

ConnectKentucky

**Accelerating Technology in the
Commonwealth!**



CONNECT MERCER COUNTY



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MERCER COUNTY FULL REPORT

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A. Executive Summary

A. Executive Summary

Purpose

This document provides a “road map” for technology-based growth and economic development in Mercer County. Detailed assessments and recommendations are provided in Tabs C and D of this report. The full report provides an overview of ConnectKentucky’s findings and recommendations related to the assessment of Mercer County’s technology needs, particularly related to computers, broadband and Information Technology.

Summary

Mercer County’s e-Community Leadership Team is leading the way into a new economy for Mercer County, working in partnership with ConnectKentucky. By leveraging the latest in technology and networking, ConnectKentucky is ensuring Kentucky remains the place of choice to work, live, and raise a family.

Pursuing the *Five A’s to technology acceleration in Kentucky* (Availability, Affordability, Awareness, Applications and Adoption) ConnectKentucky has established the Commonwealth as a national model for technology development. Over the past two years, Kentucky has achieved growth rates in technology availability and adoption that lead the nation.

Today, the world is smaller because technology makes it easier to work and to live nearly anywhere. In order to compete on a global scale, we must provide our citizens and businesses with the best available technology in the world, wherever they choose to live, learn, work or play. Central to technology-based development is access to and usage of computers and high-speed Internet, commonly referred to as “broadband.”

The need for improved technology in Kentucky is great. In 2003 rankings, Kentucky was 44th in its proportion of high-tech companies, 45th in household computer use, and 43rd in resident Internet use. But that is changing fast, as Kentucky transforms from a technology laggard into a national leader in universal access and innovative technology solutions. Some evidence of the progress Kentucky has made:

- According to the Federal Communications Commission, Kentucky leads the nation in its rate of broadband adoption over the past two years.
- In 2003, about 60 percent of Kentucky households had the ability to subscribe to broadband. Now, an estimated 77 percent of households can access broadband, an addition of 240,000 households over two years. Increased investment from telecommunications companies is expected to bring the broadband coverage rate to 90 percent by the end of 2006.

Though Kentucky's recent progress has been swift, there remains much to be accomplished. If we do not act on our dreams, we are destined to remain at the bottom of most technology rankings.

With this vision of hope for all Kentuckians, Governor Fletcher introduced his ***Prescription for Innovation***, a comprehensive initiative to achieve aggressive goals for broadband deployment and technology adoption in Kentucky. ConnectKentucky is working community by community, provider by provider to ensure that each of these goals is achieved by 2007, including:

1. Broadband availability for all Kentuckians, businesses and local governments;
2. Dramatically improved usage (adoption) of computers and the Internet;
3. Meaningful online applications for local government, businesses, educators, etc.;
4. Establishment of local technology leadership teams in every county promoting technology growth for: local government, business and industry, education, healthcare, agriculture, libraries, tourism, and community-based organizations.

Governor Fletcher's *Prescription for Innovation* is being implemented through ConnectKentucky, in partnership with local community leaders. The leadership of Mercer County asked ConnectKentucky to facilitate an evaluation of its current uses of technology, identifying and filling broadband coverage gaps and developing a strategic plan to increase the use of technology in each sector of the local community, including:

- Local government
- Business and industry
- K-12 education
- Higher education
- Healthcare
- Libraries
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Community-based organizations

This project has culminated in the development of initiatives to increase the competitiveness of Mercer County through the expansion of broadband availability and the increased usage of computers and broadband-related applications. In completing this analysis, ConnectKentucky engaged local leaders in all economic sectors, led the group through a visioning exercise and developed a unique strategic plan for the county.

Additionally, ConnectKentucky has engaged its network of telecommunications and Information Technology resources to determine which technology resources are currently available to Mercer County, and which services are expected in the near future.

ConnectKentucky found that broadband is readily available in larger cities and communities, which contain more than 75% of the county's population, and there are broadband services of some kind available in various locations throughout the county. ConnectKentucky will work with current and potential broadband providers to achieve full broadband availability to all residents of Mercer County by 2007.

ConnectKentucky recommends that Mercer County focus on these general areas in order to encourage further build-out of broadband throughout the community and to create awareness of the broadband-related services that already exist.

- Creating awareness of the many available digital applications that provide convenience, growth, productivity, and empowerment.
- Developing and expanding community applications that will drive the use of broadband access and ultimately encourage residents to become more technologically savvy.

Methodology

Activity 1 – Kickoff meeting and follow-up benchmarking meetings defined existing and future uses of broadband:

- How stakeholders currently use telecommunications and broadband services and applications
- What telecommunications and broadband needs are not currently being met
- What applications would be useful to increase the economic competitiveness of the area
- What telecommunications and broadband services and applications key stakeholders desire for the future

Activity 2 – Interviews with key telecommunications and Information Technology providers in the community determined what services and infrastructure are in place now and what services and infrastructure are planned for the future.

Activity 3 – ConnectKentucky reported the findings, provided analysis of potential alternatives and made recommendations on potential future initiatives:

- Benchmarked current uses of technology
- Researched applications that will enhance the economic vitality of the community in various participating sectors
- Recommended a strategic approach to adopting appropriate applications

- Provided project management to assure successful implementation
- Collected coverage data from existing broadband providers in the Commonwealth. In GIS format, mapped coverage footprints of all providers
- Provided data for areas not served by broadband
- Shared relevant market data with potential providers to encourage additional investment
- Identified possible grant and low-interest loan availability to areas not currently served
- Encouraged investment from all providers, including cable, telecommunications companies, municipals, satellite and wireless, to fill remaining gaps.

How Do We Get There?

ConnectKentucky will continue to assist the e-Community Leadership Team, working together to ensure that Mercer County remains a strong place to work, live, and raise a family. ConnectKentucky will remain engaged with the leadership and stakeholders from each sector to implement the recommendations provided in this report.



B. WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

B. WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Business and Industry

Today, a number of factors are forcing businesses to change time-honored models of operation, including global competition, a trend toward partnering/outsourcing for all but core functions, and a demand for more personalized services. Each of these trends can save businesses time and money, but they require a sound technological infrastructure. The good news is that while these trends are emerging, the costs of technology are falling. Businesses cannot be sheltered from competitors. The reality is that Mercer County businesses must adapt to the changing world in which they operate. Businesses have to learn the tools of the networked economy and innovate to survive.

Business and industry often experience the most direct benefit of high-speed Internet with increased sales, profit, and growth. However, many businesses and industries are utilizing high-speed Internet to simplify processes, increase efficiency, and develop new marketing methods. While the employees benefit immediately, the consumer ultimately sees lower prices and better quality.

Gaining benefits from the implementation of high speed Internet is not just for large corporations. For smaller businesses, technology creates an even playing field with companies much bigger than themselves. E-commerce (the buying and selling of goods over the Internet) allows small or even home-based businesses to operate and sell their goods on a national and sometimes international scale. Where small businesses were once limited to whatever local customers they could attract through local advertising and word of mouth, the internet now allows them to attract customers across the globe.

