Strategies for Broadband Adoption and Digital Inclusion in Rural Communities

BroadbandUSA Practical Broadband Conversations

You must dial in to hear the webinar!
Conference Line: 800-593-7190 Passcode: 984-4951#

April 19, 2017
Today’s Presenters

Moderator
• Emy Tseng, Senior Broadband Program Specialist, BroadbandUSA, NTIA, US Department of Commerce

Presenters
• Dr. Brian Whitacre, Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics, Oklahoma State University, brian.whitacre@okstate.edu
• Dr. Bharat Mehra, Associate Professor, School of Information Sciences, University of Tennessee Knoxville, bmehra@utk.edu
• Katie Hill, Director, Coffeyville, Kansas Public Library, kh@coffeyvillepl.org
The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) advises on telecom policy issues

• NTIA is the Executive Branch agency in the U.S. Department of Commerce that is responsible for advising the President on domestic telecommunications and information policy issues.
• NTIA's programs and policies focus largely on:
  – expanding broadband access and adoption;
  – expanding the use of federal spectrum by all users, and
  – ensuring that the Internet remains an engine for continued innovation and economic growth.
NTIA’s BroadbandUSA program educates communities, facilitates relationships and provides helpful resources

- **Arm stakeholders & community leaders with information** to make the right decisions
- **Convene & facilitate the right conversations** with the right people to increase project success
- **Develop guidance for communities** as they pursue solutions to broadband challenges
Broadband and Rural Economic Development: Recent Research & Extension Efforts
The Studies


- (2001-2010; National County-level Data)

Whitacre, Gallardo, and Strover. 2014b. *Annals of Regional Science*

- (2008-2011; National County-level Data)

Whitacre and Manlove. 2016. *Community Development*

- (2011; State-level Data)
What We Found

We compared rural counties that had high levels of broadband adoption (60+%) with otherwise similar rural counties that did not...

What We Found

We also compared rural counties that had **low levels of broadband adoption** (<40%) with otherwise similar rural counties that did not...
What We Found

Non-metro counties that increased their broadband adoption rates between 2008 and 2011:

• Saw a **positive impact** on changes in
  • median household income
  • total employment

• Particularly impressive – focuses on adoption over a short period of time

• No impacts seen when using change in broadband **availability** rather than broadband **adoption**

Whitacre, Gallardo, and Strover. 2014b.
*Annals of Regional Science*
What We Found

• Higher levels of broadband adoption in non-metro portions of states leads to more civic engagement (usually)

Whitacre and Manlove. 2016. Community Development
BUT...It’s Not ALL Positive...

Does Broadband Matter for Rural Entrepreneurs and Creative Class Employees?

Kelsey L. Conley and Brian E. Whitacre
Department of Agricultural Economics, Oklahoma State University, USA

(2016) 46, 171–190

The Review of Regional Studies
The Official Journal of the Southern Regional Science Association

Conley and Whitacre. 2016. Review of Regional Studies
• (2000-2012; National County-level Data)

• High levels of broadband adoption in rural areas may reduce the number of entrepreneurs and creative class employees
  – Perhaps due to reducing rates of “necessity entrepreneurs” who found other jobs
  – Or, encouraging out-migration among entrepreneurs / creative class workers to metropolitan areas?
Extension Efforts

• An E-commerce Program for Small Businesses
  – Series of 3-hour, hands-on workshops
    • Typically 5 – 15 in each class
  – Partner with economic development org (take advantage of pre-existing small business contacts)
## Current OSU E-commerce Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Computers Needed?</th>
<th>Avg # of Attendees</th>
<th>Workshops / Attendees (since 2010)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Small Business Websites</strong></td>
<td>3 hours</td>
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<td>10-15</td>
<td>35 / 600</td>
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<td>• Planning out your website</td>
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<td>• Website Building 101</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Actually building a site using templates</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PayPal 101</strong></td>
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<td>10-15</td>
<td>18 / 210</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>• Actually installing PayPal on an example site</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Other PayPal tips &amp; tricks</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ins and Outs of Online Storefronts</strong></td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>17 / 215</td>
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<td>• Getting started selling online</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Primer for Amazon / Yahoo / eBay / Etsy stores</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pros and cons of each option</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Search Engine Optimization</strong></td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>28 / 415</td>
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<td>• 5 proven techniques for SEO</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pay-per-click advertising</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Social media basics, including Facebook ads</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Installing and using Google Analytics</td>
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</table>
### Workshop Evaluation

