

## BENEFITS OF BROADBAND AND OTHER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

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

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

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

### Addresses the needs of businesses wanting reliable and advanced online services

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

### Targets key industries

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

### Broadens employment opportunities

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

### Improves healthcare access and providing health professions support

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

### Supports Education

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

### Meets the demands of residents to have online services

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

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

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

### Makes online telecommunications more accessible to all age groups

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

### Advances access and exchange information within the community

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

### Expands public library usage

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