

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

A Guide to Strengthen Community Ties
and Differentiate Local Broadband



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Introduction

Smart Rural CommunitySM (SRC) providers are community-based broadband providers that deploy cutting-edge, high-speed, fiber-based networks so rural communities can thrive. No matter where they are located, SRC providers are committed to providing the highest-quality services and supporting the variety of innovations they enable, ensuring local broadband delivers local impact.

SRC providers are trusted community partners. Strong local relationships – with leaders, community partners and the customers they serve – are what differentiates these providers from the competition. They are not just delivering broadband but are actively invested in the people and future of the communities they serve.

Whether you are new to the SRC program or are just looking for new ideas, this toolkit offers a series of actionable steps designed to help you utilize SRC resources to build visibility, strengthen relationships, and grow your impact as an SRC provider. Every community and provider is different, so treat this as a “choose-your-own-adventure” guide. Select the actions that make sense for your community, your capacity and your goals.

Each step includes at least one action you can take as well as links to corresponding SRC resources. You can find all of these resources at smartruralcommunity.org/resources. If you have any questions or want additional assistance, please email smartrural@ntca.org and our team is happy to help.



STEP 1: Display Your SRC Status

Make your SRC status visible everywhere within 30 days.

Before you engage your community, they need to know you're different than national providers. SRC status is not just a designation; it is proof that you are invested in rural progress. Visibility builds credibility.

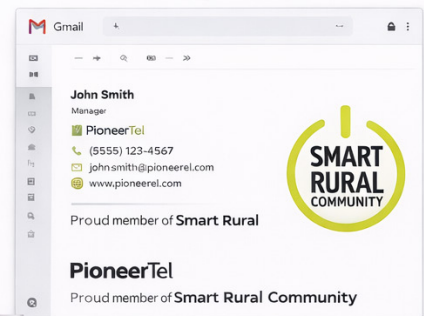
Do This:

- Add the SRC logo to to:
 - ▶ Website homepage
 - ▶ Email signatures
 - ▶ Social media images
 - ▶ Billing statements
 - ▶ Office windows
 - ▶ Company vehicles
- Use the SRC Teams/Zoom backgrounds for all public meetings.
- Add a short paragraph to your website explaining what SRC means locally. Here is some sample language:
 - ▶ *As a Smart Rural CommunitySM provider, we believe connection is at the heart of everything – neighbors to friends, teachers to students, doctors to patients, new businesses to customers, and our community to the world. With the power of broadband, we're proving every day that rural places can achieve more when we achieve it together.*
- Track your progress and share successes via the SRC Listserv.

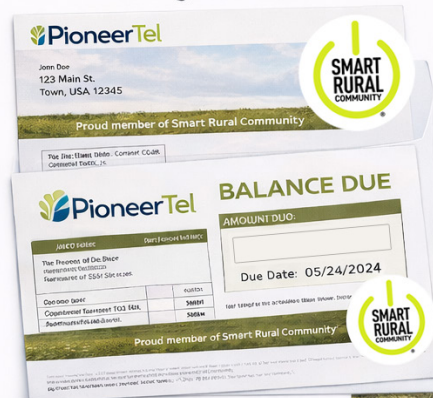
Website homepage



Email signatures



Billing statements



Social media



Company vehicles



Office windows



Use These Resources:

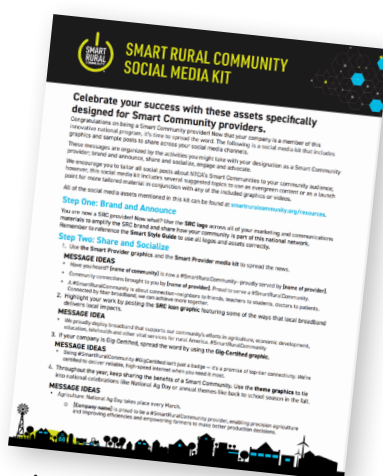
- SRC logos
- Smart Style Guide
- Teams/Zoom backgrounds
- What is a SRC handout
- The road to a SRC handout
- SRC store

STEP 2: Tell the Story – Don't Just Announce It

Don't just announce that you are a SRC provider once and forget about it! Launch a SRC awareness campaign on social media. Post every day, post once a week, you know your social media strategy and audience best. Just make sure you are not only highlighting your fast speeds, but also what being a community-based provider means.

