

## Lorain County Government Sector

### Why Is This Important?

Government serves citizens in numerous ways, from offering services like vehicle registration to providing information such as election results. While it is common for people to feel disengaged from the everyday actions of state and local government, technology has allowed governments to begin closing that gap. On the state level, Ohio has developed [www.ohio.gov](http://www.ohio.gov), a comprehensive website that provides government services and information to all citizens. On this site, residents can purchase and update hunting licenses, car dealers can access title searches on cars and citizens can monitor the progress of legislation when the General Assembly is in session. By bringing the services of the state government to the convenience of residents' homes, the ohio.gov site provides participants a greater sense of relevance in the actions of state government.

Local governments have also seen the importance of an online presence. They provide communities with many services that offer a great deal of local information and encourage public involvement and awareness. With a web presence, local governments can distribute information to more citizens, provide increased opportunities for interaction with the agencies that affect them and make transactions that previously required a drive to the courthouse accessible online.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Lorain County had a population of 302,260 in 2007. 53% of the population are families with no children, 47% are families with children. 26.2% of the population is under the age 18, and 35.7% is over the age of 45. 46% of the population has attended some college or higher. The median household income is \$45,042. Municipalities in Lorain County include the following:

- County Seat, Elyria City - population 55,059

#### Lorain County Government

- State of Ohio, [www.ohio.gov](http://www.ohio.gov)
- Ohio General Assembly, [www.legislature.state.oh.us](http://www.legislature.state.oh.us)
- Geographic Information, [www.puco.ohio.gov/PUCO/GIS/?navitem=leftsidebar](http://www.puco.ohio.gov/PUCO/GIS/?navitem=leftsidebar)
- Public Utilities, [www.PUCO.ohio.gov](http://www.PUCO.ohio.gov)
- State Senate Districts, [www.puc.state.oh.us/pucogis/NewDistricts/Senate\\_links.pdf](http://www.puc.state.oh.us/pucogis/NewDistricts/Senate_links.pdf)
- State House Districts, [www.puc.state.oh.us/pucogis/NewDistricts/House\\_links2.pdf](http://www.puc.state.oh.us/pucogis/NewDistricts/House_links2.pdf)
- Lorain County Government, [www.loraincounty.us/government.aspx](http://www.loraincounty.us/government.aspx)

- Lorain City - population 70,124
- North Ridgeville City - population 27,578

### Where Are We Today?

Lorain 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 Lorain County residents are as follows:

- 82% of residents research products online (77% statewide)
- 72% of residents purchase products online (70% statewide)
- 65% of residents use online banking (55% statewide)
- 60% of residents search for jobs online (50% statewide)
- 52% of residents conduct online government transactions (35% statewide)

The State of Ohio has taken a leadership role in the development of online government services through its portal at [www.ohio.gov](http://www.ohio.gov). Many of the services available are targeted at local residents. Visiting Ohio's website allows users to access state laws and regulations, renew driver's licenses, locate local colleges and public schools, apply for unemployment services and hundreds of other services. Information about business, education, travel, employment and government is also available to residents.

All entities within the government sector understand that technology is important to conduct the government's business more effectively. Broadband is viewed as a way to better communicate with the residents of the cities and county. With the use of Broadband, the government sector wants to utilize applications that take advantage of that infrastructure.

Broadband capabilities, resources, funding and leadership varies greatly depending on the government entity. Lorain County and several larger municipalities like North Ridgeville have high ratings in all categories while other municipalities and townships have limited resources. A number of communities have websites with varying levels of functionality. Funding and IT support are an issue for many government entities.

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

The Lorain County eCommunity Leadership Team found that the government sector is just beginning to use technology to its advantage and believes the Internet to be essential to business operations.

- **Networked Places** – In the category of networked places, Lorain County’s government sector is currently at stage 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. Many employees have email accounts. Some field workers are collecting data on laptop computers or palmtops. Webcams are starting to be deployed.
- **Applications & Services** – In the category of technology applications & services, the government sector is currently at stage 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. Some government applications are available, such as simple building permit applications, email list servs and some downloadable forms. Email from residents is manually routed to the appropriate departments. Some agencies routinely use the network to share data.
- **Leadership** – In terms of technology leadership within the government community, Lorain County is currently at stage 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. Government staff is actively involved in framing technology and telecommunications issues. Processes are underway for enhancing connectivity, rights-of-way management and information technology innovation. Employees are trained and knowledgeable about basic applications.

### Where Do We Need To Be?

The Lorain County eCommunity Leadership Team has developed goals to provide a framework for robust government functions within the next two years. The team has set goals to move Networked Places and Applications & Services from stage 3 to stage 4, and Leadership from stage 3 to stage 5, all on a 0 to 5 scale. The team’s vision includes:

- Reliable sources of funding are in place, enabling government entities to make the required investments in technology and Broadband.
- A county level fiber optic network is in place, providing all government entities in the county with a

consistent, affordable level of high bandwidth Broadband service.

- In conjunction with county wide fiber optic availability, a number of community wi-fi networks are in place enabling a wide array of public safety, utility, GIS and mobile workforce solutions.
- Government entities are collaborating and cooperating on a number of Broadband and technology initiatives.
- Some field workers use wireless networks to upload and download data in the field. Some employees use desktop videoconferencing. Sensors and webcams monitor locations, such as rivers that are important to public safety.
- Customers can make routine payments, such as parking fines, online using credit cards or electronic fund transfer. Parks and recreation classes have online registration. Employees can enter building inspections and violations from the field.
- The government has telecommunications, egovernment and information technology master plans in place to guide its efforts. Innovative processes are used to collaborate with the private sector.

## How Do We Get There?

### Project Ideas

- Secure reliable sources of funding to enable government entities to make the required investments in technology and Broadband services.
- Develop county level fiber optic network to provide all government entities with a consistent, affordable source of level of high bandwidth Broadband service and community wi-fi networks.
- Establish a county technology council to foster collaboration between government entities and other sectors in the county.

### Other Potential Projects

- Develop more thorough employee technology training programs.
- Make all applications and documents download accessible from the Internet.
- Improve the ability to conduct business with government over the Internet, e.g. permitting, purchasing and payments, by developing more egovernment applications that provide value to the consumer.
- Ensure that government is utilizing “best practices” in data storage and security.



The eCommunity Leaders within the Government sector include:

- Denny Johnson, City of North Ridgeville
- Mitchell Fallis, City of Lorain
- Ernie Smith, Lorain County
- Karl Zuber, City of Avon Lake
- Koury Henderson, City of Elyria
- Bob Milovich, Lorain County Auditor's Department
- Eric Norenberg, City of Oberlin
- Dane Leimbach, Brownhelm Township
- Donald Brackenhoff, City of Elyria

In working toward the implementation of the sector-specific goals, Connect Ohio recommends that additional participants be brought into the process, which may include technology providers, subject matter experts, other community organizations, funding sources, and the resources of agencies and commercial providers of products and services to the government sector.

Dave Davidson, Northwest State Operations Manager for Connect Ohio will continue to work with the 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 and timelines that will ensure that the projects are actionable, measurable, and valuable.