

A NATIONAL BLUEPRINT

for Technology and the Public Good





Vision: An Opportunity Agenda

Over the past decade, innovations in technology—particularly broadband Internet technology—have fundamentally changed the way Americans lead their lives. Broadband has dramatically altered the way we perform our jobs, communicate with our families and friends, and learn about the world around us. This revolutionary medium has made innovations like Google, MySpace, and YouTube possible and has transformed the delivery of commercial goods and services through the ease of accessibility the information superhighway provides. As Thomas Friedman so aptly put it, broadband has truly “flattened” our world; with the development of newer broadband technologies and applications, the global marketplace will grow even flatter.

But as technology has made the lives of many Americans easier, the benefits of broadband have failed to reach millions of low-income Americans who increasingly find themselves left behind in this ever-expanding information age we live in. According to a recent study by Leichtman Research on broadband usage rates in this country, less than 45 percent of Americans earning under \$30,000 per year have in-home access to a high-speed internet connection. This is unacceptable and more must be done to ensure that all Americans benefit from the power of technology.

A confluence of events both at home and abroad provides America with a unique opportunity to reshape the country’s technological landscape and set forth an ambitious agenda that will use technology for the greater public good. In order to jumpstart the creation of a national opportunity agenda that

promotes the use of technology for the public good, One Economy Corporation puts forward this blueprint that lays out achievable goals and policy ideas the federal government and the nation ought to vigorously pursue. This blueprint focuses on three strategic areas of technology that will enable the United States to prosper in the 21st century.

The Blueprint: Technology and the Public Good

UNIVERSAL ACCESS

Broadband in Public Housing Executive Order

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) should promote policies and regulations that maximize its investment in housing to help low-income people achieve economic self-sufficiency and participate in the modern-day workforce. Given the opportunity to bring technology into public housing projects and the existing statutory language that would permit the wiring and provisioning of units with high-speed Internet access, *One Economy believes that the President of the United States should issue an Executive Order directing HUD to:*

- Mandate the inclusion of infrastructure that permits unit-based access to high-speed Internet connectivity in all new public housing units and public housing redevelopment projects;

- Promote and permit the retrofitting of public housing developments with infrastructure that allows for high-speed Internet connectivity under public housing development and modernization programs, including the Capital Fund; and
- Promote and permit the provision of high-speed Internet service as an allowable public housing operating expense.

Comprehensive Telecommunications Universal Service Fund Reform

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 mandated the creation of the Universal Service Fund (USF) as a mechanism for providing rural and underserved communities with the financial resources necessary to build and support essential telecommunications services.

While this program has proven successful in bringing communications services like telephone service and dial-up Internet access to underserved communities, it does not apply to the deployment of broadband services; thus, many of the people in these communities lack affordable access to broadband. Therefore, *One Economy calls for comprehensive reform of the Telecommunications Universal Service Fund that would specifically mandate the creation of a fund that would ensure 100% broadband deployment in rural and other underserved communities by 2010.*



DEVELOP NEW TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS

Healthcare

Disease Management

It is widely recognized that America has a healthcare crisis in terms of cost, coverage, and, in some cases, care. One area of concern is the inefficient way the current system treats chronic illness and disease management. In order to help relieve this enormous financial burden on government and individuals, and to enhance care, *One Economy calls for the creation of a Digital Disease Management Fund.* This investment would give recipients of Medicare and Medicaid access to technological tools that would allow them to manage, monitor, and learn about their medical conditions. More specifically, the fund would expand Section 1915(c) of the Social Security Act to include the cost of digital medical monitoring devices and equipment as an acceptable Home and Community Based Services Waiver.