Technology has allowed larger businesses to maximize efficiency in order to better serve customers. E-mail, intranets, paperless operations, and automated logistics processes are just a few examples of how the Internet is allowing large companies to work with much greater efficiency and at lower costs. This allows those businesses to expand into other markets and grow their companies, or even pass the savings on to their customers.

K-12

For our children to succeed in the New Economy, the tools of the Information Age should be as comfortable to use as a pencil and paper. The future health of the nation's economy depends on how broadly and deeply we reach a new level of literacy – that includes strong academic skills, thinking, reasoning, teamwork skills, and proficiency in the use of technology. Our schools must equip every student, regardless of family income, with the ability to use these tools. Equally important is the use of these tools in the educational process itself. The interactive nature of the Web provides a richer learning experience that engages and motivates students to explore and learn.

In Kentucky, Internet applications used in elementary and secondary schools continue to develop. Typically, the Internet is a communication tool for teachers and parents to remain up-to-date on the recent happenings of the classroom. Everything from homework assignments to scheduled activities and pictures can be found on classroom Websites, keeping everyone connected to educational resources. Elementary and secondary schools provide students with the opportunity to learn more about computer technology and explore the Internet with school computer labs. Committed to protecting students and maintaining a safe, educational environment, schools monitor and restrict Internet access of students to ensure the highest quality resources are being viewed and to ensure the safety of our children.

Healthcare

The healthcare industry has unique challenges. It inherently generates mountains of information yet at the same time is duty bound to keep these mountains hidden for the sake of individual privacy. For companies charged with managing and working with this information, high-speed Internet access and technology innovations are crucial. On a daily basis, doctors must keep up with the latest research; patient records have to be easily accessible and accurate; and images, test results, and prescriptions have to be delivered promptly, without errors, to practitioners, pharmacies, and insurance providers. In healthcare, errors and delays are not only costly, but also dangerous. Many providers are converting to electronic medical records which can be easily updated and shared on secure, internal networks. Network-based technologies like video-conferencing and digital stethoscopes allow specialists to consult with rural patients, reducing travel time and hazards. This ability to reach rural patients through technology has allowed many people to seek treatment that otherwise might not. Bringing the best of healthcare to every Kentucky citizen is a worthy goal.

Because of the nature of their activities, the healthcare industry has found the perfect partner in high-speed Internet technology. The convenience of the Internet has simplified information transfers and improved medical equipment while maintaining the integrity of confidential patient information.

Libraries

Today, libraries are more than just books on the shelves. Everything from the card catalog to check out can be simplified with the help of high-speed Internet. Public libraries often play a vital role in the community by providing every resident with the opportunity to receive instruction and use the Internet free of charge. Though they are not available 24 hours a day as a home computer is, libraries are still a central point of access to the Internet that is available to each and every citizen in the community. Many businesses have been launched as a result of research done on a computer in a Kentucky library. Many children are able to do their homework online or research reports because of the Internet access provided by the local library. Because the library plays such an important

role in the community, it is essential that local libraries are on the cutting edge of technology and continue to develop new methods of keeping their patrons up to date. High speed Internet can help libraries continue their tradition as a trusted and indispensable resource.

Higher Education

Colleges, universities, and community colleges in Kentucky continue to find new ways to use the Internet to improve everyday activities. Websites are an important source of information about the institution, from providing news and information concerning campus activities to online registration of classes. Colleges and universities often implement the use of the school websites to attract prospective students, remain connected to alumni, and allow for online donations.

The most common application of high-speed Internet on college and university campuses, however, is typically not actually used on-campus. Most colleges and universities offer online classes and academic programs to better equip students with the opportunity to learn. In 2004, 35,000 students participated in higher education classes through Kentucky Virtual University, www.kyvu.org. By bringing the classroom to the students, participants from every walk of life and region of the state were able to participate in higher education classes. However, it is necessary to have high-speed Internet to participate successfully in online classes. High-speed Internet is crucial to supporting the capabilities and the possibilities of higher education in Kentucky.

Community-Based Organizations

Non-profit agencies provide a wide variety of services to citizens, including health services, religious services, community sports and athletic facilities, and public entertainment. Like any organization, community-based organizations need technology to manage operations, apply for grants, reduce costs, improve client services, and better serve the community. Unfortunately, their budgets are typically limited, and they often depend on outdated technologies and donated services. As a result, community-based organizations must be creative in order to serve their constituents in the best manner possible. Fortunately, there is no shortage of creativity among community-based organizations, and many are using innovative solutions to offer important local services. As with other sectors, the Internet is an enabling factor for these creative solutions.

Government

Government serves citizens in numerous ways, from providing services such as vehicle registration to providing information such as election results. While it is common for people to feel disengaged from the everyday actions of state and local government, technology has allowed governments to begin closing that gap. On the state level, Kentucky has developed Kentucky.gov, a comprehensive website that provides government services and information to all

citizens. On this site, residents can purchase and update hunting licenses; car dealers can access title searches on cars; and citizens can monitor the progress of legislation when the General Assembly is in session. By bringing the services of the state government to the convenience of residents' homes, the Kentucky.gov site provides participants a greater sense of relevance in the actions of state government.

Local governments have also seen the importance of an online presence. Local governments provide communities with many services, offer a great deal of local information, and encourage public involvement and awareness. With a web presence, local governments can distribute information to more citizens, provide more opportunities for interaction with the agencies that affect them, and make more convenient transactions that previously required a drive to the courthouse.

Tourism, Recreation, and Parks

As citizens become more comfortable with the Internet, they typically continue to find more uses for it. One of the industries benefiting from this trend is the tourism industry. Increasingly, people are using the Internet to research, book, and pay for airline tickets, hotels, rental cars, and to make other logistical arrangements for their vacations and business travel. In light of this fact, hotels, travel agents, restaurants, attractions, and other support businesses in the tourism industry are taking advantage of this trend and making their information and services available on the Internet.

Additionally, with the help of high-speed Internet and computer technology, the leisure time planned and purchased over the internet can also be used more efficiently, allowing for a more enjoyable experience. Whether it is vacation, recreation, or a visit to a local park, high-speed Internet is making the travel experience more enjoyable and more convenient. Already, a number of innovative tourism attractions are using high-speed Internet to improve services and meet the changing demands of their guests.

Agriculture

Too often, the agricultural community sees little need for broadband technology in the day-to-day activities of maintaining farms and livestock. However, broadband technology allows for growing innovation in agriculture, simplifying and mainstreaming important daily tasks, and developing marketing and sales. With high-speed Internet, farmers can remain up-to-date with everything from the weather to the conditions of the chicken coops equipped with temperature-sensitive monitors. Livestock farmers can access market prices and gain access to the latest in livestock management techniques. Farmers can advertise and even sell goods on the Internet, generating customers from all over the world. The Internet can also help Kentucky farmers diversify their operations and develop cutting edge revenue streams thus alleviating some of the loss of revenue from the Tobacco Quota Buyout program. Internet resources can give Kentucky farmers an edge on production and results. The possibilities are virtually endless. The marriage of agriculture and high-speed Internet can produce abundant success for farmers across Kentucky by creating opportunities.



