Broadband & Libraries: Measuring Levels of Broadband Access and Perceptions of Broadband Impact and Value

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Background: The RACECs

Florida's Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern

RACCE is a regional collaborative of local governments, community action agencies, and economic development agencies from rural and economically disadvantaged communities in Northwest and South Central Florida.

The city of Immokalee in Collier County is part of RACCE, but the rest of the county is not.
NFBA/FRBA and Libraries

• Many residents rely on the library for broadband and broadband services
• Limited broadband available to libraries
  – Normally only one choice of ISP
• Primary need to maintain or lower cost of broadband
• Secondary need to improve levels of broadband connectivity and services
Importance of Broadband for Public Libraries

• The public library needs fast, reliable broadband Internet to maintain its
  – Relevance
  – Credibility
  – Importance
  – Services
  – Users
  – Community impact

Implications of Broadband for Local Communities

• Broadband can improve a community’s
  – Education
  – Economic development
  – Healthcare
  – E-government
  – Quality of life
  – Emergency management operations

• Public library broadband can be the basis of these services for a community
Typical Metrics of Public Library Value

• Usage Data
  – When the library obtained Internet connection
  – Number of public workstations
  – What the public uses the Internet for

• Identification of key stakeholder groups and their information needs
  – What are the demographics of the local population
  – Whether other Anchor Institutions provide similar services

Additional Metrics

• Amount of broadband currently available at public libraries
  – What is the actual speed (Mbps) coming in

• Availability of technology training to both patrons and staff
  – Are there classes, webinars, on basic and advanced computers skills

• Planning for future developments in technology
  – Is there a replacement schedule for equipment

• Sophistication level of current IT services and network
  – Is there centralized management of login authentication, software
Broadband Speeds and Technical Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Max Mbps</th>
<th>Min Mbps</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Tech Plan</th>
<th>Budget Control</th>
<th>IT Staff</th>
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<td>✔</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Importance of Ongoing Technology Training for Staff
Perceived Ability of Current Technology to Meet Current and Future Needs

Factors Contributing to Low Perceptions of Ability to Meet Needs

- Age of the building
- Age of the equipment
- Availability of IT support staff
- Lack of funding
- Lack of demand from patrons for increased technology resources
- Resistance to change from staff
- Lack of adequate justification for administrators
- Other demands on time/responsibilities

*Multiple colored spheres represent two libraries*
Public Libraries as Community Broadband Leaders

- Rural residents are aware of the role that libraries play in bringing broadband, broadband-enabled services, and broadband-related training to their communities

- Public libraries’ ability to fulfill this new service role depends on a well trained staff, sufficient network capabilities, and detailed planning for the future
Thank You!

Questions or Comments?

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A copy of the slides is available at:
http://mcclure.ii.fsu.edu/northumbria_slides.html