- **Standard Post-workshop evaluation tool**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>% “Very Useful”</th>
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<td>35</td>
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<td>92</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Longer-term evaluation tool**
  - Contact with specific businesses
Other Extension Efforts

- Pilot Rural Library Hotspot Loan Program

- Under Development:
  - Increasing Broadband Adoption Among Disadvantaged Households

  - Demonstrations of various technology
  - Low-cost options (Fact sheet)
  - Partner with local businesses / non-profits
The Role of Rural Libraries in Promoting Effective Broadband Implementation and Use to Boost Economic Growth and Community Development in the Southern and Central Appalachian Region

Dr. Bharat Mehra
Associate Professor
School of Information Sciences, University of Tennessee

BroadbandUSA Webinar: Strategies for Broadband Adoption and Digital Inclusion in Rural Communities
April 19, 2017
It’s More than Broadband Connectivity: How Can People in Rural Communities Effectively USE Technologies to Make a Real Difference in their Everyday Lives?

- Policy makers and federal/state economic programs can boost digital inclusion efforts in rural libraries to bolster effective Broadband adoption, implementation, and use that leads to greater workforce and entrepreneur development, economic growth, and community impact in rural environments.
The Context

According to an ARC (2016) study entitled “County Economic Status and Distressed Area in Appalachia, FY 2017” of the 420 Appalachian counties, 84 counties are economically distressed, and another 114 considered economically at-risk.
Tennessee’s Rural Libraries

- TSLA consists of nine multicounty regions serving 211 small and medium-sized public libraries throughout Tennessee.
- TN rural libraries face challenges to provide small businesses with access to current/credible information, critically use information, provide benefits of technology in far-flung areas, and collaborate with community agencies to provide better systems and services for all small businesses (Mehra, 2016).
- Helping small businesses get started and flourish is an ongoing aspect of community resilience that combats the ever-present crises of poverty in many local economies (Bishop and Veil 2013).

Results from the 2014 Digital Inclusion Survey show (Bertot et al. 2014):
- 73.1% of libraries provide skills instruction that are essential to applying for jobs.
- 68.3% facilitate efforts to access and use employment databases.
- Only 31.9% of rural public libraries provide assistance in access and use of online business information resources compared to 67.0% of city locations.
- Only 22.8% of rural libraries conduct activities to support small business development.
Empowering Rural Librarians as Change Agents in the 21st Century: Developing Community-Based Technology Literacy & Management Outcomes in the Southern & Central Appalachian Region

Information Technology Rural Librarian Master’s Scholarship Program: Part 1 and Part 2 (ITRL + ITRL2)

Institute of Museum and Library Services, Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program [Funded]
URL: http://www.sis.utk.edu/rural-librarianship
URL: http://www.sis.utk.edu/13-scholarships-available-itrl2

Mehra@BroadbandUSA_Webinar—2017
Information Technology Rural Librarian Master’s Scholarship Program: Part I and Part II (ITRL and ITRL2)

- The ITRL and ITRL2 goal was to train sixteen and eleven paraprofessionals respectively working in the Southern and Central Appalachian rural libraries to complete their master’s degree part-time via distance in the UT SIS and improve their IT and management skills essential to serve the unique needs of the region’s rural communities.

- **Information Technology Outcomes:** Technology infrastructure planning and analysis; Web design, development, and usability; Database design and implementation; Building digital library and web portals; Establishing hardware and software networking; Creating Library 2.0 tools.

- **Rural Library Management Outcomes:** Service evaluation and public relations portfolio for a rural library; Management of a rural library program for adults and children/young adults; Reader’s advisory; Grant writing and development.

Mehra@BroadbandUSA_Webinar—2017
Rebecca Tedesco developed GeoWeb technologies and web mapping software to analyze geo-data in improving facilities at Cleveland State Community College in Cleveland, TN. She also provided computer service evaluation by creating a Crowdsourcing Web Mapping Application to include user-generated content.

Anjanae Brueland conducted a SpiceWorks system-wide technology inventory for the Sevier County Public Library System in TN. She revamped their website, developed a lending for eReaders, iPads and notebooks, facilitated in the circulation of HD KindleFire devices, and posted ”Making the Most Out of Your Librarian” on the agency blog to reinforce the program teachings and share it with her rural community.

