

How Will Our Community Benefit from Broadband?

As more and more people and services use the Internet, it is becoming the primary way that we communicate with others, whether this be via the comments section of a website, a message board, Voice over IP phones, or a video conferencing platform. As these services become more comprehensive and complex, they increasingly require a broadband internet connection in order to take full advantage of them. These services are no longer designed with DSL in mind, as the assumption nowadays is that most households have access to broadband. Here we provide a few concrete examples of how high-speed internet can help us in our daily lives.

Remote Learning

This is helpful for primary and secondary school students who are having to complete classes via bandwidth-intensive video conferencing. Video conferencing requires both high upload and download speeds, as well as low latency, which are incredibly difficult to maintain on older DSL connections. Many colleges are offering degrees completely online as well. Broadband internet can help facilitate completing such coursework from the comfort of home, and on a more convenient schedule for those who cannot give up their job to further their education. Other benefits are not having to travel hours away to a campus, saving money on gas as well as room and board.

Work From Home

Broadband empowers employees to work from home and still do their jobs effectively. This can cut down on travel costs as well as costs for childcare, potentially allowing employees to restructure their workdays and increase quality of life. For those that own their own businesses, this allows them to operate that business from the comfort of their home, decreasing costs, as they no longer need to rent an office space. This leaves more room to spend money on the business itself and to more readily compete with businesses in larger communities.

Telemedicine

With telemedicine, patients can participate in healthcare appointments and advocate for their own wellbeing without having to travel several towns away to seek care. Sessions can potentially be conducted in the privacy and comfort of one's own home.

Communication

People are not only using video conferencing tools for education and work, but to communicate with their family and friends that don't necessarily live close by. These services provide a way to see someone's face *and* hear their voice when you can't physically be in the same room as them. Even traditional cable companies and national broadcast stations are offering video streaming services. Broadband gives consumers another choice when it comes to digital entertainment, and without it these platforms are much more difficult to use.

Additionally, many households have at least several devices that connect to the Internet. Broadband allows all these devices to be utilized simultaneously, so families do not have to choose between

streaming a movie and letting their child play their favorite game or video chat with friends. Broadband also improves the speed at which we can shop or just send an email.

The Best of Both Worlds

One of the things folks love about living in rural Maine is the quality of life. The pace of life is more manageable, we don't necessarily have to listen to cars going by at all hours, and we can perform our favorite outdoor activities (hunting, hiking, skiing, and more) without having to travel a great distance. We know our neighbors and are part of a close-knit community. With broadband, we can still have all those things, but we can also enjoy to the fullest all the modern amenities that the Internet offers. Ultimately, broadband allows us to live in a place we love while increasing and simplifying access to a digital world that has become an important part of our lives.