



## **Call for Paper Proposals Beyond Broadband Access: Data-Based Information Policy For a New Administration**

This is a Call for Proposals (Abstracts) for papers for a three day by-invitation Experts Workshop on approaches to developing data-based information policy. The deliverables are expected to be policy recommendations, a book and a new research agenda. Abstracts are due by April 15, 2009.

### *Scope and Overview*

The stimulus bill just passed by the United States Congress and signed into law by President Obama allocates \$7.2 billion to loan and grant programs for the deployment of broadband. Most recently the governments of Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, France and the United Kingdom have committed more spectrum to wireless broadband services. However, it is widely acknowledged that in order to fully realize the potential of broadband for the promotion of social progress, economic development and democracy, mere access is not enough. Technology, applications, education, awareness, skills, and content are among many factors that are to be taken into account. Understanding the interplay of all these factors is essential in order to take information policy to the next level. However, this demands both firm empirical and theoretical foundations.

This Workshop is intended to propose a strategy for developing such a foundation – a comprehensive, data-based approach for understanding policy consequences and improving policy outcomes through the utilization of meaningful empirical analyses, statistical methods, and the development of new conceptual frameworks. The Workshop will assemble a small group of highly skilled experts to seek breakthrough insights, which can be applied to current policy challenges.

Important policy decisions are being made worldwide about information services that promote innovation, knowledge development, social equity and democratic values. These decisions can be improved if informed by empirical data that will assist decision makers in understanding the likely consequences of their policies.

Many numbers are thrown around in the global information policy discourse regarding matters such as “e-readiness”, the “digital divide”, and the “information society”. What do these numbers actually mean? Are they the numbers that matter? Are they loaded for or against certain outcomes? Can the underlying methods and data be transformed into truly useful policy tools? Most of the existing approaches to measurements that affect information policy produce results which are descriptive and comparative (e.g., which nation has more Internet access), which are only useful up to a point. Clearly, what is needed are approaches which are explanatory and predictive, that help understand not only what has happened but also why, and to assist in making predictions about what will happen. This presents significant methodological challenges that must first be guided by theory, and in this field, theory is remarkably lacking.

### *Description*

The Workshop will bring together a group of about twenty experts on information metrology from around the world. They will meet for three days in Washington, D.C., where, during morning and afternoon sessions, they will make presentations, share research, hear guest experts, discuss concrete approaches and new theories, identify problems and challenges, and develop conclusions and a future research agenda. Each participant will write and present an original paper to the group, which will then be the subject of questions and discussion, followed by a final Workshop summary session. Participants will be selected based on their abstracts and their identified ability to make a significant contribution based on their expertise or experience.

### *Date and Location*

DATE: September 22-24, 2009  
PLACE: The New America Foundation  
1899 L Street NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20036

### *Topics*

Proposals should be based on current theoretical or empirical research, and may be from any disciplinary perspective. Subject areas of interest include, but are not limited to the following:

Theory: Specification of objectives; development of theoretical models; identification of testable hypotheses; selection of appropriate methodologies for analysis.

Data: Identification of key indicators; development of consistent data standards; data collection and verification; data access.

Modeling: Development of empirical models; dealing with institutional diversity and complexity; coping with dynamic technological change. Multidimensional visual modeling of large bodies of data.

Application: Formulating answerable questions; Making predictions about outcomes; Analyzing relevant data; Using outcomes to refine theory and hypotheses.

Policy Development: Organization of statistical resources; conversion of results of statistical analysis into policy guidance; incorporation of results in shaping policy or legislation; political use of findings.

### *Submission Deadline*

Submissions are due by April 15, 2009. Submissions should be made to [expwksshopDBIP2009@psu.edu](mailto:expwksshopDBIP2009@psu.edu). Abstracts are not to exceed 500 words. Abstracts should be accompanied by a brief biographical description of the author(s) (no more than two pages). Decisions will be announced by May 29, 2009. Accepted papers will be due on Sept. 1, 2009, and authors are expected to present the accepted submissions.

### *Support Funds*

*Final funding plans are still being developed, but it is expected that some funding will be available to help offset the costs of attendance for accepted papers, with a priority given to international participants.*

*Program Organizers*

- Johannes Bauer, Ph.D., Professor, [Telecommunication, Information Studies, and Media](#), Co-Director, [Quello Center for Telecommunication Management & Law](#), MSU (<https://www.msu.edu/~bauerj/>)
- Sascha Meinrath, Research Director, Wireless Future Program, New America Foundation ([http://www.newamerica.net/people/sascha\\_meinrath](http://www.newamerica.net/people/sascha_meinrath))
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