

**STATE: MISSISSIPPI**

**Date of Report:** Undated (sometime after May 2005)

**Nature of report (preliminary, final, advisory, executive/legislative):** Advisory

**Key recommendations:**

(1) Mississippi should implement a statewide initiative to encourage all citizens to use technology, especially the Internet, to improve their lives. There should be an effort to communicate to citizens, especially those in rural communities, the benefits of broadband Internet access.

(2) Mississippi should adopt a Broadband strategy and a formal plan. The plan should include and identify existing broadband infrastructure.

(3) There should be an entity at the state level to serve as a coordinating council, resource center, communications arm, etc. for communities, private providers, citizens and local organizations to turn to for information. With proper support, the Mississippi Technology Alliance is an existing organization that may be best to take on this role.

(4) The state should maximize federal funding by providing information, guidance and technical assistance to communities.

(5) The state should encourage the private market to bring broadband Internet access to rural communities.

(6) Mississippi should allow local units of government to provide wholesale services with their own broadband networks, but only as a last resort. The State of Mississippi, like every other state, has limited capital resources and therefore must prioritize its funding to communities in such a way that the most people receive the most benefits possible.

**Key programs initiated:** None

**Recommended appropriation:** None

**Web link to agency or task force:** <http://www.msgovt.org/policy.html>

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**Statement of Values:**

- Increase public awareness of e-business and e-government.
- Create market-driven strategies to increase use of technology.
- Create public policy initiatives promoting broadband access.

**Where we've been:**

- In 2002, the NTIA reported that 58% of Mississippi households did not own a computer. 64% do not own a computer. Based on this performance the NTIA ranked Mississippi 50<sup>th</sup> in the United States regarding internet access.
- Mississippi ranks 47<sup>th</sup> in the Progressive Policy Institute's New Economy Index (2002). This report indicates Mississippi's position is directly related to its rural and low-income demographic characteristics.
- There are 8.2 students per computer in Mississippi public schools. In high-poverty schools, this figure jumps to 16.7 kids per computer.
- 19 in 1,000 private sector workers in Mississippi are employed by "high-tech" firms. (51<sup>st</sup> in nation).
- Of 32 county economic development officials surveyed in Mississippi, not one said that broadband was available in rural areas of their county. None of the officials surveyed were aware of the loss of any economic development "prospects" as a result of a lack of broadband.
- 28 communities in Mississippi have had applications approved by the USDA Rural Community Connect Broadband Grant Program.

**Where we are today:** See above.

**Where we want to be:** See key recommendations above.

**How are we going to get there?** See key recommendations above.

**Broadband functionality (tiers of service) - N/A**