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Hon David Cunliffe

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New Digital Strategy Funds Launched

Two pools of funding available under the Digital Strategy were launched today by Information Technology Minister David Cunliffe and Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector Minister Luamanuvao Winnie Laban.

The government has allocated more than \$40 million to two contestable seed funds, the **Broadband Challenge**, and the **Community Partnership Fund**. Expressions of interest for both funds are **called for** from today.

"For the **Digital Strategy** to work for all New Zealanders – a range of communities, local government, businesses and individuals need to be involved.

"All New Zealanders need to share in making the investment because we will all reap the benefits. The launch of these funds today shows the government is committed to fully implementing the Digital Strategy," said David Cunliffe.

"When the Government first released the draft Digital Strategy there was an overwhelming call from New Zealanders for cheaper, faster broadband," he said.

The Broadband Challenge is a \$24 million fund geared towards bringing broadband to those who do not have it and to promote high-speed broadband networks in urban and regional centres.

The \$20.7 million Community Partnership Fund will support regional and community not-for-profit ICT initiatives that provide New Zealanders with the skills, capability and confidence to use ICT.

"Research has shown that significant parts of the population are not getting all the advantages using ICT has to offer. That is a shame."

"The Community Partnership Fund will help address disadvantage. It will make the use of ICT in communities more widespread. This will allow them to use ICT to support their goals and aspirations," Winnie Laban said.

She explained that, the Community Partnership Fund will support community initiatives that:

- Encourage community capacity and capability building;
- Allow communities to gain ict skills;
- Increase confidence in using ict to support their goals; and
- Support information of interest to New Zealand being online

"We are particularly interested in projects that can grow and link with others around New Zealand," said the Ministers.

Expressions of interest in this stage of the funding process for both funds close on 12 December.

Alongside the Community Partnership Fund and the Broadband Challenge the government is also extending the reach of **Project PROBE** with priority for regions where community coverage has been harder to achieve. That \$1.44 million extension will be completed by the end of next year and is applied for through the Broadband Challenge process.

For further details on the criteria and application process please visit: www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz.