

Community Toolkit Relaunched

The FTTH Council is preparing to relaunch its Community Toolkit, newly updated to reflect all the research, innovations and experience of the last three years.

By Heather Burnett Gold / FTTH Council Americas

At the FTTH Council's annual conference this summer, we were able to announce that 40 million homes in North America now have access to true fiber to the home, and nearly half of consumers who have a choice between fiber and some other internet access technology choose fiber. Why? Because fiber is winning the download speed race and blows other technologies out of the water for upload speeds. Because fiber is the most reliable technology in terms of latency, up times and consistency of speeds achieved.

Perhaps most important, fiber is winning because communities, private providers and consumers know it matters to their futures. Fiber leads to higher GDPs, better home values and overall greater satisfaction with communities.

The council has been tracking the growth of FTTH for 15 years, and I can honestly say that the fervor for fiber is greater now than it has been at any other time. It has been building in the industry, in private capital markets, in government agencies and in communities – and we at the council are committed to making every place in America a fiber community.

This commitment led us, more than three years ago, to launch a toolkit for communities that want better broadband. Our goal was to begin to bridge the information gap for localities – and providers and consumers – that want to go from gigabit envy to fiber deployed. We were excited to assemble these tools and the opportunity to share the knowledge we and our members have garnered over the years. We gathered resources to explain the value of fiber to community leaders and show them how to get started. We explored funding models and ways to begin to make communities fiber ready through common-sense regulatory and policy changes.

The effort was enormously well received. We introduced the toolkit in Kansas City in summer 2013, expecting a small but committed group to take part in the conversation. When attendance was 400 percent greater than we expected, we knew the movement was taking off. And over the last three years, this toolkit has been an invaluable resource to policymakers and providers as they navigate the challenges of connecting communities.

TAKING THE NEXT STEP

However, we haven't rested on our laurels; we've continued the work. Now, we're getting ready to relaunch the Community Toolkit to showcase everything we have learned over the last few very busy years. Council members have made technological leaps in deployment techniques and innovations in electronics that mean faster speeds and lower costs for building networks. The process of designing, deploying, managing, maintaining and operating fiber networks has changed.

At the same time, many communities, rather than wait for a provider to come to them with a solution, have become proactive. These communities have stimulated investment, largely private, into broadband networks. New models of public-private partnerships have emerged, and more communities get connected every day, building the council's library of success stories and best practices. In fact, there is more private capital in this market than ever before.

In addition, the council has collected more and better data on the impact of ultra-high-speed broadband on local economies, on property values, and on schools, health care facilities and libraries.

The relaunched toolkit will be introduced in October at the Fiber for the New Economy conference in Minneapolis, which the council and **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** are co-sponsoring. The relaunch is an opportunity to introduce local and state policymakers to the idea of making their communities fiber ready, a chance to connect consumers and providers with the in-depth knowledge of council members, and a platform for advocacy for building more fiber in more places. Now, more than ever, any community that wants better broadband likely has a path forward to get it. We at the council are happy to help. ❖

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