



# SABINE COUNTY

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## TECHNOLOGY ACTION PLAN

PREPARED BY CONNECTED TEXAS  
AND THE  
SABINE COUNTY BROADBAND COMMITTEE



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ACCESS



ADOPTION



USE

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## INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of this report is to summarize the community's assessment of local broadband access, adoption, and use, as well as the best next steps for addressing any deficiencies or opportunities for improving the local technology ecosystem.

### Background

Today, technology plays a pivotal role in how businesses operate, the type of service consumers expect, how institutions provide services, and where consumers choose to live, work, and play. The success of a community has also become dependent on how broadly and deeply the community adopts technology resources – this includes access to reliable high-speed networks, digital literacy of residents, and the use of online resources locally for business, government, and leisure. As noted in the National Broadband Plan, broadband Internet is “a foundation for economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness and a better way of life.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite the growing dependence on technology, as of 2012, 30% of Americans did not have a high-speed connection at home.<sup>2</sup> Connected Nation's studies also show that 17 million families with children do not have broadband at home – and 7.6 million of these children live in low-income households. In 2012, Connected Nation also surveyed 7,004 businesses in 9 states. Based on this data, Connected Nation estimates that at least 1.8 million businesses - 24% - in the United States do not utilize broadband technology today.<sup>3</sup>

Deploying broadband infrastructure, services, and application, as well as supporting the universal adoption and meaningful use of broadband, are challenging - but required - building blocks of a twenty-first century community. To assist communities, Connected Nation developed the Connected Community Engagement Program to help your community identify local technology assets, complete an assessment of local broadband access, adoption, and use, and develop an action plan for pursuing solutions.<sup>4</sup>

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1 *Connecting America: The National Broadband Plan*, Federal Communications Commission, April 2010, <http://www.broadband.gov/download-plan/>

2 *Consumer Broadband Adoption Trends*, Connected Nation, Inc., March 2013, <http://www.connectednation.org/survey-results/residential>

3 Connected Nation, *Broadband and Business: Leveraging Technology to Stimulate Economic Growth*, <http://www.connectednation.org/survey-results/business>

4 Connected Nation, parent company for Connected Texas, is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that expands access to and use of broadband Internet and the related technologies that are enabled when individuals and communities have the opportunity and desire to connect. Connected Nation works in multiple states to engage community stakeholders, state leaders, and technology providers to develop and implement technology



## Methodology

By actively participating in the Connected Community Engagement Program, the Sabine County Broadband Committee is boosting the community's capabilities in education, healthcare, and public safety, and stimulating economic growth and spurring job creation. The Sabine County Broadband Committee has collaborated with multiple community organizations and residents to:

1. Empower a community team leader (local champion) and create a community team composed of a diverse group of local residents from various sectors of the economy including education, government, healthcare, the private sector, and libraries.
2. Identify the community's technology assets, including local infrastructure, providers, facilities, websites, and innovative uses employed by institutions.
3. Complete the Connected Assessment, a measurement of the community's access, adoption, and use of broadband based on the recommendations of the National Broadband Plan.
4. Match gaps in the local broadband ecosystem to solutions and best practices being utilized by communities across the nation.
5. Pursue Connected Certification, a nationally recognized platform for spotlighting communities that excel in the access, adoption, and use of broadband.

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expansion programs with core competencies centered around the mission to improve digital inclusion for people and places previously underserved or overlooked.

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## CONNECTED ASSESSMENT

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The Connected assessment framework is broken into 3 areas: **ACCESS**, **ADOPTION**, and **USE**. Each area has a maximum of 40 points. To achieve Connected Certification, the community must have 32 points in each section and 100 points out of 120 points overall.

The **ACCESS** focus area checks to see whether the broadband and technology foundation exists for a community. The criteria within the **ACCESS** focus area endeavors to identify gaps that could affect a local community broadband ecosystem including: last and middle mile issues, cost issues, and competition issues. As noted in the National Broadband Plan, broadband **ACCESS** “is a foundation for economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness and a better way of life.”

Broadband **ADOPTION** is important for consumers, institutions, and communities alike to take the next step in fully utilizing broadband appropriately. The **ADOPTION** component of the Connected Assessment seeks to ensure the ability of all individuals to access and use broadband.

Broadband **USE** is the most important component of **ACCESS**, **ADOPTION**, and **USE** because it is where the value of broadband can finally be realized. However, without access to broadband and **ADOPTION** of broadband, meaningful **USE** of broadband wouldn't be possible. As defined by the National Broadband Plan (NBP), meaningful **USE** of broadband includes those areas of economic opportunity, education, government, and healthcare where values to individuals, organizations, and communities can be realized.

### Analysis of Connected Assessment

The Community Technology Scorecard provides a summary of the community's Connected Assessment. The Connected Assessment's criteria are reflective of the recommendations made by the Federal Communications Commission's National Broadband Plan. Lower scores indicate weaknesses in the community's broadband ecosystem, but do not necessarily signify a lack of service.

- Sabine County achieved a score of 59 points out of 120 for overall broadband and technology readiness.
- Due to a lack of available infrastructure, the county scored 6 out of a possible 40 points in the broadband access section. Recommendations in this technology action plan will provide some guidance and assistance on how to implement programs that will help facilitate ways to increase this score.
- Conversely, The County scored 32 out of a possible 40 points in broadband adoption primarily because of the number of public computers that they have available for



community use at two libraries in the county. Additionally, the county provides various technological resources for several vulnerable population groups, which also contributed to higher adoption scoring.

- While the results indicate that the community has made tremendous strides and investments in technology, this technology plan will provide some insight and recommendations that will help the community continue to achieve success.





<b>Community Technology Scorecard</b> Community Champions: Veronica Thomas Community Advisor: LaTanya Tatum				
FOCUS AREA	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	SCORE	MAXIMUM POSSIBLE SCORE
ACCESS	Broadband Availability	58.65% of homes have access to 3 Mbps	0	10
	Broadband Speeds	75% of households with access to less than 3 Mbps	0	5
	Broadband Competition	7.65% of households with access to more than 1 broadband provider	0	5
	Middle Mile Access	Availability of middle mile fiber infrastructure from only 1 provider	6	10
	Mobile Broadband Availability	17.93% of households have access to mobile broadband	0	10
	<b>ACCESS SCORE</b>			<b>6</b>
ADOPTION	Digital Literacy	Program grads are greater than 2 per 1000 residents over the past year	4	10
	Public Computer Centers	500 computer hours per 1,000 low income residents per week	10	10
	Broadband Awareness	Campaigns reach 80% of the community	8	10
	Vulnerable Population Focus	At least 5 groups	10	10
	<b>ADOPTION SCORE</b>			<b>32</b>
USE	Economic Opportunity	0 advanced, 6 basic uses	6	10
	Education	4 advanced, 3 basic uses	10	10
	Government	1 advanced, 2 basic uses	4	10
	Healthcare	0 advanced, 1 basic use	1	10
	<b>USE SCORE</b>			<b>21</b>
<b>COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT SCORE</b>			<b>59</b>	<b>120</b>

## Itemized Key Findings

The Sabine County Broadband Committee identified the following key findings (in addition to findings illustrated in the community scorecard) through its technology assessment:

### ACCESS

- 9 last-mile broadband providers currently provide service in Sabine County:
  - 58.65% of households have access to 3 Mbps.
  - More than 51.19% of Sabine County homes have access to 10 Mbps service.
  - 7.65% of Sabine County households have access to more than 1 provider.
- Middle mile fiber infrastructure is available from 1 provider in Sabine County.
- 17.93% of Sabine County households have access to mobile broadband.

### ADOPTION

- 1 Digital Literacy Program exists in the community resulting in 8 graduates over the past year.
- 2 Public Computer Centers (PCC) with a total of 18 computers are open to the public.
- 3 Broadband Awareness Campaigns are reaching 80% of Sabine County.
- 5 organizations are working with vulnerable populations.

### USE

- At least 6 uses of broadband were identified in the area of economic opportunity including 0 advanced uses and 6 basic uses.
- At least 7 uses of broadband were identified in the area of education including 4 advanced uses and 3 basic uses.
- At least 3 uses of broadband were identified in the area of government including 1 advanced use and 2 basic uses.
- At least 1 basic use of broadband was identified in the area of healthcare.

In addition to the items identified above, the Sabine County Broadband Committee identified the following technology resources in the community:

#### **Technology Providers**

- 9 broadband providers were identified in Sabine County

#### **Technology Facilities**

- 2 public computing centers
- 2 wireless hotspots
- 1 video conferencing center

### **Community Websites**

- 6 Business-related websites (excluding private businesses)
- 5 Education-related websites
- 4 Government-related websites
- 2 Healthcare-related websites
- 2 Library-related websites
- 9 Tourism-related websites

### **Priority Projects**

This exercise has culminated in the outlining of projects to allow the community to continue its recognized excellence in technology and broadband planning across the community. Below are 5 priority projects, each describing a project plan with suggested steps. This is followed by a complete list of all recommended actions.

*Apply to USDA for Funding Support to Build out Broadband in Community*

*Identify and Expand Wireless Hotspots in the Community*

*Perform an Analysis of Local Policies and Ordinances*

*Distribute Digital Literacy Content*

*Facilitate a Technology Summit*

### **Complete List of Recommended Actions**

Below is a complete list of recommended actions. Detailed descriptions of each solution proposed by Connected Texas can be found in the *Recommended Actions* section later in this report.

#### **ACCESS**

##### **Broadband Availability**

1. Apply to USDA for Funding to Support Broadband Build-out in Community
2. Perform an Analysis of Local Policies and Ordinances

**Broadband Speeds** – No recommended actions.

**Broadband Competition** – No recommended actions.

**Middle Mile Access**

3. Develop Public-Private Partnerships to Deploy Broadband Service
4. Study and Possibly Reassess Major Telecom Purchase Contracts

#### **Mobile Broadband Availability**

5. Improve Campus Connectivity
6. Deploy Educational WiMAX
7. Identify and Expand Wireless Hotspots in the Community
8. Develop & Issue an RFP for Build-out
9. Identify, Map, and Validate Broadband Demand
10. Complete a Vertical Assets Inventory
11. Perform a Broadband Build-out Analysis in Unserved Areas

#### **ADOPTION**

##### **Digital Literacy**

12. Distribute Digital Literacy Content
13. Develop a Technology Mentorship Program
14. Establish a "Community Technology Academy"
15. Facilitate Internet Safety Classes

**Public Computer Centers** – No recommended actions.

##### **Broadband Awareness**

16. Facilitate a Technology Summit
17. Implement a Community-Based Technology Awareness Program

**Vulnerable Population Focus** – No recommended actions.

#### **USE**

##### **Economic Opportunity**

18. Create a Main Street Portal (Community Portal)
19. Develop a Farmers' Network
20. Online Identification of Broadband Services at Key Economic Sites
21. Develop a Tourism Portal
22. Host Website and Social Media Classes for Local Businesses
23. Create a Teleworker Support and Attraction Program
24. Develop or Identify a Broadband Training and Awareness Program for Small and Medium Businesses
25. Establish a "Digital Factory"

##### **Education**

26. Improve Education through Digital Learning



27. Connect all School Classrooms to the Internet

**Government**

28. Improve Public Safety Communications

29. Perform a Municipal Information Technology Assessment

30. Improve the Online Presence of Government

31. Pursue Next Generation 911 Upgrades

32. Improve Online Business Services Offered by the Government

**Healthcare**

33. Promote Telemedicine in Remote Areas



## DETAILED FINDINGS

### Sabine County Assessment Findings

Today, residents in Sabine County (or sections of the community) are served by 9 providers. Currently, broadband is defined as Internet service with advertised speeds of at least 768 Kbps downstream and 200 Kbps upstream. According to Connected Texas' latest broadband mapping update, the following providers have a service footprint in the Sabine County community:

Broadband Providers	Technology Type	Website Reference
AT&T Southwest	DSL	<a href="http://www.att.com">http://www.att.com</a>
AT&T Mobility LLC	Mobile Wireless	<a href="http://www.wireless.att.com/">http://www.wireless.att.com/</a>
Deep East Texas Communications	Fixed Wireless	<a href="http://www.det-com.com">http://www.det-com.com</a>
Hughes Network Systems, LLC	Satellite	<a href="http://www.hughesnet.com/">http://www.hughesnet.com/</a>
Skycasters	Satellite	<a href="http://www.skycasters.com">http://www.skycasters.com</a>
StarBand Communications	Satellite	<a href="http://www.starband.com/">http://www.starband.com/</a>
Sprint	Mobile Wireless	<a href="http://www.sprint.com">http://www.sprint.com</a>
Windstream Communications Southwest	DSL	<a href="http://www.windstream.com">http://www.windstream.com</a>
ViaSat	Satellite	<a href="http://www.viasat.com/">http://www.viasat.com/</a>

Below is a list of community websites (sorted by category) designed to share and promote local resources.

Organization Name	Website	Website Category
Sabine County	<a href="http://www.co.sabine.tx.us">www.co.sabine.tx.us</a>	Government
Sabine County Chamber of Commerce	<a href="http://www.sabinetexas.com">www.sabinetexas.com</a>	Government
Sabine County Appraisal District	<a href="http://www.sabine-cad.org/">http://www.sabine-cad.org/</a>	Government
City of Hemphill	<a href="http://www.hemphill.govoffice2.com/">http://www.hemphill.govoffice2.com/</a>	Government
Sabine County Hospital	<a href="http://www.sabinecountyhospital.com">http://www.sabinecountyhospital.com</a>	Healthcare
East Texas Home Health	<a href="http://www.ethhc.com/">http://www.ethhc.com/</a>	Healthcare
Lowe's Creek	<a href="http://www.lowescreek.com">http://www.lowescreek.com</a>	Tourism
Midlake Campground	<a href="http://www.midlakecampground.com/">http://www.midlakecampground.com/</a>	Tourism
Paradise Point	<a href="http://www.paradisepointpark.com/">http://www.paradisepointpark.com/</a>	Tourism
Alpine Marina & Resort	<a href="http://www.toledo-bend.net/marina/">http://www.toledo-bend.net/marina/</a>	Tourism

Lake Sam Rayburn KOA	<a href="http://www.koa.com/campgrounds/brookeland/">http://www.koa.com/campgrounds/brookeland/</a>	Tourism
Rayburn RV Hideout	<a href="http://www.rayburnrvhideout.com/">http://www.rayburnrvhideout.com/</a>	Tourism
Powell Park Camping Resort & Marina	<a href="http://www.powellpark.com/">http://www.powellpark.com/</a>	Tourism
Rayburn Country Resort	<a href="http://www.lakerayburncountry.com/">http://www.lakerayburncountry.com/</a>	Tourism
Fin & Feather Resort	<a href="http://www.finfeatherresort.com/">http://www.finfeatherresort.com/</a>	Tourism
J.R. Huffman Public Library	<a href="http://www.hemphilltxlibrary.com">http://www.hemphilltxlibrary.com</a>	Library
Arthur Temple Senior Memorial Library	<a href="http://www.pinelandlibrary.org/">http://www.pinelandlibrary.org/</a>	Library
PC SolutionZetc	<a href="http://www.pcsolutionzetc.com">http://www.pcsolutionzetc.com</a>	Business
East – Tex PC Repair	<a href="http://www.east-texpcrepair.com/">http://www.east-texpcrepair.com/</a>	Business
First State Bank – Hemphill	<a href="http://www.firststatebankhemphill.com">http://www.firststatebankhemphill.com</a>	Business
Shelby Savings Bank	<a href="http://www.shelbysavingsbank.com">http://www.shelbysavingsbank.com</a>	Business
First Bank & Trust	<a href="http://www.fbtet.com">http://www.fbtet.com</a>	Business
Brookshire Brothers Food and Pharmacy	<a href="http://brookshirebrothers.com/">http://brookshirebrothers.com/</a>	Business
Angelina College Sabine Area Career Center	<a href="http://www.angelina.edu/distance/SabinePineland.html">http://www.angelina.edu/distance/SabinePineland.html</a>	Education
Brookeland ISD	<a href="http://www.brookelandisd.net/">http://www.brookelandisd.net/</a>	Education
Broaddus ISD	<a href="http://www.broaddusisd.net">http://www.broaddusisd.net</a>	Education
Hemphill ISD	<a href="http://www.hemphill.esc7.net/">http://www.hemphill.esc7.net/</a>	Education
West Sabine ISD	<a href="http://www.westsabineisd.net/">http://www.westsabineisd.net/</a>	Education

Below is a list of organizations that are making technological resources available to the community. These include organizations that provide videoconferencing, public computing, and wireless hotspots.

