



# Summary of Common Factors

## OITP Connectivity Study

In 2006-7, the American Library Association's Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP) received a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to study factors that can lead to successful high speed broadband connectivity among public libraries in a state.<sup>1</sup> The research uncovered the following common characteristics of successfully connected states:

### 1. Leadership

At the state, regional, or local level, someone – or some group – takes the lead. These people strongly believe in the goal of connectivity and motivate others to join the effort with strong and continuing leadership.

### 2. Vision

At the state, regional, or local level, there is a clear vision of what is wanted: connectivity of an entire state, region or community that includes libraries. This vision includes the level of connectivity desired, the services that can be offered with better connectivity, and the potential benefit to the community. There is agreement about the vision and commitment to finding a solution to reach the vision.

### 3. Inclusivity and partnerships

Partnerships are established among libraries or among libraries and other organizations that share the same vision. All stakeholders whose participation is critical to success are invited to participate in planning.

### 4. Advocacy for the vision

Successful projects have a strong advocacy effort that describes and lobbies for the vision. Advocacy must occur at all levels in order to convince policy makers, funders, and even reluctant librarians that the vision is worth funding and implementing.

### 5. Demonstration models

Not everyone understands the need for broadband or its role in helping libraries serve the community. Successful broadband deployment strategies include showing how broadband could be used and the benefit to the local community.

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<sup>1</sup> Research report available at:  
[http://ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oitp/publications/booksreportsstudies/Public\\_%20Library\\_Conn.pdf](http://ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oitp/publications/booksreportsstudies/Public_%20Library_Conn.pdf)

**6. Importance of aggregation**

Demand is aggregated to make the business case to telecommunications providers that it is worthwhile to deploy broadband. The aggregation allows the stakeholders to plan together and develop the most economical and efficient network.

**7. Technical plan for implementation and support**

A good technical plan is developed to solve connectivity problems and create the best solution for all stakeholders. The plan also includes provision for ongoing technical support of local libraries and other stakeholders.

**8. Training librarians about the new technology**

Some librarians do not place a priority on broadband given the demand on library budgets and constraints on staff time. Library staff at all levels need to be trained on the value of broadband technology and applications.

**9. Funding**

Funding for connectivity comes from multiple sources. State funds to the state library or directly to regional library cooperatives or local libraries supplements local funds. E-rate discounts are used extensively. Aggregation of demand leads to lower overall costs.

**10. The role of the state library agency**

The state librarian plays a role and so do state library staff. They are all involved in bringing people together, deciding to use funds creatively, demonstrating value, and providing training. State library staff can help facilitate partnerships at the state level and encourage partnerships at the regional and local level as well.