

FCC & “CONNECT TO COMPETE” TACKLE BROADBAND ADOPTION CHALLENGE THROUGH EXPANDED DIGITAL LITERACY TRAINING

BROADBAND ADOPTION KEY TO JOBS AND EDUCATION

Last week, Chairman Genachowski unveiled his proposal to reform the Universal Service Fund to accelerate broadband build-out to the 18 million Americans who are currently unserved and expand the benefits of high-speed Internet to American consumers to millions of consumers in every part of the country.

Today, Chairman Genachowski was joined by executives and nonprofit leaders from across the broadband ecosystem at the Pew Charitable Trust in Washington, D.C., where he applauded “Connect to Compete,” a new nonprofit initiative. This is a first-of-its-kind national effort to address the barriers to broadband adoption, digital literacy and the employment skills gap. In addition, he announced an FCC proposal to launch a Digital Literacy Corps.

In May 2011, Chairman Genachowski challenged the broadband ecosystem to help close the adoption gap. In response to this challenge, private sector and nonprofit actors met the challenge and announced significant commitments to tackle digital literacy, one of the core barriers to adoption. Including: Best Buy’s Geek Squad; Microsoft; Arise Virtual Solutions; CareerBuilder.com, Monster.com, MetrixLearning, BrainFuse; Sesame, Discovery Education and several of the nation’s most effective grassroots community organizations.

THE BROADBAND ADOPTION CHALLENGE

- One-third of all Americans – 100 million people – haven’t adopted broadband at home. Broadband adoption is key to America’s competitiveness – to jobs, E-Government, education, and energy. According to the Pew Research Center, the top three obstacles to broadband adoption are digital literacy and trust, relevance and cost.
- In May 2011, Chairman Genachowski announced his broadband adoption initiative challenging the broadband ecosystem to help close the adoption gap; today marks the first response to that challenge. There is no silver bullet to closing the adoption gap. It will take ongoing efforts across government, nonprofit and private sectors working together to close the gap.
- We cannot close the adoption gap without reforming the Universal Service Fund. Almost twenty million of the 100 million non-adopters simply do not have access to high-speed Internet. USF reform is needed to bring these consumers broadband.

THE BROADBAND ADOPTION OPPORTUNITY

- More than 80 percent of Fortune 500 companies today, including Wal-Mart and Target, require online job applications.
- Students with broadband at home have a 7 percent higher graduation rate.
- Consumers with broadband at home can save more than \$7,000 a year.
- Closing the broadband adoption gap will create \$32 billion in annual economic value, or about \$100 for every American, every year.
- Right now, government spends hundreds of millions of dollars each year on paper communications with citizens, most of whom are non-adopters. If we move more services online, we can incentive broadband adoption and make government more efficient.

“DIGITAL LITERACY CORPS” PROPOSAL: EXPAND TRAINING ACROSS AMERICA

- According to a recent Gates Foundation-funded survey, only 38% of all public libraries offer a basic digital literacy class – and only 25% in rural America.
- Chairman Genachowski’s proposal would enable thousands of more libraries to host in-person, basic digital literacy training programs
- The proposal would expand digital literacy training to the FCC’s “School Spots” program, which allows schools to keep their computer labs open after hours for students and their families.
- Together, these new library and school literacy courses and instructors would form a new “Digital Literacy Corps,” an idea first discussed in the National Broadband Plan.

TODAY'S ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM COMPANIES AND NONPROFIT ACTORS:

Private-sector companies join non-profit groups to offer basic and advanced digital literacy training and certification, including commitments from:

- **Best Buy**, a specialty technology retailer, will put its 20,000 Geek Squad Agents to work nationwide to train Americans in basic digital literacy. Geek Squad Agents will begin training Americans in 20 cities, large and small, over the next year, with plans to expand to additional communities. The Geek Squad will also train trainers, working with community groups to train others how to teach digital literacy.
- **Microsoft** will offer basic and advanced digital literacy training and certification. The company will offer basic digital literacy and free job skills training including Microsoft Office. Beginning in 15 states over the next three years, Microsoft will work with its partners to deploy training in Microsoft Office through schools, libraries and community colleges. Microsoft has also offered to conduct basic in-person digital literacy and office training in their stores nationwide. The company will also build a state-of-the-art online digital literacy training center with videos and other easy-to-follow content.
- **Arise Virtual Solutions** will in the coming year provide live, online training to help job seekers develop the customer service and interpersonal skills that today's employers demand, with plans to make self-paced training available going forward.
- **Grass-roots organizations** join *Connect to Compete* to help build a national seamless web of digital literacy trainers, including the Boys and Girls Club, Goodwill, 4H, and members of the Broadband Opportunity Coalition: The Asian American Justice Center, National Council of La Raza (NCLR), League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), National Urban League, One Economy, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies and the Minority and Media Telecommunications Council (MMTC).
- **CareerBuilder.com** will offer online prep or actual certification courses for only \$1 per course in high demand employment areas such as technology, healthcare and manufacturing, to the hardest-pressed job seekers. On a quarterly basis, the company will release a "Skills Gap Monitor" that lists the top 5 "in-demand jobs" for which further online training or certification could make a difference between finding a job and not. Job-seekers will also be directed to specific job listings for these in-demand jobs.
- **Monster.com** will identify "middle skills" jobs in which there are more openings than qualified candidates and identify the skills and certifications job seekers will need to land those jobs. Monster will also provide job-search resources tailored to the needs of Americans new to broadband.
- **Discovery Education** will contribute their premiere educational content, including video clips and digital lessons, to help bolster student achievement. With topics ranging from two-digit addition to presidential elections, proven resources for student success will be accessible free of charge to America's neediest students and their parents.
- **MetrixLearning**, an e-training company, has offered to provide free online training for job seekers needing to hone their basic skills to get hired, from basic math to interview skills. The training will be available not only in English, but in Spanish and Mandarin Chinese.
- **Brainfuse**, an online job-hunting, tutoring, and collaborative learning service, will provide individualized application and resume-writing assistance for free to the nation's hardest-pressed job seekers.
- **Sesame Workshop**, a nonprofit educational organization, has offered to provide content including games, videos and other educational materials from its outreach projects on hunger and economic hardships.

CONNECT TO COMPETE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Private companies and non-profits have announced the formation of *Connect to Compete*, a non-profit initiative, to execute the offerings made on expanding digital literacy and helping Americans close the jobs skills gap. The new organization, which will be housed at One Economy, will be a collaborative effort with other non-profits and industry partners.

- **Leadership:** Kelley Dunne will lead the initiative as part of his current role as CEO of One Economy, one of the most effective and reputable organizations in the digital literacy space
- **Advisory Board:** the *Connect to Compete* non-profit will have an advisory board, which will include the following key players in this initiative: Common Sense Media, Connected Nation, CFY (formerly Computers for Youth), an education non-profit, Best Buy, Discovery, Marc Morial, the Chairman of Broadband Opportunity Coalition, the Knight Foundation, and others.
- **Accountability:** The Media and Technology Institute of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies will serve as the independent evaluator of *Connect to Compete* and will implement a longitudinal research plan that sets program metrics and assesses the short-and long-term impact of the initiative.
- **The Knight Foundation**, a prominent thought leader in the broadband ecosystem, will support *Connect to Compete* with resources to help shape and lead the program.
- Leading non-profit partners will provide thought-leadership and open their networks to distribute information about *Connect to Compete* resources and training, including members of Broadband Opportunity Coalition, CFY, Common Sense Media, Connected Nation, Goodwill Industries International and the National League of Cities.

To learn more about *Connect to Compete*, visit www.fcc.gov or www.connect2compete.org