Organization Name	Resource Type
J. R. Huffman Public Library	Public Computing Center
Arthur Temple Sr. Memorial Library	Public Computing Center
Angelina College Sabine Area Career Center	Videoconferencing
Lake Sam Rayburn KOA	Wireless Hotspot
Rayburn RV Hideout	Wireless Hotspot

## Connected Assessment

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	Mobile Broadband Availability	17.93% of households have access to mobile broadband	0	10
	<b>ACCESS SCORE</b>			<b>6</b>
ADOPTION	Digital Literacy	Program grads are greater than 2 per 1000 residents over the past year	4	10
	Public Computer Centers	500 computer hours per 1,000 low income residents per week	10	10
	Broadband Awareness	Campaigns reach 80% of the community	8	10
	Vulnerable Population Focus	At least 5 groups	10	10
	<b>ADOPTION SCORE</b>			<b>32</b>
USE	Economic Opportunity	0 advanced, 6 basic uses	6	10
	Education	4 advanced, 3 basic uses	10	10
	Government	1 advanced, 2 basic uses	4	10
	Healthcare	0 advanced, 1 basic use	1	10
	<b>USE SCORE</b>			<b>21</b>
<b>COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT SCORE</b>			<b>59</b>	<b>120</b>



## ACCESS Score Breakdown

**Broadband Availability** (0 out of 10 Points Possible) – is measured by analyzing provider availability of 3 Mbps broadband service gathered by Connected Nation’s broadband mapping program. In communities that may have broadband data missing, community teams were able to improve the quality of data to ensure all providers are included.

- **According to the October 2012 data collected by Connected Texas, 58.65% of Sabine County residents had access to broadband speeds of 3 Mbps or greater.**

**Broadband Speeds** (0 out of 5 Points Possible) – is measured by analyzing the speed tiers available within a community. Connected Nation will analyze broadband data submitted through its broadband mapping program. Specifically, Connected Nation will break down the coverage by the highest speed tier with at least 75% of households covered. In communities that may have broadband data missing, community teams were able to improve the quality of data to ensure all providers are included.

- **According to the October 2012 data collected by Connected Texas, 51.19% of Sabine County residents had access to broadband speeds of 10 Mbps.**

**Broadband Competition** (0 out of 5 Points Possible) – is measured by analyzing the number of broadband providers available in a particular community and the percentage of that community’s residents with more than one broadband provider available. Connected Nation performed this analysis by reviewing the data collected through the broadband mapping program. In communities that may have broadband data missing, community teams were able to improve the quality of data to ensure all providers are included.

- **According to the October 2012 data collected by Connected Texas, 7.65% of Sabine County residents had access to more than one broadband provider.**

**Middle Mile Access** (6 out of 10 Points Possible) – is measured based on a community’s availability to fiber. Three aspects of availability exist: proximity to middle mile points of presence (POPs), number of POPs available, and available bandwidth. Data was collected by the community in coordination with Connected Nation.

- **Sabine County is served by 1 middle mile fiber provider.**

**Mobile Broadband Availability** (0 out of 10 Points Possible) – is measured by analyzing provider availability of mobile broadband service gathered by Connected Nation’s broadband mapping program. In communities that may have mobile broadband data missing, community teams were able to improve the quality of data to ensure all providers are included.

- According to the October 2012 data collected by Connected Texas, 17.93% of Sabine County residents had access to mobile broadband service.



**ADOPTION Score Breakdown**

**Digital Literacy** (4 out of 10 Points Possible) – is measured by first identifying all digital literacy programs in the community. Once the programs are determined, a calculation of program graduates will be made on a per capita basis. A digital literacy program includes any digital literacy course offered for free or at very low cost through a library, seniors center, community college, K-12 school, or other group serving the local community. A graduate is a person who has completed the curriculum offered by any organization within the community. The duration of individual courses may vary. A listing of identified digital literacy offerings is below.

Organization Name	Program Description	Number of Grads
J.R. Huffman Public Library	Free Computer Class	8

**Public Computer Centers** (10 out of 10 Points Possible) – is measured based on the number of hours computers are available each week per 1,000 low-income residents. Available computer hours is calculated by taking the overall number of computers multiplied by the number of hours open to a community during the course of the week. A listing of public computer centers available in Sabine County is below.

Organization Name	Number of Open Hours per Week	Number of Computers	Available Computer Hours per Week
J. R. Huffman Public Library	37.5	8	300
Arthur Temple Sr. Memorial Library	35	10	350

**Broadband Awareness (8 out of 10 Points Possible)** – is measured based on the percentage of the population reached. All community broadband awareness programs are first identified, and then each program’s community reach is compiled and combined with other campaigns. A listing of broadband awareness programs in Sabine County is below.

Organization Name	Campaign Description	Community Reach
Hemphill ISD	Employment Opportunities, Parents can view grades online and this is advertised	70%
J.R. Huffman Public Library	Advertises free Wi-Fi to patrons	100%
Arthur Temple Sr. Memorial Library	Advertises free Wi-Fi to patrons	100%

**Vulnerable Population Focus (10 out of 10 Points Possible)** – A community tallies each program or ability within the community to encourage technology adoption among vulnerable groups. Methods of focusing on vulnerable groups may vary, but explicitly encourage technology use among vulnerable groups. Example opportunities include offering online GED classes, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, video-based applications for the deaf, homework assistance for students, and job-finding assistance. Communities receive points for each group on which they focus. Groups may vary by community, but include low-income, minority, senior, children, etc. A listing of programs focusing on vulnerable populations in Sabine County is listed below.

Organization Name	Program Description	Vulnerable Group
Angelina College	Tutor to assist students in passing the GED test	rural, low income, minority
J.R. Huffman Public Library	Provides computer assistance to patrons as needed	Low income, minority, senior, disabled, children
Arthur Temple Sr. Memorial Library	Provides computer assistance to patrons as needed	Low income, minority, senior, disabled, children



## USE Score Breakdown

**Economic Opportunity (6 out of 10 Points Possible)** – A community receives one point per basic use of broadband and two points per advanced use of broadband. Categories within economic opportunity include: economic development, business development, tourism, and agriculture. Identified uses of broadband in the area of economic opportunity are listed below and identified as basic or advanced.

Application Provider	Description	Basic / Advanced
Sabine County Chamber of Commerce	Website on area resources/tourism	Basic
Sabine County	County website	Basic
Angelina College - Extension & Career Center	Extension college and career center: <a href="http://www.angelina.edu/distance/Sabine_Pineland.html">www.angelina.edu/distance/Sabine_Pineland.html</a>	Basic
Shelby Savings Bank	Online Banking	Basic
First Bank and Trust	Online Banking	Basic
First State Bank - Hemphill	Online Banking	Basic

**Education (10 out of 10 Points Possible)** – A community receives one point per basic use of broadband and two points per advanced use of broadband. Categories within education include K-12, higher education, and libraries. Identified uses of broadband in the area of education are listed below and identified as basic or advanced.

Application Provider	Description	Basic/ Advanced
J.R. Huffman Public Library	Online Card Catalog	Advanced
Arthur Temple Sr. Memorial Library	Online Card Catalog	Advanced
Brookeland ISD	Online curriculum software provides elementary and junior high school students with challenging opportunities to enhance their learning; enables high school students to recover high school credits in order	Advanced

	for them to graduate and continue their studies in higher education or the global workforce.	
Brookeland ISD	Classrooms connected to the Internet via broadband	Basic
Broaddus Parent Portal	Parents have online access to view student grades and curriculum	Basic
Hemphill ISD	We have enhanced the district’s technology status by providing Internet connectivity to every classroom, eleven computer labs, video conferencing, digital document cameras and projectors for each teacher, and SmartBoard interactive white boards for each teacher who entered a request	Advanced

**Government (4 out of 10 Points Possible)** – A community receives one point per basic use of broadband and two points per advanced use of broadband. Categories within government include general government, public safety, energy, and the environment. Identified uses of broadband in the area of government are listed below and identified as basic or advanced.

Application Provider	Description	Basic/Advanced
Sabine County Website	Website for the county provides information about county resources.	Basic
City of Hemphill Website	Website for the City of Hemphill that provides information about city resources.	Basic
Sabine County Appraisal District	Residents are able to access and pay property taxes online	Advanced

**Healthcare (1 out of 10 Points Possible)** – A community receives one point per basic use of broadband and two points per advanced use of broadband. Entities within healthcare can include, but are not limited to, hospitals, medical and dental clinics, health departments, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and pharmacies. Identified uses of broadband in the area of healthcare are listed below and identified as basic or advanced.

Application Name	Description	Basic/Advanced
Sabine County Hospital	Website for the local hospital, which provides residents with basic information needed for medical situations.	Basic

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## ACTION PLAN

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### Priority Projects

This exercise has culminated in the outlining of projects to allow the community to continue its recognized excellence in technology and broadband planning across the community. Below are 5 priority projects, each describing a project plan with suggested steps. This is followed by a complete list of all recommended actions.

#### *Apply to USDA for Funding to Support Broadband Build-out in Community*

The USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages housing, business, and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of state and local offices. Rural Development has an active portfolio of more than \$165 billion in loans and loan guarantees. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers, and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural areas.

#### **Farm Bill Loan Program - USDA**

This program is designed to provide loans for funding, on a technology neutral basis, for the costs of construction, improvement, and acquisition of facilities and equipment to provide broadband service to eligible rural communities.

#### *Additional Information:*

- Direct loans are in the form of a cost-of-money loan, a 4-percent loan, or a combination of the two.

#### *Eligibility:*

- Must be a rural area. Rural area means any area, as confirmed by the latest decennial census by the U.S. Census Bureau, which is not located within: (a) A city, town, or incorporated area that has a population of more than 20,000 people; or (b) An urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town with a population of more than 50,000 people. An urbanized area means a densely populated territory as defined in the latest decennial census.
- To be eligible for a broadband loan, an applicant may be either a nonprofit or for-profit organization, and must take one of the following forms: (1) Corporation; (2) Limited liability company (LLC); (3) Cooperative or mutual organization; (4) Federally recognized Indian tribe or tribal organization; or (5) State or local government, including any agency, subdivision, or one of their units.

- A service area may be eligible for a broadband loan if all of the following are true: (1) The service area is completely contained within a rural area; (2) At least 25 percent of the households in the service area are underserved households; (3) No part of the service area has three or more incumbent service providers; (4) No part of the funded service area overlaps with the service area of current RUS borrowers and grantees; (5) No part of the funded service area is included in a pending application before RUS seeking funding to provide broadband service.

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**Community Connect Program – USDA**

Provides community access to broadband services in unserved areas through a one-time grant to such organizations as tribes, cooperatives, private companies, and universities, and uses the infrastructure built by the grant to create opportunities for continued improvement.

*Additional Information:*

- The funding will support construction, acquisition, or lease of facilities, including spectrum, to deploy broadband transmission services to all critical community facilities and to offer such services to all residential and business customers located within the proposed service area.
- The funding can be put towards the improvement, expansion, construction, acquisition, or leasing of a community center that furnishes free access to broadband Internet service, providing that the community center is open and accessible to area residents before, during, and after normal working hours and on Saturday or Sunday.
- All equipment purchases with grant and/or matching funds must be new or non-depreciated.

*Eligibility:*

- Must be single community with a population of less than 20,000 that does not have Broadband Transmission Service.
- Applicants must be organized as an incorporated organization, an Indian tribe or tribal organization, a state or local unit of government, or other legal entity, including cooperatives or private corporations or limited liability companies organized on a for-profit or not-for-profit basis.
- The project must deploy Basic Broadband Transmission Service, free of all charges for at least 2 years, to all Critical Community Facilities located within the proposed Service

Area. Additionally, it should offer Basic Broadband Transmission Service to residential and business customers within the proposed Service Area.

*Contact Information:*

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**Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loans and Grants Program – USDA**

Provides loans and grants to rural community facilities (e.g. schools, libraries, hospitals, and tribal organizations) for advanced telecommunications systems that can provide healthcare and educational benefits to rural areas.

*Additional Information:*

- The Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loans and Grant Program (DLT Program) provides three kinds of financial assistance: a full grant, grant-loan combination, and a full loan.

*Eligibility:*

To be eligible for a grant, your organization must:

- Currently deliver or propose to deliver distance learning or telemedicine services for the term of the grant. To receive a grant, the purposes must meet the grant definition of distance learning and telemedicine. The DLT program is focused on sustainability. Planning studies, research projects, and short-term demonstration projects of less than two years will not be considered.
- Be legally organized as an incorporated organization or partnership; an Indian tribe or tribal organization; a state or local unit of government; a consortium; or other legal entity, including a private corporation organized on a for-profit or not-for-profit basis with the legal capacity to contract with the United States Government.
- Operate a rural community facility or deliver distance learning or telemedicine services to entities that operate a rural community facility or to residents of rural areas at rates calculated to ensure that the benefit of the financial assistance passes through to such entities or to residents of rural areas.

*Contact Information:*

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**Universal Service Rural Health Care Program – Universal Service Administration Company**

The Rural Health Care program supports healthcare providers serving rural communities by funding telecommunications services necessary for the provision of healthcare. The program is intended to ensure that rural healthcare providers pay no more for telecommunications in the provision of healthcare services than their urban counterparts.

