

Medina 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 Medina 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 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.

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 with little or

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- Medina County Economic Development, www.medinacounty.org
- Ohio Economic Development, www.ecodevdirectory.com/ohio.htm
- Ohio Chamber Of Commerce, www.ohiochamber.com
- Ohio Department of Development, www.odod.state.oh.us
- ODOD Office of Policy Research and Strategic Planning, www.odod.state.oh.us/research

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.

Technology has allowed larger businesses to maximize efficiency in order to better serve customers. Email, intranet, 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:

- Service providing establishments 38,825 employees
- Good producing establishments 13,759 employees
- Local government 6,907

Where Are We Today?

Medina County residents utilize the Internet to conduct business through a variety of methods at a rate slightly higher than the state averages, with the exception of searching for employment and paying bills. Uses of the Internet by Medina County residents are as follows:

- 83% of residents research products online (77% statewide)
- 79% of residents purchase products online (70% statewide)
- 67% of residents use online banking (55% statewide)
- 47% of residents search for jobs online (50% statewide)
- 22% of residents buy, sell or trade investments online (19% statewide)

Within the business & industry sector, technology and Broadband are viewed as vital to the economy and Medina County's growing business community. The Medina County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) provides professional, comprehensive assistance to a wide variety of economic development clients. MCEDC's capabilities are focused to meet the needs of clients in a confidential and time sensitive fashion. It is the mission of the MCEDC to enhance the quality of life in the county through economic

development.

The Medina County Port Authority (MCPA) is a dynamic, county-wide organization that was created in October 2003, as the result of a collaborative effort between the Board of Medina County Commissioners and the Medina County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC). MCPA endeavors to build and sustain a competitive business environment in Medina County by utilizing its unique powers to enhance economic development through marketing and innovative financing.

Medina County also has a number of active Chamber of Commerce organizations that are designed to meet community needs. Among other things, the Chamber is a civic clearinghouse, a public relations counselor, a legislative representative, an information bureau and a research and promotion medium. It is often the first place tourists, businesses and those seeking residential/business relocation turn to for information about the county.

The defined territories of wired broadband providers and varying service options are a challenge for businesses with multiple county locations. Most infrastructure for existing wired broadband networks in the county are above ground (aerial). The cost of last mile connections to primary broadband networks are a barrier for many businesses and most large corporations are in need of additional bandwidth. There is a need for alternative points of presence (POP) to allow for company growth and attract new business to the county.

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

The Medina County eCommunity Leadership Team found that the Business & Industry 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, Medina 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 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. Most businesses have an informational website. Some retail websites can accept credit card purchases. Some businesses participate in the electronic supply chain.
- **Leadership** – In terms of technology Leadership within the business & industry community, Medina 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 Medina 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 has set goals to move networked places from stage 3 to stage 4, applications and services from stage 3 to stage 4, and leadership from stage 3 to stage 4, all on a 0 - 5 scale. The leadership team envisions more underground broadband assets to provide additional bandwidth and improved reliability and diversity of broadband routes in the county, establishment of a mechanism to provide businesses with a source of funding for hardware and broadband connections, and extend broadband coverage to all un-served areas of the county where there is a need for such service. The team's vision also 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 outsource most of their computing services. Some retailers and manufacturers sell goods out of state or internationally. Some employees work remotely, some out of state.
- 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.

In Medina County, the median commute to work is roughly 26 minutes for 76,500 people. Finding a way to enable telecommuting for 25% of these workers would result in over \$16 million in saving on gas alone (50 miles x 20 miles/gal x \$1.75/gal x 240 day/yr x 19,125). On an individual basis, this is over \$800 per year per commuter, plus the environmental impact from reduced emissions and carbon credits.

How Do We Get There?

Project Ideas

- Build county wide fiber network to provide state of the art broadband availability to all areas of the county.
- Develop a public/private partnership between the state and banks to provide a funding source for businesses to purchase hardware and to invest in last mile connections to broadband networks.
- Work with incumbent and new providers to extend broadband coverage to all areas of the county where there is a need.
- Work with the local Chambers of Commerce, technology companies and broadband service providers to create business symposiums for broadband and technology.
- Work with the Ohio Department of Transportation to coordinate underground fiber transportation.

Other Potential Projects

- Promote Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and encourage its use among businesses as a way to save money.
- Create a high-tech center to display technology infrastructure and technology tools for employees.
- Develop a directory for local information technology services in the county including business-to-business opportunities.
- Create a media campaign to help consumers and businesses understand the benefits of high-speed services and the Internet.

The eCommunity Leaders within the Business and Industry sector include:

Bethany Dentler and Sandy Neuman – Medina Economic Development Corporation

Melissa Krebs – Brunswick Area Chamber of Commerce



William Hutson – Westfield Insurance

James Gerspacher – Gerspacher Real Estate and Medina County Port Authority Board Member

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.

Dave Davidson, Northeast 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.