

## Henry County Business & Industry Sector

### Why Is This Important?

Today, a number of factors are forcing businesses to change time-honored models of operation, including global competition, partnering/outsourcing and demand for more personalized services. Each of these trends can save businesses time and money, but they require a sound technological infrastructure. The good news is that while these trends are becoming more prevalent, the costs of technology are falling. Businesses cannot be sheltered from competitors. The reality is that Henry County businesses must adapt to the changing world in which they operate. Businesses have to learn the tools of the networked economy and innovate in order to survive.

The business & industry sector often experiences the most direct benefit of high-speed Internet with increased sales, profit and growth. However, many businesses and industries are utilizing high-speed Internet to simplify processes, increase efficiency and develop new marketing methods. While a company's employees benefit immediately from Broadband implementation, the consumer also ultimately sees lower prices and better quality.

Increased benefits from the implementation of high-speed Internet access are not just for large corporations. For smaller businesses, technology creates an even playing field with much larger companies. eCommerce, the buying and selling of goods over the Internet, allows small or even home-based businesses to operate and sell their goods on a national and sometimes international scale. Where small businesses were once limited to only local customers they could attract through local advertising and word of mouth, the Internet now allows them to attract customers across the globe. The Business and Industry sector team identified that eCommerce and its related benefits are not being fully utilized by the small to medium sized businesses in Henry County. They further recognized that an

#### Henry County Business & Industry

- Henry County Economic Development, [www.hencoed.com](http://www.hencoed.com)
- Napoleon/Henry County Chamber of Commerce, [www.ohiohenrycounty.com](http://www.ohiohenrycounty.com)
- Ohio Economic Development, [www.ecodevdirectory.com/ohio.htm](http://www.ecodevdirectory.com/ohio.htm)
- Ohio Chamber Of Commerce [www.ohiochamber.com](http://www.ohiochamber.com)
- Ohio Department of Development [www.odod.state.oh.us](http://www.odod.state.oh.us)
- ODOD Office of Policy Research and Strategic Planning [www.odod.state.oh.us/research](http://www.odod.state.oh.us/research)

opportunity exists for education regarding the use and benefits of web-based sales and Internet based supply-chain management.

Utilizing Broadband and technology, businesses with multiple locations can save money by implementing Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). VoIP allows businesses to call between those locations using the convenience of 4-digit dialing, with little or no costs. It allows users to travel anywhere in the world and still make and receive phone calls. Additionally, VoIP allows for collaboration not available when using traditional telephone methods. While most businesses have high-speed connectivity, the leadership team questioned rather the coverage in Henry County is adequate to support VoIP on a consistent basis.

Technology has allowed larger businesses to maximize efficiency in order to better serve customers. Email, intranets, paperless operations and automated logistics processes are just a few examples of how the Internet is allowing large companies to work with much greater efficiency and at lower costs. These practices allow those businesses to expand into other markets, grow their companies and even pass the savings on to their customers.

The largest employers by type are:

- Manufacturing with 3,860 employees
- Trade, Transportation & Utilities with 2,135 employees
- Local Government with 1,953 employees

## Where Are We Today?

The city of Napoleon is currently in the process of expanding their fiber network to include increased bandwidth for both Industrial Parks, which will expand the Broadband capacity for several major companies.

Henry County residents utilize the Internet to conduct business through a variety of methods at a rate slightly higher than the state average. Uses of the Internet by Henry County residents are as follows:

- 74% of residents research products online (77% statewide)
- 68% of residents purchase products online (70% statewide)

- 51% of residents use online banking (55% statewide)
- 32% of residents search for jobs online (50% statewide)
- 14% of residents buy, sell or trade investments online (19% statewide)

The Napoleon/Henry County Chamber of Commerce, [www.ohiohenrycounty.com](http://www.ohiohenrycounty.com), is designed to meet community needs. Among other things, it is a civic clearinghouse, a public relations counselor, a legislative representative, an information bureau and a research and promotion medium. Members can take advantage of numerous benefits offered by the following companies:

- CompManagement
- Anthem
- Auto-Owners Insurance
- DHL
- Enterprise Car Rental
- Clear Channel
- Embarq

It is often the first place tourists, businesses and those seeking residential/business relocation turn to for information about the county.

