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Comments on Broadband Research Agenda

What research proposals regarding broadband access should be prioritized?

Longitudinal research is needed that follows individuals' adoption and expanding use of broadband technology. This longitudinal research, carried out by studies using a range of longitudinal designs and methods, can clarify the role of a number of factors underlying broadband access and use, including proximity to broadband infrastructure, socioeconomic status, personal interests and life circumstances, and opportunities available for using broadband technology in family, education, work and community contexts.

How can cross-disciplinary collaboration in broadband research be enhanced?

Cross-disciplinary broadband research will be enhanced by soliciting research proposals that focus on uses of broadband technology in specific application domains. A few examples of such domains include healthcare, immigrant integration, safety net services and criminal justice. Cross-disciplinary research can be targeted on broadband adoption and use and their impact on domain-specific outcomes (e.g., on measures of health, immigrant integration, poverty reduction, and reduced incarceration/recidivism).

What is needed to understand how to reach population groups that have traditionally under-utilized broadband technology?

In addition to factors that have already been identified by research on broadband utilization (e.g., affordability), there is need for better understanding of the social and cultural factors that influence the ease and comfort of using broadband technology for different purposes and in various settings by members of diverse cultural and linguistic groups. These studies can address a number of important research questions. How should differences among user populations best be taken into consideration in the design of broadband device interfaces? How do differences

in user language and cultural background, cognitive skills, and sensory/attentional resources affect their propensity to utilize the technologies? What interface designs and supports facilitate engagement with various broadband devices?

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