Project Overview

ConnectedMB

WHAT IS THE PROJECT?

This project takes a comprehensive approach to building broadband connectivity and digital literacy in rural regions of Manitoba. A preliminary literature review will investigate the existing digital infrastructure, community broadband initiatives, digital adoption and capacity-building practices, and digital priorities. An integral part of the study is a podcast series that will share rural Manitoba's digital journey.

WHO ARE THE PROJECT PARTNERS?

The Rural Development Institute will partner with the Internet Society of Canada, Manitoba Chapter, and the Executive Director, Joel Templeman. Joel is a leader in digital connectivity and adoption for underserved communities in Manitoba. RDI is also excited to have Dr. Sarah-Patricia Breen from Selkirk College and Dr. Ashleigh Weeden, knowledge and policy expert in rural connectivity, contribute their knowledge and expertise to the project.

WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT?

Digital technologies and broadband connectivity are essential for today's society education, social connections, businesses, and employment. Statistics Canada has highlighted the importance of broadband connectivity in recent research that indicates 24.3% of Canadians work from home as of May 2021. As of the end of 2021, while 97.3% of urban Manitobans have reliable connectivity, only 38.8% of rural inhabitants do. This number drops even more significantly, where 14.6% of Indigenous communities have reliable connectivity. Among those rural and First Nation communities that are "served," there are significant discrepancies between the data registered by the Internet Service Providers and the performance experienced by the user. These discrepancies make them ineligible for federal funding and prevent further development in the community.

PROJECT COLLABORATORS

Internet Society
Manitoba Chapter

ConnectedMB

Rural Development Institute
Brandon University
270-18th Street,
Brandon, MB R7A 6A9

204-571-8515

brandonu.ca/rdi

BRANDON UNIVERSITY

WHAT IS RDI'S ROLE IN THE PROJECT?

The Rural Development Institute will create an inventory of community broadband initiatives, community-serving organizations, and Manitoba digital adoption initiatives. To accompany this inventory, a podcast will chronicle the stories of rural Manitoban successes and challenges in achieving connectivity.

HOW IS RDI CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROJECT?

RDI is aiding rural community-serving organizations in making connections with content experts throughout the length of this project. The Digital Rural Research Framework (DRRF), developed by Dr. Wayne Kelly, will also be used in discussions with the community broadband initiative representatives and as an analysis tool to understand the digital priorities as we advance. In conjunction with the DRRF, five models for community connectivity initiatives in rural Canada will demonstrate that the private-market delivery approach is not the only model for connecting Canadians and guiding communities on which model may work best for them.