



Intelligent Community Forum

Dedicated to economic growth in the broadband economy for communities large and small

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What is an Intelligent Community?

Broadband: The New Essential Utility

"Intelligent Community" is ICF's term for what others have called the wired city, smart community, or e-city. It is the community — whether a town, city, county or region — that views Internet bandwidth as the new essential utility, as vital to economic growth and public welfare as clean water and dependable electricity. Where communities once raced to build seaports, rail depots, airports, and highways to attract businesses and create jobs, many now view broadband communications and information technology as the new keys to prosperity.

The rise of the Intelligent Community movement is a reaction to the evolution of the [broadband economy](#). The deployment of broadband worldwide has made capital investment in businesses, factories and facilities highly mobile. Trillions of US dollars move around the globe daily in pursuit of a competitive return on investment, and when trouble strikes a nation's conomy, that mobile capital can flee at devastating speed. For major companies, it has also unleashed collaboration and cooperation across time zones and cultures that has boosted productivity, created employment, and improved living standards.

In the broadband economy, capital is mobile and companies naturally look for opportunities to locate their facilities where they can gain the greatest advantage in terms of cost, skills and access to markets. But while global business may be mobile, communities are not. Communities everywhere have the same goal: to be a place where people can raise their children and give those young people enough economic opportunity to allow them to stay and raise children of their own.

Creating a Culture of Use

Being an Intelligent Community, however, is not a matter of technology — it is a matter of creating a culture of use for that technology. Intelligent Communities work to position their citizens, businesses and public sector to prosper in the Digital Age. Rather than trying to prop up dying industries, they eagerly embrace the growth

industries of tomorrow. They train their citizens to take advantage of those jobs, provide means for low-income citizens to benefit from broadband, and work to deliver government services in electronic form more cost-effectively and efficiently than ever before. Without these non-technology efforts, the broadband revolution risks worsening social inequality, reducing economic opportunity and constricting political participation — creating a “gilded age” in which the benefits go to the privileged few, rather than a “golden age” of greater prosperity, knowledge and freedom.

Intelligent Community Indicators

ICF uses five [Intelligent Community Indicators](#) as a conceptual framework for understanding all of the factors that determine how competitive a community will be in the Digital Age.



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Intelligent Community Indicators

In a study funded by the Province of Ontario, Canada, the Intelligent Community Forum defined five critical success factors for the creation of Intelligent Communities. This list of "Intelligent Community Indicators," as the study termed them, provided the first conceptual framework for understanding all of the factors that determine a community's competitiveness in the [Broadband Economy](#).

1. [Broadband Infrastructure](#)

Whether we know it or not, we live today in the broadband economy, where the competitiveness of a community depends in part on its ability to connect at broadband speeds to the World Wide Web. Whether or not they are effectively served by private-sector carriers, Intelligent Communities are not content to leave their broadband destiny entirely in the hands of the market. Instead they express a clear vision, craft effective public policies and promote equitable access to broadband assets.

2. [Knowledge Workforce](#)

Intelligent Communities exhibit the determination and demonstrated ability to develop a workforce qualified to perform knowledge work. This is not simply a matter of possessing universities able to crank out post-grads with science and engineering degrees. Effective development of knowledge workers extends from the factory floor to the research lab, and from the loading dock to the call center or Web design studio.

3. [Innovation](#)

Intelligent Communities seek to foster or attract innovative businesses, because they are the ones that will grow in terms of employment and contribution to the tax base. Intelligent Communities foster innovation with economic development programs, by creating an environment that attracts creative people, and by promoting the formation of, and access to, the risk capital that fuels new business growth.

4. Digital Inclusion

It is no exaggeration to say that the broadband revolution has the potential to create a golden age of prosperity, knowledge and freedom. But it has just as much potential to foster a “gilded age,” in which the benefits go to a privileged few in the age-old pattern that has hindered development around the world for centuries. What will determine the difference between gold and gilding? Enlightened policies and effective programs created by governments at the local, regional and national levels.

5. Marketing

Globalization of markets, capital flows and business operations puts a premium on the ability of communities to market their “intelligence.” Intelligent Communities market themselves effectively, based on knowledge of the competitive offerings of other cities and regions, clear understanding of what leading-edge businesses require, and a determination to deliver it.

The Intelligent Community Indicators provide communities with a useful framework for assessment, planning and development, as they work to build prosperous local economies in the broadband era. Communities use the Indicators to –

- Develop consensus on the key areas in which they should focus their development efforts
- Identify gaps in their development programs that should be considered for additional resources and investment
- Establish a foundation-building approach in which broadband infrastructure becomes a platform for the development of a knowledge workforce, and this in turn becomes the means to increase the innovation level of the community, and so on.