*Additional Information:*

- Public and non-profit healthcare providers in rural areas can receive discounts on installation and monthly charges for telecommunications and Internet access service used for the provision of healthcare by using one of two methods: a mileage-based calculation, or a calculation of the “urban rate” to receive support equal to the difference between what they pay and what they would pay if they were receiving the service in any city in their state with a population of 50,000 or more.
- The rural healthcare provider must submit a form requesting services to the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). Once the form is approved, it is posted on USAC’s website seeking bids from telecommunications companies interested in providing the requested services. After the rural healthcare provider selects a provider from qualified bidders and USAC has approved the funding request, the services may begin. Support from the USF is then used to help pay for eligible services provided to the rural healthcare provider.

*Eligibility:*

Eligible organizations include:

- Post-secondary educational institutions offering healthcare instruction, including teaching hospitals and medical schools;
- Community health centers or health centers providing healthcare to migrants;
- Local health departments or agencies;
- Community mental health centers;
- Not-for-profit hospitals;
- Dedicated emergency departments in rural for-profit hospitals;
- Rural healthcare clinics;
- Part-time eligible entities located in facilities that are ineligible; and
- Groups of healthcare providers consisting of one or more entities described above.

*Contact Information:*

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Website: <http://www.universalservice.org/rhc/default.aspx>

*Implementation Team:*

To be determined.

## *Identify and Expand Wireless Hotspots in the Community*

### **Project Description:**

In order to maximize the benefits that wireless hotspots provide, a community must ensure there are an appropriate number of hotspots available, along with a published inventory of the locations of each wireless hotspot.

Wireless hotspots are classified as free or fee. Hotspots are often found at restaurants, train stations, airports, libraries, hotels, hospitals, coffee shops, bookstores, fuel stations, department stores, supermarkets, RV parks and campgrounds, public pay phones, and other public places. Many universities and schools have wireless networks on their campuses as well.

### **Goal:**

Expand free access to broadband.

### **Benefits:**

- Wireless hotspots in the community are a benefit to local residents without broadband at home as well as tourists traveling to the region.

### **Action Items:**

- Develop a community Wi-Fi inventory.
- Conduct an analysis to identify key areas and organizations for the expansion of local wireless hotspots.
- The local chamber of commerce and tourism groups should promote the hotspots to ensure maximum visibility in the community.

### **Implementation Team:**

To be determined.

## *Perform an Analysis of Local Policies and Ordinances*

### **Project Description:**

High capital investment costs, including permit processing, pole attachment costs, and lack of effective planning and coordination with public authorities, negatively impacts the case for deployment. For example, the FCC's National Broadband Plan concludes that, "the rates, terms, and conditions for access to rights of way [including pole attachments] significantly impact broadband deployment." The costs associated with obtaining permits and leasing pole attachments and rights-of-way are some of the most expensive cost functions in a service provider's plans to expand or upgrade service, especially in rural markets where the ration of poles to households goes off the charts. Furthermore, the process is time consuming. "Make ready" work, which involves moving wires and other equipment attached to a pole to ensure

proper spacing between equipment, and compliance with electric and safety codes can take months to complete.

Community and provider collaboration to problem solve around local pole attachment and other right of way issues is one of the most effective opportunities to encourage faster, new deployment of infrastructure.

**Goal:**

Ensure that local policies are conducive to broadband build-out.

**Benefits:**

- Lowers cost barriers to improve the business case for broadband deployment.
- Encourages good public policy and provider relations.

**Action Items:**

- Review local policies, ordinances, and other barriers to broadband deployment, and consult with community leaders, providers, utilities and other members of the community to ensure that they are supporting policies (local ordinances, pole attachments, right-of-way) that are conducive to broadband build-out.
- Develop an awareness campaign targeted towards community leaders to inform them of the benefits of broadband to the entire community derived from access to global resources that outweigh the need for some policies.

**Implementation Team:**

To be determined.

***Distribute Digital Literacy Content***

**Project Description:**

Leverage the abundant digital literacy content available online to distribute to local trainers. Currently, numerous non-profit organizations and for-profit corporations provide curriculum that can be adapted for classroom or self-paced study. Some organizations also provide additional resources for instructor use, including classroom setup information, teaching tips for each course, additional practice, test item files, and answers to frequently asked questions. Digital literacy content can be deployed via local websites (a community portal), print material, podcasts, blogs, and videos.

Additionally, your community could create a partnership between libraries, school systems, computer suppliers, and broadband providers to provide free training and discounted computers and broadband service to low-income community members who are not participating in the digital age. An example of such a program is Connected Nation's Every

Community Online program. This is an innovative program that is providing free digital literacy training, access to low-cost computers, and discounted broadband access to communities across the country.

**Goal:**

Facilitate partnerships in order to provide digital literacy training.

**Benefits:**

- Increasing the community's digital literacy facilitates widespread online access to education and other public and government services, provides equal access to opportunities such as jobs and workforce training, enables people to find information about their health, and offers the opportunity to increase levels of social interaction and civic involvement.

**Action Items:**

- Develop partnerships with local organizations and equip them with digital literacy content;
- Train staff to deliver the curriculum to potential adopters;
- Promote local organizations as a source of broadband access and training;
- Engage non-adopters with a comprehensive public outreach campaign, helping them understand the benefits of broadband service and inviting them to experience the value at their libraries;
- Provide curriculum to teach computer and Internet use, as well as the skills required to utilize the Internet effectively for essential services, education, employment, civic engagement, and cultural participation;
- Offer compelling promotion to participants, giving them the opportunity to adopt the technology for everyday use in their homes.

**Implementation Team:**

To be determined.

***Facilitate a Technology Summit***

**Project Description:**

Develop and host a technology summit for residents and businesses to increase awareness of broadband value, service options, and the potential impact on quality of life. The technology summit should facilitate community partnerships between leaders in local government and the private sector, including non-profits and private businesses in the education, healthcare, and agriculture sectors, with the goal of ensuring that residents have at least one place in the community to use powerful new broadband technologies, and that this asset will be sustained

over time. Further, the technology summit should highlight success stories as evidence of the impact of technology.

**Goal:**

A technology summit should bring together community stakeholders to develop a dialogue about how public and private stakeholders can collectively improve broadband access, adoption, and use.

**Benefits:**

- Highlights successes, opportunities, and challenges regarding community technology planning.
- Develops ongoing dialogue around improving broadband access, adoption, and use.
- Unifies community stakeholders under one vision.

**Action Items:**

- Create community partnerships.
- Identify funding sources and hosts.
- Identify suitable speakers.
- Develop relevant content.

**Implementation Team:**

To be determined.

## Recommended Actions

### ACCESS: Recommended Actions

#### Broadband Availability

##### 1) Apply to USDA for Funding to Support Broadband Build-out in Community

The USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages housing, business, and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of state and local offices. Rural Development has an active portfolio of more than \$165 billion in loans and loan guarantees. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers, and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural areas.

##### Farm Bill Loan Program - USDA

This program is designed to provide loans for funding, on a technology neutral basis, for the costs of construction, improvement, and acquisition of facilities and equipment to provide broadband service to eligible rural communities.

*Additional Information:*

- Direct loans are in the form of a cost-of-money loan, a 4-percent loan, or a combination of the two.

*Eligibility:*

- Must be a rural area. Rural area means any area, as confirmed by the latest decennial census by the U.S. Census Bureau, which is not located within: (a) A city, town, or incorporated area that has a population of more than 20,000 people; or (b) An urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town with a population of more than 50,000 people. An urbanized area means a densely populated territory as defined in the latest decennial census.
- To be eligible for a broadband loan, an applicant may be either a nonprofit or for-profit organization, and must take one of the following forms: (1) Corporation; (2) Limited liability company (LLC); (3) Cooperative or mutual organization; (4) Federally recognized Indian tribe or tribal organization; or (5) State or local government, including any agency, subdivision, or one of their units.
- A service area may be eligible for a broadband loan if all of the following are true: (1) The service area is completely contained within a rural area; (2) At least 25 percent of the households in the service area are underserved households; (3) No part of the service area has three or more incumbent service providers; (4) No part of the funded service area overlaps with the service area of current RUS borrowers and grantees; (5) No part of the funded service area is included in a pending application before RUS seeking funding to provide broadband service.

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- Website: [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/utp\\_farmbill.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/utp_farmbill.html)

**Community Connect Program – USDA**

Provides community access to broadband services in unserved areas through a one-time grant to such organizations as tribes, cooperatives, private companies, and universities, and uses the infrastructure built by the grant to create opportunities for continued improvement.

*Additional Information:*

- The funding will support construction, acquisition, or lease of facilities, including spectrum, to deploy broadband transmission services to all critical community facilities and to offer such services to all residential and business customers located within the proposed service area.
- The funding can be put towards the improvement, expansion, construction, acquisition, or leasing of a community center that furnishes free access to broadband Internet service, providing that the community center is open and accessible to area residents before, during, and after normal working hours and on Saturday or Sunday.
- All equipment purchases with grant and/or matching funds must be new or non-depreciated.

*Eligibility:*

- Must be single community with a population of less than 20,000 that does not have Broadband Transmission Service.
- Applicants must be organized as an incorporated organization, an Indian tribe or tribal organization, a state or local unit of government, or other legal entity, including cooperatives or private corporations or limited liability companies organized on a for-profit or not-for-profit basis.
- The project must deploy Basic Broadband Transmission Service, free of all charges for at least 2 years, to all Critical Community Facilities located within the proposed Service Area. Additionally, it should offer Basic Broadband Transmission Service to residential and business customers within the proposed Service Area.

*Contact Information:*

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**Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loans and Grants Program – USDA**

Provides loans and grants to rural community facilities (e.g. schools, libraries, hospitals, and tribal organizations) for advanced telecommunications systems that can provide healthcare and educational benefits to rural areas.

*Additional Information:*

- The Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loans and Grant Program (DLT Program) provides three kinds of financial assistance: a full grant, grant-loan combination, and a full loan.

*Eligibility:*

To be eligible for a grant, your organization must:



- Currently deliver or propose to deliver distance learning or telemedicine services for the term of the grant. To receive a grant, the purposes must meet the grant definition of distance learning and telemedicine. The DLT program is focused on sustainability. Planning studies, research projects, and short-term demonstration projects of less than two years will not be considered.
- Be legally organized as an incorporated organization or partnership; an Indian tribe or tribal organization; a state or local unit of government; a consortium; or other legal entity, including a private corporation organized on a for-profit or not-for-profit basis with the legal capacity to contract with the United States Government.
- Operate a rural community facility or deliver distance learning or telemedicine services to entities that operate a rural community facility or to residents of rural areas at rates calculated to ensure that the benefit of the financial assistance passes through to such entities or to residents of rural areas.

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**Universal Service Rural Health Care Program – Universal Service Administration Company**

The Rural Health Care program supports healthcare providers serving rural communities by funding telecommunications services necessary for the provision of healthcare. The program is intended to ensure that rural healthcare providers pay no more for telecommunications in the provision of healthcare services than their urban counterparts.

*Additional Information:*

- Public and non-profit healthcare providers in rural areas can receive discounts on installation and monthly charges for telecommunications and Internet access service used for the provision of healthcare by using one of two methods: a mileage-based calculation, or a calculation of the “urban rate” to receive support equal to the difference between what they pay and what they would pay if they were receiving the service in any city in their state with a population of 50,000 or more.
- The rural healthcare provider must submit a form requesting services to the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). Once the form is approved, it is posted on USAC’s website seeking bids from telecommunications companies interested in providing the requested services. After the rural healthcare provider selects a provider from qualified bidders and USAC has approved the funding request, the services may begin. Support from the USF is then used to help pay for eligible services provided to the rural healthcare provider.

*Eligibility:*

Eligible organizations include:

- Post-secondary educational institutions offering healthcare instruction, including teaching hospitals and medical schools;
- Community health centers or health centers providing healthcare to migrants;
- Local health departments or agencies;
- Community mental health centers;
- Not-for-profit hospitals;
- Dedicated emergency departments in rural for-profit hospitals;
- Rural healthcare clinics;
- Part-time eligible entities located in facilities that are ineligible; and
- Groups of healthcare providers consisting of one or more entities described above.

*Contact Information:*

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Website: <http://www.universalservice.org/rhc/default.aspx>

## **2) Perform an Analysis of Local Policies and Ordinances**

High capital investment costs, including permit processing, pole attachment costs, and lack of effective planning and coordination with public authorities, negatively impact the case for deployment. For example, the FCC's National Broadband Plan concludes that, "the rates, terms, and conditions for access to rights of way [including pole attachments] significantly impact broadband deployment." The costs associated with obtaining permits and leasing pole attachments and rights-of-way are some of the most expensive cost functions in a service provider's plans to expand or upgrade service, especially in rural markets where the ration of poles to households goes off the charts. Furthermore, the process is time consuming. "Make ready" work, which involves moving wires and other equipment attached to a pole to ensure proper spacing between equipment, and compliance with electric and safety codes can take months to complete.

Community and provider collaboration to problem solve around local pole attachment and other right of way issues is one of the most effective opportunities to encourage faster, new deployment of infrastructure.

*Goal:*

Ensure that local policies are conducive to broadband build-out.

*Benefits:*

- Lowers cost barriers to improve the business case for broadband deployment.
- Encourages good public policy and provider relations.

*Action Items:*

- Review local policies, ordinances, and other barriers to broadband deployment and consult with community leaders, providers, utilities and other members of the community to ensure that they are supporting policies (local ordinances, pole attachments, right-of-way) that are conducive to broadband build-out.
- Develop an awareness campaign targeted towards community leaders to inform them of the benefits of broadband to the entire community derived from access to global resources that outweigh the need for some policies.

**Broadband Speeds**

No recommended actions.

**Broadband Competition**

No recommended actions.

**Middle Mile Access**

**3) Develop Public-Private Partnerships to Deploy Broadband Service**

Public-private partnerships take many forms, limited only by the imagination and legal framework in which the municipality operates. Some communities issue municipal bonds to fund construction of a network, which they lease to private carriers, with the lease payments covering the debt service. Others create non-profit organizations to develop networks in collaboration with private carriers or provide seed investment to jumpstart construction of networks that the private sector is unable to cost-justify on its own.

A public-private partnership should not be simply seen as a method of financing. The strength of these partnerships is that each party brings something important to the table that the other doesn't have or can't easily acquire. The community can offer infrastructure (publicly-owned building rooftops, light poles, towers, and other vertical assets for mounting infrastructure) for the deployment of the system, as well as committed anchor tenants. Private-sector partners bring network-building and operations experience.

*Goal:*

Fund broadband network deployment

*Benefits:*

- The public sector transfers much of the risk for private investment. For example, the public sector has many funding tools available, including incentivizing continued

investment through tax credits, encouraging greater availability of private capital through government guaranteed loans, or government being a direct source of capital through loans or grants.

