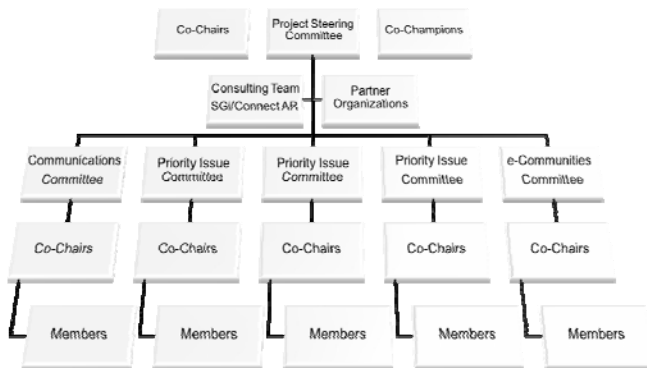


## About DeshaForward

*DeshaForward* is a strategic planning project to create a Comprehensive Community and Economic Development Plan for Desha County. The diagram below depicts the committee structure that will provide oversight, direction, and policy formulation.



In developing this strategic plan, the *DeshaForward* Steering Committee is creating several sub-committees to address priority issues in Desha County. At this time, the e-Community Committee has been created to address high-speed internet access, or broadband, in Desha County.

## DeshaForward's e-Community

**Part of a Statewide Initiative.** Connect Arkansas, a private, non-profit, is implementing a community-based initiative that will link all Arkansans, especially in rural areas, to the internet. On March 28, 2007, Governor Beebe signed the *Connect Arkansas Broadband Act* into law to ensure the creation of a competitive broadband, or *high speed internet*, infrastructure that will not only improve personal lives, but also the economic capabilities and prospects of all Arkansans. In economic development, education, and healthcare, broadband is a key strategic component.

**Our Focus.** To facilitate broadband access across Desha County, the *DeshaForward* e-Community, will work with Connect Arkansas to focus on three major components:

- **Determination of existing broadband infrastructure in Arkansas.** An important step in facilitating access is to create an understanding of local needs. By mapping the state's existing broadband infrastructure, *DeshaForward* will work with Connect Arkansas to provide a level of detail that is currently not available in Arkansas. These maps will show where access is available, and more importantly, where access is not available.
- **Education.** *DeshaForward* will develop a strategic plan for IT, while working with local communities and existing organizations to provide public internet access and computer training.
- **Equipment & Access.** Through the *Breaking Boundaries with Broadband* Program, *DeshaForward* will work with existing community programs and create programs as needed to promote increased internet use and ownership of computer devices.

**High-speed telecommunications is as critical to connect our regional economies as four-lane highways. Businesses increasingly rely on the internet super-highway and need that access to compete worldwide.**

**- Governor Mike Beebe**