

RURAL COMMUNITY BROADBAND NETWORK Readiness Checklist



By Henry Baird

Telecom Directions Group

©2005 Telecom Directions, LLC



The following five conditions indicate that a rural community is ready to evaluate options for the development of a broadband network:

1. Broadband options offered by local telephone and/or cable companies are limited or non-existent. Direct competition with a local carrier that is otherwise equipped to deliver equivalent high speed services can suppress the revenue potential of a community venture. However, if local carriers are limited in their abilities to provide such services, the situation flips, as the community network becomes a potential new customer.

2. Demand exists for broadband services among residences, businesses, libraries or schools. Successful business models for these networks require steady revenue, especially in the early going before longer term community-wide benefits become apparent. In areas of low population

density, a core demand source among any or all of the above constituencies will help prove-in the feasibility of the project.

3. Local individual(s) are willing to develop a business plan to support the broadband network's development. Such a plan need not be formal, but it should be written, coherent and agreed upon by community leaders. The fundamental elements of such plans are a vision of how the network will operate and a statement of its intended purpose. See our separate white paper for suggested business plan development guidelines.

4. Support of influential community leader(s) for exploring and evaluating development options. Without such agreement to at least explore options on a pre-expenditure, provisional basis, the project stands at significant risk of never leaving the conceptual stage.

5. Support for idea of potentially developing the network is one part of a current or future regional effort to deliver broadband services. The economics of broadband networks strongly support regional efforts. While a single, isolated community network project is not without a good chance of success, it will always be wise to think regionally at the high-level design stage.

TELECOM DIRECTIONS GROUP

This readiness checklist is provided compliments of the Telecom Directions Group (TDG), for any rural community that is potentially interested in developing broadband services. TDG is a division of Telecom Directions, LLC.

Feel free to download the other documents in this series relating to developing a rural community broadband network: “Initial Action Steps” and “Create a Business Plan for a Rural Community Broadband Project,” via the Telecom Directions Group Page, at www.telecomdirections.com.

Ensuring readiness is only one of several tasks involved in establishing a rural community broadband network. The Telecom Directions Group is available to provide project concept and articulation assistance to rural communities. Our customized services cover the entire range of project planning tasks, from developing a business plan using these guidelines, to developing and issuing requests for information and requests for proposals. These are fee-based services.

Since 1987, Telecom Directions has been an independent consultancy based in Seattle, Washington, and has no affiliation or remunerative relationship with any provider of telecommunications equipment or services.



Henry Baird is a 14-year member of the Society of Telecommunications Consultants and has been elected twice to its board of directors. He is also a member of the Project Management Institute and the International Society of Parametric Analysts. He holds a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Washington and a Master of Arts in Expository Writing from the University of Iowa.