- The partnership can aggregate demand and reduce barriers to deployment. By working together, public and private parties can educate and build awareness needed for the public to better integrate the use of broadband into their lives, thereby improving the business case for broadband deployment.
- A good partnership concentrates investment on non-duplicative networks and aims to ensure that all residents have access to adequate broadband service.

*Action Items:*

- Decide on the technology (e.g. cable, DSL, fiber, etc.).
- Issue an RFP.
- Develop a finance and ownership model.

#### **4) Study and Possibly Reassess Major Telecom Purchase Contracts**

Demand for broadband capacity across community institutions represents a key segment of the overall demand for broadband in many communities. The purchasing power of this collective should be leveraged to help promote greater competition in the broadband market and drive increased investment in backhaul and last mile broadband capacity.

*Goal:*

Leverage the demand for broadband across community institutions to promote competition and investment in broadband services.

*Benefits:*

- By aggregating demand within a local community, these institutions will be able to demonstrate to interested broadband providers existing pent-up demand and help justify private investments to bring greater capacity backhaul service to that community.
- The increased backhaul capacity can in turn benefit the whole community.

*Action Items:*

- Develop partnerships between local high-capacity demand institutions, including local civic leaders, government entities, public safety agencies, libraries, hospital or clinics, and schools, in a coordinated effort to aggregate local demand needs for increased broadband capacity and service.

### **Mobile Broadband Availability**

#### **5) Improve Campus Connectivity**

Improved access includes classroom access, better wireless coverage in common areas and student centers, as well as high-speed broadband access to student dorms. Before expanding

access, a network assessment should be undertaken to ensure current coverage. Part of the expansion should include indirect requirements such as the potential need for increased tech support and power consumption due to increased usage of devices.

*Goal:*

Ensure that all higher education campuses (especially community colleges) have adequate access to broadband networks.

*Benefits:*

- Beyond the research and development tools, broadband enables higher education institutions to offer college credit for online courses for advanced high school students; offer specialized science and technology online learning experiences in subjects where there are too few specialized K-12 teachers; support adult students through personalized career and technical programs while working around the needs of their jobs and families; and extend continuing education programs by offering diverse, quality content to the public to foster job skills, community development, and personal growth.

*Action Items:*

- Utilize the [national broadband availability map](#) and assess your community's needs. The [U.S. Department of Education](#) developed this broadband availability map and search engine as part of a collaborative effort with the [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) (NTIA) and the [Federal Communications Commission](#) (FCC). This education-focused broadband map and database builds upon the [NTIA State Broadband Initiative](#) (SBI) Program that surveys bi-annually broadband availability and connectivity for the 50 United States, 5 territories, and the District of Columbia.
- Research federal and state funding sources.

## 6) Deploy Educational WiMAX

Deploy WiMAX to the community and provide students with WiMAX-enabled laptops to ensure equal access for all students regardless of socioeconomic status. WiMAX is primarily a wireless and highly cost effective means of extending the school district's intranet-based content and applications to the student body beyond the school campus and outside of school hours equating to anytime, anywhere instruction.

WiMAX is an IP-based, wireless broadband access technology that provides performance similar to Wi-Fi networks, but with the coverage and quality of service of cellular networks. WiMAX can provide broadband wireless access (BWA) up to 30 miles (50 km) for fixed stations, and 3 - 10 miles (5 - 15 km) for mobile stations. Developing a WiMAX network should be done in partnership with providers, technology organizations, and local government.

Community-wide WiMAX networks require significant infrastructure, including: towers (number and placement determined by a site survey conducted by the installation company); antennas; WiMAX transmitters and receivers; management server; Internet backhaul; and power. A one-to-one laptop and WiMAX program would include network and hardware maintenance costs. WiMAX infrastructure is a capital expense that can be amortized over many years. The typical infrastructure costs [\\$5-20 per student per month, over a five-year period](#), depending on factors such as population density, terrain, and the size of the area to be covered.

*Goal:*

Extend school district's intranet-based content and ensure equal access to home Internet.

*Benefits:*

- Affordability. WiMAX is cheaper than DSL, Cable, Fiber to the Home, and 3G wireless. This low cost per home brings it into the realm of possibilities for a school district to build its own private access network independent of commercial operators.
- Empowers all students to access online educational material after school hours so that digital content is not restricted to school or library computer labs for low-income students who cannot afford laptops or Internet access at home.
- Provides equal hardware and Internet access to all students.
- Supports curriculum updates and increased push for STEM education.

*Action Items:*

- Develop partnership with area providers, technology and education organizations, local government, and school district.
- Assess infrastructure needs.
- Contact local or national WiMAX service and equipment providers.

## **7) Identify and Expand Wireless Hotspots in the Community**

In order to maximize the benefits that wireless hotspots provide, a community must ensure there are an appropriate number of hotspots available, along with a published inventory of the locations of each wireless hotspot.

Wireless hotspots are classified as free or fee. Hotspots are often found at restaurants, train stations, airports, libraries, hotels, hospitals, coffee shops, bookstores, fuel stations, department stores, supermarkets, RV parks and campgrounds, public pay phones, and other public places. Many universities and schools have wireless networks on their campuses as well.

*Goal:*

Expand free access to broadband.

*Benefits:*

- Wireless hotspots in the community are a benefit to local residents without broadband at home, as well as tourists traveling to the region.

*Action Items:*

- Develop a community Wi-Fi inventory.
- Conduct an analysis to identify key areas and organizations for the expansion of local wireless hotspots.
- The local chamber of commerce and tourism groups should promote the hotspots to ensure maximum visibility in the community.

### **8) Develop & Issue an RFP for Build-out**

An RFP (request for proposals) is a widely used technique for establishing a selection of qualified responses from which to choose when contracting for services. The RFP should provide a guidance and due diligence framework for interested broadband providers and vendors. Furthermore, the RFP should request that interested parties provide plans for cost-effective community broadband networks, including equipment lists, locations, and itemized engineering cost estimates. In addition, the completed design should include what technology will be needed at customer premises, the performance that can be expected, and recurring costs associated with operating and maintaining the system once it is in place.

*Goal:*

To identify the most credible and reliable broadband provider to serve your region's households and businesses.

*Benefits:*

- After completing an RFP, your community will have a good handle on the potential project risks, as well as benefits, associated with build-out.
- An RFP lets providers know that the situation will be competitive. The competitive bidding scenario is often the best method available for obtaining the best pricing and, if done correctly, the best value.

*Action Items:*

- **Content:** The RFP should include a project overview, background information, scope of work, and selection criteria. Additionally, the RFP should require that vendors provide a cover letter, a statement of project understanding, a business plan, a proposed project schedule, qualifications, references, and cost.
- **Distribution:** The RFP could be posted to the community's website. Alternatively, one method of efficiently distributing an RFP is to send out to a wide audience a one-page document announcing the availability of the full RFP. Vendors and consultants who are interested in your project can then contact you to obtain the full RFP.

### 9) Identify, Map, and Validate Broadband Demand

Develop a team to conduct research surveys and market analyses to validate a business case. A market analysis includes research on the existing and potential service offerings and the respective rates to determine the levels of interest in the services and rate plans offered by the client. The team should provide accurate, timely, and thorough solutions, accompanied by personalized service to meet the needs of communities or broadband providers.

*Goal:*

To understand existing and potential markets for broadband subscribers (both residential and business)

*Benefits:*

- Enables the ability to better understand the key drivers of the broadband market.
- Validates the business case for network build-out and capacity investment.

*Action Items:*

- The project team should be prepared to provide research project design, data collection services, data analysis and reporting, and presentation development and delivery.

### 10) Complete a Vertical Assets Inventory

Wireless communications equipment can be placed in a wide variety of locations, but, ideally, wireless providers look for locations or structures in stable conditions, with reasonably easy access to electricity and wired telecommunications, and with a significant height relative to the surrounding area. “Vertical assets” are defined as structures on which wireless broadband equipment can be mounted and positioned to broadcast a signal over as much terrain as possible. These assets include structures such as cell towers, water tanks, grain silos, and multi-story buildings.

The lack of easily accessible and readily usable information regarding the number and location of vertical assets prevents the expansion of affordable, reliable wireless broadband service. Wireless broadband providers must determine if it is worth the effort and expense to collect and analyze this data when making investment decisions. Public sector organizations are faced with the same challenges. A centralized and comprehensive vertical assets inventory can help wireless broadband providers expedite decisions regarding the deployment of affordable, reliable broadband service in rural areas.

*Goal:*

Develop a single repository of vertical assets, such as communications towers, water tanks, and other structures potentially useful for the support of deploying affordable, reliable wireless broadband in less populated rural areas or topographically challenged areas.

*Benefits:*

- The vertical assets inventory provides data for private and public investment decisions, lowering the initial cost of efforts needed to identify potential mounting locations for infrastructure.
- The inventory can encourage the expansion of affordable, reliable wireless broadband services to underserved areas by shortening project development time.

*Action Items:*

- Identify or develop a vertical assets inventory toolkit to provide guidelines to identify structures or land that could serve as a site for installation of wireless communications equipment.
- Data to collect would include vertical asset type, owner type, minimum base elevation, minimum height above ground, and location.
- Identify and map elevated structures utilizing your community's GIS resources. The resulting database should be open ended; localities should be encouraged to continuously map assets as they are made available.

**11) Perform a Broadband Build-out Analysis in Unserved Areas**

Conduct an onsite visual assessment of the defined geographic area seeking broadband coverage. The assessment determines the feasibility of deploying various Internet systems in a defined area. You should gather site specific information required for (i) determining use of existing infrastructure, (ii) designing wired and wireless Internet system using these assets, and (iii) expanding the broadband coverage in the defined area.

Wireless may be the best likely solution. To assist with that, you should conduct a visual assessment of the vertical assets (broadcast towers and water tanks) to determine the feasibility of deploying a fixed wireless broadband Internet system in the unserved community and to gather site-specific information required for that purpose.

*Goal:*

Determine which areas lack the necessary technological structure and determine the feasibility of deploying various Internet systems in the defined area.

*Benefits:*

- Determines project feasibility and provides information to develop a business case for build-out.
- First step in providing unserved community residents with adequate broadband access.

*Action Items:*

Conduct a wireless assessment to include:

- Determining the functionality of all potential transmit locations

- Surveying the availability of adequate power sources at each location
- Identifying any issues regarding ingress and egress at each location
- Designing a wireless broadband system using these potential transmit locations
- Creating a methodology for the expansion of wireless broadband coverage into the unserved areas of the community

## **ADOPTION: RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

### **Digital Literacy**

#### **12) Distribute Digital Literacy Content**

Leverage the abundant digital literacy content available online to distribute to local trainers. Currently, numerous non-profit organizations and for-profit corporations provide curriculum that can be adapted for classroom or self-paced study. Some organizations also provide additional resources for instructor use, including classroom setup information, teaching tips for each course, additional practice, test item files, and answers to frequently asked questions. Digital literacy content can be deployed via local websites (a community portal), print material, podcasts, blogs, and videos.

Additionally, your community could create a partnership between libraries, school systems, computer suppliers, and broadband providers to provide free training and discounted computers and broadband service to low-income community members who are not participating in the digital age. An example of such a program is Connected Nation's Every Community Online program. This is an innovative program that is providing free digital literacy training, access to low-cost computers, and discounted broadband access to communities across the country.

#### *Goal:*

Facilitate partnerships in order to provide digital literacy training.

#### *Benefits:*

- Increasing the community's digital literacy facilitates widespread online access to education and other public and government services, provides equal access to opportunities such as jobs and workforce training, enables people to find information about their health, and offers the opportunity to increase levels of social interaction and civic involvement.

#### *Action Items:*

- Develop partnerships with local organizations and equip them with digital literacy content



- Train staff to deliver the curriculum to potential adopters
- Promote local organizations as a source of broadband access and training
- Engage non-adopters with a comprehensive public outreach campaign, helping them understand the benefits of broadband service and inviting them to experience the value at their libraries
- Provide curriculum to teach computer and Internet use, as well as the skills required to utilize the Internet effectively for essential services, education, employment, civic engagement, and cultural participation
- Offer compelling promotion to participants, giving them the opportunity to adopt the technology for everyday use in their homes

### **13) Develop a Technology Mentorship Program**

Initiate a program designed to recruit local high school or college students who excel in school and exhibit advanced leadership and technology skills to assist in technology training, technical support, and outreach efforts in their communities. Recognizing students as a powerful resource for local outreach efforts, the program will challenge them to extend their technology experiences beyond the classroom. The program essentially taps into a technology knowledge base that exists through these exceptional students. Students will be required to develop programs such as training seniors to use computers, initiating a computer refurbishing program, offering basic computer training for local communities, building websites, etc.

*Goal:*

Utilize student technology knowledge to implement community programs.

*Benefits:*

- The program helps students develop self-confidence and technical competencies as they work with their families, leaders, peers, neighbors, seniors, and other members of their communities. In addition to empowering these students with real world experience, it helps enhance their skills as they mature into productive and highly competent citizens.
- It helps to build character by awarding students opportunities to give back to their communities and embrace responsibilities associated with community service.
- The program will engage students who are creative, knowledgeable, and interested in technology as a great resource for planning, implementation, support, and using technology at a local level. With guidance and support, they will help to provide a missing, and important, link between the members of a community who have experience with broadband technology and those who are currently not using it.
- The program will expose students to potential career paths and provide a basis to determine if they want to further their educations in a technology field. It could also potentially provide a beginning client base from the relationships he or she has built within the community as a student.

#### **14) Establish a "Community Technology Academy"**

Develop partnerships between libraries, community centers, churches (places with computer labs for public use) and schools, community colleges and universities (places with subject matter experts) to develop a "Community Technology Academy." Providers, local businesses, and community volunteers may be included to provide financial and/or in-kind support for the program. Academy curriculum should include basic training in areas such as "Introduction to Computers," "Internet Basics," social networking, using communication technologies, and the use of applications such as Microsoft Office, OpenOffice or Google Docs.

*Goal:*

Create a partnership to underscore a community's commitment to developing a tech-savvy workforce.

*Benefits:*

- Creates a more digitally literate and competent populace.
- Develops community's human capital.

*Action Items:*

- Identify all organizations performing technology education and training services.
- Identify all the organizations that have computer labs.
- Compile a list of classes to be offered and develop content or leverage content that is currently available at minimum or no cost from organizations such as Microsoft.
- Determine what classes are currently being offered in the community.
- Develop a collaborative and cooperative approach for operating the "Community Technology Academy" between all organizations.

#### **15) Facilitate Internet Safety Classes**

One of the best ways to make sure community members are aware of how to navigate the Internet safely include instituting security-awareness training initiatives that include, but are not limited to, classroom style training sessions, security awareness website(s), helpful hints via e-mail, or even posters. These methods can help ensure that community members have a solid understanding of cyber threats. There are many risks, some more serious than others.

