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[Resolving the Digital Divide: Information, Access and Opportunity](#) Conference Report, February 2000

Summary of Recommendations

Resolving the Digital Divide Demands A National Initiative

A national strategy will help to ensure coordinated efforts and widely dispersed benefits. While many distinct efforts are presently under way, panelists cautioned that piecemeal efforts would do little to alleviate this complex problem.

Community Relevance and Community Involvement is Essential for Solving the Divide

Panelists strongly recommend that communities be involved in strategies to increase use of information technology tools and that the tools be used to solve existing community problems. It is imperative that solutions are culturally relevant and acceptable to the community involved.

Rethink Educational Approaches

A constructivist approach to teaching and learning is recommended. Using technology to educate is much more important than educating students about technology. Also, curricula must be made culturally relevant. Content is extremely important to communities–content should be relevant, culturally acceptable and of interest to the community. In higher education, there should be a major initiative to increase access in engineering and computer and information technology fields.

Continue and Expand Government Programs and Provide Additional Funding to Resolve the Digital Divide

Panelists recommended the continuation of government programs and an increase in government investment targeted toward programs designed to resolve the digital divide. Especially relevant are: The Community Technology centers funding from the Department of Education, the Universal Service Fund (e-rate), the National

Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the Technology Challenge grants, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's partnership with Communities in Schools (CIS) and the Cisco Networking Academy Program.

Rethink Market Approaches

While the market approach is important to this Nation, it is necessary to realize that the market often fails to address issues of information inequality. Viable and sustainable economic development as well as training, data collection and research are critical to solving these market failures.

More Research, Data Collection and Evaluation Are Necessary to Solve the Digital Divide

In order to combat the problem of the digital divide, continuing research, data collection and evaluation is important. Research teams should consistently assess community access to technology and engage the community in ways to solve access problems or to create better uses for existing access.

Better Technology and More Minority Owned Businesses

Better technology can help increase the use of information technology tools. Minority owned companies, a growth in minority researchers, and an increase in policy-oriented employees will help to overcome content and cultural barriers.