Mehra@BroadbandUSA_Webinar—2017
Catherine Tyler improved community technology skills to provide more effective computer services via hardware and software troubleshooting and web design to help patrons resolve issues at Rockbridge Regional Library in Goshen, Virginia.

Ryan Congdon created a YouTube web-video introducing social media and its uses for rural environments such as Rockbridge Regional Library in Lexington, Virginia. He also developed a website that instructs on the use of E-Readers for the agency.

**ITRL2 IT Deliverables**

Mehra@BroadbandUSA_Webinar—2017
Insights and Recommendations

- With their information creation-organization-management-dissemination skills applied to ICT use the “embedded-librarian” plays an important role in technology adoption to further Broadband use in rural communities. Their efforts can be integrated in federal/state level efforts of policy formulation and decision-making to further effective operationalization and implementation of future initiatives.

- Rural librarians have not been tapped in asset mobilization to engage with small businesses, workforce entrepreneurs, and chambers of commerce representatives as well as participate in government policy resource sharing training programs to empower communities and further economic development in rural communities.

Marilyn Pontius, Branch Manager of the Hancock War Memorial Library in Washington County, Maryland, conducted an assessment and evaluation of the agency’s public computers and technology services.

Student Support for Public Libraries, Office of Community Engagement & Outreach, University of Tennessee, October 1, 2015.

Mehra@BroadbandUSA_Webinar—2017
The Role of Rural Public Libraries in Small Business Economic Development in the Appalachian Region

A Case Study of Tennessee (PLSB-TN)

Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Leadership Grants for Libraries (Research category) [Funded]
URL: http://scholar.cci.utk.edu/plsb-tn
Community Action Research in the PLSB-TN

- **Practical Concern:** In response to the slow economic development in Tennessee, the PLSB-TN developed a potentially practical solution to address the problematic situation.

- **Tangible Product:** A gap analysis of feedback provided by the two stakeholder groups helped develop a blueprint toolkit design for feedback from key partners in the region to further a strategic action plan in its operationalization and implementation (Mehra, Bishop, and Partee II, 2017).

- **Local Partnerships and Collaborations:** PLSB-TN strengthened ties between small business agencies and rural libraries and the toolkit blueprint and preliminary strategic action plan got tested and operationalized in the rural state and the Appalachian region.
In Nov. 2016 the Blount County Public Library hosted 30 representatives (e.g., govt. officials, bankers, chamber of commerce/economic council members, etc.) who discussed implementation issues of a toolkit blueprint design that TN’s rural public libraries can develop for small businesses in the future.

The Small Business Community Information Exchange

Efforts to replicate such “Think Tanks” involving local, regional, and national policy makers is essential to identify partnerships and develop/finance such resources towards effective utilization of Broadband that is meaningful to small businesses.

The Blount County Public Library and others in the Ocoee River Regional Library are supporting organizations of the Blount County Partnership that provides opportunities for small business, corporations, manufacturing, technology commercialization, leisure travel, and corporate retreats to its 3000 members.

BCPL provides a wide variety of programming for adults in workforce development training and partners with the local department of labor career coach and small businesses in the region.
Insights and Recommendations

- Rural libraries can assist small businesses by providing digital resources (e.g., PLSB toolkit) in ways that meet small business needs (e.g., integrating online workshops and remote services).

- Currently, rural libraries do not have adequate staff and finances to meet small business expectations, providing scattered services in an ad hoc manner.

- Govt. agencies can provide financial assistance to rural libraries develop the PLSB toolkit that will provide a comprehensive framework for their services and effectively use Broadband to deliver a product that will be useful to small businesses.

- Resource development: It makes common sense for govt. agencies to allocate investments and expand digital infrastructures in the extensively distributed rural libraries to better utilize Broadband in creating tools relevant to economic growth.

- Staff development: With grants and funding support for IT training programs for rural librarians, govt. agencies can help them serve their communities effectively.

- Provide subsidies: Creative solutions (e.g., reduced rates from service providers for HotSpot programs) are needed in this regard [approx. $35/devise x 50 HotSpots @ BCPL]. Such efforts will help rural libraries focus on specific user communities (e.g., entrepreneur small businesses) to strategically further effective Broadband implementation and use.