Among these dangers are viruses erasing entire systems, a hacker breaking into a system and altering files, someone using someone else's computer to attack others, someone stealing credit card information, sexual predators making advances at children, and criminals making unauthorized purchases. Unfortunately, there's no 100% guarantee that even with the best precautions some of these things won't happen, but there are steps that can be taken to minimize the chances. Awareness training can also be used to alleviate anxiety for community members who are not using the Internet because of fear of cyber threats.

*Goal:*

Create a program designed to help community members who are using the Internet to identify and avoid situations that could threaten their safety, threaten business or government networks, compromise confidential information, compromise the safety of children, compromise their identities and financial information, or destroy their reputations.

**Public Computer Access**

**No recommended actions.**

**Broadband Awareness**

**16) Facilitate a Technology Summit**

Develop and host a technology summit for residents and businesses to increase awareness of broadband value, service options, and the potential impact on quality of life. The technology summit should facilitate community partnerships between leaders in local government and the private sector, including non-profits and private businesses in the education, healthcare, and agriculture sectors, with the goal of ensuring that residents have at least one place in the community to use powerful new broadband technologies, and that this asset will be sustained over time. Further, the technology summit should highlight success stories as evidence of the impact of technology.

*Goal:*

A technology summit should bring together community stakeholders to develop a dialogue about how public and private stakeholders can collectively improve broadband access, adoption, and use.

*Benefits:*

- Highlights successes, opportunities, and challenges regarding community technology planning.
- Develops ongoing dialogue around improving broadband access, adoption, and use.
- Unifies community stakeholders under one vision.

*Action Items:*

- Create community partnerships.
- Identify funding sources and hosts.
- Identify suitable speakers.
- Develop relevant content.

### ***17) Implement a Community-Based Technology Awareness Program***

Conduct an extensive advertising campaign to raise awareness about the benefits of broadband and related technology. Develop a strategy to help the community become more aware of the benefits associated with Internet and computers adoption in their daily lives and activities. Methods of delivery include, but are not limited to, classroom style awareness sessions, press conferences led by community leaders, having a speaker at a community event, posting community posters, handouts, and public service announcements.

Additionally, the campaign should specifically target technology non-adopters. By using established media, the campaign reaches non-adopters where they are. Public radio, broadcast and cable TV, utility bill stuffers, and print newspapers have been utilized to reach households of many types. The public awareness campaign should focus on helping residents, particularly those from underserved communities, understand the personal value they can derive from an investment in information technology.

There are also opportunities to leverage existing resources to expand and enhance workforce-training programs, encourage more post-secondary education, and create additional awareness within the community in regards to global resources. It is important to support the outcomes of awareness training with the development of technology training programs that will then teach community members how to use the technology.

#### ***Goal:***

Organize, promote, and deliver a technology awareness program that would increase utilization of technology resources in the community.

#### ***Benefits:***

- Success is achieved when a community experiences increased usage of computers and the Internet, improved basic computer skills, increased use of technology in day-to-day operations of a community, and increased access to economic opportunities.

#### ***Action Items:***

- Determine the type of public awareness campaign that is appropriate for your community. Connect Ohio's statewide Every Citizen Online public awareness campaign provides an excellent case study of a professionally developed campaign. For more information, visit <http://connectohio.org/public-awareness-campaigns>.
- Create a centralized technology portal/website that promotes local technology resources for use by residents. Resources would include calendars (promoting local tech events and showing available hours at public computing centers), online training resources, and local computer resources.

## Vulnerable Population Focus

No recommended actions.

## USE: RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### Economic Opportunity

#### **18) Create a Main Street Portal (Community Portal)**

A community portal can be hosted by a local government, a non-profit, school, or an individual, depending on the preference of the community and availability of resources. Some of the major requirements of the portal include a good content management system, simple yet flexible interface, and interactive tools. A feature-rich community portal with multiple ways to inform community members about what is happening the community (e.g. community calendar, discussion forums, voting polls, blog community, real time chat, videos and image gallery, RSS feeds, blogs, automated reminders, accompanying Apps for smartphones, etc.) has the potential to increase civic participation.

The portal has a dual purpose. One purpose is to inform residents and businesses within the community about community events and initiatives, groups, and economic development initiatives. Additionally, the community portal can act as a training and education resource for residents; short courses and webinars can be offered on topics of interest in the community (e.g. education on community-wide economic development or infrastructure initiatives, pollution mitigation, community gardening, local zoning laws, etc.)

Secondly, a community portal empowers others from outside of the community to learn more about the community itself. A community portal helps project an image of a dynamic and "connected" community that has a savvy, tech-ready workforce and an informed citizenry. Businesses want to move to communities that are comfortable with technology and that are clearly making modest investments to stay current. As a marketing tool, the community portal becomes an important part of tourism efforts, a way to get travelers and visitors to stop and spend money on lodging and meals, to market local businesses to customers outside the community, and to project a modern and vibrant image to the world. For a community to be seen as vibrant, attractive, and great place to live and to work, the portal must be of the highest quality to project that image.

#### *Goal:*

Collaborate with local businesses, government, schools, non-profits, and community volunteers to create a web portal that will serve as a one-stop shop for all online government services,

community resources, tourism and economic development, census information, news, and events.

*Benefits:*

- Drives web traffic to other community links.
- Available and open data increases informed decision making and participation.
- Increases the community's visibility on the web.
- Acts as a recruitment tool for knowledge workers and high-tech businesses.
- Assists community members and visitors in making informed decisions.
- Can become a key tourism tool.

*Action Items:*

- Identify a host for the portal. The host can be a local government, non-profit, school, or an individual, depending on the preference of the community and availability of resources.
- Some of the major requirements of the portal include a good content management system, simple yet flexible interface, and interactive tools.
- The community portal should be continually updated to reflect the community's needs and technological expertise.

### **19) Develop a Farmers' Network**

Create a local agricultural portal to connect farmers with buyers and technical experts ([United States Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA), researchers, university and extension offices, state department of agriculture, the State or [National Farm Bureau](#), etc.) in agriculture. This portal will enable local farmers to share the latest techniques in farming such as using technological tools and data to make decisions. Tools can include GPS, yield monitors, variable rate technology, and remote sensing. Farmers can also share how to be successful in maximizing production and reducing costs.

Beyond information sharing, a local agricultural portal could also be utilized to provide online "booth space" for growers, producers, and artisans selling direct to the consumer. Set up much like an open-air farmers' market where vendors offer food, crafts, gifts, supplies, garden tools, and more, the purpose would be to provide a space where local and regional consumers can meet, correspond, and purchase products directly from the farm. This online farmers market could be a feature in the local agricultural portal or a Main Street Portal. Either way, an online farmers market should be feature-rich, enabling virtual farm tours, discussion forums, video and image galleries, and real time ordering and payment.

*Goal:*

Create a portal to keep the agricultural community connected and to facilitate advanced information sharing, news, and marketing of products.

*Benefits:*

- Connects agricultural community.
- Connects agricultural producers and consumers.
- Facilitates knowledge-share.
- Could be used for e-commerce.

*Action Items:*

- Identify an appropriate host for the agricultural portal.
- Some of the major requirements of the portal include a good content management system, simple yet flexible interface, and interactive tools.
- The community portal should be continually updated to reflect the agricultural community's needs and technological expertise.

## **20) Online Identification of Broadband Services at Key Economic Sites**

Develop an inventory of the broadband and telecommunication services available at community industrial parks, business parks, and other key business locations. Gathered information could include the highest speeds, technology platform, and number of fiber providers available. If not available, the closest provider and distance should be identified. All information should be shared with regional and state economic development planners, as well as listed on the area economic development websites (e.g. Chamber of Commerce or area development districts).

*Goal:*

Develop an inventory of the broadband and telecommunication services available at community industrial parks, business parks, and other key business locations to share with regional and state economic development planners.

*Benefits:*

- This data can be utilized to make site selection decisions, as well as to attract potential investment. According to a [2011 survey](#) of building owners and property managers, broadband access is one of the most important decision factors for commercial real estate siting — after price, parking, and location. Similarly, a [national survey](#) found that 77 percent of economic development professionals believe that to attract a new business, a community must have broadband of at least 100 Mbps.

*Action items:*

- Collaborate with commercial building owners, providers, and other stakeholders to develop an inventory of broadband and telecommunications services available at key economic sites.

## 21) Develop a Tourism Portal

Creating a tourism portal is a way to market local attractions to travelers from around the world and deliver sophisticated, interactive multimedia tools that detail lodging, recreation, and amenities in the community. Visitors to the portal must also be able to register for events, make reservations, and have access to activities, businesses, and other items that tourists generally look for such as locations of ATM machines, restaurants, antique bazaars, museums, hotspots, and tourist agencies. The tourism portal can be a component of a comprehensive community portal that has a dual purpose: first, to inform tourists about local attractions and give them opportunities to make inquiries and reservations. Second, the portal informs local residents and businesses within the community about current activities, groups, and commerce. In addition to serving residents, the portal will help to inform residents and businesses within the community about current activities, groups, and commerce.

### *Goal:*

Create a tourism portal that informs tourists about local attractions and provides information to locals regarding current activities, groups, and commerce.

### *Benefits:*

- Informs tourists and advertises to potential tourists.
- Drives web traffic to local businesses and tourist attractions.
- Increases the community's visibility on the web.

### *Action Items:*

- Identify an appropriate host for the tourism portal.
- Some of the major requirements of the portal include a good content management system, simple yet flexible interface, and interactive tools.

## 22) Host Website and Social Media Classes for Local Businesses

For small businesses, an online presence and the use of social media are vital to stay competitive in the twenty-first century. A website and social media use are not just for companies that have the experience, staff, or budget; any small business can tap into these resources. Training should be provided to small businesses regarding the use of websites and social media within that small business. Website topics should range from starting a basic website to more advanced topics such as e-Commerce. Social media topics should include a variety of social media outlets including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and LinkedIn.

### *Goal:*

To encourage small local businesses to develop websites and to use social media and e-Commerce.

### *Action Items:*

- Work with the local chamber and/or the libraries to expand on existing programs that promote e-Commerce, such as free websites and social media development within the small businesses of the community including those involved in agriculture.
- Partner with providers to sponsor workshops. (Providers may be willing to sponsor events since small business workshops will likely lead to increases broadband adoption and use).
- Identify regional and community partners with resources and expertise to assist the community in producing “free” website and social media workshops.
- Schedule workshops and advertise classes via local media.

### **23) Create a Teleworker Support and Attraction Program**

Teleworking offers significant benefits to employers, employees, self-employed individuals, and entrepreneurs. These benefits include businesses infrastructure savings, emissions reduction, and congestion management. Further, teleworking can help businesses and government agencies reduce real estate, energy, and other overhead costs, using the savings to avoid job cuts or to hire new staff. Research has shown that teleworking programs can increase an employer’s productivity, and enable them to continue operating without skipping a beat in the face of a natural disaster or other emergency situation that might otherwise bring business to a halt. Teleworking also allows employees to lower their commuting costs while juggling both work and family, even accommodating people with disabilities, the elderly, mothers, and rural residents who may not be in a position to work outside the home.

It is unlikely that all employees will be able to telework. A good way to start is to identify some types of positions or job types that can be performed remotely. Before fully implementing the policy, initiate a trial period and track results. Get feedback from managers and other employees as to the benefits and any challenges they are seeing. Then fine-tune and possibly expand the program to best suit everyone's needs.

#### *Goal:*

Promote or develop flexible efficient and effective work arrangements.

#### *Benefits:*

- Teleworking can benefit the environment, boost economic growth, and provide a better work-life balance for employees.
- Taps into community’s workforce potential (employable individuals with transportation limitations).
- Makes community more attractive to knowledge workers and business expansion.

#### *Action Items:*

- Promote the establishment of a teleworking pilot program.

- Establish a cross-functional project team, including, for example, information technology labor representatives and other stakeholders.
- Establish an agency-wide telework policy.
- Establish eligibility criteria to ensure that teleworkers are selected on an equitable basis using criteria such as suitability of tasks and employee performance.
- Develop a telework agreement for use between teleworkers and their managers.
- Conduct assessment of teleworker and organization technology needs.

#### **24) Develop or Identify a Broadband Training and Awareness Program for Small and Medium Businesses**

Methods of implementing a small and medium business broadband awareness program include, but are not limited to, facilitating awareness sessions, holding press conferences led by community leaders, inviting speakers to community business conferences or summits, and public service announcements. It is also important to educate local businesses about Internet tools that are available at minimum or no cost to them.

A training program, or entry-level “Broadband 101” course, could be utilized to give small and medium businesses an introduction on how to capitalize on broadband connectivity, as well as more advanced applications for IT staff. In addition, training should include resources for non-IT staff, such as how to use commerce tools for sales, streamline finances with online records, or leverage knowledge management across an organization. Additional training might include:

- “How-to” training for key activities such as online collaboration, search optimization, cybersecurity, equipment use, and Web 2.0 tools.
- Technical and professional support for hardware, software, and business operations.
- Licenses for business applications such as document creation, antivirus and security software, and online audio- and videoconferencing.
- Website development and registration.
- Basic communications equipment, such as low-cost personal computers and wireless routers.

*Goal:*

Businesses adopt and use broadband-enabled applications, resulting in increased efficiency, improved market access, reduced costs, and increased speed of both transactions and interactions.

*Benefits:*

- Provides entrepreneurial support.
- Eliminates knowledge gap about how best to utilize broadband tools, increasing productivity.
- Promotes business growth and workforce development.

- Broadband empowers small businesses to achieve operational scale more quickly by lowering start-up costs through faster business registration and improved access to customers, suppliers, and new markets. According to [Connected Nation's 2012 Jobs and Broadband Report](#), businesses that are using the Internet bring in approximately \$300,000 more in median annual revenues than their unconnected counterparts.

*Action Items:*

- Identify federally or state sponsored business support programs (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, SBA, EDA, Agriculture, or Manufacturing extension) that include assistance with broadband or IT content.
- Identify or develop a business awareness and training program.
- Identify or develop online training modules for businesses. For example, the Southern Rural Development Center, in partnership with National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA, administers the National e-Commerce Extension Initiative. As the sole outlet nationally for e-Commerce educational offerings geared at Extension programming, the National e-Commerce Extension Initiative features interactive online learning modules. In addition, the program's website offers a library of additional resources and a tutorials section for greater explanation on website design and function. Modules and presentations include: A Beginner's Guide to e-Commerce, Doing Business in the Cloud, Electronic Retailing: Selling on the Internet, Helping Artisans Reach Global Markets, and Mobile e-Commerce. To see some examples, click here: [http://srdc.msstate.edu/ebeat/small\\_business.html#](http://srdc.msstate.edu/ebeat/small_business.html#).

## 25) Establish a "Digital Factory"

A digital factory is a hybrid between an employment agency and a co-working facility that connects residents with online training courses and connections with companies that lack a physical presence in the community. Digital factories provide office space, computer and broadband access, and conference space, as well training ranging from computer and digital literacy skills to computer programming.

