



# I. INTRODUCTION

## Background

Technology plays a pivotal role in the way businesses operate, the type of service consumers expect, how institutions provide services, and where consumers choose to live, work, and play. The success of a community has also become dependent on how broadly and deeply the community adopts technology resources – this includes access to reliable high-speed networks, digital literacy of residents, and the use of online resources locally for business, government, and leisure. As noted in the National Broadband Plan, broadband Internet is “a foundation for economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness and a better way of life.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite the growing dependence on technology, the United States Census reports that 27% of Americans do not have a high-speed connection at home. Connected Nation’s studies also show<sup>2</sup> that 19.1 million children do not have broadband at home, and 6.1 million of those children live in low-income households. In 2014, Connected Nation also surveyed<sup>3</sup> 4,206 businesses in 7 states. Based on this data, Connected Nation estimates that nearly 1.5 million businesses – 20% – in the United States do not use broadband technology today.<sup>4</sup>

Deploying broadband infrastructure, services, and application, as well as supporting the universal adoption and meaningful use of broadband, are challenging but required building blocks of a twenty-first century community. To assist communities, Connected Nation developed the Connected Community Engagement Program to identify local technology assets, complete an assessment of local broadband access, adoption, and use, and develop an action plan for pursuing solutions.<sup>5</sup>

## History of the Project

Connect South Carolina, established in 2008, is a subsidiary of Connected Nation and was the South Carolina state designee for the United States Department of Commerce’s State Broadband Initiative grant. This public-private initiative has been established to help communities plan for technology expansion, conduct surveys to assess the current state of broadband adoption across South Carolina, and work with each of the state’s broadband providers to create detailed maps of broadband coverage. Connect South Carolina works closely with the Governor’s Office, the SC Chief Information Officer, our

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<sup>1</sup> Connecting America: The National Broadband Plan, Federal Communications Commission, April 2010, <http://www.broadband.gov/download-plan/>.

<sup>2</sup> Broadband Technology Fact Sheet, Pew Research Internet Project, September 2013, <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/broadband-technology-fact-sheet/>.

<sup>3</sup> The Adoption Gap in Low-Income Households with Children: 2011 Residential Survey Preliminary Findings, Connected Nation Inc., September 2011, <http://www.connectednation.org/documents/connectednationlow-income2011surveyfindingsfinal.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Broadband and Business: Connected Nation 2014 Business Survey Results, Connected Nation Inc., [http://www.connectednation.org/sites/default/files/biz\\_infographic\\_2014\\_cn\\_final.pdf](http://www.connectednation.org/sites/default/files/biz_infographic_2014_cn_final.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Connected Nation, parent company for Connect South Carolina, is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that works in multiple states to engage community stakeholders, state leaders, and technology providers to develop and implement technology expansion programs with core competencies centered around the mission to improve digital inclusion for people and places previously underserved or overlooked.

Broadband Advisory Council, all 45 regional broadband providers, and local leaders and champions as they address challenges and take advantage of opportunities related to broadband across the state. Connect South Carolina's State Broadband Initiative (SBI) efforts were funded by the United States Department of Commerce's SBI grant program through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). More information is available at <http://www2.ntia.doc.gov>.