



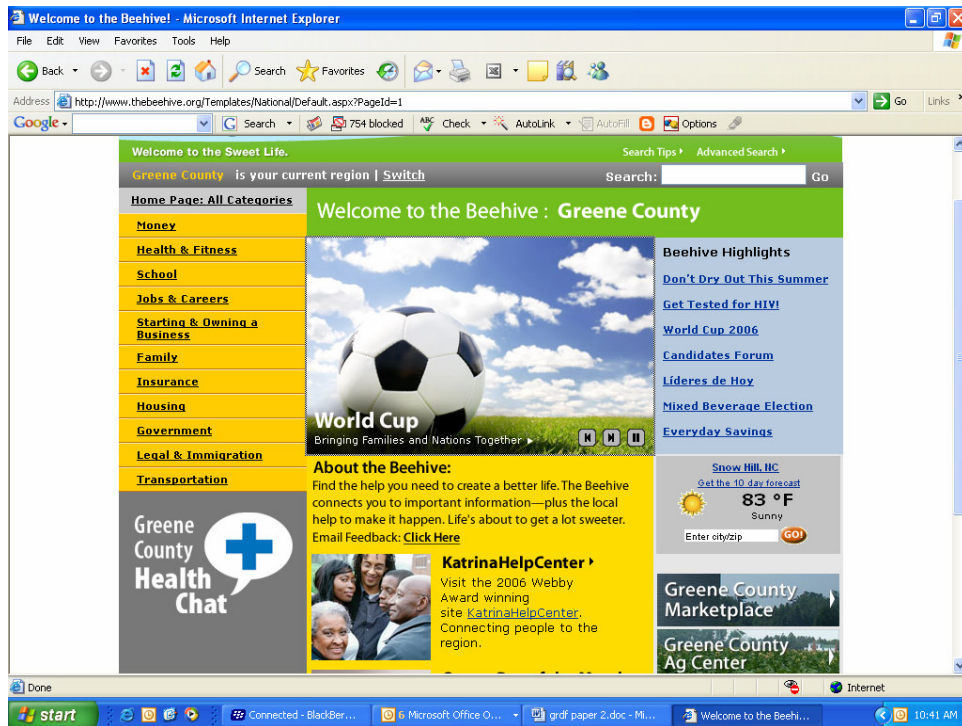
A Replicable Model: Greene County, North Carolina

Greene County, North Carolina is a rural, economically distressed county in the eastern portion of the state. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 20.2% of the county's population lived below the poverty line, a number that is notably higher than national statistics and only 8.2% of the population had a bachelor's degree or higher, another staggering statistic when compared to the national rate of 24%.¹ However, through Greene County's collaboration with One Economy Corporation, a multi-national nonprofit organization, significant positive changes have occurred throughout the community.

Beginning in November 2003, a diverse team of stakeholders, including the Greene County local government, the school system, grassroots leaders, and social service providers, used technology and its tools to positively impact the pressing economic needs in the area. The technology infusion began at the school-level by bringing Apple I-Books to each 6th through 12th grader in the County. However, the schools and the community quickly realized that without broad-based, affordable access to the Internet, the benefits of technology would be severely limited in the community. In November 2003, Greene County Leadership began working with One Economy to help develop Internet tools and content for the community. Over the next 24 months, Greene County developed free Internet hotspots at schools and fire stations. The County then contracted with Internet Service Provider, Wavelength, to create a municipal broadband solution for the entire County.

Today, all of Greene County now has affordable high-speed access. Moreover, Greene County launched a county-specific Beehive web site which includes non-tobacco agriculture options, online marketplace, small business development, and career-building opportunities (www.beehivegreene.org). Through this site, Greene County residents are actively participating in the local election process, discussing health issues with medical experts from East Carolina University, and learning about educational opportunities in their community. The site is pioneering web-based solutions for rural America through locally-generated content such as the "Greene County Marketplace" and "Pest Alert."