Mehra@BroadbandUSA_Webinar—2017
Coffeyville Public Library

Mobile Hotspot Lending Program Overview
Coffeyville, Kansas

General Information
• Located in Montgomery County in Southeast Kansas
• Population 10,295 (as of 2010 census)
• Claim to fame: Dalton bank robbery of 1892

Economic Background
• Montgomery County median household income: $42,221
  • $10K less than State median household income
• 24.81% of children in MG county live below 100% poverty level

Our Library

• Services
  • Book lending (large type, audio, e-book, etc.)
  • Copy and fax services
  • Educational programming for all ages
    • Computer, gardening, resume writing, summer reading, etc.
  • Senior outreach services
  • Part of 43 member library consortium
  • 19 public access computers
  • Free WiFi

• Library Usage (2016 stats)
  • 83,477 visitors
  • 15,275 public computer sessions
  • 378 programs offered with 6,078 attendees
  • 93,447 items circulated
  • 882 e-book downloads
  • 252 mobile hotspot circulations
How our lending program got started

• New York Public Library had a grant from the Knight Foundation to partner with a rural state for hotspot lending.
• State Librarian of Kansas, Jo Budler, put out a call for interested libraries in the State of Kansas.
• 18 Kansas libraries participated in the pilot lending program and loaned 95 wireless devices during the year long grant.
• The cost was completely paid for by the grant and those 18 libraries received the devices and monthly service at no cost.
• All participating libraries met virtually every month to discuss logistics prior to the start of the program and to discuss problems with policy and procedures as the grant was implemented.
• The State Library of Kansas was crucial in the initial startup of this program.
• Lending data was collected and compiled. The final report can be found at kslib.info/DocumentCenter/View/4842.
Public Response to the Program

• Survey responses were collected during the grant.
• Participants were asked how satisfied they were with the MiFi devices and how likely it would be for them to recommend checking out the MiFi device to a friend. Participants responded with 52.63% very satisfied and 63.93% very likely to recommend.
• Had on average over 40 people on the waiting list for seven devices.
• Biggest complaint about the devices: Slow loading or poor reception.
Grant completed...lending program continues

• At the conclusion of the grant we still had over 40 people on the waiting list.
• The Library Board decided to continue the program at our own expense.
• Verizon Wireless honored the same rates and set us up on our own contract.
  • $41/month per device
  • Grants and outside donations help offset the cost
• Funded six devices in 2016 and increased to seven devices in 2017.
  • 39 people currently on the waiting list
• Now have a ‘rentable’ device. Allows patrons to skip the waiting list for a $5/day fee.
Questions and Comments

• Please type your questions in the chat or Q&A box.

• Slides and Transcript will be posted on the BroadbandUSA website within 7 days after the webinar.

http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/
Thank you for attending.
Tune in for the next Practical Conversations Webinars

May 17, 2017 at 2pm ET
Infrastructure Week: A Conversation on Next Generation Technology Deployment
Registration is required for this webinar: http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/ under Events

May 18, 2017 at 2pm ET
Infrastructure Week: NLC, NACo, NTIA Webcast on Smart Communities
More information coming soon
Additional Resources
BroadbandUSA is available to help communities with their broadband access and digital inclusion efforts

BBUSA Resources:

• Public-Private Partnerships Guide
• Community Broadband Roadmap Toolkit
• Introduction to Stakeholder Outreach
• Using Partnerships to Power Smart Cities

For General Information:

- 202-482-2048
- broadbandusa@ntia.doc.gov
- http://www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandusa

To Request Technical Assistance:

Submit Intake Form
Additional Resources

A complete presentation is available at URL: https://tiny.utk.edu/Mehra@BroadbandUSA
Empowering Rural Librarians as Change Agents in the 21st Century: Development of Community-Based Technology Literacy and Management Outcomes in the Southern and Central Appalachia

PROJECT TEAM [alphabetical]: Kimberly Black, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (co-PI) ● Bharat Mehta, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (PI) ● Christopher Mitchell, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (research assistant) ● Nancy Rentfro, Watauga Regional Library (partner) ● Don Reynolds, Nolichucky Regional Library (partner) ● Susan Simmons, Clinch-Powell Regional Library (partner) ● Vandana Singh, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (co-PI) ● K. C. Williams, Sevier County Public Library System (partner)

About the ITRL Program

The goal of the Information Technology Rural Librarian Master’s Scholarship Program (ITRL) Program is to train student paraprofessionals working in the Southern and Central Appalachia (SCA) rural libraries to complete their master’s degree part-time in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Tennessee via distance and improve their information technology competencies and management skills essential to serve the unique needs of the region’s rural communities. The program combines work experience, mentorship from experienced professionals working in the region along with graduate instruction and curriculum support. This program is funded by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and support from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville School of Information Sciences.