Do This:

- Download the social media kit.
- Post once a week (or whatever schedule is appropriate for your company) using provided graphics.
- Use #SmartRuralCommunity
- Highlight:
 - ▶ Telehealth
 - ▶ Telework
 - ▶ Ag tech
 - ▶ Local business growth
 - ▶ Education impact



Use These Resources:

- Smart provider graphics
- Social media kit
- Icon graphic
- Theme graphics
- Co-brandable commercial
- Infographics (Ag Tech, Telework, Telehealth)
- Local Broadband Delivers handout

Sample Social Post:

We're proud to be a Smart Rural Community provider – because being local means more than delivering broadband. It means investing in schools, supporting small businesses and helping our neighbors thrive. #SmartRuralCommunity

You can find more sample social media posts in the social media kit

STEP 3: Meet Your Mayor (and Other Officials)

Schedule a meeting with your mayor, state and local officials, or members of Congress to introduce (or reintroduce) yourselves and your company. Local officials influence funding, permitting and public opinion. When they see you as a partner and not just a provider, you gain long-term advantage over national competitors. Don't wait until you need them to approve a permit or help with funding. Strong relationships are built when they feel mutually beneficial and authentic.

Do This:

- Invite officials to tour your office and meet with staff.
- Take a field trip to splice fiber and show your work and impact firsthand.

Use These Resources:

- [What is a SRC handout](#)
- [The road to a SRC handout](#)
- [Fiber road map](#)
- [Media kit](#)
- [Local Broadband Delivers handout](#)
- **Sample Message to Mayor:**

As your local Smart Rural Community broadband provider, we're not just building networks; we're building economic opportunity. We'd love to meet and share how our fiber expansion supports your priorities for growth, education and healthcare.



STEP 4: Connect with Community Partners

Host one partner roundtable in the next quarter to see where you can work together to support your community. National providers sell service. Local providers build ecosystems.

Do this:

Invite:

- Schools and library administrators
- Healthcare providers
- Economic development leaders or Chambers of Commerce
- Public safety leaders

Agenda:

1. What does “Smart Community” mean locally?
2. What digital gaps still exist?
3. How can we collaborate?

* If you are interested in hosting a roundtable discussion and need ideas on discussion topics, agendas or audiences, please email smartrural@ntca.org for additional resources. *

Use These Resources:

- [Extended Reality Telehealth for Rural Spaces](#)
- [BOLD K-12 Career Awareness Toolkit](#)
- [KPIs for Rural Economic Development](#)
- [Connected Technology for Survivor Safety](#)
- Infographics ([Ag Tech](#), [Telework](#), [Telehealth](#))
- [Local Broadband Delivers handout](#)
- **Sample Outreach Email (School Superintendent):**

As your local Smart Rural Community provider, we're committed to more than connectivity. We'd like to explore how we can support career awareness, esports, remote learning and digital skills programs together.

- **Sample Outreach Email (Healthcare Provider):**

As your local Smart Rural Community provider, we're committed to more than connectivity. We'd like to explore how we can support telehealth expansion, care coordination and remote patient monitoring.

Let's find a way to partner to strengthen access, improve outcomes and help your team deliver care more efficiently.

- **Sample Outreach Email (Economic Development/ Chamber of Commerce Leaders):**

As your local Smart Rural Community provider, we're committed to more than connectivity. We'd like to explore how we can support business attraction, workforce development, remote work hubs and digital upskilling initiatives.

- **Sample Outreach Email (Public Safety Leaders):**

As your local Smart Rural Community provider, we're committed to more than connectivity. We'd like to explore how we can support emergency communications, real-time data access in the field, public alerting systems and training around digital tools for improved response times and preparedness. We're here to partner with you in strengthening safety and resilience across the community.

STEP 5: Celebrate Your Community's SRC Status

Host one visible, service-focused SRC activation in the next six months. This reinforces that you are officially designated; you provide high-speed, future-ready connectivity and are proud of your infrastructure investment in your community.

Do One (or More) of These:

1. Road Sign Unveiling
 - ▶ Install SRC road signs at town entrances or near your office.
 - ▶ Invite mayor/county officials and local press.
 - ▶ Take photos and share them on social media.
2. County Fair or Community Festival Booth
 - ▶ Set up an SRC-branded booth.
 - ▶ Highlight your gig speeds (if applicable).
 - ▶ Play the co-brandable SRC commercial.
 - ▶ Offer speed demos or sign-ups.
3. Provide Public Wi-Fi at a Local Event
 - ▶ Sponsor Wi-Fi at a concert, fair, parade or sports event.
 - ▶ Co-brand signage: "Free Wi-Fi Provided by Your Smart Rural Community Provider."
 - ▶ Collect testimonials.
4. Ribbon Cutting for New Fiber Build
 - ▶ Highlight speeds and reliability.
 - ▶ Share your Fiber Road Map.
 - ▶ Invite local officials and press.