**C. WHERE ARE WE AND
WHERE ARE WE GOING?**

C. WHERE ARE WE AND WHERE ARE WE GOING?

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

As in many other parts of Kentucky, Mercer County's business and industry relies heavily on its manufacturing base. The community's largest employers include Hitachi Automotive Products USA, glass manufacturer Corning, Inc., and Trim Masters, Inc., a producer of automotive seat covers and plastics components. These businesses and other large manufacturing companies in Mercer County have been generally successful in using technology to simplify processes, increase efficiency, and develop new marketing methods. And while these large, technology-oriented manufacturers are an integral piece of Mercer County's economy, they represent only a handful of the many businesses in Mercer County. It is the smaller business community that the Mercer Leadership Team found to hold the greatest untapped potential for using technology to spur business growth at the local level.

The Assessment

- **Networked Places** – In the category of networked places, Mercer County's business and industry sector scored a 1 on a 0 to 5 scale, with only a few employees in the community having internet access in the workplace. This limited internet access is generally restricted to a dial-up connection.
- **Applications and Services** – In the area of technology applications and services, business and industry scored a 2 on a 0 to 5 scale. The team found that some businesses in Mercer County have a web presence to promote business services or products, and a few of these companies are using the Internet to place or take orders.
- **Leadership** – In terms of technology leadership within the business community, Mercer County scored a 1 on a 0 to 5 scale. There seems to be a general feeling that the Internet could be used to enhance business activities, yet there is much to learn about potential technology applications for business development.

The Vision

While the Mercer Leadership Team found that business and industry's current use of technology is somewhat limited, the team has an aggressive vision for how the county's business and industry sector will be using technology in two years. The team set goals that would move the business and industry sector from the lower half of the scoring system to the highest score of 5 in each of the three categories outlined above. The team's vision includes:

- Most businesses in Mercer County will use high speed connections for **enhanced web services** such as national and international online retail sales, advanced tracking of inventory and equipment, and multiparty video conferencing through computer webcams;
- Where beneficial, employees will be equipped with portable wireless electronic devices such as **laptop computers**, and will have the ability to access the office network remotely, allowing flexibility and cost savings;
- A **telework program** will be implemented within appropriate organizations, allowing employees the opportunity to work from home;

- Where cost-effective, businesses will use **Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP)** to streamline and save money on telecommunication services;
- Most businesses will **outsource** all or some of their non-core operations, allowing a focus on core business activities; and
- Mercer County businesses will encourage **technology training**, and all new hires will be required to have experience using new technologies in business applications.

K-12

Mercer County's three public school systems – Mercer County, Harrodsburg Independent, and Burgin Independent – comprised 3524 students in the 2003-2004 school year. The only private school system in Mercer County, Central Kentucky Christian, has approximately 140 students.

Most schools in Mercer County are currently working to integrate technology applications in the classroom, but technology access and learning opportunities in Mercer County are generally greater for secondary-level students than for elementary-level students. Teachers in Mercer County are encouraged to further their knowledge of technology so that they may more fully integrate technology into the classrooms; however, the Mercer County Leadership Team found a need for more specific training in classroom technologies. The team also identified general needs for enhanced computer security within the school system and more effective use of distance learning technologies.

The Assessment

In its evaluation, the Mercer County Leadership Team determined that the K-12 education sector has made significant progress in making technology a priority, and the team set goals for enhanced access and use of technology and its applications.

- **Network Places** – In the category of network places, Mercer County's K-12 education sector scored a 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. Most schools provide at least one computer for every five students in grades seven and above. Most classrooms have computers for student use, and some teachers use computer-based presentation tools and projectors for their lessons.
- **Applications and Services** – In the category of technology applications and services, the education sector scored a 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. Some schools have an interactive Website that offers access to homework assignments and communication with teachers and administrators. Many experienced teachers know how to incorporate Internet-based lesson plans into the curriculum, and most teachers welcome e-mail from parents and students.
- **Leadership** – In terms of technology leadership within the education sector, Mercer County scored a 2 on a 0 to 5 scale. Some experienced teachers are trained in how to incorporate material from the Internet into their curriculum. Most schools, however, do not have formal plans for better use of telecommunications services and technologies in the classrooms.

The Vision

The Mercer County Leadership Team recognizes that the school systems have made technology a priority, and the team has outlined a clear vision for enhanced technology usage and application in the classroom. The vision includes:

- Mercer K-12 institutions will be **networked** to provide staff and students with digital projection and student video production;
- A policy whereby some **students bring their own laptop computers to school**, allowing for more flexible use of computer labs;
- Use of **wireless sensors to monitor energy consumption**;
- **Interactive school Websites** that offer access to homework assignments and e-mail contact with teachers and administrators;
- All teachers will be trained to use the **Internet for instruction**;
- **Parents and family members will be encouraged to participate** in student learning via e-mail and online applications;
- When appropriate, seniors will take **college level classes on the Internet**;
- **Comprehensive plans** for learning activities using technology in the classroom;
- New hires will be **required to have experience using new technology** in the classroom;
- **Computer labs are made available to family and community members**; and
- Schools take responsibility for continuing the federal e-rate program and other **funding opportunities**.

LIBRARIES

The Mercer County Public Library is currently the only site in the community offering public access to the Internet. As a result, the library's computer and Internet resources are critical to anyone who needs the Internet but does not have access through other means. In addition to its citizen services, the Mercer County Library has specific computers and resources devoted to the small business community.

The Assessment

The Mercer County Leadership team found that the library rated higher overall than most other sectors in its current use of technology.

- **Network Places** – In the category of network places, libraries scored a 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. There seems to be an adequate number of computers for those currently needing access; there is rarely more than a 10 minute wait for computer resources.
- **Applications and Services** – In the category of technology applications and services, libraries again scored a 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. The Mercer County library's catalogs are available online. Patrons may use the Internet to place books on hold and request books from other libraries in the library system. Patrons can search online databases from home, school, or work. And the library hosts live video feeds of public interest events.
- **Leadership** – In terms of technology leadership within the library system, the sector again scores a 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. The library research desk is an

online community resource. Staff training on new technologies is a priority, and library policies reflect appropriate filtering requirements. The library is using consultants to take advantage of grants and subsidies such as the national e-rate program, a national program that helps fund schools and libraries in rural areas.

The Vision

The leadership team has set forth a two year vision for enhancing the library so that it serves the community more effectively and efficiently, concentrating on network places and leadership. The team set an aggressive goal for the category of network places, with plans to move from a score of 3 to a 5 in two years. The team plans to continue to support the existing technological state of the library's applications and services, choosing to keep the goal for this category the same as its current score of 3. In the leadership category, it is the team's goal to bring the library from a score of 3 to a 4. The vision includes:

- A publicly accessible wireless network with a **minimum speed of 100 mbps**, allowing for more productive time on computers;
- Library staff's active participation in **educating the community** on copyright issues and how to protect privacy on the Internet;
- Requirement that new hires have **experience using new technology**;
- Taking responsibility for **continuing grant and subsidy programs** such as the federal e-rate program; and
- The network technologies and management policy is designed to **prevent patrons from sending spam**.

