

## The One Gigabit or Bust™ Rural Issues Task Force

### Rural Areas in California Face Unique Challenges to Enhancing Their Economic Competitiveness in the Expanding Networked Economy

The deployment of next-generation broadband offers California an economic opportunity of \$376 billion dollars by 2010. The obvious question is why isn't next-generation broadband being deployed ubiquitously now? In response, CENIC's One Gigabit or Bust Initiative created a Rural Issues Task Force to explore the unique obstacles facing rural regions and how to overcome them.

#### The Digital Divide of Del Norte and Humboldt Counties

Neither Del Norte nor Humboldt County has the regional communication infrastructure to enable area residents to benefit from the 21st century technologies enjoyed by other areas of the state. Bandwidth capabilities are extremely limited—some residents are unable to get even dial-up access—and existing network backbone connections cannot support additional sales.

#### San Joaquin Valley Partnerships

Although fiber runs the length of the San Joaquin Valley along Highway 99, it's been difficult to obtain affordable connectivity to today's broadband services. As many as two-thirds of the Valley's 3.3 million people have been limited to dial-up connections, and for some rural areas even dial-up is unreliable. In addition, only a small portion of the workforce has the skills to use technology and there are few opportunities for people in low-income communities to learn the new skills.

#### Inland Empire Regional Economic Development

Riverside and San Bernardino Counties are working to attract business that will feed into a regional visioning project for the next 20 years. But, the region is burdened by a lack of high-speed connectivity, including 27,000 square miles of federal land with Native American tribes and lands that are not connected in terms of schools or businesses. Teri Ooms, president and CEO of the Inland Empire Economic Partnership, says, "without [the One Gigabit or Bust] Initiative, it will likely take three

to five years to have some level of ubiquity. We may possibly have services in the majority of the region in two to three years...but this region will always be left behind the major markets."

#### Central Coast Broadband Access Project

The California Central Coast Counties of Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo and the Santa Maria Valley area of northern Santa Barbara County have varying degrees of access to broadband services—with greater access in more populated areas and less in inland and agricultural areas.

#### Conclusion

Despite recent short-term gains in telecommunications access, rural regions throughout California still lag considerably behind metropolitan areas in terms of broadband infrastructure deployment. The majority of rural areas have access to only one fiber path, no redundancy, high prices and limited—if any—choice of ISPs. Special consideration must be given to these regions to ensure they receive the same benefits and dividends of a one-gigabit network as the rest of the State.

The One Gigabit or Bust Initiative was created to identify the opportunities and obstacles to achieving ubiquitous one-gigabit access throughout California by 2010 and establish an action plan to achieve it. The Rural Issues Task Force will play a critical role in the success of this Initiative. For information on joining the Task Force, see <http://www.cenic.org/GB/taskforces/rural/rural.htm>.

*CENIC is a not-for-profit corporation serving the California Institute of Technology, California State University, Stanford University, University of California, University of Southern California, California Community Colleges and the statewide K-12 school system.*



5757 Plaza Drive  
Cypress, CA 90630  
[www.cenic.org](http://www.cenic.org)