Current Approaches to Measuring the Economic Impact of Broadband:
A Household Perspective

Catherine Middleton
Canada Research Chair
Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada

Broadband and Its Impact on Consumers and Economies:
Developing a New Framework for Future Metrics
Washington, DC October 2011
Why collect broadband data?

• Understand individuals’ ability to engage in a digital society, realize societal, individual, economic benefits

Societal benefit:

• “more ubiquitous access to and use of broadband Internet networks ... will help foster innovation and drive the growth of the Internet economy and of the economy in general” June 2011 OECD Communiqué
Why collect broadband data?

Individual benefit:
• “Broadband access is a prerequisite of social and economic inclusion.”
Why collect broadband data?

Economic benefit from uptake:
• e.g. “Each contact and transaction with government switched online could generate savings of between £3.30 and £12.00.”
National statistical agencies as data collectors allow for:

• large scale surveys with representative sampling of households/individuals
• international coordination on questions
• data accessible to policy makers, researchers
Are we collecting what we need?

Access:

– availability of fixed and mobile networks, uptake
– quality of broadband networks -- can network support required/desired applications?
– affordability (difficult to assess)

Use:

– purpose and context of broadband use (e.g. location)
– time/frequency measures not very useful (proxies)
– need to understand skill/literacy/ability to engage
Are we collecting what we need?

• Impact:
  – how to define and measure *effective* use?
  – how does individual broadband use create positive outcomes?
  – what is the impact of non-adoption or ineffective use
Data for policy making

• Providing network access
  – type of network
  – speed, quality of service

• Realizing benefits of broadband
  – adoption and non-adoption
  – access is not enough: nuanced understanding of use, capability and impact
Mobile broadband stats are key

“governments are turning to m-government to realise the value of mobile technologies for responsive governance and measurable improvements to social and economic development, public service delivery, operational efficiencies and active citizen engagement”

-- do mobile services allow these benefits to be realized?
Broadband on household surveys

- Provides data about citizens’ use of broadband, in aggregate offers insights on ability to participate in digital society
- Need better understanding of how individual broadband use (engaged, effective) results in improved socio-economic outcomes
- Can we link individual level impacts (micro) with macro economic data at the national level?