GOVERNMENT

The three main government entities in Mercer County include the county government, the county seat of Harrodsburg, and the city of Burgin. Among these three local governments, the Mercer County Clerk's office has the only official government Website. Created at no cost to Mercer County by Kentucky.gov, the site offers information and interactive citizen services related to the office of the County Clerk. The site, however, is designed to serve only a portion of county government, and therefore does not include the services of a complete county Website. The two cities do not have official Websites for online citizen services. The Mercer County Leadership Team identified Web-based applications as a primary need area, and sees a fully functioning and integrated Website as a prime opportunity for improving government communication with citizens, increasing efficiency, and enhancing economic and community development.

The Assessment

Although the government entities in Mercer County have a limited online presence, the Mercer County Leadership team found that the local government is currently using technology to improve processes in other areas.

- **Network Places** – In the category of network places, the government sector scored a 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. Many employees have e-mail accounts that are being used for communications. Some field workers are collecting data on laptop computers or other portable electronic devices. In some cases, webcams are being deployed in order to make use of video technologies.

- **Applications and Services** – In the category of technology applications and services, the government sector scored a 2 on a 0 to 5 scale. The sole public agency Website of the County Clerk offers informational features such as community calendars, staff directories, and downloadable forms. Generally, however, citizens still rely on postal mail and telephone to conduct government business.
- **Leadership** – In terms of technology leadership within the government community, Mercer County and its associated governments scored a 2 on a 0 to 5 scale. Officials are just beginning to explore electronic government (e-government) as a way to make government processes more efficient; therefore, leaders do not yet have a plan for how to best use e-government applications. Elected officials are not involved in telecommunications issues, and minimal telecommunications planning has occurred.

The Vision

The Mercer County Leadership Team has developed goals to provide a framework for robust e-Government functions in the next two years, bringing the rating in the category of network places from a 3 to a 4; the rating for applications and services from a 2 to a 5; and the rating for leadership from a 2 to a 4. The team's vision includes:

- A **shared network** between city and county governments to allow for enhanced data sharing between agencies and employees;
- Increased use of **portable wireless electronic devices** to upload and download data in the field;
- Government employees' use of **enhanced Web-based applications** such as desktop videoconferencing and more widespread use of e-mail;
- Increased use of **webcams** and environmental sensors to monitor environmental safety threats;
- Regular use of **interactive applications** such as customer relationship management, online GIS, and video streaming;
- Enabling government employees to **manage benefits on an intranet**;
- Enabling emergency response teams to **reliably communicate across jurisdictions**;
- Creating a system that indexes council meetings and makes them available for **searching and retrieval online**;
- Where appropriate, developing a **formal telework policy** within agencies, allowing certain employees to work at home part of the time;
- Establishing **rights-of-way and tower sitting policies**; and
- Affirmation that elected officials of each government entity understand the **importance of the network to economic development and the quality of life** for the community.

AGRICULTURE

Mercer County has over 133,000 acres of farm land divided among nearly 1,100 farm operations. In recent years, farming operations in Mercer County have accounted for over \$28 million in sales, representing a large sector of the economy. The primary commodity is livestock, largely goats and cattle. Produce is another major agricultural product in Mercer County.

The Assessment

The Mercer County Leadership Team found that the agricultural sector is just beginning to use technology to its advantage and identified a large opportunity for technology applications within the farming community.

- **Network Places** – In the category of network places, Mercer County’s agricultural sector scored a 2 on a 0 to 5 scale. While a few of the growers, suppliers, and processors have an always-on connection to the Internet at their desks, many still rely on dial-up connections or no connection at all.
- **Applications and Services** – In the category of technology applications and services, the agriculture sector scored a 1.5 on a 0 to 5 scale. A good number of growers, suppliers, and processors use e-mail and the internet, a few of these have informational Websites, and a very few transmit and receive some orders electronically.
- **Leadership** – In terms of technology leadership within the agricultural community, Mercer County scored a 1 on a 0 to 5 scale. Although most organizations have not adopted formal technology or telecommunication plans, the industry seems to generally see that the Internet can be used as a tool to enhance daily business.

The Vision

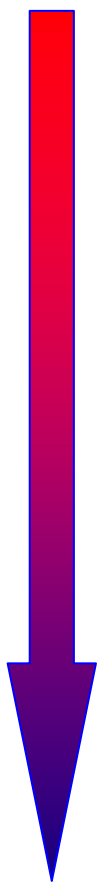
The Mercer County Leadership Team sees great potential for the use of technology in the agricultural sector but understands the industry is limited in its resources and ability to implement changes within a brief period. The team has set goals to move each of the three categories above to a rating of 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. The team’s vision includes:

- **Always-on connections to the Internet** for most growers, suppliers, and processors, enabling web-based activities and applications such as livestock sales monitoring, breeding stock research, and online livestock auctions;
- **Laptop computers** for appropriate mobile workers, with the ability to access the network remotely;
- Making **affordable videoconferencing facilities** available in the community;
- Most growers, suppliers, and processors will have **informational Websites** to promote products, some with the ability to **accept credit card purchases online**;
- Some growers, suppliers, and processors will participate in an electronic supply chain, including **real time livestock tracking** through global positioning satellite technology (GPS);
- Some suppliers and processors will permit employees to **periodically telework**; and
- Some growers, suppliers, and processors will encourage employees to take work-related **classes online**.


Business and Industry

Mercer County

● Mercer County's Benchmark Assessment Results are presented in red.
 ■ Mercer County's Vision for this Sector is presented in blue.

