

# The Social Impact of Broadband - Red Cliff Case Study



In the fall of 2017, Nate Walowitz, Broadband Coordinator for NWCCOG, contacted The CU Faculty Director for [Interdisciplinary Telecom Projects](#), Dr. David Reed, to discuss having CU students working on their Capstone project review the social impacts of Broadband in the Town of Red Cliff.

At the time, Red Cliff had no cell phone service and no broadband. Residents who needed to use the internet drove into Vail or other nearby locations that had access. Communications from Red Cliff at the time were via land lines and snail mail.

The students, Mark Colwell, Ayman Shafka, and Alex Schuman organized the project with key objectives, a survey design to measure impacts, key topics, and conclusions. They visited Red Cliff during the construction phase of the current broadband capabilities, administered the survey and completed their final report which was distributed to the stakeholders this month.

Their key objectives were 1.) To understand the social impacts of Broadband; how residents "worked around" not having access, to measure the social impacts after broadband was introduced, to document how Red Cliff was able to gain access, and to document the lessons learned that might also apply to other rural communities seeking access to the internet. And 2.) Develop ways to improve the adoption and use of broadband through education and outreach.

After many interviews, community surveys, and long hours of gaining data and an overall understanding of the entire process, the team came up with the following conclusions.

- Red Cliff experienced significant positive social impact from broadband deployment, from having access to e-commerce, to being able to complete homework assignments, to video programming options
- Residents already possessed digital literacy skills, so impact was immediate
- The town faced many challenges from regulators in deploying broadband
  - Officials at every level of government should work together to address such challenges
- Matching grant programs proved immensely helpful to finance broadband deployment in Red Cliff
- Addressing broadband deployment challenges will help expand these positive social impacts to connect the over 24 million Americans who currently lack broadband access.

In an interview with the team, they unanimously agreed that a top priority for future success is to work toward simplifying the regulatory process and to continue to utilize and expand the grant process that enables communities to share expenses for construction.

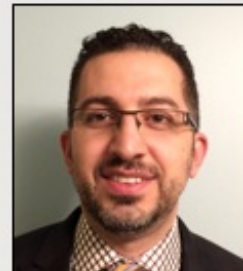
[The full report is available here](#) (link), or you can contact Nate Walowitz at [nwalowitz@nwccog.org](mailto:nwalowitz@nwccog.org) or 970-455-1064



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