



More than just Facebook:

Internet access is essential infrastructure

From sharing a local news story on Facebook to working from home with a sick child, Internet access is changing our personal and professional lives. While one of the most common applications of Internet access is connecting with others over social

media, it is also essential for more than entertainment: completing job applications, telecommuting for work, and engaging with local government. In areas across the United States, municipalities are recognizing the benefits of improving Internet access, investing in infrastructure to keep their communities vibrant.

450+

American communities have invested in public infrastructure to improve Internet access for businesses, residents, and other stakeholders

Source: MuniNetworks.org

Internet access and local economies

Internet-based applications are essential for [producing and packaging crops](#); creating video, 3-D renderings, and other media; and communicating with employees around the world. **Businesses increasingly consider Internet access as they once did proximity to major thoroughfares and storefront size**, and many cities tout high-speed Internet access as a major incentive for business development.

84%

of recent job seekers have completed an online application

Source: [Pew Research](#)

Internet access and job seekers

Home Internet service is important for job searching, as postings are almost exclusively listed online. This is especially true for higher-wage jobs, which often require candidates to send resumes and in-depth applications over email. **Public libraries provide Internet services to job seekers without home access, but are not a long-term solution** because of inconvenient hours or distance from home.

1 in 3

households with school-aged children and an income of less than \$50,000 do not have a broadband connection

Source: [Pew Research](#)

Internet access and the homework gap

As teachers assign online homework, students without access are unable to complete tasks at home. While libraries are an option, their location and unaccommodating hours can be problematic for students. **A home connection provides unparalleled ease of access.**

10%

of American adults access the Internet exclusively with a cell phone

Source: [Pew Research](#)

Mobile access is convenient, but not enough

Smart phone Internet access is much more expensive per megabit than wired home access due to carriers implementing data caps and overage fees. Cell phones have helped get low-income households online, but are not meeting current needs for access. While one in ten American adults access the Internet only with a cell phone, these numbers jump for low-income adults.

What are some benefits of improving connectivity?

Small business development

Businesses need **off-site backup and data recovery**, only possible with high-speed access

Businesses can **expand to new markets**, receive orders, and purchase from wholesalers through the Internet

Fast, reliable access **enables employees to be more productive** and businesses more competitive

Lower costs, higher quality

Public investment can update infrastructure, **allowing for higher Internet speeds**

Open-access networks **allow multiple providers to compete**, operating on publicly-owned infrastructure

Subscribers see **reduced service costs** due to more competition

Workforce development

Good-paying jobs increasingly require digital skills, developed in schools and at home over a broadband connection

Broadband allows for **web-based training** and education

K-12 schools have better capacity for online learning tools and can **better equip students for the workforce**

Improved access to services

Customers have more control of their accounts—anything from finding educational records to accessing health care services to submitting a building permit request to their city

Online banking **allows customers to deposit checks and pay bills without having to take time off of work** to visit a bank

Good connectivity keeps communities vibrant.

High-speed, reliable Internet access allows existing businesses to stay competitive, attracts new businesses, provides educational opportunities, and improves quality of life

What is good connectivity?

- As of 2016, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) defines “basic broadband access” as 25 Mbps (Megabits per second) download speeds and 3 Mbps upload speeds
- As of 2016, 34 million Americans don't have fixed, basic broadband access. At least 39% of those living in rural areas lack access to basic broadband
- Businesses rely on consistent, high-speed Internet access not only to download information but also to upload data to online systems and clients
- A single connection must sustain an entire household or business, as each person has multiple devices vying for connectivity
- A good connection is a consistent one: especially at peak usage times, an Internet connection should be reliable

Rather than just using Facebook, Internet access enables us to...

Stay connected • Fulfill online orders • Find an apartment • Telecommute to work • Look up bus schedules • Enroll in health coverage • Monitor patient progress • Organize customer information • Compare prices • Access college course readings • Join social clubs • Check in to a flight • Read the local news • Stream music and video • Apply for jobs • Share statistical information for crops • View bank statements • Complete homework • Share pictures • Learn a new skill • Register to vote • Find business hours • Create an online portfolio • Pay bills • Monitor public safety • Find a phone number • Communicate with teachers • Post items online for sale • Collaborate with coworkers • Check the weather • Crowdfund for a cause • Livestream special events • Reach new business clients • Store and backup documents in the Cloud • Read online magazines • Organize a community meeting • Connect with relatives that live far away • Attend an online webinar • Read MuniNetworks.org

Need better connectivity in your community? You're not alone. Local governments have been able to improve Internet access for residents and businesses in a variety of ways, often reducing costs and providing better service. Take a look at the multitude of resources at MuniNetworks.org and NextCenturyCities.org to find out how your community can improve Internet access.