Use These Resources:

- SRC road signs (store)
- Certificates
- Local Broadband Delivers handout
- What is a SRC handout
- The road to a SRC handout
- SRC commercial
- Social media kit
- Infographics (Ag Tech, Telework, Telehealth)
- Fiber road map

STEP 6: Go Beyond Just Internet Service

Being a SRC provider goes beyond fast internet. Show you are invested in your community, not just networks. This is where local providers win long-term loyalty, and prove you are a community stakeholder. Host or sponsor at least one “impact beyond broadband” initiative annually.

Host or Support One of These:

1. Senior Safety Workshop
 - ▶ Use the Senior Safety Series materials.
 - ▶ Host at a local library, senior center or community hall, or at your central office.
 - ▶ Promote as free public service training.
2. Digital Skills Night
 - ▶ Offer training on:
 - Basic device setup and usage.
 - Telework tools.
 - Remote learning platforms.
 - AI tips and best practices.
 - ▶ Partner with chamber or workforce groups to meet the specific needs of your community.
3. School and Youth Initiatives
 - ▶ Promote the BOLD K-12 Career Awareness Toolkit.
 - ▶ Support esports programs.
 - ▶ Offer internships.
 - ▶ Participate in career days and job fairs.
4. Healthcare Collaboration
 - ▶ Host a telehealth awareness session.
 - ▶ Partner with a local clinic to demonstrate virtual visits.



Use These Resources:

- Senior Safety Series
- Extended Reality Telehealth for Rural Spaces
- BOLD K-12 Career Awareness Toolkit
- KPIs for Rural Economic Development
- Connected Technology for Survivor Safety
- What is a SRC handout
- Local Broadband Delivers handout
- NTCA AI resources

STEP 7: Prepare for Funding Opportunities

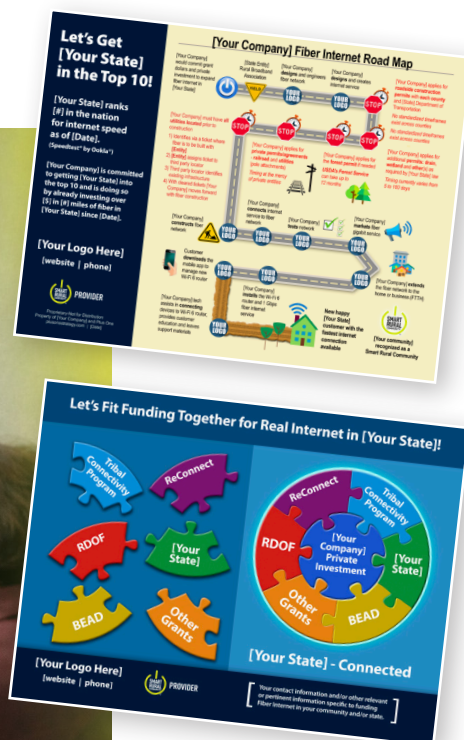
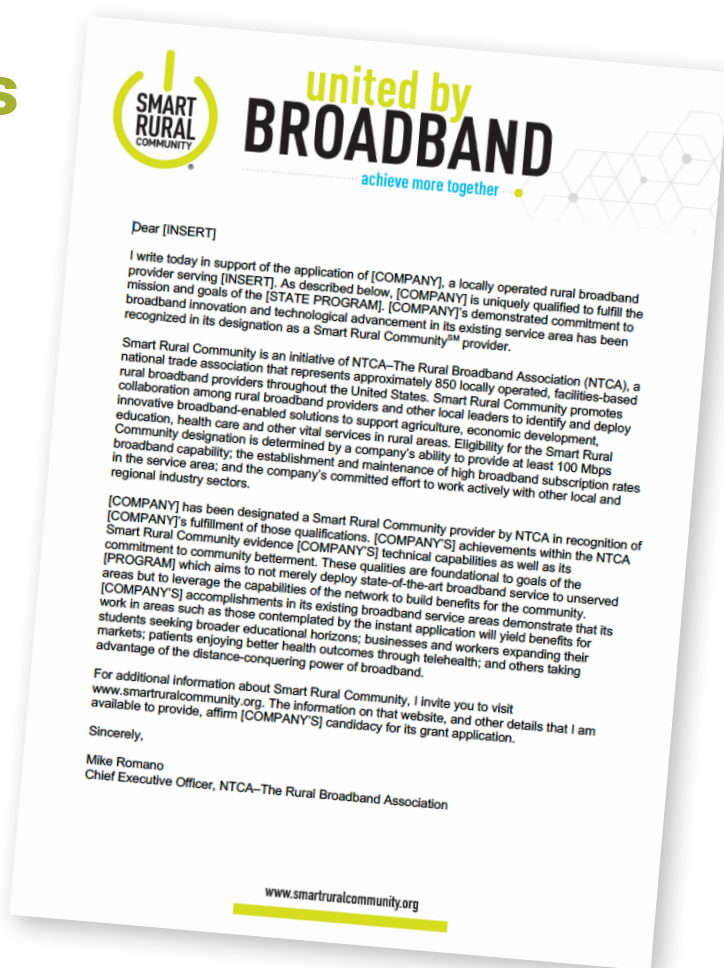
You have built strong relationships with local leaders and community stakeholders and shown that you are a true community partner. Turn that trust into momentum for future projects and funding applications.

