Survey Results

Results from the survey indicate:

1- The level of usage of internet and digital resources in the region are robust. No one surveyed did not value using the internet.

2- There are gaps in comfort using the internet and digital tools in the region – 52% of the respondents did not feel they could fully maximize the resources available to them.

3- There is a significant need for continuing education – 56% of respondents who had problems identified lack of knowledge or training as their primary hurdle for maximizing their digital usage.

4- Respondents surveyed conducted a variety of work and play digitally – 99% of respondents used e-mail regularly, 20% use a website to sell products and services, 75% use social media tools and 70% bank or pay bills online.

5- Although there were fewer issues or problems with people getting online, the issues people did have ranged from internet service to slow speeds to no service availability in particular locations – 93% of respondents in the preliminary survey had easy access to the internet.

Interestingly, when given a chance to respond in more detail, a full 30% of respondents took the time to identify problems they have getting online.

Survey Methodology

To best reach residents in the River Valley region and to respect the time and effort needed to take surveys, we used two surveys that ran simultaneously. A preliminary 6-question survey was designed to ask basic questions and be taken quickly by a wide range of people. There was a link from this survey to a longer, 12-question general survey that asked more in-depth questions of usage, provided a speed test tool, and asked open-ended questions requiring direct feedback. We approached the surveys in this way to gather as much information as we could from as wide a geographic and user base as possible.

Speedtest Results

The general survey gave respondents an opportunity go to off site and take a commercially available internet speed test through Speakeasy.net. This test was used to get a general feeling for data speeds in the region, and to raise awareness of the importance of high-speed internet. Our respondents reported a range of speeds from 0.66-52.46 Mbps down to 0.08-18.47 Mbps up. Interestingly, the fastest and slowest download speeds recorded through our survey were in Americus, GA.
The survey also provided an opportunity for people to provide unfiltered feedback. Some of the insights from the region:

‘Information overload & little time to figure it all out’
‘Would like to have more computer training’
‘Basic Computer Skills lacking’
‘don’t have a Smartphone & don’t know which one I should even look for!’
‘What is Twitter anyway? and how do I find out?’
‘Would like to take a MS Office class, like at the local library’
‘don’t trust tech to really do much financial transactions – too much hacking into systems’
‘Behind on using tablets and smart phones, mostly due to finances and no work to justify amount paid to amount used’
‘Faster internet and a more reliable connection would make it easier to work from home or take classes online’
‘Please bring Google Fiber to our area. Also, I know it may be a pipedream, but I would like to see publicly available wifi, even if only in public spaces.’
‘I am a systems manager for an office of 35 users in Columbus that is totally integrated in using the technology to access online resources for our business.’

Do you feel like you have the knowledge to fully maximize the technology available to you today?

Training needed

We asked what training was needed as an open-ended question. Of the responses received, the percentage of specific training was requested in the following categories:

- General Training – 46%
- Website Development – 17%
- Microsoft Office – 15%
- Social Media – 10%
- Smartphone / Mobile Devices – 5%
- Networking and Server Maintenance – 5%
- Disaster Recovery/Data Back-up – 2%
- Census Data manipulation – 2%
- Bookkeeping – 2%

For more information on the Digital Economy, contact Jim Livingston at:
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