

Mission Statement
of the
Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition

June 11, 2009

The mission of the Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition is to improve the broadband capabilities of schools, libraries and health care providers so that they can enhance the quality and availability of the essential services they provide to the public and serve underserved and unserved populations more effectively. The Internet has become a fundamental cornerstone of modern education, learning, health care delivery, economic growth, social interaction, job training, government services, and the dissemination of information and free speech. High-capacity broadband is the key infrastructure that K-12 schools, universities and colleges, libraries, hospitals, clinics and other health care providers need to provide 21st century education, information and health services. The Coalition is dedicated to ensuring that each and every library, health care provider and school (including K-12 schools, colleges and universities) has robust, affordable, high-capacity, broadband connections.

Connecting these anchor institutions with high-capacity broadband will generally provide the greatest benefits to those people who need it most – rural, low-income, disabled, elderly, societally and economically disadvantaged, and other unserved and underserved segments of the population. Building high-capacity broadband to these anchor institutions will also create jobs. Whether it is laying fiber optic cable or constructing antennas to provide high-bandwidth wireless capabilities, these investments in our future will provide thousands of American workers with high-tech employment.

Broadband plays a critical role in allowing consumers to benefit from the essential services provided by these anchor institutions in the following ways:

- Public libraries make wired and wireless broadband connections available to the public at no charge. These connections allow people to submit job applications, apply for e-government benefits, participate in distance education and complete school homework assignments, with the additional benefit of support from on-site professional librarians. Similarly, libraries in schools, colleges and universities depend on high-capacity broadband to deliver essential learning services.
- Primary and secondary schools need high-capacity broadband access to offer specialized courses and basic coursework through distance learning. New multimedia educational applications can help teachers address various learning styles and abilities, and tailor instructional programming to meet individual students' needs, if high-capacity broadband connections are available.
- Community colleges and higher education require high-capacity broadband to provide online degree programs and job training skills, to promote research and collaboration, and to give rural

and low-income areas remote access to experts and laboratories. Research universities are often at the center of innovation in our economy; they need high-capacity broadband to propel the U.S. forward and to restore our global leadership in advanced technologies.

- Hospitals, clinics, and physician's offices need high-capacity broadband to exchange diagnostic information and medical records, and to provide remote monitoring of out-patients. The effectiveness of telemedicine depends upon quality, high-capacity broadband connections, and high-capacity broadband allows health professionals to obtain quality continuing medical education through the Internet. Rural health clinics have a great need for broadband connections to provide rural residents with immediate access to specialists in hospitals and other health care providers.

The Coalition believes that adhering to the following principles will help the U.S. to achieve this mission:

- Because of the essential services that they provide to the public, it should be a priority of federal policy that all schools, libraries and health care providers have affordable access to "future-proof" high-capacity, broadband technologies, especially in rural and low-income areas. Federal policy should encourage the deployment of high-capacity broadband networks that can provide a minimum of 100 Mbps to small entities and 1 Gbps or more to larger entities. Moreover, these broadband networks should be easily upgradable to meet the enormous growth in demand that is expected from high-definition video, distance learning, telemedicine, job-training and other societally-beneficial applications.
- Broadband networks deployed to serve these community anchor institutions should be open to interconnection by other broadband networks serving the community as a way to spur additional broadband investment. Ultimately, all homes and businesses should have access to affordable, high-capacity broadband. Allowing interconnection to networks serving community anchor institutions will provide jumping off points for distributing additional broadband services into surrounding neighborhoods, including residences and other community anchor institutions.
- As the statutory language recognizes, these community anchor institutions have unique needs for very high-capacity bandwidth that are different from those of residential consumers. The eligibility of community anchor institutions to apply for funding should not be dictated by geographic boundaries or definitions that are more appropriate for households.
- It is especially important that rural and low-income schools, libraries and health care providers are able to obtain high-capacity broadband connections because rural and low-income areas often lack any broadband capabilities at all or because the broadband that is available is not affordable. At the same time, other community anchor institutions may have access to low-speed broadband but simply cannot obtain enough bandwidth to carry out their mission because of a shortage of high-capacity broadband networks. Therefore, any of these

community anchor institutions that lacks adequate high-capacity broadband to serve the public should have the right to apply for and/or receive broadband funding, and each application to provide broadband to these entities should be considered on its merits on a case-by-case basis.

- All entities, whether non-profit, commercial, or government, including non-profit research and higher education networks, should be encouraged to deploy high-capacity broadband facilities to meet this mission.
- Policy-makers should recognize and address the urgent need to fund the up-front construction costs of deploying broadband facilities, and they should also ensure that the provision of such funding results in lower monthly recurring charges so that the broadband service is affordable and sustainable.
- Community anchor institutions that receive government funding for broadband should be accountable and responsible for the proper use of these funds. The Government should have enforcement and monitoring procedures that are both rigorous and flexible to ensure that funding programs are implemented wisely, are administered efficiently, and are successful in serving the needs of the public.

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