportunities.

John Fredericks



As the Director of IT & Erwin Fiber at Erwin Utilities, John leads with a commitment to fostering innovation, collaboration, and customer satisfaction. With over 20 years of experience in the telecommunications industry, his journey has been shaped by a dedication to technological excellence and empathetic leadership. Inspired by Simon Sinek's "Leaders Eat Last," he prioritizes the well-being and growth of his team, ensuring a supportive environment where everyone can thrive. His expertise spans SIP, IP, Ethernet, and advanced networking protocols, underpinned by a Bachelor's degree in Information Technology from King College.

Dr. Simpfronia Taylor



Dr. Simpfronia Taylor, originally from New Orleans, Louisiana, holds a B.A. in Business Administration from Dillard University, a Master's in Business Education, and a Doctorate in Education from The University of Georgia. With over 30 years of educational experience across all levels, she has secured over a million dollars in grants for teacher education and student training. Dr. Taylor is the author of "Teacher Efficacy: Overcoming Barriers To Computer Instruction" and has worked in the UT system since 2009, including seven years at the UT Health Science Center. She

recently served as the UT Martin Ripley Center Director. Currently, she is the Co-Principal Investigator for the \$1.3 million High School To Health Care Grant, a collaborative project to educate rural Tennessee high school students about careers in medical laboratory sciences and public health information technology.

Entrepreneurship and Navigating the Digital Economy

Besiah Fahngon is the Owner and Director of Events at Kaifa. With a passion for creating unforgettable events, Besiah brings to the table a wealth of experience in event planning, business growth, and economic development. Besiah has spearheaded countless successful marketing strategies through community engagement and events, from ideation to execution, making sure every detail is executed flawlessly. Her expertise in event planning, creative strategy development, logistics coordination, and event analytics ensures that every event she manages is an 'end of year report' highlight and success. Clients include East Tennessee State University, Sync Space, and more.

Besiah Fanghon



Sarah Mattson



Sarah Mattson serves as Director of Entrepreneurship for the City of Chattanooga, where she develops strategies to help entrepreneurs navigate the local small business ecosystem. In the spirit of Mayor Tim Kelly's One Chattanooga plan, Sarah works to make Chattanooga the easiest, most fun, and most equitable place to start and grow a business. Sarah has a background in small business ownership and earned her Master of Business

Administration from UTC in 2016. (Go Mocs!) Previously, she served as Senior Small Business Consultant at the Tennessee Small Business Development Center (TSBDC) in Chattanooga.

Allie Schrenker



Allie Schrenker serves as the Director of Community Engagement at the Company Lab, where she plays a pivotal role in empowering entrepreneurs across 10 different communities, many of which are rural. She is dedicated to helping individuals start and scale their businesses by connecting them to essential resources, mentors, and programs, while also providing personalized one-on-one consultations. With a deep-rooted passion for entrepreneurship, Allie leverages a robust background in entrepreneurial management, having earned a master's

degree from Durham University. Her dissertation, which focused on the success and failure factors of rural Tennessee businesses, underscores her commitment to understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by rural entrepreneurs. Prior to her career in entrepreneurship, Allie played professional rugby around the world. This unique experience has instilled a steadfast belief in her that no dream is unreachable, a philosophy that she imparts to every entrepreneur she works with.



Digital Opportunity and BEAD Overview

Digital Opportunity Grants Overview

TNECD is currently administering five programs to implement Tennessee's vision for Digital Opportunity.

1. DSEW – 50 projects in 74 counties providing digital skills and workforce trainings to 28,040 people.
2. CCF – 20 projects in 19 counties serving 170,180 Tennesseans and providing access to state-of-the-art technologies, education, digital skills training, and telehealth services.
3. BRC- 64 projects in 64 counties providing digital skills training, devices, and public Wi-Fi to Tennesseans.
4. TOP- Managed by Tennessee State Library and Archives, these funds support new equipment and digital skills training for public libraries.
5. TCAT – Supporting the training of future broadband infrastructure professionals at 5 TCAT campuses.

What's Next for Digital Opportunity?

TNECD is working to secure an additional \$15.8 million in federal funds to support digital opportunity programs and address needs identified in Tennessee's Digital Opportunity Plan.

Infrastructure Grants Overview

The Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program is a federal initiative administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Through this program, Tennessee has been given \$813.3 million to expand high-speed internet access through infrastructure deployment and digital opportunity programs.

Infrastructure Grants Overview

The Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program is a federal initiative administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Through this program, Tennessee has been given \$813 million to expand high-speed internet access through infrastructure deployment and adoption (non deployment) programs.

TNECD received approval on the Initial Proposal Volume 1 in January, giving the green light to begin the challenge process outlined within. That process is broken down below. Each phase was 25 days in length on a non-rolling timeline.

- Eligibility Map - Posted April 30, 2024
- Challenge Phase - May 7, Closed June 1, 2024
- Rebuttal Phase - June 2, Closed June 27, 2024
- Final Determination - June 28 - July 23, 2024

Next Steps:

After receipt of Initial Proposal Volume 2 approval, TNECD will begin the subgrantee selection process, in which the project areas will be determined, maps produced, and following public comment, will begin the application process. The BEAD NOFO language will give TNECD 365 days to complete this process, and submit back to NTIA a Final Proposal for approval. Additional resources on BEAD can be found on TNECD's website.



