

Policy framework needed for connectivity

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Funding for enhanced broadband connectivity throughout the country will only be allocated once a policy framework has been agreed, the National Treasury says.



In its 2013 budget review, released on Wednesday (27 February), National Treasury said public-sector investments by Broadband Infraco and national signal distributor Sentech were currently focused on service provision in rural areas and institutions such as schools libraries and clinics.

Cape Town, eThekweni and Johannesburg have also been investing in their own urban networks.

The budget review stated the private sector had made substantial investments in broadband connectivity, concentrated in mobile networks and in overland and undersea fibre-optic cable infrastructure.

Average Internet connection speeds increased by 32% to 3.1 MBps between October 2011 and October 2012.

"The increase in broadband capacity means that user charges have fallen somewhat, but remain high by global standards," the budget review said.

The 2011 Census results show that 64.8% of households do not have access to the Internet and that most of those with access are reliant on cellphone connections.

"Access to Internet is still hampered by relatively high costs and under-supply of broadband infrastructure across the country," the review said.

The National Treasury stated that an improved regulatory environment would allow for expanded access and lower costs across the sector.