ITRL students are receiving:
- Part-time degree in a ALA-accredited program
- A structured, individually-tailored IT and rural management curriculum
- Rural library practices and needs incorporated into the curriculum
- IT competencies in developing rural library work applications
- Formal/informal professional mentoring by educators and practitioners
- Full-tuition scholarship for two years
- Allowance for materials and provision of a laptop computer

Why ITRL is important:
- SCA rural librarians experience critical information needs and concerns owing to:
  - Information poverty and unemployment
  - Economic challenges
  - Low levels of information literacy and educational attainment
  - A lack of access and use of IT
  - Other unique environmental challenges
  - Their critical information needs have traditionally been inadequately represented in the LIS professions, and are only recently beginning to get some attention in LIS education

Information Technology Outcomes:
- Technology infrastructure planning and analysis
- Web design, development, and usability
- Database design and implementation
- Building digital library and web portals
- Establishing hardware and software networking
- Creating Library 2.0 tools

Information Technology Deliverables:
- Improved technology skills to provide more effective computer services: Julie Forkner developed a mobile laptop lab with 12 laptops, including one for the visually impaired, at E.G. Fisher Public Library in Athens, TN.
- Provided evaluation and assessment of computer services: Angela Glowcheski reorganized computer classes to better serve community needs at Lumpkin County Public Library in Dahlonega, GA.
- Developed online communication and evaluation instruments to gather feedback from various constituencies: Lauren Long conducted first online user and staff surveys at Madison County Public Library in Marshall, NC.
- Participated in “hands-on learning” technology projects: Brittany Fletcher developed and implemented an iPads use plan in the K-12 school classroom project at Mountain City Elementary School in Mountain City, TN.
- Implemented a DE program in the school system: Becky Grindstaff gained insight and developed a DE program in Knox County Public Schools, Knoxville, TN.
- Promoted awareness and use of open source software: Susan Macreillis evaluated the suitability of OJS Evergreen as the integrated library system for East Ridge City Library in East Ridge, TN.

Rural Management Outcomes:
- Service evaluation in rural libraries
- Management of a rural library program for adults and children/young adults
- Reader’s advisory
- Grant writing and development

Rural Management Deliverables:
- Conducted an internal and external profile analysis of library systems: Marilyn Pentius conducted a community scan and a SWOT analysis for Washington County, MD, for the community’s Hancock War Memorial Library.
- Developed a funding profile for a library system: Chris Smith developed a funding profile (including local, state, and federal government resources) and community partnership opportunities for C. Bascom Slemp Memorial Library in Big Stone Gap, VA.
- Developed a comprehensive public relations plan for a library system: Susan Williams developed a comprehensive PR plan (including press kit, marketing trademarks, etc.) and a community marketing strategy for Highlander Library in New Market, TN.
- Gained expertise in identifying the role of strategic relational management in developing externally-funded grant projects: Rich Haynes developed a Grant Partnership Agreement for an externally-funded grant project that will expand, market and promote local history resources at the Harlan County Public Library in Harlan, KY.
- Developed collection development knowledge to select quality children’s literature for their libraries: Fran Owen developed a collection for a school under construction at Sevier County Public Schools in Sevierville, TN.

Project Design

The overall project design covers five phases. These phases include: recruitment of ITRL students from rural libraries in the SCA region; needs assessment of library services and information challenges faced by rural regional libraries; implementation of educational/training activities; mentoring and evaluation/assessment of program outcomes and dissemination of program results and experiences.

ITRL program information technology courses:
- Technology planning, assessment, and analysis
- Database design and development, and usability
- Building digital library and web portals, and Library 2.0 tools
- Creating Library 2.0 tools

ITRL program rural librarianship courses:
- Service evaluation/assessment in rural libraries
- Planning and management of a rural library program for youth and adults
- Reader’s advisory and other information services
- Grant writing and partnership development

○ The ITRL program has benefited my professional life in so many ways. I have gained enormous respect for the role of the information professional in an area of the librarians on staff as a result of my work in the SIS and ITRL programs. An ITRL student setting and have been mentored by several.

http://www.sis.utk.edu/rural-librarianship
http://www.sis.utk.edu/13-scholarships-available-itrl2
Introduction


PLSB-TN involves collecting quantitative and qualitative feedback based on the needs, expectations, and experiences of small businesses and rural public libraries in the state.