"VisionPerry," located in Perry County, Tennessee, provides an ideal example of the digital factory concept. VisionPerry provides office space, high-speed Internet service, a conference room, and training/work rooms that all act as a hub for employees, remote employers, and online training courses. Training at VisionPerry currently follows two main courses: Customer Service Representative and Programmer Training.

VisionPerry currently partners with companies such as LiveOps, Salesforce.com, and Kodak, that desire customer service representatives and remote programmers. Just like a co-working facility, workers who are employed and working at the digital factory pay, according to their salary and job levels, a small monthly fee for using the facilities and services of the digital factory, making the operation sustainable without ongoing government support.

For more information, visit <http://www.visionperry.com/>.

*Goal:*

Connect IT training and education with remote employment opportunities.

*Benefits:*

- This type of project can educate, train, employ, and has the potential to ultimately increase the productivity and economic competitiveness of your community's workforce.
- The physical infrastructure and training exposes a broad spectrum of residents to the benefits of telecommunications and productive uses of the Internet.
- Through training and work, participants will rely heavily on local ISPs, broadband technology, and emerging IT technologies to provide services to a global marketplace, in turn fostering the demand-driven strengthening of your community's physical Internet infrastructure.

*Action Items:*

- The digital factory concept requires a site suitable for establishing office infrastructure, educational partners to develop the workforce, and business relationships with enterprises willing to hire workers through the digital factory.
- Identify the physical, financial, and technological resources needed to establish a digital factory.
- Space to house workspace and training and support offices will be needed, as well as the equipment, such as computers and monitors for video conferencing and training.
- Develop partnerships with companies who would provide contractual employment to program graduates.
- This employment-focused program can be coupled with a digital literacy program, such as Connected Nation's Every Community Online program, in order to provide basic computer and Internet skills. Connected Nation provides a discounted, turnkey training lab solution, including refurbished or new computers, presentation equipment, training curriculum, and broadband service.

## **Education**

### **26) Improve Education through Digital Learning**

Several digital learning platforms are available for K-12 implementation. For example, [CFY](#) is a national education nonprofit that helps students in low-income communities, together with their teachers and families, harness the power of digital learning to improve educational outcomes. The organization is unique in that it operates both "in the cloud" (through

PowerMyLearning.com, a free K-12 online learning platform) and “on the ground” (through its Digital Learning Program, a whole school initiative that works hands-on with all three of the constituents that impact student achievement: teachers, parents, and students).

[PowerMyLearning.com](http://PowerMyLearning.com) is a free online educational tool that helps students, teachers and parents locate and access over 1,000 high-quality online digital learning activities — videos, simulations, and other educational software — to propel student achievement in subjects including math, English, science, and social studies. The platform features a kid-friendly design. There is a playpoint/badge feature to help motivate students. In addition, students can rate digital learning activities and share them with friends via e-mail, Facebook, and Twitter. CFY also provides onsite training to instruct teachers how to integrate PowerMyLearning into their classrooms.

*Goal:*

Increase student attention and engagement, and encourage students to take ownership of their learning and make it easier for teachers to differentiate instruction without embarrassing students.

*Benefits:*

- Increase learning time by extending learning beyond the classroom walls.
- Individualize learning and increase student engagement in school.
- Encourage self-directed learning.
- Enable parents to more effectively support their children at home.

## **27) Connect all School Classrooms to the Internet**

A K-12 broadband network should provide adequate performance and reach, including abundant wireless coverage in and out of school buildings. “Adequate” means enough bandwidth to support simultaneous use by all students and educators anywhere in the building and the surrounding campus to routinely use the Web, multimedia, and collaboration software. To reach the goal of sufficient broadband access for enhanced K-12 teaching and learning and improved school operations, the [State Educational Technology Directors Association](http://State Educational Technology Directors Association) (SETDA) recommends that broadband speeds in schools should equate to a [minimum of 100 Kbps per student/staff](#). However, given that bandwidth availability determines which online content, applications, and functionality students and educators will be able to use effectively in the classroom, additional bandwidth will be required in many, if not most, K-12 districts in the coming years.

In order to evolve with technology, school districts must continue to update local educational policies and curriculum, assess their broadband and classroom technology needs, evaluate the professional development requirements of teachers, and provide tech support.

*Goal:*

Facilitate the connection of all classrooms to broadband Internet so that teachers and students can take advantage of global educational resources.

*Benefits:*

- Students can actively utilize school computers to access rich, multimedia-enhanced educational content and the Internet.
- Students can post their content (including audio and video podcasts) to school learning management systems, access their e-textbooks and get their assignments online, and collaborate daily across the network with other students via wikis and other Internet-based applications.
- Teachers can videoconference or download streaming media to classrooms and take their students on virtual field trips to interact with subject area experts.
- School systems can utilize online courses.
- Teachers can actively participate in online professional learning communities to share lessons and to participate in professional development.

*Action Items:*

- Assess current and future bandwidth needs.
- Utilize E-Rate funding. [E-Rate](#) is the commonly used name for the Schools and Libraries Program of the [Universal Service Fund](#), which is administered by the [Universal Service Administrative Company](#) (USAC) under the direction of the [Federal Communications Commission](#) (FCC). The program provides discounts to assist most schools and libraries to obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access. Funding is requested under four categories of service: telecommunications services, Internet access, internal connections, and basic maintenance of internal connections. Discounts for support depend on the level of poverty and the urban/rural status of the population served and range from 20% to 90% of the costs of eligible services. Eligible schools, school districts and libraries may apply individually or as part of a consortium.
- If broadband capacity is lacking at the local level, seek partnerships with other local high-capacity demand institutions, including local civic leaders, government entities, public safety agencies, libraries, and hospitals or clinics, in a coordinated effort to aggregate local demand needs for increased broadband capacity and service. By aggregating demand within a local community, these institutions will be able to demonstrate to interested broadband providers existing pent-up demand and help justify private investments to bring greater capacity backhaul service to that community. That increased backhaul capacity can in turn benefit the whole community.

## Government

### **28) Improve Public Safety Communications**

Broadband offers a unique opportunity to achieve a comprehensive vision for enhancing the safety and security of your community's residents. Broadband can help public safety personnel prevent emergencies and respond swiftly when they occur. Broadband can also provide your community with new ways of calling for help and receiving emergency information.

For example, first responders from different jurisdictions and agencies often cannot communicate during emergencies due to disparate communication systems and the lack of integration between these systems. However, wireless broadband supports the interoperability of communications systems that would allow first responders anywhere in the nation to communicate with each other, send and receive critical voice and data to save lives, reduce injuries, and prevent acts of crime and terror.

Furthermore, with broadband, 911 call centers (also known as public safety answering points or PSAPs) could receive text, pictures and videos from the public and relay them to first responders. Similarly, the government could use broadband networks to disseminate vital information to the public during emergencies in multiple formats and languages.

To overcome the challenges posed by disparate communication systems and dated technology, your community's public safety agencies should collaborate with state and federal agencies in order to improve communication across organizational and jurisdictional boundaries. This is one of the priorities of the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet). Created by the Middle Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, FirstNet was established as an independent authority within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) in order to establish a single nationwide, interoperable public safety broadband network.

To find out more information on FirstNet and the Nationwide Public Safety Network, visit <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/category/firstnet>.

To find out more information regarding your state's efforts and point of contact for FirstNet planning, check with your Governor's office and/or statewide interoperability coordinator.

Other relevant initiatives include:

- [Assistance to Firefighters Grants \(AFG\)](#): The primary goal of the AFG Program is to meet the firefighting and emergency response needs of fire departments and non-affiliated emergency medical service organizations. AFG funds have helped firefighters and other first responders to obtain critically needed equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training, and other resources needed to protect the public and emergency personnel from fire and related hazards.



- [Community Connect Grant Program](#): The Community Connect Grant Program provides financial assistance to furnish broadband service in unserved, often isolated, rural communities. The grants are used to establish broadband service for critical facilities such as fire or police stations, while also providing service to residents and businesses.

*Goal:*

Leverage Broadband Technologies to Enhance Emergency Communications to and from the Public

**29) Perform a Municipal Information Technology Assessment**

Conduct a Community IT Assessment of current environment performed through an interview process (onsite, video conferencing, e-mail/web based) to determine overall IT operational efficiency. Once complete, an end deliverable provides detailed assessment results including a relative “grade” in each area as well as suggested action plans for any areas that are found to be below standards.

*Goal:*

Determine overall IT operational efficiency and establish an informed process for strategic IT decisions.

*Benefits:*

- Eliminates performance gaps, redundancies, inefficiencies, and unintended information silos.
- Assists in providing a clear, repeatable, streamlined and informed process for making strategic IT decisions.

*Action Items:*

- Identify a complete list of all IT equipment including age, condition, and capacity/specifications currently in use.
- Assess server infrastructure (hardware, operating systems, and storage) and network topology (design, cable plant, and Internet connectivity).
- Identify all currently used applications/uses and backup procedures.
- Identify and assess security measures (firewall, perimeter, physical and wireless security).
- Identify “Best Practices” for each office as appropriate.

**30) Improve the Online Presence of Government**

*Goal:*

The goal should be to make the website relevant, useful, convenient, and the go-to for local information and services.

*Project Description:*

The government's website must meet the needs of the citizen; should equal or exceed the standards of private company websites; design must be uncluttered, informative, and easy to navigate; and website best practices must be continuously monitored and implemented. Further, website administrators should be funded and required to follow the latest best practices in design and web search optimization. They should have a process for archiving content that is no longer in frequent use and no longer required to be posted on the website. In addition, the local government should regularly solicit public opinion and analyze citizens' online preferences before making changes to their website or before launching a new website.

*Benefits:*

- Makes government more efficient, resulting in greater public convenience and cost effectiveness.
- Improves the quality and accessibility of government information, and helps agencies deliver the services most requested by their customers.

*Action Items:*

- Review the current e-Government applications to identify gap areas. Compare current applications to other comparable government websites of like size from around the state to identify improvement areas.
- Conduct an assessment of the usability of current applications.
- Use current and draft survey instruments to identify applications of public interest. Use this survey to examine potential e-Government applications.
- Identify high-volume services to target for online automation. Emergency and first responder applications will be included.
- Identify partners and entities to assist in implementation.
- Develop and launch applications.

### **31) Pursue Next Generation 911 Upgrades**

The overall system architecture of Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) has essentially not changed since the first 911 call was made in 1968. These 911 systems are voice-only networks based on original wireline, analog, circuit-switched infrastructure that prevent easy transmission of data and critical sharing of information that can significantly enhance the decision-making ability, response, and quality of service provided to emergency callers. To meet growing public expectations of 911-system functionality (capable of voice, data, and video transmission from different types of communication devices), that framework should be replaced. This would require replacing analog phone systems with an Internet Protocol (IP)-based system. This system would provide an enabling platform for current technology, as well as future upgrades.

For example, in January 2013, the Federal Communications Commission proposed to amend its rules by requiring all wireless carriers and providers of "interconnected" text messaging

applications to support the ability of consumers to send text messages to 911 in all areas throughout the nation where 911 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) are also prepared to receive the texts (which requires an IP-based system). Text-to-911 will provide consumers with enhanced access to emergency communications in situations where a voice call could endanger the caller, or a person with disabilities is unable to make a voice call. In the near term, text-to-911 is generally supported as the first step in the transition to a Next Generation 911.

*Goal:*

Design a system that enables the transmission of voice, data, or video from different types of communication devices to Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) and onto emergency responder networks.

*Benefits:*

Transitioning to a “Next Generation” IP-based network will enable the public to make voice, text, or video emergency calls from any communications device. With Next Generation 911, responders and PSAPs will gain greater situational awareness, which will enable better-informed decisions, resulting in better outcomes and, ultimately, a safer community. By capitalizing on advances in technologies, you are enabling:

- Quicker and more accurate information to responders
- Better and more useful forms of information
- More flexible, secure and robust PSAP operations
- Lower capital and operating costs

*Action Items:*

If you're involved in PSAP decision making and are faced with replacing aging systems or purchasing new technology for the very first time, you need to consider what your most immediate requirements are and where you need to be 10 years from now. Your community can take a measured and practical approach that spreads the operational impact and costs of a Next Generation 911 transition over time. Your local agency should choose a starting point that makes the most sense and provides immediate benefits for their PSAP, responders, and communities they serve. For example, according to [Intrado, Inc.](#), a provider of 911 and emergency communications infrastructure to over 3,000 public safety agencies, local public-safety agencies can implement any of the following next-generation 911 components today, and provide immediate benefits with little to no disruption of current operations:

- A public-safety-class, IP-based network
- IP-based call processing equipment (CPE) in public-safety answering points (PSAPs)
- Geographic information system (GIS) data enhancements
- Advanced 911 data capabilities and applications

### 32) Improve Online Business Services Offered by the Government

Developing more e-Government applications not only provides value to businesses, but also allows the government to realize cost savings and achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness. Examples of activities include paying for permits and licensing, paying taxes, providing services to the government and other operations.

*Goal:*

Build an e-Government solution that improves the ability of businesses to conduct business with the government over the Internet.

*Benefits:*

- Facilitates business interaction with government, especially for urban planning, real estate development, and economic development.
- e-Government lowers the cost to a business conducting all of its interaction with government. Further, as more businesses conduct their business with government online, their transaction costs will be lowered. The cost to a business for any interaction decreases as more technology and fewer staff resources are needed.
- e-Government provides a greater amount of information to businesses and provides it in a more organized and accessible manner.

*Action Items:*

- The first step in the process of providing e-Government services to constituents is developing a functional web portal that allows businesses to have access to resources easily. Such a portal can enable outside businesses looking for new opportunities to make informed decisions about working in a certain community.
- In addition, often overlooked in e-Government deployment are the issues of audiences and needs. Local governments must determine who will visit the website and what sort of information and services they will typically seek. A first step toward meeting general needs of constituents is to provide online access to as broad a swath of governmental information and data as is possible.

The sort of information that should be included is:

- Hours of operation and location of facilities.
- Contact information of key staff and departments.
- An intuitive search engine.
- Access to documents (ideally a centralized repository of online documents and forms).
- Local ordinances, codes, policies, and regulations.
- Minutes of official meetings and hearings.
- News and events.

## Healthcare

### **33) Promote Telemedicine in Remote Areas**

Promote the delivery of healthcare services from a distance using video-based technologies. Telemedicine can help to address challenges associated with living in sparsely populated areas and having to travel long distances to seek medical care - particularly for patients with chronic illnesses. It also addresses the issue of the lack of medical specialists in remote areas by awarding access to specialists in major hospitals situated in other cities, states, or countries. While telemedicine can be delivered to patient homes, it can also be implemented in partnership with local clinics, libraries, churches, schools or businesses that have the appropriate equipment and staff to manage it. The most critical steps in promoting telemedicine are ensuring that patients and medical professionals have access to broadband service, understand the main features of telemedicine, are aware of the technologies required for telemedicine, and understand how to develop, deliver, use, and evaluate telemedicine services.

