

Bridging The Digital Divide

Telecommunications and Rural Development

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Research Problem



- Broadband penetration has not been even in US
 - Profit-driven model makes urban areas more attractive markets for broadband development
 - Many rural areas “left behind”
- Which broadband delivery models are most efficient and effective in providing rural residents, schools, governments, and businesses with access to high-speed internet?

Alternative Delivery Models



- Community-driven models have enabled broadband development where previously impossible
 - Public-Private Partnership (P3)
 - Municipal Delivery Model
- Which model is more effective...
 - ... for deployment?
 - ... for customer satisfaction?
 - ... for community engagement?

Objectives



- Compare rural broadband deployment models in terms of affordability, customer satisfaction, and financial viability
- Determine which local cultural and institutional factors enhance or impede broadband deployment in rural areas
- Develop deeper understanding of local issues facing broadband development
- Develop policy solutions, and associated outreach and educational materials

Methods



- Site Selection
 - 1 P3 and 1 municipal model in each of three states
 - Maine, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin
 - We are based in Pennsylvania
 - Maine and Wisconsin had similar rural penetration levels at beginning of research
- Written survey
 - Attitudes/knowledge about broadband
 - Broadband use patterns
 - Customer satisfaction
- Key informant interviews
 - How did local process develop?
 - How did partnerships form?
 - What have the outcomes been?

Progress



- Quantitative and Qualitative data collected and analyzed
 - 953 resident and 281 business responses for written survey
 - 26 key informants interviewed
- Next Steps:
 - Compile research final report
 - Drafting of academic and practitioner publications
 - Implementation of outreach component

Findings: The Broadband Development Process



- What are the common *process* elements in these initiatives?
 - A recognized, current need
 - A champion or champion organization
 - willingness to take risk
 - manage and recruit diverse players
 - develop a common vision
 - communicate
 - embrace an investment mentality
 - keep the initiative going
 - A local solution
 - An inclusive, representative governing body

Findings: Is One Model Better?



- May be the wrong question!
 - Where are the needs?
 - Locally, county-level, or regional?
 - Where are the collaborators?
 - Who will provide leadership and expertise?
 - Is there citizen support?
 - Is it *legal*?
 - Municipal model outlawed in many states
 - Act 183: Pennsylvania's Verizon Law
- Emphasis on *partnership*
 - A nod to the flexibility and broad scope of the P3 model
 - Multiple partners, roles

Findings: Implications for Development



- Opportunity forgone
 - What is the cost of inaction?
- Community development
 - Broadband is not development
 - It is a useful tool
 - Importance of local strategy and community vision for broadband
- Issues of fairness
 - Is broadband a public or private good?
 - Who is responsible for broadband development?
- Distributive Justice
 - Implications for citizens, workers, companies, government
 - Broadband not the same everywhere

Expected Impacts/Outreach



- Improve understanding of alternative broadband delivery models and their impacts
 - Inform policy to facilitate deployment
 - New community-driven entrepreneurial models
 - Substantial economic development at state level
 - New economic models for rural America
 - Entrepreneurship, e-biz, telecommuting, agri-tech

Questions?



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