

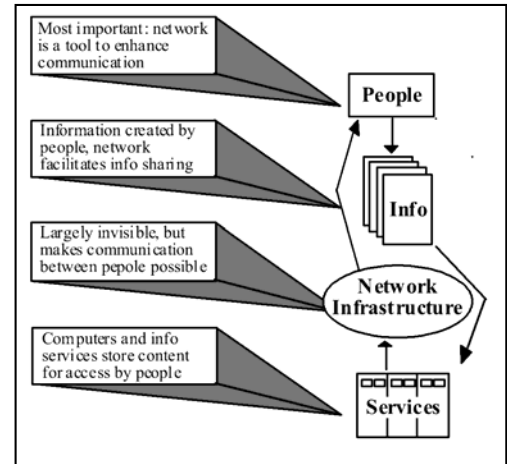


## Building a Community Information Network

### Phase 1 – Community Information Network Task Force

Creating a sustainable Community Information Network (CIN) is a task that will require commitment and participation from all segments of the community. New relationships and partnerships will need to be formed to allow community organizations to develop and share community information technology infrastructure.

Following are some key steps that will help communities develop a successful Community Information Network.



#### Community Information Network Champion

Most successful Community Information Networks will have one individual that serves as the project **Champion**. The **Champion** needs to have a thorough understanding of how digital technologies can benefit the individuals and organizations in the community and be able to communicate the benefits in non technical terms. Throughout the project the Champion will perform the following duties:

- Arranging for meetings with other Task Force Members
- Arrange for one-on-one or small group discussions with key community leaders
- Attend meetings of community organizations such as governmental boards, service clubs, non-profits, etc.) to discuss CIN effort.
- Identify and recruit residents to serve on CIN committees

The CIN Champion should be charismatic, have good communication skills, understand the importance of digital technologies for the future of the community and be able to build commitment for the effort among members of community organizations.

#### Community Information Network Task Force

The **Task Force** will set the tone for the Community Information Network process. These individuals must understand, or be willing to learn about the benefits digital technology will bring to the community’s children and families, schools, businesses, government, libraries and non-profits.

The Task Force should have from 3 to 9 members. Task Force members must strongly believe that information technology is crucial to the future well-being of the community. The members don’t have to be “technology experts” as long as they are willing to learn and work together to bring the community’s leadership and resources to focus on helping move the community into the Information Age.

Members of the Task Force should have access to the formal (governmental, business, religious and non-profit/foundation) and non-formal (social organizations, service clubs) leaders in the community. Task Force members should represent as many of the following groups as possible.

Libraries	Senior Citizens
Education	Youth Organizations
Government	Non-profits
Business	Media
Religious community	Other

### **Task Force Responsibilities**

The Task Force will perform (or engage others in the community to perform) the tasks outlined below. The order and speed that these tasks are performed in a community will depend greatly on the degree to which digital technologies are being used by community organizations and businesses and how well community leaders understand how digital technologies can benefit organizations in the community.

#### **1. Information Technology Infrastructure Assessment**

- One of the first tasks the Task Force should perform is to complete a Technology Infrastructure Assessment. The completed assessment provides information on existing community information technology resources. This information will be used to develop the CIN Technology Plan, identifying the Community Technology Center, community resources and organizations or people who can help implement Community Information Network projects.

#### **2. Draft a “Working” Community Information Network Vision Statement**

- The Task Force should develop a two or three sentence (no more than a short paragraph) statement that can be used to describe the objectives and benefits of the effort. Key elements of the vision statement should describe how the community will “look and feel” at some future time. Penn State Cooperative Extension’s strategic visioning program “*Charting the Future of Your Community*” is designed to help communities develop a shared strategic vision and develop action plans the community can carry out to achieve their vision.
- Regardless of how the community strategic vision is developed, Task Force members must share this vision with others in the community to set the stage for community organizations to collaborate on the CIN project. The Community Information Network should then be designed to support people and community organizations, improve communication, and information flow as they move toward this shared vision.

#### **3. Facilitate Support from Key Local Leaders and Organizations**

- Broad community support will be crucial in creating and sustaining a Community Information Network. Task Force members will need to identify key leaders that represent the following organizations:

Government	Schools
Agencies	Libraries
Business	Media
Agencies	Other

These individuals will need to be educated about the benefits that a Community Information Network will provide to their organization and the community. Some members of these organizations will have the interest, skills and resources that can help assist with the process of building the Community Information Network. The Task Force members need to be prepared to involve these individuals in meaningful and appropriate ways as these individuals are identified or volunteer to assist with the project.

The following web sites will provide Community Information Network Task Force members with a wealth of information that will help them build a CIN that will provide citizens and organizations with the tools and skills needed to compete in the Information Age.

### **Community Information Network Resources**

- Association for Community Networking  
<http://www.afcn.net>
- Community network design and development information  
[http://www.bev.net/project/digital\\_library/](http://www.bev.net/project/digital_library/)
- Blacksburg Electronic Village  
<http://www.bev.net/project/evupstart>
- Communities of the Future  
<http://www.communitiesofthefuture.org/>
- Communities, technology, and local governance issues  
<http://www.newdemocracy.org/>

### **Community Web sites**

- Rosenet – Madison, NJ  
[www.rosenet.org](http://www.rosenet.org)
- Blacksburg Electronic Village - Blacksburg, Virginia  
[www.bev.net](http://www.bev.net)
- Potter County, PA  
[www.pottercountypa.net](http://www.pottercountypa.net)
- Charlotte's Web – Charlotte, NC  
[www.charweb.org/](http://www.charweb.org/)

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