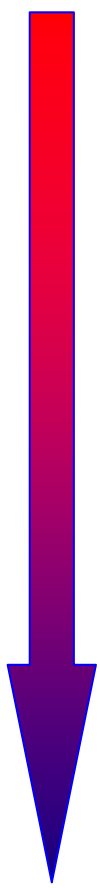
	Stage	Networked Places	Applications & Services	Leadership
<div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Least Connected</p>  <p>Most Connected</p> </div>	0	Not using the Internet.	No computer use or Website. Customers use phone and postal mail.	No technology or telecom plan.
	1	● Some employees have limited access to the Internet through a dial-up connection.	Utilize basic e-mail services through their connection.	● Internet is considered a possible business enhancement.
	2	Some office employees have always-on connections to the Internet at their desks.	● Some businesses have informational Website. Some businesses transmit or receive some orders electronically.	Some view the Internet as essential to business operations. Employees are trained on basic applications.
	3	Most office employees have always-on connections to the Internet at their desks. Some mobile workers have laptop computers and can access the office network remotely. Affordable videoconferencing facilities are available in the community	Most businesses have informational Website. Some retail Websites can accept credit card transactions. Some businesses participate in electronic supply chain.	Some businesses permit some employees periodically to telework. Some businesses encourage employees to take work-related classes offline. Employee training on new technology is a priority.
	4	Some businesses use VoIP (Voice over IP) to save money. Some office workers have converted from desktop computers to portable device. Some office computers have webcams for videoconferencing.	Some businesses outsource most of their computer services. Some retailers and manufacturers sell goods out of state or internationally. Some employees work remotely, some out of state.	Some businesses permit some employees to telework one or two days a week. Some businesses encourage employees to take work-related courses online. Businesses are working with educational partners to raise workforce skill levels.
	5	■ Most businesses use VoIP to save money. Most computers have video cameras. Some retailers and manufacturers use RFID (radio frequency identification) to track inventory and equipment.	■ Some businesses send and receive video mail. Some businesses outsource most of their computing services. Some businesses routinely use multiparty videoconferencing to coordinate operations.	■ Some businesses have restructured to focus on their core contribution and outsource nonessential functions. New hires are required to have experience using new technology in business applications.

● Mercer County's Benchmark Assessment Results are presented in red.
 ■ Mercer County's Vision for this Sector is presented in blue.

	Stage	Networked Places	Applications & Services	Leadership
	Least Connected			
	0	Not using the Internet.	Use phone and postal mail. No Website.	No technology or telecom plan.
	1	Few middle and high schools have computer labs for students. Few classrooms/teachers have access to computer projectors	Few schools have an informational Website. Internet is not used as a resource for instruction or homework assignments.	Few experienced teachers are trained in how to incorporate material from the Internet into their curriculum.
	2	Many middle and high schools have computer labs for students. Some classrooms and teachers have access to computer projectors.	Many schools have an informational Website. The Internet is rarely used as a resource for instruction or homework assignments.	● Few schools have plans for better utilizing telecommunications services and technologies in their classrooms. Some teachers can incorporate Internet material into their curriculum.
	3	● Schools provide at least one computer for every five students in grades 7-12. Most classrooms have computers for student use. Some teachers use computer-based presentation tools and projectors for their lessons.	● Some schools have an interactive Website that offers access to homework assignments and communication with teachers/administrators. Many teachers can incorporate Internet material into the curriculum Teachers welcome e-mail from parents/students.	The school board sees opportunities to use the network to raise test scores and operate the school more efficiently. Teacher training on new technologies is a priority at most school districts. Schools are using consultants to take advantage of e-rate and other school discounts.
Most Connected	4	■ Some students bring their own laptop computers to school. Some computer labs close. Many classrooms teachers have access to digital projection capabilities. Most middle and high schools have video programs that allow students to produce and share shows on a public network. Some schools use wireless sensors to monitor energy consumption.	■ Many schools have an interactive Website that offers access to homework assignments and e-mail contact with teachers and administrators. All teachers are trained to use the Internet for instruction. Parents and family members are encouraged to participate in student learning via e-mail and online applications. Some seniors are taking college-level classes on the Internet.	■ Some schools have comprehensive plans for learning activities utilizing technology in the classroom. New hires are required to have experience using new technology in the classroom. Computer labs are made available to family and community members. Schools take responsibility for continuing e-rate and other discounts.
	5	Most students bring their own laptop computers to school. Most computer labs have been closed. Many classrooms have large, flat-panel displays or projectors for video-based instruction. Most schools have converted their phone system to VoIP to save money.	Schools use the network to connect students, teachers and parents, improve learning via online resources, and manage administrative responsibilities. Schools have ICT literacy requirements in place. Technology training is offered in the community. Many high school students use online resources to explore subjects and develop learning plans.	Many schools have comprehensive plans for learning activities utilizing technology in the classroom. School districts actively promote ICT literacy to drive positive impacts on economic performance, skills and innovation in the classroom. The school system plays a vital role in raising the skill level and awareness of community and family members.

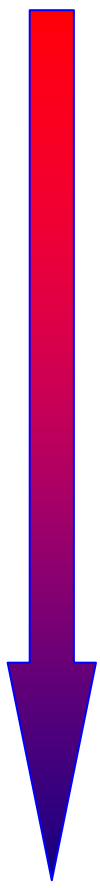
Healthcare	Mercer County
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● Mercer County's Benchmark Assessment Results are presented in red.
 ■ Mercer County's Vision for this Sector is presented in blue.

	Stage	Networked Places	Applications & Services	Leadership
<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 20px;">Least Connected</div>  <div style="margin-top: 20px;">Most Connected</div> </div>	0	Not using the Internet.	Customers use phone and postal mail. No Website.	No technology or telecom plan.
	1	Some physicians and/or staff have access to the Internet through a dial-up connection.	Physicians and/or staff are utilizing a dial-up connection in order to access health-related sites.	Considering what advantage may come from implementation of Internet in office.
	2	● Some doctors regularly use computers to enter and maintain patient records. Digital instruments and imaging equipment are being acquired.	● Some providers have informational Websites. Some providers store patient records electronically. Telemedicine is being evaluated. Some offices are electronically transmitting records to insurers for reimbursement.	● Some providers have begun the conversion to electronic medical records. Some providers are investigating how to deploy wireless technologies for mobile workers.
	3	■ Some doctors and nurses are using laptop and palmtop devices connected to wireless networks to enter patient information and access databases.	■ Many providers have informational Websites. Many providers store patient records electronically. Telemedicine is being evaluated. Some offices are electronically transmitting records to insurers for reimbursement.	■ Many providers have begun the conversion to electronic medical records. Many providers are investigating how to deploy wireless technologies for mobile workers.
	4	Internet-based videoconferencing is used to consult experts and for training programs. Some patients are being monitored at home and at work via portable devices with wireless transmitters.	Some providers allow patients to e-mail doctors. Most providers store patient records electronically. Some lab results and images are received electronically.	Work is underway by some providers to begin online exchanging of test results and other medical records with appropriate parties. Healthcare leaders are talking with the community about enhancing online services and using the network to improve communitywide healthcare.
	5	Most equipment has been converted to digital. Desktop videoconferencing is routine at all hospitals and major clinics. Telephone systems have converted to VoIP to save money. Remote monitoring of patients with chronic conditions is standard procedure.	All providers allow patients to schedule appointments, view records and get advice online. All patient records are stored electronically and routinely sent electronically to distant providers to aid diagnosis and treatment for emergency patients. Telemedicine routinely is used to access specialists. Wireless feeds in ambulances provide real-time patient assessment to ER staff.	Healthcare leaders see themselves as a key part of the community's overall economic strategy. Leaders are visible and active in strategy development and implementation. Executives of the region's hospitals, clinics, insurers, employers and other healthcare providers are meeting regularly to find ways to collaboratively reduce the cost of healthcare without compromising quality of service.