Aging in Place

Cost and quality of care can often be enhanced when individuals can age in place, as opposed to being moved to nursing care or other facilities. Emerging technologies now enable more elderly and disabled individuals to reside and receive care in their homes. *The federal government should foster the inclusion of medical devices into the home and amend affordable housing finance policies to enable broadband access and the affordable acquisition of these devices.*

Education

National Education Database and Online Channel

In early 2007, One Economy Corporation created a comprehensive online educational tool, ZipRoad.org, which helps individuals find education-related resources in their communities. By simply entering a zip code, individuals can find and share information about area schools, after-school tutoring classes, and other learning programs in their neighborhoods. As Congress gets set to consider the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, *One Economy calls on the nation's leaders to set up a National Education Database and Online Channel that would allow parents and students across the country to access the necessary tools and information that will enhance the educational experience.* We ought to create and aggregate the tools, curriculum, and education resources that every child needs in a 21st-century education system.

The Laptop Project

A vast majority of America's schools are failing to teach our children the fundamental skills and tools needed to succeed in today's 21st-century global economy. As more and more jobs require workers to possess highly technical backgrounds steeped in math and science, it is imperative that America's leaders provide every student with the resources that are vital for success in today's workplace. Given the importance of making sure America's children are equipped with the tools to be competitive in the global economy, *One Economy proposes enactment of The Laptop Project. This initiative would:*

- Modify the USF's E-Rate program to allow for federal funding to school districts that implement a one-to-one laptop program for students in grades 6 through 12; and

- Provide Title I funding for teachers, students, and parents who receive training in technology-rich educational services and applications.

Public Service Resources

Public Internet Channel

In June 2006, One Economy launched a campaign to create the first national Public Internet Channel (PiC). PiC is a web-based channel that will provide a 21st-century public service benefit for all Americans. It will use the web to provide content, search tools, and rich media to address a broad range of topics such as having your child vaccinated, attaining your GED, preparing for a disaster, and improving your job skills. Using powerful online search, coupled with timely multimedia features and news, the PiC will help users access information in five core areas: economic livelihood, health, education, civic participation, and emergency preparedness. In order to bring this much needed web-based resource to the American public, *One Economy calls on the federal government to make a significant investment in the PiC through active participation in content, distribution, and funding.*



Disaster Relief Mobile Services Unit

While the responsibility for making adequate preparations for disasters rests with all levels of government, the federal government, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), plays a unique role in establishing order in areas devastated

by disaster. One of the more critical elements to establishing order is ensuring that infrastructure needs, such as telecommunications services, are met. *One Economy believes that FEMA should be required to set up a Disaster Relief Mobile Services Unit in order to meet some of these core infrastructure needs.* This unit would be tasked with going into disaster areas and setting up a fully functional, interoperable telecommunications system for the purposes of civic communication.



EXPAND AND ENCOURAGE CIVIC PARTICIPATION

National Youth Tech Corps

Young people are our country's greatest technological innovators. Whether it is creating the next Facebook or simply using cell phones to send brief text messages, America's youth have seamlessly integrated technology into their everyday lives. One Economy has created a program, Digital Connectors, to maximize this opportunity. Digital Connectors is a best practice youth development model that identifies talented young people, immerses them in technology training, and helps them build their leadership and workplace skills to enter the new economy. Youth receive training and participate in community service opportunities in the areas of technology instruction, technical support, digital media, marketing, workforce readiness and leadership development.

One Economy calls on the federal government to create a National Youth Tech Corps modeled after the Digital Connectors program that would be available to low-income communities in all 50 states. This program can be part of Americorps, or it can function at the local level through summer youth employment programs.

About One Economy Corporation

One Economy Corporation is a global nonprofit organization that uses innovative approaches to deliver the power of technology and information to low-income people, giving them valuable tools for building better lives.

We help bring broadband into the homes of low-income people, employ youth to train their community members to use technology effectively, and provide socially responsible media properties that offer a wealth of information on education, jobs, health care and other vital issues.

Our mission is to maximize the potential of technology to help low-income people improve their lives and enter the economic mainstream.

For more information on One Economy, please contact our Public Policy Department at (202) 393-0051 or visit us at www.one-economy.com.





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