

Next-Generation Internet Entrepreneurs

“Next-generation Internet” usually describes technology that’s just around the corner. In Chattanooga, the “City with a Gig,” city leaders really are reaching out to the next generation to develop the Next Big Thing.

For two months next summer, bright undergraduates from around the country will gather in Chattanooga to answer the question, “What do you do with the fastest Internet connection in the world?”

In their quest to develop the killer app for ultra-broadband, they will be able to take advantage of the citywide fiber network that the municipal electric

EPB has bandwidth to spare and is challenging students to come up with ideas for using it.

utility, EPB, just finished building – the only network in which 1 Gbps service is available to every home and business in the service area.

The Lamp Post Group, a venture fund and incubator program in Chattanooga, is sponsoring the program, which is called the Lamp Post Lab. Cosponsors include EPB, two local nonprofits (the Lyndhurst Foundation and the Chattanooga Renaissance Fund) and two other business-services companies (Co.Lab and Delegator). The Lamp Post Group is currently nurturing companies in a variety of industries, ranging from a four-person start-up that is commercializing a college research project to a 200-person transportation logistics firm.

During the summer program, business leaders, venture capitalists and the Lamp Post Group’s Web development team will mentor and guide participants. By the end of the program, students should understand the realities of starting a business, from marketing to raising capital, and have a specific vision for a high-bandwidth application.

Weekly competitions will offer prizes that range from laptops to time on the local SIMCenter computational super-computer. The grand prize of \$50,000, along with ongoing mentorship, will help the winner launch the vision he or she created during the program.

It won’t be all work and no play for these students. On the weekends, they’ll have access to all the outdoor activities Chattanooga is renowned for, from hang gliding to whitewater rafting. ♦

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