Greater bandwidth availability is needed for local businesses, along with “just in time” inventory processing and other logistics technologies. The business community would like to provide more work from home opportunities for employees as well.

Business & Industry Sector Assessment Overview			
Category	Current Assessment	Future Vision	Additional Comments
Networked Places	3	4	
Applications & Services	2.5	5	
Leadership	3	4	

The Henry County eCommunity Leadership Team found that the business & industry sector is beginning to use technology to its advantage and have identified large opportunities for technology applications within

the business community.

- **Networked Places** – In the category of Networked Places, Henry County’s business & industry sector is currently at stage 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. Most office employees have always-on connections to the Internet at their desks. Some mobile workers have laptop computers and can access the office network remotely. Affordable videoconferencing facilities are available in the community.
- **Applications & Services** – In the category of technology Applications & Services, the business & industry sector is currently at stage 2+ on a 0 to 5 scale. Some businesses have an informational website. Some businesses transmit or receive some orders electronically.
- **Leadership** – In terms of technology Leadership within the business and industry community, Henry County is currently at stage 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. Some businesses permit some employees periodically to telework. Some businesses encourage employees to take work-related classes offline. Employee training on new technology is a priority.

## Where Do We Need To Be?

While the Henry County eCommunity Leadership Team found that business and industry’s current use of technology is somewhat limited, the team has an aggressive vision for how the sector should be using technology in two years. The team set goals that would move the business and industry to stage 4 on a 0 to 5 scale in the areas of networked places and leadership, and to stage 5 in the applications and services category. The team’s vision includes:

- Some businesses use VoIP to save money. Some office workers have converted from desktop computers to portable devices with wireless connections. Some office computers have webcams for videoconferencing.
- Some businesses send and receive video mail. Some businesses outsource most of their computing services. Some businesses routinely use multiparty videoconferencing to coordinate operations.
- Some businesses permit some employees to telework one or two days a week. Some businesses encourage employees to take work-related courses online. Businesses are working with educational partners to raise workforce skill levels.

In Henry County, the median commute to work is roughly 21 minutes for 13,911 people. Finding a way to enable telecommuting for 25% of these workers would result in over \$3.3 million in savings on gas alone

(32 miles/20 miles/gal x \$2.50\*/gal x 240 day/yr x 3,477). On an individual basis, this is over \$960 per year per commuter, plus the environmental impact from reduced emissions and carbon credits.

## How Do We Get There?

### Priority Projects

- Educate local businesses regarding the benefits of ecommerce to drive technology adoption.
- Expand Broadband coverage so that employees can take advantage of work-from-home opportunities.

### Other Potential Projects

- Create a municipal Mesh WiFi network designed for use by employees, visitors, and First Responders.
- Expand Cellular coverage to eliminate the many “holes” that exist today.

The eCommunity Leaders within the Business and Industry sector include:

Cheryl Bostelman, General Manager, Bright.Net North

Joel Miller, Executive Director, Napoleon and Henry County Chamber of Commerce

Ralph Lange, Henry County CIC, Economic Development

Eric Damman, Farmers Telephone

Mark Stober, Marketing Manager, Holgate Implement Sales

Phil Parsons, General Manager, Tri-County Electric Coop

In working toward the advancement of the business sector goals, Connect Ohio recommends that additional participants be brought into the process, which may include technology providers, subject matter experts, community organizations which serve the business community and the resources of agencies and commercial providers of products and services to the business sector.

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\* As the price of gas fluctuates, this formula is based on \$2.50 per gallon.



Brad McMillen, Northwest State Operations Manager for Connect Ohio will continue to work with the business sector leaders to advance selected projects toward their completion. By leveraging Connect Ohio's project management process, its research information, and its partners, projects will be defined, developed, and reviewed to help assure that the local teams are equipped to execute them. Connect Ohio will assist in the identification of funding sources, introducing technical resources, and helping to define the measurable goals that will ensure that the projects are actionable, measurable, and valuable.