Libraries	Mercer County
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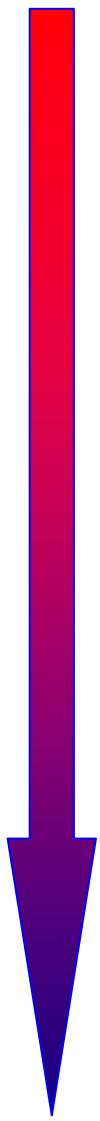
● Mercer County's Benchmark Assessment Results are presented in red.
 ■ Mercer County's Vision for this Sector is presented in blue. (Blue is used when Assessment and Vision are the same.)

	Stage	Networked Places	Applications & Services	Leadership
	Least Connected	0 Libraries do not provide Internet access.	Customers use postal mail or phone. No Website.	There is no technology or telecom plan.
	1	Some employees have access to a dial-up connection.	Some employees are accessing e-mail and library-related Websites.	Employees are accessing Internet in order to help the patrons of the facility.
	2	Public libraries provide several computers with free access to the Internet.	Most libraries have a Website with basic information about hours of operation and location.	Libraries are the first to offer free access and instruction in the use of the Internet.
	3	● There is rarely a more than 10-minute wait to use the Internet-enabled computers.	■ Most libraries have catalogs online. Patrons may use the Internet to place books on hold and request books from other libraries in the library system. Patrons can search online databases from home, school, or work. Libraries host live video feeds of public interest events.	● The library research desk is an online community resource. Staff training on new technologies is a priority at most libraries. Libraries are using consultants to take advantage of e-rate and other discounts. Library policies reflect appropriate filtering requirements.
	4	Public libraries have added network ports or wireless networks and electrical outlets to carrels.	Patrons may review their accounts online and pay fines by credit card. Patrons can access the library online as a portal for other online information services.	■ Libraries help the community understand copyright issues and how to protect privacy on the Internet. New hires are required to have experience using new technology. Libraries take internal responsibility for continuing e-rate and other discounts. Libraries have developed network management policies and technologies to prevent patrons from sending spam.
	Most Connected	5	■ Most public libraries offer patrons a 100 mbps or faster wireless network.	Public libraries offer live video consultations. Public libraries allow patrons to borrow e-books over the Internet. They help patrons conduct research and assist with legal access to copyrighted databases and publications, including music and movies. Two-way videoconferencing is available to the general public.

Higher Education


Mercer County

● Mercer County's Benchmark Assessment Results are presented in red.
 ■ Mercer County's Vision for this Sector is presented in blue.

	Stage	Networked Places	Applications & Services	Leadership
 <p>Least Connected</p>	0	Not using the Internet.	Use phone and postal mail.	There is no technology or telecom plan.
	1	Some on-campus residents have broadband connections through non-university providers.	Few faculty members are trained to use the Internet for instruction. Few classes use digital content and/or web-based content for instruction.	Few departments have plans for better utilizing telecommunications services and technologies in their operations.
	2	● Most on-campus residences have a 10 mbps connection to the network. Some classrooms are wired to the college/university network and are equipped with digital projection capabilities.	● Some faculty members are trained to use the Internet for instruction. Some classes use digital content and/or web-based content for instruction.	● Few departments have plans for better utilizing telecommunications services and technologies in their operations.
	3	■ Most on-campus residences have connections to the network in every room at least 10 mbps. Some classrooms have projection equipment that allows the instructor to display videos from the Internet into the classroom.	■ Many of the faculty are trained to use the Internet for instruction. Many classes use digital content and/or web-based content for instruction. Students use chat rooms to discuss lessons and ask questions of instructors outside of class hours. Online registration, catalogs, and payment available.	■ Specialized courses have been developed to cater to area businesses seeking to improve the skills of workers. Some colleges and universities have or are developing online classes to provide greater convenience for students and to increase student enrollment. Faculty training on new technology is a priority.
	4	Some classrooms have been remodeled to include network connections and power outlets at every seat. Many students bring laptop computers or other network-enabled devices to class. Some classrooms have video equipment for recording lectures.	Most of the faculty are trained to use the Internet for instruction. Most classes use digital content and/or Web-based content for instruction. Some undergraduate students take distance learning classes for specialized subjects and graduate-level research.	Higher education and local businesses are working together to raise the skill level of the current workforce. Community colleges are expanding their capacity by using distance learning technologies to reduce the need for classroom time. Some colleges and universities are developing online classes to market to students in other parts of the country and the world.
	5	Many classrooms have been remodeled to include network connections and power outlets at every seat. Most students bring laptop computers or other network-enabled devices to class. Many classrooms have video equipment for recording lectures.	Many undergraduate students take distance learning classes for specialized subjects and graduate-level research. All aspects of higher education are available through the network including instruction and administration.	The college/university sees itself as a vital partner in the community's economic development strategy and has formed partnerships with local businesses to provide skilled technology workers and innovative solutions. The colleges/universities actively promotes ICT literacy to drive positive impacts on economic performance, skills, and innovation in the classroom.
Most Connected				

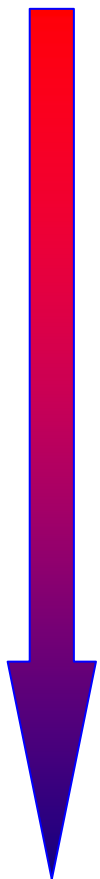
Community-Based Organizations	Mercer County
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● Mercer County's Benchmark Assessment Results are presented in red.
 ■ Mercer County's Vision for this Sector is presented in blue. (Blue is used when Assessment and Vision are the same.)

	Stage	Networked Places	Applications & Services	Leadership
	Least Connected			
	0	Not using the Internet.	No computer use. No Website. Use phone and postal mail.	No technology or telecom plan.
	1	● Accessing the Internet through a limited dial-up connection.	Currently utilizing e-mail and possibly other basic Internet functions.	● Internet is seen as a possible enhancement and marketing tool.
	2	■ Some CBOs have computers that are no older than three years old. Many CBOs have e-mail. Some office employees have always-on connections to the Internet at their desks.	■ Some CBOs have informational Websites.	■ CBOs are minimally involved in community economic development issues. Little or no plans exist for better utilizing telecommunications services and technologies. Some CBOs provide technology training to their staff at least once a year.
	3	Most CBOs with at least five paid staff have at least one computer for every three employees. Many CBOs have e-mail.	Many CBOs have an informational Website. Many local chapters are able to share data electronically with the national parent organization. Some CBOs accept online donations.	Some CBOs are involved in specific economic development initiatives, but most do not participate. Some CBOs plan to use telecommunications services and technologies within the next year. Some CBOs provide technology training to their staff at least once a year.
	4	Many CBOs with at least five employees have direct connections to the Internet. All paid staff have e-mail accounts. Some CBOs use VoIP to save money. Some office workers have converted from desktop computers to portable wireless devices. Some office computers have video cameras.	Most CBOs have an informational Website. A unified CBO portal provides access to a broad range of community information and services. Most local chapters are able to share data with the parent organization.	Some CBO leaders are actively involved in community economic development issues and there are visible leaders taking a significant role in economic development. Many CBOs plan to use telecommunications services and technologies within the next year. Most CBOs provide technology training to their staff at least once a year.
Most Connected	5	Many CBOs use VoIP. Every CBO is connected to the Internet. Every computer can access the Internet via a local area network. Many computers have video cameras Most CBOs use affordable videoconferencing facilities.	Most CBOs accept online donations. Some CBOs utilize an interactive service to further engage the community and make their services more broadly available. Electronic data sharing is a common practice between CBOs locally and with national parent organizations.	CBOs collaborate with one another regularly to share resources and provide up-to-date training to their employees and volunteers. CBOs have a defined role in supporting local economic development initiatives. Most CBOs plan to use telecommunications services and technologies within the next year.