One relevant funding opportunity includes [Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loans and Grants Program](#). USDA provides loans and grants to rural community facilities (e.g. schools, libraries, hospitals, and tribal organizations) for advanced telecommunications systems that can provide healthcare and educational benefits to rural areas. Three kinds of financial assistance are available: a full grant, grant-loan combination, and a full loan.

*Goal:*

Deliver improved healthcare services to rural residents.

## APPENDIX 1: STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE OF BROADBAND

### Statewide Infrastructure

As part of the Texas State Broadband Initiative (SBI) and in partnership and at the direction of the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), Connected Texas produced an inaugural map of broadband availability in the spring of 2010. The key goal of the map was to highlight communities and households that remain unserved or underserved by broadband service; this information was essential to estimating the broadband availability gap in the state and understanding the scope and scale of challenges in providing universal broadband service to all citizens across the state. Since the initial map's release, Connected Texas has collected and released new data every six months, with updates in October and April annually.

The most current statewide- and county-specific broadband inventory maps released in the fall of 2012 depict a geographic representation of provider-based broadband data represented by cable, DSL, fiber-to-the-home, fixed wireless, and mobile wireless services. These maps also incorporate data such as political boundaries and major transportation networks in the state. Statewide broadband maps can be found at: <http://www.connectedtx.org/mapping/state>. And county-specific maps and data can be found at: [http://www.connectedtx.org/community\\_profile/find\\_your\\_county/texas/sabine](http://www.connectedtx.org/community_profile/find_your_county/texas/sabine).

SBI Download Speed Tiers	Unserved Households ('000)	Served Households ('000)	Percent Households by Speed Tier
<b>At Least 768 Kbps/200 Kbps</b>	149,280	8,773,653	98.33%
<b>At Least 1.5 Mbps/200 Kbps</b>	438,867	8,484,066	95.08%
<b>At Least 3 Mbps/768 Kbps</b>	687,838	8,235,095	92.29%
<b>At Least 6 Mbps/1.5 Mbps</b>	1,519,149	7,403,784	82.97%
<b>At Least 10 Mbps/1.5 Mbps</b>	1,807,469	7,115,464	79.74%
<b>At Least 25 Mbps/1.5 Mbps</b>	4,140,402	4,782,531	53.60%
<b>At Least 50 Mbps/1.5 Mbps</b>	4,200,526	4,722,407	52.92%
<b>At Least 100 Mbps/1.5 Mbps</b>	5,928,174	2,994,759	33.56%
<b>At Least 1 Gbps/1.5 Mbps</b>	8,922,933	0	0%

Source: Connected Texas, November 2012

Table 1 reports updated summary statistics of the estimated fixed, terrestrial broadband service inventory (excluding mobile and satellite service) across the state of Texas; it presents the number and percentage of unserved and served households by speed tiers. The total number of households in Texas, based on the 2010 Census, is 8,922,933, for a total population of approximately 25 million people. Table 1 indicates that 98.33% of households are able to connect to basic broadband service at speeds of at least 768 Kbps download/200 Kbps upload. This implies that the number of households originally estimated by Connected Texas to be unserved has dropped from 257,571 households in the fall of 2010 to 149,280 households in the fall of 2012. Further, approximately 687,838 households across Texas have broadband available of at least 3 Mbps download/768 Kbps upload speeds. The percentage of Texas households having fixed broadband access available of at least 6 Mbps download and 1.5 Mbps upload speeds is estimated at 82.97%.

Taking into account both fixed and mobile broadband service platforms, an estimated 99.90% of Texas households have broadband available from at least one provider at speeds of 768 Kbps download/200 Kbps upload or higher. This leaves 9,123 households in the state completely unserved by any form of terrestrial broadband (including mobile, but excluding satellite services).

As differences in broadband availability estimates between the fall of 2010 and the fall of 2012 show, additional participating broadband providers can have a large impact upon Texas broadband mapping inventory updates. Further, the measured broadband inventory provides an estimate of the true extent of broadband coverage across the state. There is a degree of measurement error inherent in this exercise that should be taken into consideration when analyzing the data. This measurement error will decrease as local, state, and federal stakeholders identify areas where the displayed coverage is underestimated or overestimated. Connected Texas welcomes such feedback to be analyzed in collaboration with broadband providers to correct errors identified in the maps.

In addition, the broadband availability data collected, processed, and aggregated by Connected Texas has been sent on a semi-annual basis to the NTIA to be used in the National Broadband Map, and comprises the source of Texas' broadband availability estimates reported by the NTIA and the FCC in the National Map. The National Broadband Map can be found here:

<http://www.broadbandmap.gov> and the specific page for analyzing Texas' data can be found here: <http://www.broadbandmap.gov/summarize/state/texas>.

### **Interactive Map**

Connected Texas provides My ConnectView<sup>TM</sup>, an online tool developed and maintained by Connected Nation, intended to allow users to create completely customized views and maps of broadband infrastructure across the state. The self-service nature of this application empowers Texas' citizens to take an active role in seeking service, upgrading service, or simply becoming

increasingly aware of what broadband capabilities and possibilities exist in their area, city, county, or state. My ConnectView™ is available at: <http://www.connectedtx.org/interactive-map>.

For additional maps and other related information, visit:  
[http://www.connectedtx.org/community\\_profile/find\\_your\\_county/texas/sabine](http://www.connectedtx.org/community_profile/find_your_county/texas/sabine).

## Business and Residential Technology Assessments

To complement the broadband inventory and mapping data, Connected Texas periodically conducts statewide residential and business technology assessments to understand broadband demand trends and across the state. The purpose of this research is to better understand the drivers and barriers to technology and broadband adoption and estimate the broadband adoption gap across the state of Texas. Key questions the data address are: who, where, and how are households in Texas using broadband technology? How is this technology impacting Texas households and residents? And, who is not adopting broadband service and why? What are the barriers that prevent citizens from embracing this empowering technology?

Through Connected Texas' research, many insights are able to be collected. The 2012 Residential Technology Assessment revealed the following key findings:

- Statewide, 69% of residents subscribe to broadband service, up from 62% in 2011.
- Despite the numerous benefits of broadband, 31% of, or approximately 5.7 million, Texans still do not subscribe to home broadband service.
- There remains an adoption gap between rural and non-rural regions of the state as 58% of rural Texans subscribe to home broadband service, compared to the 69% state average.
- Despite the statewide growth in home broadband adoption, not all Texas residents are subscribing at the same rate. Only 37% of Texas low-income households have broadband service and only 56% of Hispanic adults in Texas subscribe to broadband.
- The top reasons for Texans not subscribing to home broadband are:
  - 15% say they don't want it
  - 13% say broadband fees are too expensive

Additionally, an assessment on technology of 811 businesses in the state released in the fall of 2012 in the report titled *Technology Adoption Among Texas Businesses* revealed the following key findings:

- Businesses with high-speed Internet connections report having median annual revenues \$200,000 more than businesses without broadband.
- One-half of all Texas businesses (approximately 261,000 businesses) have a website. Median annual revenues among broadband-connected businesses with websites are \$300,000 higher than those without.



- Approximately 95% of Texas businesses using broadband today report that they are satisfied with their broadband service, with 64% answering that they are “Very Satisfied” with their broadband.
- Rural Texas businesses report needing more bandwidth at greater percentages than their urban or suburban counterparts.
- Approximately 27% of all businesses – and 28% of small businesses with fewer than five employees – do not use broadband for their daily business needs.
- Roughly one-quarter of state businesses allow employees to telework, allowing workers more flexibility and job opportunities, and helping businesses operate more efficiently.

For more information on the statewide information described, visit the Connected Texas website at <http://www.connectedtx.org/research>.

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## APPENDIX 2: PARTNER AND SPONSORS

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**Connected Texas**, in partnership with the Texas Department of Agriculture, supports Texas' reinvention and technological transformation through innovation, job creation, and entrepreneurship via the expansion of broadband technology and increased usage by Texas residents. In 2009, Connected Texas partnered with the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) to engage in a comprehensive broadband planning and technology initiative as part of the national effort to map and expand broadband. The program began by gathering provider data to form a statewide broadband map, and has progressed to the planning and development stage. At this point the program is expanding to include community engagement in local technology planning, identification of opportunities with existing programs, and implementation of technology projects designed to address digital literacy, improve education, give residents access to global Internet resources, and stimulate economic development.  
<http://www.connectedtx.org>

The Texas Legislature established the **Texas Department of Agriculture** in 1907. The agency's key objectives are to promote production agriculture, consumer protection, economic development, and healthy living. The agriculture commissioner oversees the agency and is elected every four years. The current commissioner, Todd Staples, was first elected in 2006 and re-elected to a second term in 2010.

The TDA is a diversified state agency that provides value-added services through its regulatory and marketing initiatives. The TDA is headquartered in Austin and has five regional service offices, six satellite offices, six laboratories, and six livestock export facilities.

The TDA's mission is to partner with all Texans to make Texas the nation's leader in agriculture, fortify our economy, empower rural communities, promote healthy lifestyles, and cultivate winning strategies for rural, suburban, and urban Texas through exceptional service and the common threads of agriculture in our daily lives.  
<http://texasagriculture.gov>

**Connected Nation** (Connected Texas' parent organization) is a leading technology organization committed to bringing affordable high-speed Internet and broadband-enabled resources to all Americans. Connected Nation effectively raises the awareness of the value of broadband and related technologies by developing coalitions of influencers and enablers for improving technology access, adoption, and use. Connected Nation works with consumers, community leaders, states, technology providers, and foundations, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to develop and implement technology expansion programs with core competencies centered on a mission to improve digital inclusion for people and places previously underserved or overlooked.

<http://www.connectednation.org>

**National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)** is an agency of the United States Department of Commerce that is serving as the lead agency in running the State Broadband Initiative (SBI). Launched in 2009, the NTIA's State Broadband Initiative (SBI) implements the joint purposes of the Recovery Act and the Broadband Data Improvement Act, which envisioned a comprehensive program, led by state entities or non-profit organizations working at their direction, to facilitate the integration of broadband and information technology into state and local economies. Economic development, energy efficiency, and advances in education and healthcare rely not only on broadband infrastructure, but also on the knowledge and tools to leverage that infrastructure.

The NTIA has awarded a total of \$293 million for the SBI program to 56 grantees, one each from the 50 states, 5 territories, and the District of Columbia, or their designees. Grantees such as Connected Texas are using this funding to support the efficient and creative use of broadband technology to better compete in the digital economy. These state-created efforts vary depending on local needs but include programs to assist small businesses and community institutions in using technology more effectively, developing research to investigate barriers to broadband adoption, searching out and creating innovative applications that increase access to government services and information, and developing state and local task forces to expand broadband access and adoption.

Since accurate data is critical for broadband planning, another purpose of the SBI program is to assist states in gathering data twice a year on the availability, speed, and location of broadband services, as well as the broadband services used by community institutions such as schools, libraries, and hospitals. This data is used by the NTIA to update the National Broadband Map, the first public, searchable nationwide map of broadband availability launched February 17, 2011.

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## APPENDIX 3: THE NATIONAL BROADBAND PLAN

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The National Broadband Plan, released in 2010 by the Federal Communications Commission, has the express mission of creating a high-performance America—a more productive, creative, efficient America in which affordable broadband is available everywhere and everyone has the means and skills to use valuable broadband applications. The plan seeks to ensure that the entire broadband ecosystem—networks, devices, content and applications— is healthy.

The plan recommends that the country adopt and track the following six goals to serve as a compass over the next decade:

**GOAL No. 1: At least 100 million U.S. homes should have affordable access to actual download speeds of at least 100 megabits per second and actual upload speeds of at least 50 megabits per second.**

**GOAL No. 2: The United States should lead the world in mobile innovation, with the fastest and most extensive wireless networks of any nation.**

**GOAL No. 3: Every American should have affordable access to robust broadband service and the means and skills to subscribe if they so choose.**

**GOAL No. 4: Every American community should have affordable access to at least 1 gigabit per second broadband service to anchor institutions such as schools, hospitals, and government buildings.**

**GOAL No. 5: To ensure the safety of the American people, every first responder should have access to a nationwide, wireless, interoperable broadband public safety network.**

**GOAL No. 6: To ensure that America leads in the clean energy economy, every American should be able to use broadband to track and manage their real-time energy consumption.**

To learn more, visit: [www.broadband.gov](http://www.broadband.gov)

## APPENDIX 4: WHAT IS CONNECTED?

The goal of Connected Texas' Connected program is to certify that each community that participates in the program has, in some relevant manner, addressed their community's need for improved Access, Adoption, and Use of technology by assessing community technological resources, identifying gaps, and working to fill those gaps:

- **ACCESS** – Is Broadband infrastructure available to all residents?
- **ADOPTION** – Do residents use the technologies?
- **USE** – Are residents using technology to improve their quality of life?

### Connected Certification Process



The Connected certification process consists of a 4-step process to community certification:

**Step 1: Create a community technology team.** Facilitate kickoff meetings and program orientation with regional leaders and community champions. Provide them with tools and resources to form a community team. This team will be represented by local leaders from key community sectors, including:

- Broadband Provider Community
- Government: General, Public Safety, Energy and Environment
- Economic Opportunity: Economic Development, Business Development, Tourism

- Agriculture
- Education: K-12, Higher Education
- Libraries
- Healthcare

**Step 2: Perform a technology assessment.** With support provided by a planning specialist, Connected Texas will provide communities with tools (electronic or print depending on the community needs) to benchmark local community technology. Bolstered by benchmarking data that had been gathered through Connected Texas’ mapping and market research, the Sabine County Broadband Committee will work with community members to determine their overall broadband and technology grade on a 13-point “community certification AAU” model:

1. Broadband Availability
2. Broadband Speeds
3. Broadband Competition
4. Middle Mile Access
5. Mobile Broadband Availability
6. Digital Literacy
7. Public Computer Centers
8. Broadband Awareness
9. Vulnerable Population Focus
10. Economic Opportunity
11. Education
12. Government
13. Healthcare

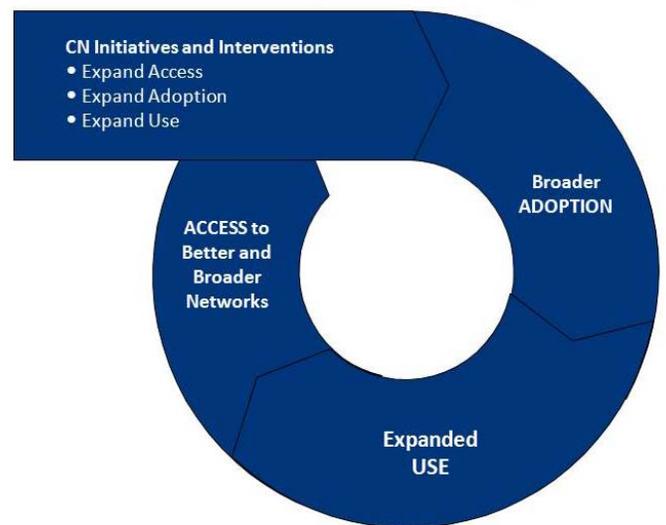
**Step 3: Action Planning & Implementation.**

Following Community Assessments, the data is analyzed, gaps will be determined, and recommended actions to help to fill gaps will be identified. After successful execution of projects the community will be certified as a Connected Community.

