

# ICN User Outreach

Report to the ITTC  
Findings and Analysis  
February 17, 2010



200 Tenth Street, 5th Floor, Des Moines, IA 50309  
P: 515.243.2000 F: 515.243.5941 E: [amckeen@sppg.com](mailto:amckeen@sppg.com)

# ICN User Outreach

- October – December 2009 time frame
- Qualitative research – seven focus groups
- Quantitative research – survey of a sample of authorized users
- Research contractor – SPPG (State Public Policy Group, Inc.)



200 Tenth Street, 5th Floor, Des Moines, IA 50309  
P: 515.243.2000 F: 515.243.5941 E: [amckeen@sppg.com](mailto:amckeen@sppg.com)

# Goals of the User Outreach

To learn perceptions of authorized users about the following:

- Value of the ICN
- How users expect to use the ICN in the future
- The impact of current public policy governing the ICN



200 Tenth Street, 5th Floor, Des Moines, IA 50309  
P: 515.243.2000 F: 515.243.5941 E: [amckeen@sppg.com](mailto:amckeen@sppg.com)

# Focus Group Methodology

- 7 focus groups: 3 metro; 4 out-state
- Invitees from list of authorized users provided by the ICN; 1,000 invited
- Held at accessible, neutral sites
- Use of a script with premises and questions
- Non-attributable notes of each session



200 Tenth Street, 5th Floor, Des Moines, IA 50309  
P: 515.243.2000 F: 515.243.5941 E: amckeen@sppg.com

# Survey Methodology

- Authorized user sample of 849 that was used with the focus groups
- Electronically administered
- Overall response rate of 33.8%
  - Focus group participants 80.4%
- Margin of error ranged from 2.5 to 5.8 percentage points



**Eight themes emerged from the focus groups and the survey supported them with quantitative data**

# **THEMES**



200 Tenth Street, 5th Floor, Des Moines, IA 50309  
P: 515.243.2000 F: 515.243.5941 E: [amckeen@sppg.com](mailto:amckeen@sppg.com)

# The ICN is well-liked, overall, and many users are very dependent on it.

- Users like and depend on the ICN as a reliable communications system that helps them get their work done
- Access to the ICN for an organization to get its work done was Very Important (53.8%) or Somewhat Important (20.3%)
- Importance of specific services varied based on type of organization
- Critics still supported ICN; had specific issues



# **There are significant differences in how rural and out-state users value the ICN when compared with Capitol complex and metro-area users.**

- The ICN reduces distance for those in rural and out-state areas for education, public access to government, and data links with a statewide network
- The ICN is the affordable option in outlying areas for technology and communications services
- Type of user may be a factor: government users clustered in Des Moines



# **Video services are either highly valued and frequently used or are seen as unnecessary or obsolete.**

- A large proportion of survey respondents, 68%, use video services monthly, less often, or never. 32% use it daily or weekly.
- Focus group participant had two views:
  - Video is essential and they use it often
  - The ICN's video service is obsolete and requires costs to maintain unused classrooms



# **Voice services provided by the ICN are the subject of many varied opinions on service, billing, value, and cost.**

- Harsh criticism in focus groups came from state agency users in Capitol complex regarding VOIP cost and quality.
- Users in rural areas lauded ICN's affordable and reliable long distance services.
- All appreciate the relationship with ICN and ability to talk to someone they know.
- In the survey, 86% of those saying voice is the most critical service rated quality of the service as Extremely Valuable or Valuable.



**Data is the primary service of the future, and alternatives to the classroom format for video services are expected for users to meet current and future needs.**

- Data is the least understood service; those who use it value it highly.
- Libraries rarely use data services.
- Focus group participants who are technology specialists were adamant about data as the service of the future.
- There is a demand for shifting video services to a desktop format.



# **The ICN should market itself and assist users in developing ideas for how to best use the ICN in their unique settings.**

- A surprising number of focus group participants want:
  - Stronger branding and marketing of ICN
  - Technical assistance in how to best use ICN services in their own situation
  - Some requested dedicated staff for this
- Survey results supported this need with over 60% naming at least one aspect they need more information about



# **Policy changes are needed to allow the ICN to maintain and expand services and to ensure investments are made to keep the system meeting the needs of the users.**

- Policy governing the ICN and related issues were not understood by most of the focus group participants.
- Participants thought policy should support ICN's mandate to operate like a business
- Survey respondents see benefits of technology advancement in their organization
- They also want additional services from ICN, such as:
  - Web conferencing
  - Desktop video
  - Wireless service



# **Authorized users should be expanded to include local government.**

- There was near-universal agreement by focus group respondents that local government should be authorized users of the ICN
- 78.8% of survey respondents favored local government as ICN users
- Efficiencies and practicality points to this expansion
- A smaller majority favored including nonprofit organizations



# Concluding Thoughts

- ICN is the envy of other states and often underappreciated within Iowa's borders
- The ICN faces challenges to operate without state funding and remain a viable enterprise
- The ICN has a role in the future of telecommunications to keep Iowa competitive



200 Tenth Street, 5th Floor, Des Moines, IA 50309  
P: 515.243.2000 F: 515.243.5941 E: amckeen@sppg.com