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**Whitfield County receives \$30K for community connectivity**

*County leaders plan ahead for next generation broadband access and digital equity*

**Whitfield County, GA:** \$30,000 has been awarded to Whitfield County, Georgia from Connect Humanity, a nonprofit impact fund, to participate in the Appalachian Digital Accelerator, an initiative that supports communities as they create custom connectivity plans: roadmaps for improving internet connectivity that leads to new economic opportunities and healthier communities.

The timing of the Appalachian Digital Accelerator program is momentous. As of February, all states have a plan to address digital equity: the condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in society.

By planning internet connectivity at the municipal and county levels, local communities will have a strategy to connect with state and federal resources, such as the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program, that will come available for implementation later this year.

To implement the program in the tri-state greater Chattanooga region, Thrive Regional Partnership has partnered with Connect Humanity to provide project management and technical support to a cohort that includes Bradley County, Tennessee, as well as Walker, and Whitfield counties in Georgia, as they create holistic connectivity plans that meet their broadband goals and prepare them for next-generation broadband networks.

“We are on a mission to ensure that residents of the tri-state have meaningful access to the internet to support their livelihoods and wellbeing,” said Shannon Millsaps, Chief Operating Officer of Thrive Regional Partnership. “With broadband deployment funds expected this fall, we are energized by this opportunity to partner with local communities across the region to address infrastructure challenges, affordability barriers, and digital skills gaps across the region.”

The counties were chosen by Connect Humanity, using following criteria, which guided the competitive selection process of 50 Appalachian communities:

1. Community leadership,
2. Financial capacity to manage a federal grant, and
3. Connectivity needs of the area.

“Broadband has become a critical piece of infrastructure that is necessary to our daily lives,” said Jevin Jensen, Chairman of the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners. “These funds are essential to identifying areas of the community that need improved services and planning for how to address these needs.”

This work is supported by a subaward from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), led by Connect Humanity.

#### *About Thrive Regional Partnership*

Thrive Regional Partnership is a nonprofit organization that inspires responsible growth through conversation, connection, and collaboration across the tri-state greater Chattanooga region.

#### *About Connect Humanity*

Connect Humanity is a non-profit impact fund working to change that combines tailored investments, strategic advice, and technical guidance so that everyone can connect to fast, affordable, reliable internet access.

#### *About the Appalachian Regional Commission*

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is an economic development partnership entity of the federal government and 13 state governments focusing on 423 counties across the Appalachian Region. ARC’s mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia to help the Region achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation.

Learn more at

[www.thriveregionalpartnership.org/projects/appalachian-digital-accelerator](http://www.thriveregionalpartnership.org/projects/appalachian-digital-accelerator)

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