



COMMUNITY BROADBAND NETWORKS  
INFORMATION TOOLKIT

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To Download Interactive Press Packet:

<http://ilsr.org/Community-Networks-Press-Packet.pdf>

# ABOUT @CommunityNets

**At MuniNetworks.org, we provide resources that support local authority for broadband networks that are directly accountable to the communities they serve.**

As more community leaders realize the economic benefits of faster, more reliable Internet services, they are pursuing local control of connectivity through public ownership, cooperative models, and other nonprofit approaches.

The vast majority of community broadband networks have lowered prices and spurred job growth in their communities.

Community networks create jobs and economic opportunities; they connect health care facilities with 21st century life-saving technology; and they are instrumental in helping students attain the education necessary for the modern economy.



- ILSR tracks more than 450 local government owned fiber optic networks.
- We maintain the definitive clearinghouse on local government strategies for expanding access to fast, affordable, and reliable Internet connections.
- ILSR works with communities across the United States to create the policies that ensure telecommunications networks serve the community.
- We educate and inform the public and policy-makers nationwide through persistently reporting on community broadband initiatives and their opponents.

## COMMUNITY BROADBAND NETWORKS FACTS:

Frustrated with inadequate, over priced, or unreliable networks from existing providers, hundreds of communities have decided to build their own networks, sometimes in partnership with local companies.

- At least 89 communities have a citywide fiber-to-the-home network owned by local government
- 76 communities have citywide cable networks, often built before 2000
- 19 states have decided to limit community authority to build their own networks, a veritable gift to telephone and cable monopolies.
- At least 82 communities in 17 states have access to gigabit services owned by local government.

**TO CONTACT CHRIS** email [christopher@ilsr.org](mailto:christopher@ilsr.org), or find him on Twitter: [@CommunityNets](https://twitter.com/CommunityNets).

# ABOUT CHRIS MITCHELL



Photo Courtesy: Glenn Ricart

**Chris Mitchell is the Director of the Community Broadband Networks Initiative with the Institute for Local Self-Reliance.**

Mitchell leads the acclaimed MuniNetworks.org as part of ILSR's effort to ensure broadband networks are directly accountable to the communities that depend upon them.

Mitchell is a leading national expert on community networks, advises high-ranking broadband decision-makers, speaks on radio and television programs in markets across the United States, and frequently presents at telecommunications policy events around the world.

Chris Mitchell has consulted with and advised members of the FCC on telecommunications issues. He has been a guest on national and regional radio shows and provides a strong public interest voice on telecommunications policy.

## QUOTES FROM CHRIS

“At the grassroots level, there is no doubt that Republicans, Independents, and Democrats all believe these decisions should be made by local governments.”

“Hundreds of cities have realized that they are better served by investing in themselves rather than waiting for the cable monopoly to improve its service,” says Community Broadband Networks Director Chris Mitchell with the Institute for Local Self-Reliance.

“... Cities have figured out that they have to take action. Some are building their own networks and some are partnering with private companies, but they're moving ahead because they've realized that no one is going to do it for them.”

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# COMMUNITY BROADBAND NETWORKS IN THE NEWS

Big telecomm companies have lobbied hard to win these restrictions to competition—with this announcement, communities can finally gain control over their economic futures.

ILSR's Christopher Mitchell was interviewed in *The New York Times* by Susan Crawford for her April 27, 2014 opinion piece about the future of broadband. Excerpt here:

“CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Last week’s proposal by the Federal Communications Commission to allow Internet service providers to charge different rates to different online content companies — effectively ending the government’s commitment to net neutrality — set off a flurry of protest.”

“According to Christopher Mitchell of the Institute for Local Self Reliance, a national expert on community networks, more than 400 towns and cities across America have installed or are planning networks. And that’s not just good for consumers; it’s good for business. Companies are moving to places like Wilson, N.C., and Chattanooga, Tenn., because those cities provide public, inexpensive, high-capacity connectivity.”



D.C. Dispatches

## To close rural broadband gap, Minnesota communities consider public option

By Devin Henry | 05/02/14



## The New York Times

The Opinion Pages | OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

## The Wire Next Time

By SUSAN CRAWFORD | APRIL 27, 2014

“But other municipalities are getting into the broadband game, including more than a dozen in Minnesota, looking to compete with the few private providers that dominate their markets, Christopher Mitchell, Director of the Telecommunications as Commons Initiative at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance said.

This isn’t a new idea, Mitchell said, and it’s more prevalent than many people realize. Municipalities began building their own cable networks as early as the 1980s, he said, and they moved into fiber networks about 15 years ago. There are up to 250 public cable or fiber networks around the United States.”

