

# Forward

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Broadband is critical to our future but it is not an end in itself. It is a means to a variety of ends, both direct and indirect, that can play a major role in improving our communities and our quality of life. Bigger, faster and more affordable broadband will improve educational opportunities and help better prepare our students to compete in a 21st Century global economy. It will help improve the quality of healthcare, while reducing the costs of providing services. It will make our government more transparent, and facilitate the ability of citizens to interact with and participate in the development and administration of public policy.

Better broadband will help our nation address energy goals. Smart grid technology depends upon it. Also, if even a small percentage of American workers have broadband capacity at home that allows them to telecommute for one day a week, we can significantly reduce vehicle miles traveled, lessen the stress on our public transportation systems, and reduce the emissions that result from our daily commutes.

Broadband is also all about jobs, jobs, jobs. We hear and read about it daily on the news, from political leaders, and from the talking heads in the media. So many of today's jobs require significant bandwidth, and this demand will only increase for the jobs of tomorrow. But our communities can't access that bandwidth today. When every community in the United States has access to broadband capacity that we need, workers won't have to leave small towns and either move or commute to more urban communities for work. As a former mayor, I can attest to the direct benefits that shorter commutes have in local communities. Every hour that a worker is not traveling to or from a job, is an extra hour that one can spend with family, be involved in a service club, volunteer at a faith-based institution, coach little league, volunteer in our schools or so many other similar activities. These are the small things that add up to improve the quality of our communities and our lives. And broadband is a means to achieving these ends.

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The United States has fallen behind much of the rest of the world in broadband deployment and usage. We have to do better. To be successful, every person and every interested entity has a role to play. We will not achieve our broadband goals if we wait for the private sector to solve our broadband problems. To be sure, the private sector has an important role to play in improving broadband in the United States. But the public sector, and especially local government, also has a critical role, and indeed a responsibility to be involved. Community input is vital, as our government organizations must be responsive to the needs and desires of local citizens.

Craig Settles understands these issues better than most. He understands the challenges that our nation faces as it considers our broadband future. He understands the critical roles that government must play as leaders and as facilitators in our efforts to plan, deploy and effectively utilize broadband in the United States.

Craig has been involved in these issues for some time, and he has witnessed the problems that many have faced in trying to determine and implement a positive community role in broadband deployment. This book does more than explain the issues and highlight the goals. It is filled with helpful suggestions for how to address community broadband issues and how localities can take their role in broadband deployment to the next level. What issues should be explored at a foundational level, what communities need to be engaged, how do we develop a plan that can be successful and move it forward to successful implementation? This book defines the issues, identifies the pitfalls, lays out the options, and ultimately prepares you to structure your own plan to promote better broadband in your community.

Addressing a community's broadband needs, developing a strategy for improvement, and implementing it successfully is not an easy process. Like anything worthwhile, it will take significant time, effort and a lot of hard work. There is no one size fits all, correct way to effectively improve broadband in every community throughout the nation. The beauty of this book is that it provides a tremendous source of background information, an opportunity to learn from the mistakes and the successes of others, and provides an important foundation for anyone interested in promoting broadband in their own community.

**Ken Fellman**

Arvada, Colorado

President, National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA)