Mr. Barkema: Now we have time for another session of questions from the audience. To enable us to get as many ideas on the table as we possibly can, I’m going to group the questions into groups of two’s or three’s and then present them to our panel. We’ll begin right here, sir.

Beau Beaulieu, Southern Rural Development Center: Demographers are suggesting that over the course of the next 25 to 50 years the greatest growth in rural America will take place among our minority populations, particularly Latinos and African-Americans. And Dr. Marshall, as you talk about human resource development policy, which I think most of us would embrace as being critical, these are the populations who have probably had the most difficult time with regard to the human capital endowments. Do you or Tom see any specific human resource development policy initiatives that would have to be uniquely shaped to address the needs of these particular population groups?

Mr. Barkema: Let’s take another question. Let’s get another question on the table here.

Ron Wilson, Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, Kansas State University: Terry, I appreciate your translating that Latin for us. We have a tough time in that. I’m intrigued in the concept of the electronic distance that was described this morning. I think it’s a really crucial issue for the future of rural America, and I wonder if there are any policy prescriptions that you all might suggest to help us bridge that gap to help deliver greater broadband access in rural America.

Mr. Barkema: Let’s take one more question, right up here.

Robyn Henderson, National Rural Health Association: I guess this is more of a comment and piggybacks on the previous question about the information infrastructure. I was pleased to hear Ray talk about the use of cooperatives in rural areas, not only to bring in telephone services, but certainly the rural electrification process. And I would suggest that as a model also for bringing in infrastructure working either through the electric cooperatives or public power districts, as is the case in some states, as well as the telephone cooperatives. It is a model that has worked well for the last 60 years, and it may be a partial solution or model for the next 60 years.

Mr. Barkema: Thanks for that comment. Well, we have two issues on the table. First of all, a question of whether or not there are specific human resource development issues that might be targeted at the minority population, which is growing very rapidly in some parts of the country, and second, a question of how we can deliver broadband access to rural America. So, Ray, why don’t you tackle the first question?

Mr. Marshall: The answer is, yes, there are things that have been done and can be done to dramatically improve education for minorities in rural America. There are a couple of models that I have
found very useful. One was Jim Comber’s model, developed actually in New Haven, Connecticut. I would say everything that I pointed out about the need for a high-performance school applies to delivery of educational services to minorities.

In fact, I chaired a committee on minority education for the Carnegie Corporation. We put out a report called *Education That Works*, where we dealt with that basic issue. Essentially, I’d put it into two parts. One, minorities need many of the same kinds of things that anybody needs in education. You need to have education to high standards, in particular for the core courses, and our core courses are math, science, language arts, and applied learning. We call it “applied learning” and not “vocational” because too many vocational programs were watered-down programs that assumed that you didn’t need to have academic subjects.

Now, in addition to those things, though, you need to understand the needs and culture of the people you’re dealing with to be able to deliver education services. If you don’t do that, then you violate one of the fundamental principles of learning. Learning is based on students, it’s based on expectations, and it’s based on their belief that you expect them to learn, and that you understand where they are.

Jim Comber called this, in dealing with African-American students, “cultural discontinuity.” He said that you’re never going to be able to reach those students until you overcome cultural discontinuity. It means even though the teachers were black and the students were black, they were from vastly different cultures. So, the teachers couldn’t understand the students and the students couldn’t understand the teachers. And bringing the parents and the community into the school, focusing on student achievement, the model that Jim Comber started has been able to take some of the worst schools in New Haven and make them some of the best. When you ask him what he did, he will say we did two main things besides overcoming cultural discontinuity.

In many of these communities, you’ve got to change attitudes. Well, what does that mean? It means that many young people are programmed for failure from birth. Nobody believes they can learn. Their parents don’t believe they can learn to high standards. That’s one of the reasons for this experimental program in Port O’Connor, is the teachers didn’t believe they could learn, and the kids didn’t believe they could learn. And cognitive science tells us that when you get that combination no learning will take place.

So, in order to really give a good education, you’ve got to meet the core standards, but then how you do it—the curriculum, the teaching approaches—has to be geared to the community that you’re trying to deal with.

Mr. Barkema: Thank you, Ray. Let’s move on to the second important issue that has been a recurring theme this morning, and that is, how do we bridge the digital divide in rural America, how do we provide broadband access? Tom, why don’t you tackle that first, and then other panelists, feel free to join in.

Mr. Johnson: One of the advantages of lumping the questions together is that it increases the chance that at least one of them I can answer. I don’t have an answer for this particular question on the electronic distance.

I think that it would be a mistake, a very serious mistake from the national point of view, to take a step that reduces the rate at which information technology is introduced and innovated in the country as a whole. And, it would be very easy to create a regulatory environment, very stringent requirements that would reduce the rate at which we innovated in this area.

But, I think, on the other hand we cannot depend entirely on the private sector because of the very important economic imperatives of scale and critical mass to bring information and communication...
technology to rural areas faster. So, it’s going to take cooperatives, it’s going to take partnerships between the public sector and the private sector. Beyond that, I’m afraid I don’t have specific answers.

Ms. Jorde: We’re very fortunate, even as remote as we are in North Dakota, that we’ve had fiber optics for a long time. Our bank has one branch and we have a T1 line that runs between both locations. All 25 of our employees and insurance agency staff have computers that are online through DSL access to the Internet all the time. But, we pay over $4,000 a month as a $32 million bank for telecommunication services. For the T1, we’re paying 15 cents a minute for long distance service, and we are bearing the costs—probably more than our fair share of the costs—of the development of those types of that access. We’re fortunate that we have it, but we’re paying too much for it, and we’re subsidizing the rest of the community that really needs to be online.

Mr. Barkema: Ladies and gentlemen, I’m afraid that will have to be the last word for this morning’s session.

As you are well aware, our luncheon speaker today is Chairman Alan Greenspan of the Federal Reserve. Chairman Greenspan will be joining us by live video, precisely at 12 noon today. And, we have no leeway whatsoever in that time schedule. That’s the way satellite linkups work. Our luncheon is in the room immediately behind me. So, I would ask you to assemble in the luncheon room no later than 12 noon for Chairman Greenspan’s address. The luncheon’s main course will be served immediately following Chairman Greenspan’s remarks.

Thank you very much for your excellent engagement and participation in this morning’s discussion. We are recessed.