PLSB-TN research conducted so far includes preliminary planning activities, analyzing existing staff plans, blueprint, and strategic action plan prototype of a Public Library Small Business Toolkit that strengthens collaborations between various stakeholders involved.

PLSB-TN is serving as a pilot case experience and assessment testbed to expand strategies for the entire Appalachian region and other rural environments in the future.

Statement of Need

The Appalachian region has traditionally faced challenging economic, social, and cultural conditions that have adversely affected the population living in these areas [1; 2; 3]. Rural residents in the Appalachian region additionally face limited financial opportunities, economic information poverty and unemployment, low information literacy levels and educational attainment, a lack of access to information technology resources, and other unique debilitating environmental circumstances [4; 5]. Rural libraries have a strong potential role to play in economic development and sustainable economic viability of the Appalachian region [6; 7].

PLSB-TN Plan

The PLSB-TN has potential benefits to the (1) rural small business community, (2) rural libraries, (3) educational programs. The project goal is to research the role rural public libraries play in economic development and economic growth based on the needs, expectations, and experiences of small businesses and rural public libraries with a focus on Tennessee as a pilot case setting. The project objectives to achieve this goal are:

Objective 1: Based on the perspectives of Tennessee’s small businesses, what are their information needs, expectations, and experiences and what past and current role have rural public libraries played in assisting these agencies towards economic development?

Objective 2: Collect feedback from Tennessee’s rural public libraries regarding existing services and programs they provide to small businesses.

Objective 3: Based on the data collected from small businesses and rural public libraries, propose a blueprint towards informing the design and development of a Public Library Small Business Toolkit.

Community Partnerships

The table below identifies the community partnerships in the PLSB-TN that have been significant to achieve the various project objectives. In addition, the PLSB-TN partners have played a major role in various grant activities and include representative of Tennessee’s: 1) Blount County Public Library; 2) Clinch River Regional Library; 3) Holston Valley Regional Library; 4) Sevier County Public Library System.

PLSB-TN Design

PLSB-TN includes the following phases:

Phase 1: Collecting quantitative and qualitative data about the roles of rural public libraries in Tennessee from the small business community and librarian staff stakeholders; Phase 2: Developing a blueprint of a Public Library Small Business Toolkit and a strategic action plan for its operationalization and implementation based on feedback from key partners. The intended project audience is small businesses, rural library staff and managers/directors, library and information science (LIS) educators and students, rural economic council and chambers of commerce members, and small business entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

Expected outcomes of the PLSB-TN include: (1) Providing generalizable data on how rural public library practice empowers communities. (2) Developing a blueprint and preliminary strategic action plan based on datasets systematically collected from the small business and rural library communities towards economic development and economic growth. (3) Laying the foundation for an ongoing study of the expanding role of public libraries on economic development.

The role of community partnerships has been significant in conducting the various PLSB activities and moving forward towards generating maximum impact and achieving project outcomes. The collaborative work will help inform policy formulation with a vital e-government role public libraries serve. The synthesis of research can also inform how public libraries and community stakeholders in rural environments may pool resources, plan jointly, and look across needs to achieve economies of scale, better services, and more resilient communities.

References


Mehra@BroadbandUSA_Webinar—2017
Figure 1: User/use-based model to represent small businesses.


Mehra@BroadbandUSA_Webinar—2017
Select Action Research Projects

  URL: [http://www.sis.utk.edu/13-scholarships-available-itrl2](http://www.sis.utk.edu/13-scholarships-available-itrl2).

  URL: [http://www.sis.utk.edu/rural-librarianship](http://www.sis.utk.edu/rural-librarianship).

Select Action Research Projects

  URL: http://scholar.cci.utk.edu/plsb-tn.

- Small Business Community Information Exchange at the Blount County Public Library in East Tennessee ($1650), 2016-17 Community Engagement Incentive Grant, Office of Community Engagement and Outreach, Univ. of TN. [Funded]. [PI: Mehra].