Government	Mercer County
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● Mercer County's Benchmark Assessment Results are presented in red.
 ■ Mercer County's Vision for this Sector is presented in blue.

	Stage	Networked Places	Applications & Services	Leadership
	0	Not using the Internet.	No Website.	There is no technology or telecom plan.
	1	Select employees have access to the Internet through a dial-up connection.	Some employees use the Internet for e-mail purposes.	The Internet is seen as a possible way to enhance the basic daily operations.
	2	Some employees have e-mail accounts.	● Most public agency Websites offer informational features such as community calendar, staff directory, and downloadable forms. Customers rely mostly on postal mail and telephone to conduct business.	● Public agencies do not have a strategy for how best to use e-government. Minimal telecommunications planning has occurred. Elected officials are not involved in telecommunications issues.
	3	● Many employees have e-mail accounts. Some field workers are collecting data on laptop computers or palmtops. Webcams are starting to be deployed.	Some e-government applications are available, such as simple building permit applications, e-mail listserv and some downloadable forms. E-mail from residents is manually routed to the appropriate departments. Some agencies routinely use the network to share data.	Government staff is actively involved in framing technology and telecommunications issues. Processes are underway for enhancing connectivity, rights-of-way management, and IT innovation. Employees are trained and knowledgeable on basic applications.
	4	■ Some field workers use wireless networks to upload and download data in the field. Some employees are using desktop videoconferencing. Sensors and webcams monitor locations, such as rivers, that may be a threat to public safety.	Customers can make routine payments, such as parking fines, online using credit cards or EFT. Parks and recreation classes can be registered for online. Building inspections and violations can be entered from the field.	■ Some agencies have a formal policy that allows some employees to work at home at least one day a week. Rights-of-way and tower sitting policies are in place. Elected officials understand the importance of the network for economic development and quality of life.
	5	The telephone system is being converted to VoIP to save money. Many field workers use wireless networks to upload and download data in the field. Critical traffic signals are connected. Desktop videoconferencing is widely available.	■ Interactive applications, such as customer relationship management, online GIS, and video streaming are in regular use. Employees manage benefits programs on an intranet. Emergency response teams can reliably communicate across jurisdictions. Council meetings are indexed and available for searching and retrieval online.	The government has telecommunications, e-government and IT master plans in place to guide its efforts. Innovative processes are used to collaborate with the private sector.

Tourism, Recreation, and Parks

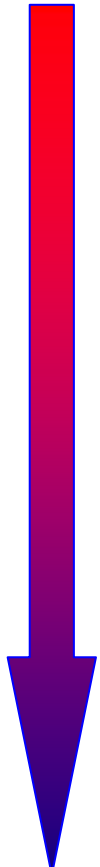
Mercer County

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 ■ Mercer County's Vision for this Sector is presented in blue.

Least Connected  Most Connected	Stage	Networked Places	Applications & Services	Leadership
	0	Not using the Internet.	No computer use. No Website. Customers use phone and postal mail.	There is no technology or telecom plan.
	1	● Some employees can access the Internet through a dial-up connection.	● Some employees currently utilize the Internet for the purpose of e-mail.	● The Internet is seen as a possible way to enhance operations.
	2	■ Some office employees have always-on connections to the Internet at their desks.	■ Some facilities have an informational Website. Some facilities transmit or receive some reservations electronically.	■ The Internet is seen as essential to business operations. Employees are trained on basic applications.
	3	Most office employees have always-on connections to the Internet at their desks. Some mobile workers have laptop computers and can access the office network remotely. Affordable videoconferencing facilities are available.	Most facilities have an informational Website. Some Websites can accept credit card purchases. Some facilities participate in an electronic supply chain.	Some facilities permit some employees periodically to telework. Some facilities encourage employees to take work-related classes online. Employee training on new technology is a priority.
	4	Some facilities use VoIP to save money. Some office workers have converted from desktop computers to portable devices with wireless connections. Some office computers have webcams for videoconferencing.	Some facilities outsource most of their computing services. Some facilities market out of state or internationally. Some employees work remotely.	Some facilities permit some employees to telework one or two days a week. Some facilities encourage employees to take work-related classes online. Facilities are working with educational partners to raise workforce skill levels.
5	Most facilities use VoIP to save money. Most computers have video cameras.	Some facilities send and receive video mail. Some facilities outsource most of their computing services. Some facilities routinely use multiparty videoconferencing to coordinate operations.	Some facilities have restructured to focus on their core contribution and outsource nonessential functions. New hires are required to have experience using new technology in business applications.	

Agriculture	Mercer County
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● Mercer County's Benchmark Assessment Results are presented in red.
 ■ Mercer County's Vision for this Sector is presented in blue.

	Stage	Networked Places	Applications & Services	Leadership
Least Connected	0	Not using the Internet.	No computer use. No Website. All contacts via phone and postal mail.	There is no technology or telecom plan.
	1	Some growers, suppliers, and processors have limited access through a dial-up connection.	Some growers, suppliers, and processors utilize e-mail and Internet.	● The Internet is seen as a possible enhancement to the way daily business is conducted.
	2	● Some growers, suppliers, and processors have always-on connections to the Internet at their desks.	● Some growers, suppliers, and processors have an informational Website. Some growers, suppliers, and processors transmit or receive some orders electronically.	The Internet is seen as essential to business operations. Employees are trained on basic applications.
	3	■ Most growers, suppliers, and processors have always-on connections to the Internet. Some mobile workers have laptop computers and can access the network remotely. Affordable videoconferencing facilities are available in the community.	■ Most growers, suppliers, and processors have informational Websites. Some Websites can accept credit card purchases. Some growers, suppliers, and processors participate in an electronic supply chain.	■ Some suppliers and processors permit employees periodically to telework. Some growers, suppliers, and processors encourage employees to take work-related classes online.
	4	Some growers, suppliers, and processors use VoIP to save money. Some workers have converted from desktop computers to portable devices with wireless connections. Some office computers have webcams for videoconferencing.	Some suppliers and processors outsource most of their computing services. Some growers, suppliers, and processors sell goods out of state or internationally.	Training on new technology is a priority. Some processors and suppliers permit employees to telework one or two days a week.
	5	Most growers, suppliers, and processors use VoIP to save money. Most computers have video cameras. Some use RFID to track inventory and equipment.	Some growers, suppliers, and processors send and receive video mail. Some outsource most of their computing services. Some routinely use multiparty videoconferencing to coordinate operations.	Some suppliers and producers have restructured to focus on their core contribution and outsource nonessential functions. New hires are required to have experience using new technology.
Most Connected				



D. HOW DO WE GET THERE?

D. HOW DO WE GET THERE?

The Mercer County Leadership Team identified the following project ideas during an extensive meeting process.

