

the use of TeleLearning. Industry Canada recently financed the creation of the TeleLearning Network of Centres of Excellence to bring together Canadian expertise from across the country to enhance our capabilities in distance education. The work of the network is to be used to enhance the capabilities of Canadian computer based training firms.

Distance learning can be a significant part of the solution to the ongoing problem of regional disparities and high unemployment rates in many of Canada's regions. It provides residents with access to quality training and a wide ranging selection of training materials and resources. It allows them to develop the skills necessary to function in today's knowledge-based economy, and to have access to job opportunities never before available.

Industry Canada's Community Access Program (CAP) provides Internet access for rural and remote areas in Canada. These access points offer NMLM companies opportunities to sell training in areas that traditionally have been ignored because of their small size and distant geographic location.

The Distance Education and Training Network of the Americas launched by Intelsat offers free satellite transmission time for one year to educational and medical institutions throughout the Americas. After the first year, Intelsat plans to charge for time, but less than an institution would have to pay on the satellite "spot" market, where users must buy satellite time if they do not buy or rent it for a long term. Canadian SMEs in NMLM can use this program to test a new distribution system at a lower risk. At the same time, this program will allow their foreign competitors to try to enter the Canadian market or other markets served by Canadian companies.

Training providers should be able to capitalise on opportunities being created by new initiatives such as HRDC's Office of Learning Technologies, which was launched in 1996. Its mission is to work with partners to expand innovative learning opportunities through technologies. The office seeks to promote effective use of learning technologies, support assessment, research and testing related to the use of these technologies, and increase the availability and sharing of knowledge and quality information about learning technologies.