This web site is made available through a county-wide deployment of affordable broadband service and a mobile training lab which is used by faith based institutions and community organizations to train their clients on how best to use this new technology. Furthermore, Greene County has 31 technologically trained young people that are working throughout the county to teach others how to use the site and become a part of the 21st century technology economy. A screenshot of the Greene County Beehive is below:



The success of technology infusion has greatly impacted all sectors of the Greene County community:

Improved Broadband Availability

- **400 households are now connected to the Internet** and nearly 200 households are waiting for connection on the county's wireless. Greene County schools and government are the anchor tenants.
- 89% of Greene County has access to broadband
- Nearly 25% of the households have purchased broadband for their home
- *Embarq*, with approx. 500 customers, has increased its coverage area, providing more competition and choice for residents.
- More than two dozen church and community buildings have **become hot spots for free internet access.**
- More than **600 residents have received free computer training.** 30% of the people trained were senior adults.
- Residents share service with neighbors--early beginnings of community wireless.

Building a Digital Community in Greene County

- The Greene County's Beehive (www.beehivegreene.org) received **4000 hits in its first month** and **200 unique visitors use the site weekly.** With only 1000 households connected to the internet, this represents 25% usage of the site each month.
- **111 Digital Connectors are involved** in the program providing computer training to Greene County residents. They have logged **1000 hours of teaching and business and technical support** to date.

Impact in Schools

- **1600 students have their own laptops** (in grades 6-12). 93% of these computers travel home with the student every evening.
- High school SAT composite scores increased 41 points in 2 years from 930 to 971.

- 84% of the 2007 senior class applied to college, compared to less than 26% the year prior to the iTech program's launch in 2003
- High school proficiency scores increased from 53% to 78.4 % in the first year and they have met adequate yearly progress each year.
- Decrease in student drop out rate.
- Increase in Honors Courses taken due to classes being offered online with other educational partners.
- Teenage pregnancy dropped from 2nd in the state to 18th (out of 100 counties)
- Higher parent / community confidence

Economic Impact

- **20 new businesses were attracted and opened** in Greene County in 2 years, reversing several years of negative business growth.
- Before *Beyond Tobacco*, less than 5 of the 200 small businesses had websites. In the second year, **nearly 25% of the county's small businesses have websites** and most are reporting increase revenues due to their online presence.
- In 2007, **2 companies reported 50% growth in sales** due to online purchases and marketing.

The success in Greene County is due, in part, to the partnerships One Economy creates with local residents and diverse groups of stakeholders and the work that we do by providing access to technology and the Beehive. In the course of our work in Greene County, One Economy facilitated the county's transformation from what had been a historically tobacco-dependent agrarian lifestyle to one rich with the enhancements of technology. In partnership with the Greene County local government, the school system, grassroots leaders and social service providers, One Economy set out to plan, develop, and launch a digital community in Greene County, North Carolina. Through our work in the county, One Economy and its partners accomplished the following objectives:

- Improved communications infrastructure. In order to address problems of access and lack of hardware that would be necessary for the creation of a digital community, One Economy worked with the community to contract a wireless company to build an Internet network that covers the county. This county-wide deployment of affordable broadband service made it possible for 90% of the residents in Greene County to get affordable high-speed access.
- Encouraged the growth of small business and agricultural enterprises. See the below description on the Greene County Ag Center and the Entrepreneur's Center, located on the Beehive (www.beehivegreene.org).
- Used technology as an accelerator for educational advancement. To integrate technology into Greene County schools, Apple computers worked with the school system to develop a program where laptops were provided to every 6-12 grade student, teacher and administrator. One Economy created relevant education content on the Beehive allowing students and parents to access educational resources and homework help.
- Built a replicable model for other rural communities. Greene County, North Carolina and the immense success that One Economy's pioneering work there achieved is proof of the positive impact that the "Digital Community" model can have on a region.

Today, Greene County residents have more opportunities to live, work and prosper than they had 5 years ago. Thanks to a committed and visionary leadership team in Greene County, the

commitment of key partners and the technical assistance of One Economy, the future of this rural community is brighter. We believe that the Greene County model that can be implemented successfully in other communities.

i Greene County Chamber of Commerce. Accessed on 6/19/2006. Available online at http://www.greenechamber.com/communityprofiles_ourcounty.php

Greene County Schools iTech Newsletter. October 2007.

Angela Turnage, Executive Director of Greene County Chamber of Commerce. Interview, November 6, 2007

Chris Robinson, Assistant County Manager and Economic Development Director, Greene County.

Patricia McNeill, PhD. Assistant Superintendent of Greene County Schools. Interview, November 5, 2007