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Community Networks
Innovating to Connect the World

Internet Society

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Consequences of being unconnected

- Competitive and economic disadvantage

- Lack of socio-economic development

- Not reaping the full benefits of the Internet -- exchange of information, share of culture, etc.

To this end, there is a sense of urgency: as the consequences of being unconnected increase over time, issues like cost and the digital divide are increasing as well!

WE MUST ACT NOW!

The Narrative

Community Networks are a complementary solution for providing accessible and affordable connectivity in underserved areas.

The Internet Society is a strong supporter of community networks. We have been involved in their development since 2010. We believe that community networks are not "the only" solution for connecting the next and final billions, but we see them as a key step in the process to change policies and allow for innovative solutions with stakeholders to connect more people.

The Role of the Internet Society

- The Internet Society works with partners around the world to develop community networks.

- We do this because we have seen the benefits of community networks in connecting people to bridge digital-divides, and to provide affordable access.

- We believe that old policies need to be changed to support new approaches to connect more people.

- By changing old policies (spectrum, universal service, licensing) to accommodate new connectivity solutions we will start to bridge the digital divide.

- For example, ISOC's spectrum paper (Oct. 2017) that advocates for innovative and collaborative approaches to allow community networks to access spectrum (e.g., secondary use, shared use, TVWS)

The Role of the Internet Society (continued...)

- We are keen to see Universal Service policies change to accommodate funding innovative ways to provide connectivity – community networks (and IXPs for that matter).

- Community networks are one way to connect people in rural, remote, and urban underserved communities.

- They are not a competitor to, but a complement to provide connectivity.

- Many community networks we know are providing connectivity to people for the first time.

Barriers to community networks (1)

- Start-up barriers can end community network efforts:

a. Registration/licensing and permitting;

b. Taxes, regulatory licensing and import fees;

c. Financing

Governments can ease or eliminate barriers through common sense reforms:

- Easing regulatory requirements;

- Tax and fee exemptions;

- Enhanced transparency;

- Expanding universal service and other funding opportunities.

Barriers to community networks (2)

Access to Spectrum:

a. Spectrum scarcity;

b. Inefficient use of spectrum;

c. Expense of spectrum access;

Innovative Licensing models can help CNs access to spectrum.

Licensing approaches:

a. Social purpose licensing (e.g. Mexico);

b. Experimental licensing (e.g. Brazil, Colombia, Mexico);

c. Spectrum auction credits.

Policy makers can help address connectivity issues ....

Streamline or Eliminate Onerous Regulatory Requirements, especially those that are not applicable to small, community-based networks.

Provide Tax, Customs, Regulatory, and Licensing Fee Exemptions. These fees and duties are difficult for community network operators to afford and can delay or prevent their development.

Enhance Transparency. Regulators should provide clear, public guidance on the specific policies and regulatory requirements (and exemptions) for community networks.

Expand Universal Service and Other Public Funding Opportunities, and publicize that community networks are eligible for funding.

Pursue Innovative Approaches to Providing Spectrum Access, such as:

Direct Licensing of Community Networks, including social purpose licensing, experimental licensing, and providing spectrum auction credits;
License Exemptions and Unlicensed Use;

Thank you.

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