Do this:

- Schedule briefings with local officials to explain how these projects could benefit the community.
- Ask community partners and leaders for support letters.

Use These Resources:

- [Sample letter of recommendation](#)
- [Fiber road map](#)



STEP 8: Turn Engagement Into Ongoing Marketing

Community engagement is not separate from marketing. National competitors can advertise speed. You can advertise:

- ▶ Investment
- ▶ Partnership
- ▶ Presence
- ▶ Commitment
- ▶ Accountability

This reinforces: We are not just your ISP. We are your local growth partner.

Use These Resources:

- [Social media kit](#)
- [Local Broadband Delivers handout](#)

Do this:

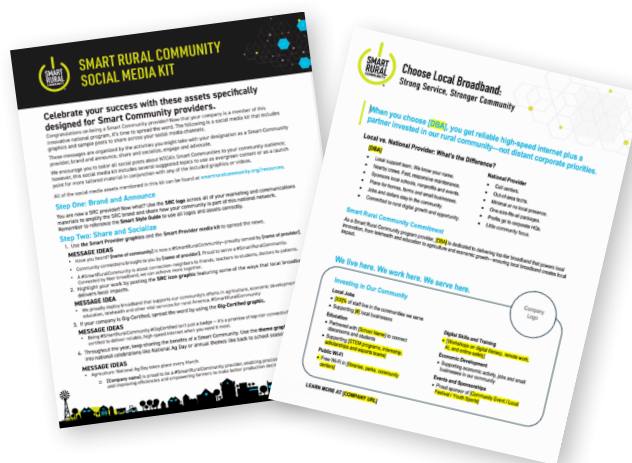
Provide regular updates on the work you are doing in your community and what being a SRC means. This can be on social media, via your newsletter, or in regular reports.

Include:

- ▶ New connections
- ▶ Community partnerships
- ▶ Events hosted
- ▶ Economic impact
- ▶ Grant activity

Send it to:

- ▶ Customers
- ▶ Local government officials
- ▶ Economic development leaders or Chambers of Commerce
- ▶ Local press



STEP 9: Apply for National Recognition

Don't just let your work stand on its own. Apply for recognition from NTCA so that we can use our national platform to help tell your story. And then use that recognition to differentiate your company from the competition.

Do this:

- Apply for gig or multi-gig provider status through the SRC program.
- Apply for the annual Smart Rural Community Showcase Awards in the spring/summer.

Use These Resources:

- [Gig and multi-gig certified provider logos](#)
- [Stronger Speeds. Smarter Communities](#) [handout](#)
- [Showcase Awards application](#)



GIG-CERTIFIED PROVIDER



MULTI-GIG PROVIDER



SHOWCASE AWARD WINNER



STEP 10: Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

Community engagement is not a one-time activity. It is an ongoing effort that must constantly be adapted as the needs of your community change. Repeat the process in every community you serve and iterate as you go.

Do this:

Share your ideas with other providers – what worked, what did not, what could be better – and learn from each other.

Smart Notes

Smart Notes is the exclusive bi-monthly e-newsletter for Smart Rural Community™ providers and contains case studies, best practices and updates on messaging materials and other SRC resources.



Sign Up for the SRC Listserv

The SRC program is about fostering connections and sharing ideas with others who understand the work you do. The SRC listserv is a dedicated space for providers to exchange insights, ask questions and learn from one another. By signing up, you'll gain access to valuable discussions, best practices and real-world solutions from peers who understand the challenges and opportunities of local broadband.



Use These Resources:

- SMART NOTES
- SRC Listserv





Contact Us - smartrural@ntca.org

Do you have an upcoming designation in your community? We have many resources you can draw on for visibility, from media kits to social to graphics. And don't forget to let us know! Tag NTCA on social media or send the SRC team an email at smartrural@ntca.org so that we can feature your community in the next SMART NOTES.