

OPEN ACCESS

Q: How can a city ensure their residents will have a choice in selecting an Internet provider?

A: We believe that municipal Wi-Fi deployments should expand consumer options for Internet service. In addition to current options for dial-up, DSL, and cable access, municipal Wi-Fi networks should be open to all reputable ISPs wishing to sell the Wi-Fi service enabled by the network. EarthLink's open access wholesale business plan allows service providers the freedom and flexibility to design products and services for their targeted audiences. These ISPs can capitalize on the infrastructure investment that EarthLink has made to the benefit of all parties involved—especially consumers seeking choice.

EarthLink® has a long history of commitment to open access and multiple ISP initiatives. In fact, EarthLink is the single largest purchaser of wholesale broadband access in the U.S. today. For years, EarthLink has been a leading advocate of the benefits of open access to the U.S. Congress, the F.C.C. and the Supreme Court. The benefits of open access include:

- **Customer choice:** Allowing consumers to choose among several Internet service providers stimulates overall sales conversions and price competition.
- **Consumer need:** By offering consumers more product and provider options, each individual's needs are better satisfied.
- **Reduced churn:** Overall churn on the network is reduced if subscribers switch between products enabled over the same network.
- **Network scale:** Network operators benefit by adding more subscribers to networks at low incremental cost.
- **Access to markets:** Service providers are able to offer products and services otherwise not possible without access to broadband lines.
- **Fair competition:** Avoiding business models with monopolistic characteristics allows governments to address regulatory issues and industry opposition.

The wireless network will provide a standard connectivity platform upon which each service provider can build residential, business, or proprietary products to meet user needs. EarthLink will not attempt to influence the products and services that may be sold over the network, but instead establish parameters for competition through business rules, such as monthly wholesale pricing and non-discriminatory network attributes. EarthLink believes that this approach best allows wholesale service providers to differentiate their services and provides a robust competitive marketplace and more choices for consumers.

For more information about EarthLink Municipal Networks visit: www.earthlink.net/muni