

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Etex and Transfr Launch Industry-Led Broadband Workforce Program to Build Local Talent Across Rural Texas

GILMER, Texas (Month Day, 2025) — [Etex Telephone Cooperative, Inc.](#) (Etex), a rural broadband provider based in Gilmer, Texas, and [Transfr Inc.](#), a leading workforce education company, today announced the launch of the Learning Immersively for Next-Gen Knowledge (LINK) Program, a broadband workforce initiative designed by industry, for industry to develop Texas's next generation of broadband professionals.

LINK will prepare high school students and incumbent workers for careers in the broadband and telecommunications industry through immersive virtual reality (VR) training, industry-endorsed curriculum, and employer-led career pathways. The program will give students across rural Texas access to high-wage, high-demand careers while helping employers accelerate workforce readiness statewide.

“LINK is more than a training program, it's a commitment to rural communities and to building the broadband workforce Texas needs for the future,” said Charlie Cano, General Manager and CEO of Etex. “This program is led by the very employers who are hiring, ensuring the training and credentials reflect real workforce needs. It gives young people the skills and confidence to build meaningful careers without having to leave their hometowns.”

The LINK Program is guided by a statewide Broadband Industry Advisory Committee made up of subject matter experts and employers representing rural broadband providers across Texas. By aligning curriculum design, site selection, and certification standards directly with industry input, LINK ensures every course delivers the technical and employability skills that employers are seeking.

LINK's three-phase model reaches learners early, meeting them at every step of their career journey—from exploration to employment. The program begins with short, immersive VR simulations that expose students to broadband careers and continues through hands-on training in fiber optics, safety, and measurement fundamentals. Graduates will earn employer-endorsed microcredentials aligned with Fiber Optic Association (FOA) standards and qualify for roles such as Line Installer, Network Technician, and Fiber Optic Specialist.

“This initiative represents a new kind of workforce development - one where education, technology, and employers come together to ensure students are ready for the jobs shaping the future of Texas,” said Bharani Rajakumar, Founder and CEO of Transfr. “By

combining immersive training with employer-led curriculum, we're helping rural communities expand opportunity and strengthen their economies from within."

Throughout implementation, LINK will continuously monitor key performance indicators including student enrollment, simulation mastery, credential attainment, internship participation, and job placement rates to measure impact and inform program improvement. The initiative is designed for flexibility, supporting both classroom-based instruction and employer-site training through mobile and stationary VR labs.

The LINK Program will launch initially in East Texas before expanding statewide. By connecting education, industry, and workforce partners, the program is expected to help fast-track Texas's broadband expansion and support long-term community and economic development across rural regions.

For more information, visit www.etex.net and www.transfrinc.com.

About Etex Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

Etex Telephone Cooperative, Inc. (Etex) is a member-owned communications provider headquartered in Gilmer, Texas. For more than 70 years, Etex has served rural East Texans with innovative telecommunications services, including high-speed fiber broadband, voice, and fiber backhaul. Committed to bridging the digital divide, Etex invests in infrastructure, partnerships, and programs that empower local communities to connect, learn, and grow. Etex is the preferred provider for over 40 schools and colleges in East Texas, in addition to providing fiber backhaul to the region's cellular network. For more information, visit www.etex.net

About Transfr

Transfr is a leading workforce education company on a mission to strengthen communities by getting more people on a pathway to upward mobility. Across the entire classroom-to-career pathway, Transfr connects education, workforce development, and community organizations with employers to provide immersive career exploration and skills training. The company's multimodal learning approach combines mobile technology, virtual reality (VR) simulations, and curriculum resources to help learners discover, experience, and prepare for well-paying careers, many that don't require a four-year degree. With more than 330 interactive training simulations across eight high-growth sectors, Spanish-language support, and partnerships with institutions nationwide, Transfr's technology-driven solutions have reached more than 400,000 learners. For more information, please visit <https://transfrinc.com/>.

For questions & interview opportunities

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