**Step 4: Project Success and Expanded Local**

**Empowerment.** Once a community is certified, the community will have an avenue to discuss its success and pursue opportunities as a recognized, technologically advanced community.

**Broadband Catalysts for Change**



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## APPENDIX 5: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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### #

**3G Wireless - Third Generation** - Refers to the third generation of wireless cellular technology. It has been succeeded by 4G wireless. Typical speeds reach about 3 Mbps.

**4G Wireless - Fourth Generation** - Refers to the fourth generation of wireless cellular technology. It is the successor to 2G and 3G. Typical implementations include LTE, WiMax, and others. Maximum speeds may reach 100 Mbps, with typical speeds over 10 Mbps.

### A

**ARRA** - American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

**ADSL - Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line** - DSL service with a larger portion of the capacity devoted to downstream communications, less to upstream. Typically thought of as a residential service.

**ATM - Asynchronous Transfer Mode** - A data service offering by ASI that can be used for interconnection of customers' LAN. ATM provides service from 1 Mbps to 145 Mbps utilizing Cell Relay Packets.

### B

**Bandwidth** - The amount of data transmitted in a given amount of time; usually measured in bits per second, kilobits per second, and megabits per second.

**BIP - Broadband Infrastructure Program** - Part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), BIP is the program created by the U.S. Department of Agriculture focused on expanding last mile broadband access.

**Bit** - A single unit of data, either a one or a zero. In the world of broadband, bits are used to refer to the amount of transmitted data. A kilobit (Kb) is approximately 1,000 bits. A megabit (Mb) is approximately 1,000,000 bits.

**BPL - Broadband Over Powerline** - An evolving theoretical technology that provides broadband service over existing electrical power lines.

**BPON - Broadband Passive Optical Network** - A point-to-multipoint fiber-lean architecture network system which uses passive splitters to deliver signals to multiple users. Instead of running a separate strand of fiber from the CO to every customer, BPON uses a single strand of fiber to serve up to 32 subscribers.

**Broadband** - A descriptive term for evolving digital technologies that provide consumers with integrated access to voice, high-speed data service, video-demand services, and interactive delivery services (e.g. DSL, cable Internet).

**BTOP - Broadband Technology Opportunities Program** - Part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), BTOP is the program created by the U.S. Department of Commerce

focused on expanding broadband access, expanding access to public computer centers, and improving broadband adoption.

## C

**Cable Modem** - A modem that allows a user to connect a computer to the local cable system to transmit data rather than video. It allows broadband services at speeds of five Mbps or higher.

**CAP - Competitive Access Provider** - (or “Bypass Carrier”) A company that provides network links between the customer and the Inter-Exchange Carrier or even directly to the Internet Service Provider. CAPs operate private networks independent of Local Exchange Carriers.

**Cellular** - A mobile communications system that uses a combination of radio transmission and conventional telephone switching to permit telephone communications to and from mobile users within a specified area.

**CLEC - Competitive Local Exchange Carrier** - Wireline service provider that is authorized under state and federal rules to compete with ILECs to provide local telephone and Internet service. CLECs provide telephone services in one of three ways or a combination thereof: a) by building or rebuilding telecommunications facilities of their own, b) by leasing capacity from another local telephone company (typically an ILEC) and reselling it, or c) by leasing discreet parts of the ILEC network referred to as UNEs.

**CMTS - Cable Modem Termination System** - A component (usually located at the local office or head end of a cable system) that exchanges digital signals with cable modems on a cable network, allowing for broadband use of the cable system.

**CO - Central Office** - A circuit switch where the phone and DSL lines in a geographical area come together, usually housed in a small building.

**Coaxial Cable** - A type of cable that can carry large amounts of bandwidth over long distances. Cable TV and cable modem broadband service both utilize this technology.

**Community Anchor Institutions (CAI)** - Institutions that are based in a community and larger user of broadband. Examples include schools, libraries, healthcare facilities, and government institutions.

**CWDM - Coarse Wavelength Division Multiplexing** - Multiplexing (more commonly referred to as WDM) with less than 8 active wavelengths per fiber.

## D

**Dial-Up** - A technology that provides customers with access to the Internet over an existing telephone line. Dial-up is much slower than broadband.

**DLEC - Data Local Exchange Carrier** - DLECs deliver high-speed access to the Internet, not voice. DLECs include Covad, Northpoint, and Rhythms.

**Downstream** - Data flowing from the Internet to a computer (surfing the net, getting e-mail, downloading a file).

**DSL - Digital Subscriber Line** - The use of a copper telephone line to deliver “always on” broadband Internet service.

**DSLAM - Digital Subscriber Line Access Multiplier** - A piece of technology installed at a telephone company's CO that connects the carrier to the subscriber loop (and ultimately the customer's PC).

**DWDM - Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing** - A SONET term which is the means of increasing the capacity of Sonet fiber-optic transmission systems.

## E

**E-rate** - A federal program that provides subsidy for voice and data lines to qualified schools, hospitals, Community-Based Organization (CBOs), and other qualified institutions. The subsidy is based on a percentage designated by the FCC.

**Ethernet** - A local area network (LAN) standard developed for the exchange data with a single network. It allows for speeds from 10 Mbps to 10 Gbps.

**EON - Ethernet Optical Network** - The use of Ethernet LAN packets running over a fiber network.

**EvDO - Evolution Data Only** - A new wireless technology that provides data connections that are 10 times faster than a regular modem.

## F

**FCC - Federal Communications Commission** - A federal regulatory agency that is responsible for, among other things, regulating VoIP.

**Fixed Wireless Broadband** - The operation of wireless devices or systems for broadband use at fixed locations such as homes or offices.

**Franchise Agreement** - An agreement between a cable provider and a government entity that grants the provider the right to serve cable and broadband services to a particular area - typically a city, county, or state.

**FTTH - Fiber To The Home** - Another name for fiber to the premises, where fiber optic cable is pulled directly to an individual's residence or building allowing for extremely high broadband speeds.

**FTTN - Fiber To The Neighborhood** - A hybrid network architecture involving optical fiber from the carrier network, terminating in a neighborhood cabinet that converts the signal from optical to electrical.

**FTTP - Fiber To The Premise (Or FTTB – Fiber To The Building)** - A fiber optic system that connects directly from the carrier network to the user premises.

## G

**Gbps - Gigabits per second** - 1,000,000,000 bits per second or 1,000 Mbps. A measure of how fast data can be transmitted.

**GPON - Gigabyte-Capable Passive Optical Network** - Uses a different, faster approach (up to 2.5 Gbps in current products) than BPON.

**GPS - Global Positioning System** - A system using satellite technology that allows an equipped user to know exactly where he is anywhere on earth.

**GSM - Global System for Mobile Communications** - This is the current radio/telephone standard in Europe and many other countries except Japan and the United States.

## H

**HFC - Hybrid Fiber Coaxial Network** - An outside plant distribution cabling concept employing both fiber optic and coaxial cable.

**Hotspot** - See *Wireless Hotspot*.

## I

**IEEE** - Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (pronounced “Eye-triple-E.”).

**ILEC - Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier** - The traditional wireline telephone service providers within defined geographic areas. They typically provide broadband Internet service via DSL technology in their area. Prior to 1996, ILECs operated as monopolies having the exclusive right and responsibility for providing local and local toll telephone service within LATAs.

**IP-VPN - Internet Protocol - Virtual Private Network** - A software-defined network offering the appearance, functionality, and usefulness of a dedicated private network.

**ISDN - Integrated Services Digital Network** - An alternative method to simultaneously carry voice, data, and other traffic, using the switched telephone network.

**ISP - Internet Service Provider** - A company providing Internet access to consumers and businesses, acting as a bridge between customer (end-user) and infrastructure owners for dial-up, cable modem, and DSL services.

## K

**Kbps - Kilobits per second** - 1,000 bits per second. A measure of how fast data can be transmitted.

## L

**LAN - Local Area Network** - A geographically localized network consisting of both hardware and software. The network can link workstations within a building or multiple computers with a single wireless Internet connection.

**LATA - Local Access and Transport Areas** - A geographic area within a divested Regional Bell Operating Company is permitted to offer exchange telecommunications and exchange access service. Calls between LATAs are often thought of as long-distance service. Calls within a LATA (IntraLATA) typically include local and local toll telephone services.

**Local Loop** - A generic term for the connection between the customer’s premises (home, office, etc.) and the provider’s serving central office. Historically, this has been a wire connection; however, wireless options are increasingly available for local loop capacity.

**Low Income** - Low income is defined by using the poverty level as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. A community’s low-income percentage can be found at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

## M

**MAN - Metropolitan Area Network** - A high-speed data intra-city network that links multiple locations with a campus, city, or LATA. A MAN typically extends as far as 50 kilometers (or 31 miles).

**Mbps - Megabits per second** - 1,000,000 bits per second. A measure of how fast data can be transmitted.

**Metro Ethernet** - An Ethernet technology-based network in a metropolitan area that is used for connectivity to the Internet.

**Multiplexing** - Sending multiple signals (or streams) of information on a carrier (wireless frequency, twisted pair copper lines, fiber optic cables, coaxial, etc.) at the same time. Multiplexing, in technical terms, means transmitting in the form of a single, complex signal and then recovering the separate (individual) signals at the receiving end.

## N

**NTIA** - National Telecommunications and Information Administration, which is housed within the United State Department of Commerce.

**NIST** - National Institute of Standards and Technology.

## O

**Overbuilders** - Building excess capacity. In this context, it involves investment in additional infrastructure projects to provide competition.

**OVS - Open Video Systems** - A new option for those looking to offer cable television service outside the current framework of traditional regulation. It would allow more flexibility in providing service by reducing the build-out requirements of new carriers.

## P

**PON - Passive Optical Network** - A Passive Optical Network consists of an optical line terminator located at the Central Office and a set of associated optical network terminals located at the customer's premises. Between them lies the optical distribution network comprised of fibers and passive splitters or couplers.

## R

**Right-of-Way** - A legal right of passage over land owned by another. Carriers and service providers must obtain right-of-way to dig trenches or plant poles for cable and telephone systems and to place wireless antennae.

**RPR - Resilient Packet Ring** - Uses Ethernet switching and a dual counter-rotating ring topology to provide SONET-like network resiliency and optimized bandwidth usage, while delivering multi-point Ethernet/IP services.

**RUS - Rural Utility Service** - A division of the United States Department of Agriculture that promotes universal service in unserved and underserved areas of the country through grants, loans, and financing.

## S

**Satellite** - Satellite brings broadband Internet connections to areas that would not otherwise have access, even the most rural of areas. Historically, higher costs and lower reliability have prevented the widespread implementation of satellite service, but providers have begun to overcome these obstacles, and satellite broadband deployment is increasing. A satellite works by receiving radio signals sent from the Earth (at an uplink location also called an Earth Station) and resending the radio signals back down to the Earth (the downlink). In a simple system, a signal is reflected, or "bounced," off the satellite. A communications satellite also typically converts the radio transmissions from one frequency to another so that the signal getting sent down is not confused with the signal being sent up. The area that can be served by a satellite is determined by the "footprint" of the antennas on the satellite. The "footprint" of a satellite is the area of the Earth that is covered by a satellite's signal. Some satellites are able to shape their footprints so that only certain areas are served. One way to do this is by the use of small beams called "spot beams." Spot beams allow satellites to target service to a specific area, or to provide different service to different areas.

**SBI** - State Broadband Initiatives, formerly known as the State Broadband Data & Development (SBDD) Program.

**SONET - Synchronous Optical Network** - A family of fiber-optic transmission rates.

**Streaming** - A Netscape innovation that downloads low-bit text data first, then the higher bit graphics. This allows users to read the text of an Internet document first, rather than waiting for the entire file to load.

**Subscribership** - Subscribership is the number of customers that have subscribed for a particular telecommunications service.

**Switched Network** - A domestic telecommunications network usually accessed by telephones, key telephone systems, private branch exchange trunks, and data arrangements.

## T

**T-1 - Trunk Level 1** - A digital transmission link with a total signaling speed of 1.544 Mbps. It is a standard for digital transmission in North America.

**T-3 - Trunk Level 3** - 28 T1 lines or 44.736 Mbps.

## U

**UNE - Unbundled Network Elements** - Leased portions of a carrier's (typically an ILEC's) network used by another carrier to provide service to customers.

**Universal Service** - The idea of providing every home in the United States with basic telephone service.

**Upstream** - Data flowing from your computer to the Internet (sending e-mail, uploading a file).

## V

**VDSL (or VHDSL) - Very High Data Rate Digital Subscriber Line** - A developing technology that employs an asymmetric form of ADSL with projected speeds of up to 155 Mbps.

**Video On Demand** - A service that allows users to remotely choose a movie from a digital library and be able to pause, fast-forward, or even rewind their selection.

**VLAN - Virtual Local Area Network** - A network of computers that behave as if they were connected to the same wire even though they may be physically located on different segments of a LAN.

**VoIP - Voice over Internet Protocol** - A new technology that employs a data network (such as a broadband connection) to transmit voice conversations.

**VPN - Virtual Private Network** - A network that is constructed by using public wires to connect nodes. For example, there are a number of systems that enable one to create networks using the Internet as the medium for transporting data. These systems use encryption and other security mechanisms to ensure that only authorized users can access the network and that the data cannot be intercepted.

**Vulnerable Groups** -Vulnerable groups will vary by community, but typically include low-income, minority, senior, children, etc.

## W

**WAN - Wide Area Network** - A communications system that utilizes cable systems, telephone lines, wireless, and other means to connect multiple locations together for the exchange of data, voice, and video.

**Wi-Fi - Wireless Fidelity** - A term for certain types of wireless local networks (WLANs) that uses specifications in the IEEE 802.11 family.

**WiMax** - A wireless technology that provides high-throughput broadband connections over long distances. WiMax can be used for a number of applications, including last mile broadband connections, hotspots, and cellular backhaul and high-speed enterprise connectivity for businesses.

**Wireless Hotspot** - A public location where Wi-Fi Internet access is available for free or for a small fee. These could include airports, restaurants, hotels, coffee shops, parks, and more.

**Wireless Internet** - 1) Internet applications and access using mobile devices such as cell phones and palm devices. 2) Broadband Internet service provided via wireless connection, such as satellite or tower transmitters.

**Wireline** - Service based on infrastructure on or near the ground, such as copper telephone wires or coaxial cable underground, or on telephone poles.