

BENEFITS OF BROADBAND AND OTHER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

A 21st Century Information Age Community depends on broadband and other technologies to respond to the needs of its residents, institutions and businesses in a number of ways. Here are a few to consider:

Broadband reduces and eliminates barriers related to the geography of the region

- ✓ Reduces the need for travel as business and educational activities can be conducted online without fear of disruption.
- ✓ Eliminates barriers to public safety by improving access to and linking of emergency services, public safety and infrastructure agencies, both public and private, into a systematic network for disaster preparedness without fear of disruption.
- ✓ Reduces or eliminates cost-prohibitive and logistically unworkable barriers to providing distance learning for workers with families who can learn and take courses at home.

Addresses the needs of businesses wanting reliable and advanced online services

- ✓ Improves opportunities for expanded business and revenue.
- ✓ Increases the knowledge and skills of employees in utilizing telecommunications technology.
- ✓ Decreases customer dissatisfaction and resulting revenue loss due to inefficiency caused by unreliable technology,
- ✓ Broadens the ability of businesses in rural areas to access business support activities via online companies.
- ✓ Supports a multitude of tasks - everything from credit card transactions to placing on-line employment ads - with a higher degree of confidence.

Targets key industries

- ✓ Aids in the recruitment of target industries that are dependent upon the availability of broadband and a population knowledgeable in its use.
- ✓ Supports the growth of and retention of target industries using or desiring to use online technology to support or expand operations.

Broadens employment opportunities

- ✓ Provides avenues for entrepreneurial activities that may lead to self-sustaining employment. The better the technology the more opportunity for online entrepreneurial success.
- ✓ Allows for accessing employment opportunities on a broader scale (regional, state or national).
- ✓ Supports training of employees to upgrade computer and telecommunication skills and thus improve their employability through cross training.

Improves healthcare access and providing health professions support

- ✓ Makes available video medical consultation and high-speed record and X-ray transmission
- ✓ Allows more reliable and advanced links between health and public safety services, especially important in emergencies.
- ✓ Allows for reliable and advanced distance teaming for health care professionals in isolated rural areas.
- ✓ Supports the development of and makes available to residents a database of health care resources and health education information.
- ✓ Supports funding from outside sources that support rural telemedicine programs/projects, which creates jobs and improves health care access.
- ✓ Improves the ability of health care providers to maintain business records, bookkeeping and other services that can be conducted or supported with online businesses.

Supports Education

- ✓ Allows cost effective distance learning (students telecommute) in rural areas with up to date telecommunications capabilities.
- ✓ Allows sharing of teaching materials, techniques and presentations among educators online.
- ✓ If free of disruptions, promotes group collaborative learning through conferences online that can include students and educators from around the world.
- ✓ Provides alternative resources for professional development of teachers without spending funds on transportation.
- ✓ Extends the hours beyond the normal campus hours of access to information and communication by students, students' families, and faculty, and expands the type of curriculum available.
- ✓ Facilitates curriculum coordination between public schools and public libraries.
- ✓ Reduces isolation of teachers in rural areas by allowing linkages with other educators in rural and urban settings.
- ✓ Experts from other parts of the country can be an interactive part of any classroom when the telecommunications technology is advanced.

Meets the demands of residents to have online services

- ✓ Supports the needs of rural residents to have access to the same information and resources provided to non-rural residents via online resources.
- ✓ Increases the ability of residents to engage in entrepreneurial and educational opportunities made available with telecommunications technology.

Efforts to make online technology available to all residents, regardless of income

- ✓ Increases access to advanced online technology at home, school or work and within the community (for example, libraries) eliminating information access divisions.
- ✓ Lower income residents in low-employment areas will have access to efficient online resources for job seeking within and outside of the area.

Makes online telecommunications more accessible to all age groups

- ✓ Supports the needs of individuals most likely (by age) to utilize telecommunications online services at home, school or work.
- ✓ Supports efforts to train young children and the elderly in the use of online technology.

Advances access and exchange information within the community

- ✓ Increases access to local information resources through local libraries.
- ✓ Allows public libraries to share electronic databases.
- ✓ Connects Fire and Police Departments with other departments for safety and disaster communication.
- ✓ Allows online access to publications/newspapers outside of rural areas.
- ✓ Allows nonprofit organizations to access funding resources without investing in long distance travel or costly books/publications.
- ✓ Links rural communities with other rural communities for the purpose of exchanging strategies addressing a number of rural issues.
- ✓ Is an effective marketing tool for products and services for rural business reaching to broader markets.

Expands public library usage

- ✓ One way in which information access and exchange can be improved is through better online capabilities that can be provided at public libraries. For low-income families, the elderly, and children, the public library is an easy and cost-free (usually) way to learn about and use online services.