# Tools and Resources



Community Broadband Networks have a very good track record in creating jobs. This fact sheet details where publicly owned network attracted new businesses or helped existing businesses to thrive.

## **Economic Development Fact Sheet [pdf]**



When a community decides it needs to establish its own publicly owned network infrastructure, one of the biggest challenges is

financing the investment. This fact sheet offers a quick look at these common approaches and provides real-world examples.

## **Financing Municipal Networks Fact Sheet [pdf]**



Wireless networks may appear to be magical, but are actually driving investment in fiber optic wires. This resource defines many terms, key points, common speeds, and offers insight into wireless technology and policy.

## **Wireless Internet Fact Sheet [pdf]**



Though schools, libraries, and other community anchors need access to faster, more reliable networks, the big cable and telephone companies have priced those services so high that they are breaking the budget. But when communities create their own connections, affordable high capacity connections aren't the only benefits

## **Economic Development Fact Sheet [pdf]**



This 2 page fact sheet explores the issue of preemption - how at least 19 states have made it impossible or more difficult for communities to build their own networks. It includes some history, legal issues, and quotes from FCC Commissioners.

## **Economic Development Fact Sheet [pdf]**

# ABOUT ILSR



## Our Mission:

We make the rules and the rules make us.

ILSR works with citizens, activists, policymakers and entrepreneurs to provide them with innovative strategies and working models that support environmentally sound and equitable economic policies and community development.

## Our Impact

We make better and more informed policies when those who design those policies are those who feel their impact.

- ILSR's solar map on the Rooftop Revolution helps 100s of millions of Americans learn how they can get cheaper electricity from rooftop solar than from their utility.
- ILSR tracks more than 400 local government owned fiber optic networks. We maintain the definitive clearinghouse on local government strategies for expanding access to fast, affordable, and reliable Internet connections.
- ILSR plays a crucial role in fighting Walmart's entry into new markets. As a result of Stacy Mitchell's testimony to the New York City council, Wal-mart stepped back from its two-year, multi-million dollar campaign to open stores in the city.

## We Believe

Both conservatives and liberals recite the proverb, "Give a man a fish and he will be without hunger for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will never be hungry."

Yet the ability to fish will not keep someone from starving if he or she has no access to a net or a boat. Even a boat is insufficient if the community lacks the authority to prevent overfishing or stop the pollution that can destroy spawning grounds.

## 40 Years of ILSR

We have grown from a small community group to a national voice for vibrant local economies. Today we continue to provide cutting edge advocacy, research, and technical assistance to the growing movement for a new economy.



# TESTIMONIALS

“We meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political and material ruin...Corruption dominates the ballot box, the legislatures and the Congress and touches even the bench... The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled, public opinion silenced...the fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few.”

-4 July, 1892 - People’s Party Platform

“As ILSR celebrates its 40th birthday -- the exact span of my own broadcast journalism -- I can think of no other citizen’s group whose work and witness during these four decades has done more to spark the courage, clarity, and conviction needed to save our social contract from the behemoths and bullies who would shred it.

**-Bill Moyers**  
Journalist, host of PBS show *Moyers & Company*, former White House press secretary

“Talk about ahead of the curve and right on the money--somehow ILSR figured out 40 years ago where the world needed to go, and it’s been bending our systems in that direction ever since. High ambition matched by high achievement makes them a unique crew, in place with the solutions a puzzled world is starting to realize it badly needs.”

**-Bill McKibben**  
Author, environmentalist & founder of 350.org

Who else but ILSR to teach the rest of us how to be boldly visionary and intensely practical at the same time? Who else has created more paths forward for cities that lead us in a transformative direction? We celebrate four decades of collaboration with, and brilliant work by, ILSR.

**-John Cavanagh**  
Director, Institute for Policy Studies

“I can’t think of any other organization that has done more than ILSR to advance both the theory and practice of local self-reliance. From energy to banking to broadband to vibrant Main Streets, the Institute thinks and acts with originality and pragmatism. They are an essential counterweight to the forces of bigness. May they thrive for another 40 years.”

**-Peter Barnes**  
co-founder Working Assets (CREDO)  
author of *Capitalism 3.0*

“When I began work on the National Broadband Plan, I looked for sources of information on what was happening with broadband in the United States that was not filtered through the normal DC Beltway lens... I always found the data [from ILSR] to be reliable, the insights important, and the commentary thought-provoking... While I don’t always agree with their positions, I continue to find their work essential in understanding all the options and the trade-offs communities face in building a foundation for the 21st Century Information Economy.

**-Blair Levin,**  
Former FCC Chief-of-Staff