The team identified the first three Priority Action Items listed as the most important areas to focus on during the next 12 to 18 months. Project teams are already working on each of these.

The second part lists additional Potential Action Items generated for each sector of the community. These “potential action items” may help guide Mercer County as it continues to build its technological capacity.

Priority Action Items

1. Awareness & Education

Project Leaders: Carolyn Royalty, Jill Cutler

Team Members: Robin Bailey, Robin Ison, Karen Hackett, Jim Mansfield

Goal:

Focus on developing a plan to help the community become more aware of what technology can do and the benefits of using the internet and computers in our daily lives. Some suggestions mentioned included adult coaching, creating awareness of need, and easy access (outreach).

Importance:

An educated community is essential in today’s global economy. We can take advantage of existing resources to enhance workforce training programs, encourage more post-secondary education, and create additional awareness within the community about broadband and technology use.

Outcomes:

- An integrated approach to the organization, promotion, and delivery of technology education and awareness for the community
- Increased citizen use of computers and the internet
- Improved basic computer skills and knowledge levels for residents of Mercer County, encouraging greater economic opportunities

Steps:

- Identify all organizations performing community education and training services
- Create a list of training classes currently being offered

- Determine what additional classes need to be included
- Develop a collaborative and cooperative approach for delivering classes
- Find creative ways to market and advertise in order to increase participation; it was suggested that billboards and Town Hall meetings might be effective marketing tools
- Create an integrated online calendar for all community technology classes and events
- Apply for funding grant through Adult Education program

Participants:

HJ Harrodsburg ATC
 Mercer County High School
 Central Kentucky Christian School
 Mercer County Public Library
 Mercer Cooperative Extension Service
 Mercer County Adult Education

2. Online Government Communications

Project Leaders: Wayne Davis, Shane New

Team Members: Vance Smith, Rodney Harlow

Goal:

Enable local government agencies, both city and county, to communicate on a common platform to improve both internal and external communications.

Importance:

Like any organization, local government needs technology to manage operations, reduce costs, improve client services, and better serve the community. Unfortunately, their budgets are always tight, and they often depend on outdated technologies. Updating the local government agencies' internal communications systems to a common platform will enable each agency to communicate more effectively. Improved online communications also will provide citizens with more access to city and county government actions.

Outcomes:

- Standardized e-mail addresses for all local government agencies and employees
- Online calendar of events and activities
- County website

Steps:

- Determine what is needed to add Mercer County government to the state network

- Map out the phases and stages for short-term and long-range plans
- Determine what services need to be provided and identify potential providers
- Create a ky.gov website for county government
- Put basic information online about offices, services, meetings, forms, and events

Participants:

Bluegrass ADD
 Mercer County Emergency Management
 City Government
 County Government

3. Website Development

Project Leaders: Duane Flora, Damian Layman

Team Members: Dick Reivitt, David Hopewell, Noel Turner

- plus students from ATC and STLP

Goal:

Increase the online presence of local organizations through the development of a community portal and websites for local businesses, organizations, and agencies.

Importance:

Businesses of all sizes and industries benefit from high-speed internet. For smaller businesses, technology creates an even playing field with much larger companies. E-commerce allows the small or even home-based business to operate and sell their goods on a national and sometimes international scale. Where small businesses were once limited to whatever local customers they could attract through local advertising and word of mouth, the internet now allows them to attract customers across the globe.

Outcomes:

- New and enhanced websites for local businesses and organizations
- Improved communications and marketing via increased online presence
- Co-op program for students to assist local businesses
- Increased information available online for every sector of the community, including government, business, and tourism

Steps:

- Re-design website for Chamber of Commerce (this project was completed in December 2005 by ATC)
- Create an online calendar for training & education classes and events

- Enhance websites for tourism and Fort Harrod State Park
- Offer classes for website design and maintenance for local businesses, in conjunction with Education project team.

Participants:

HJ Harrodsburg ATC
 Mercer Chamber of Commerce
 State Farm Insurance
 Shelter Insurance
 Harrodsburg-Mercer County Tourism

Potential Action Items

Community-Wide

- Develop Community-wide website that incorporates all the sectors
- Integrate existing organizations working on Economic Development into one unified entity –
 - Main Street Renovation, Tourism, Chamber of Commerce, and Harrodsburg First
 - Making it easier for consumers and businesses to work with the county, and also to save money and have a more unified approach to economic development
- Host Community-wide forums or town hall meeting to increase public awareness of what training programs are available, when, and where

Business & Industry

- Online discussion forums – for community-wide projects, activities, and events
- Centralized site that links to all businesses and organizations in the county
- Use online web cams for security and safety monitoring – eg., the new recreation center
- Use students to help businesses design and maintain websites
- Improve business websites to have a better web presence in order to enhance on-line sales, promotions, and marketing efforts

Education K12

- Use students to create and maintain local business and community websites
- Add GPS to buses for online maps and tracking – safety of security
- Have students teach internet classes at the library (or schools) for citizens, businesses, farmers, including how to use the internet more effectively for their business and farms and business website design and management

Healthcare

- Form a healthcare medical life alert group/system
- Wireless emergency notification for the elderly

Libraries

- Develop a community website that ties every sector together
 - a one-stop shop for all citizens to go whether they need government services, want to buy things, or need farm produce - with links to other websites – both local and state
 - identify existing local websites that need to be included
- Make the community more aware of the library facility and the services that are offered
 - Can get high-speed access now
- More effectively utilize the existing library technology, especially the wireless system being installed
 - Possibly using this as central hub for introductory training, education, and awareness classes

Community-Based Organizations

- Improve online web presence – integrated websites
- More involvement and participation in process
- Ability to sell tickets and collect chamber business partner investments online

- Look at ways to more effectively integrate the community-based organizations
 - where they can share technology, websites, and on-line servers between all the CBO's
 - getting assistance through either the library, K-12, or local businesses

Government

- County website – umbrella for entire community and all government services
- Include other gov't agencies and departments on leadership team – PVA, Clerk, etc.
- Get County and City government agencies on same network and e-mail system
- for improved communications and data sharing. Will need to develop a strategic plan and team to focus on this

Tourism

- Get participation from Parks and Tourism on leadership team
- Leverage existing live webcam downtown for online marketing & promotion

Agriculture

- Websites for farm producers – linked to central community website – to tie rural and remote areas into the whole
- Centralized online farmers' market – for communications with buyers - a way to sell their strawberries, goats, livestock, produce, and products – to inform buyers of locations, times, prices, etc.