

Survey looks at broadband

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Posted: 06/15/2009 07:08:00 AM PDT

Updated: 06/15/2009 07:08:00 AM PDT

If you want broadband in your area and California State University, Chico calls, don't assume it wants a donation and hang up.

That's the advice of Don Krysakowski, assistant director for the Center of Economic Development at the university. Krysakowski and the university are surveying about 1,600 businesses and residents across Tehama, Siskiyou, Lassen, Shasta, Butte, Plumas and Modoc counties to find how far broadband, or high-speed Internet access, has penetrated rural areas.

The survey began at the end of May and will last until July or August, at which time the results will be reported to the California Emerging Technology Fund, an organization dedicated to the spread of communication technologies that is funding the project in conjunction with the Redding-based McConnell Foundation.

The results of the study should help broadband companies identify where to lay broadband infrastructure and may be complete just as the application process begins for \$7.2 billion in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money set aside for rural broadband infrastructure.

Depending on who is eligible for the funding, municipalities and broadband companies may be able to use the survey to persuade the federal government to send money their direction, Krysakowski said. The money would not pay for the services themselves. Instead, it would save

companies some of the expense of laying cable or erecting towers to broadcast wireless Internet signals.

More than just giving locals access to dot coms like YouTube, Hulu and ESPN360, that are designed around high speed Internet, extending broadband to rural areas can offer significant economic benefits, including the ability to telecommute or operate businesses from homes.

The same technologies can enhance existing business by helping them market themselves to customers and purchase cheaper materials.

As an example, Krysakowski cited a project at Pennsylvania State University in which the university spent around \$400,000 a year helping local businesses establish an online presence. By the end of the project, the businesses were able to increase their collective earnings by about \$11 million a year, he said.

Information is available by calling Krysakowski at 898-4598.

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