TURNING THE LIGHTS ON ... *again*

On March 31, 1880, Wabash, Indiana became the "First Electrically Lighted City in the World" and now we want north-central Indiana to be the first in the country again to 'turn the lights on' of rural broadband using aerial innovation.

WHIN is an innovative nonprofit organization enabled by a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. devoted to making the 10-county Wabash Heartland region of north-central Indiana the global epicenter of digital agriculture and next-generation manufacturing empowered by smart IoT technology. However, it's challenging to deploy internet-enabled sensors in rural Indiana where there's not internet access in many areas. Fiber, copper, and satellite are too expensive and too far off.

To this end, Wabash Heartland Innovation Network has developed the first telecommunications aerostat to be deployed in the United States for rural connectivity.

It took 2 generations of farmers in the rural parts of the midwest to choose to adopt electricity about 100 years ago. We are still suffering in our country from the socio-economic divide caused by this lapse. There is another technology emerging with the same potential to change the world, data. In a similar way, the urban centers are already beginning to receive data and digital communication capabilities like broadband, and the rural areas are lagging behind...not just in streaming video, but in more socio-economic drivers like online education and online jobs as well. WHIN exists to keep what happened with electricity adoption from happening again with data adoption in rural America.

WHIN focuses on the region's under-investment in what Brooking's GPS Report calls "digitalization" in industry. Digitalization is the adoption of digital technology through things like IoT. The term Internet of Things (IoT) refers to everything that is the Internet (I) as we know it, applied to the physical world (T) as a "user." It's input/output devices to connect users to data, and all that data is networked to single location in the cloud where it can be analyzed to help those users make better decisions.

We do this by attracting and vetting technology providers, then working with them to lower the risk for our Alliance members to try out their innovations. And in the process all the data gets sent back to WHIN to be organized and made available for research so more technolgy providers can be created. The research data is what we call our Living Lab.

Data shows that digitalization is correlated with higher productivity, and higher productivity leads to more investment, and ultimately to a higher standard of living and quality of life. In the end, in much the same way southern California did for silicon 75 years ago, WHIN is building a self-sustaining, virtuous ecosystem around emerging technology pathways related to sensors and data. If we can get everything working together, and everyone benefitting, why wouldn't commerce come to our Data Decagon in much the same way it has come to the Silicon Valley?

Smart technology. Smart region. Smart future.

WHIN

Wabash Heartland Innovation Network

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