BORDER TO BORDER

BROADBAND

ADVANCING THE VISION

Greysolon Ballroom – Duluth, Minnesota
September 13-14, 2016

#mnbroadband

Greetings!

It is exciting to welcome you to the 2016 conference, *Border to Border Broadband: Advancing the Vision* - Minnesota's annual gathering of broadband champions. This year's conference is sponsored by Blandin Foundation with support from DEED's Office of Broadband Development.

It has been 25 years since Tim Berners-Lee unveiled a design for an idea he dubbed the "World Wide Web" - a networked information space connected to the Internet. And it has been 25 years since a group of visionary Minnesotans came together to incorporate MRNet – an endeavor to help our state's schools, libraries, government and businesses get to the Internet, then a 56K connection to the NSFNet at the University of Illinois at Champaign Urbana.

Much has changed in the world since 1989, but some principles endure. Like the simple truth that each of us and all of us together have the responsibility and opportunity to create a future our grandchildren will thank us for. Just as we are grateful for the hard work and public minded-ness of the Minnesotans on whose shoulders we stand today.

During the conference we will celebrate the creativity and collaboration of those MRNet pioneers, hear from young people, check-in on our collective efforts to achieve the Broadband Vision we set for the state at last year's conference, and be re-inspired for the work still ahead to ensure that benefits of broadband are available to all Minnesotans.

Thanks for coming to Connect. Learn. Recharge.

Leadership: You gotta do it yourself, but you can't do it alone.

~Bernadine Joselyn
Director of Public Policy & Engagement, Blandin Foundation
On behalf of the conference planning team

Agenda at a Glance

Tuesday, September 13

Moorish Room

4:00   **Registration Opens**

5:00   **Reception**

6:00   **Dinner**

7:00   **Evening Program: Voices from the Present, Visions of the Future**

8:00   **Social Time**

9:00   **Adjourn**

Wednesday, September 14

Ballroom

8:00   **Breakfast Buffet**

9:00   **Welcome** by Mayor Emily Larson, City of Duluth

9:15   **Opening Remarks** by Bernadine Joselyn, Blandin Foundation

9:35   **The Vision is in the Room Part I**

10:00   **Advancing the Vision – Update from the Office of Broadband Development** by Danna MacKenzie and Jane Leonard, Minnesota Office of Broadband Development

10:15   **Break**

10:30   **Advancing the Vision – Community Success Stories** Learning Stations featuring projects funded through the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program:

- Hiawatha Broadband Communications: *Public-Private Partnership with Trusted Local Partner*
- MVTV Wireless: *MVTV Improves Wireless Broadband*
- Northeast Service Cooperative: *Leveraging a Public Sector Middle Mile Network to Spur Last Mile Broadband Deployment*
- Paul Bunyan Communications: *Using Data, Social Media and Community Champions to Demonstrate the Market*
- Rock County Broadband Alliance: *The Right Time, The Right Partner*
- RS Fiber Cooperative: *Creating a New Broadband Cooperative to Serve Rural Counties and Cities*

11:45   **Lunch**

Honoring and Learning from our Past celebrating the 25th anniversary of MRNet

1:00   **Navigating Challenging Broadband Decisions** panel moderated by Bill Coleman, Community Technology Advisors, with:

- Valerie Halvorson, City of Madison
- Scott Higgins, Martin County
- Nancy Hoffman, Chisago County HRA-EDA
- Tom Johnson, Nobles County

2:00   **Break**

2:15   **The Role of Co-ops in Advancing the Vision** panel moderated by Bernadine Joselyn, Blandin Foundation, with:

- Stacy Cluff, Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative
- Robin Doege, Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative
- Kent Hedstrom, Runestone Telecom Association
- Kristi Westbrock, CTC-Consolidated Telecommunications Company

3:00   **Local Providers – Wired to Empower Rural Communities** keynote address by Gary Johnson, Paul Bunyan Communications

3:45   **The Vision is in the Room Part II**

4:00   **Closing Comments** by Bernadine Joselyn, Blandin Foundation

4:15   **Adjourn**

Program

Tuesday, September 13

Moorish Room

4:00 **Registration Opens**

5:00 **Reception**

6:00 **Dinner**

7:00 **Voices from the Present, Visions of the Future**
Bernadine Joselyn, Director, Public Policy & Engagement, Blandin Foundation

Features videos from students (middle school though college) expressing their thoughts on broadband. What do they do online now? What are their thoughts for the future? Would they live in a community with limited broadband?

Bernadine Joselyn directs Blandin Foundation's Public Policy and Engagement program, leading efforts to catalyze community action that advances community goals. A native of Minnesota, Bernadine spent the first 15 years of her professional life in Soviet (and then post-Soviet) Affairs. She served seven years as a diplomat with the U.S. Department of State, where — after an initial tour in New Delhi, India — she was assigned to Moscow, Russia, and Washington, D.C., focused on the U.S.-Soviet/Russian relationship. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Bernadine left the diplomatic corps to work on international academic and cultural exchange programs with the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) and subsequently the Eurasia Foundation, overseeing a $5 million annual grant program.

In 2000 Bernadine returned to Minnesota to complete a master's degree in public affairs at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute. She also earned a master's degree in international security policy and certificate in advanced studies from Columbia University.

Wednesday, September 14

Ballroom
8:00   Breakfast Buffet

9:00   Welcome
Mayor Emily Larson, City of Duluth

Emily Larson was elected Mayor of Duluth in November 2015 with 72% of the vote. She was inaugurated on January 4th, 2016.

Emily was President of the Duluth City Council prior to becoming Mayor. She served as a Commissioner on the Duluth Economic Development Authority, a board member of the Great Lakes Aquarium, Visit Duluth, and the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission, and was the Council conduit to Parks and Libraries.

Emily has an undergraduate degree from the College of St. Scholastica and a Master's Degree from the University of Minnesota Duluth. She is also a graduate of Intermedia Arts Creative Community Leadership Institute and served on the Advisory Committee that developed the Duluth Energy Efficiency Program (DEEP).

She formerly owned a small business that specialized in boosting the effectiveness of non-profit organizations. Client lists and projects include Duluth Local Initiatives Support Corporation and its "Duluth at Work" economic development model, United Way of Greater Duluth's Delegation on Educational Outcomes, and the co-development of an evaluation tool to measure the effectiveness of the recently opened Steve O'Neil Apartments – the first supportive housing model of its kind for homeless families in Minnesota.

Emily is an active trail runner and full-time admirer of Lake Superior. She is married to architect Doug Zaun, Co-Owner of Wagner Zaun Architecture. Together they have two sons.

8:30   Opening Remarks
Bernadine Joselyn, Director, Public Policy & Engagement, Blandin Foundation

9:35
The Vision is in the Room Part I
Attendees connect with and gain insight into the talents and resources present amongst fellow participants.

10:00

Advancing the Vision – Update from the Office of Broadband Development
Danna MacKenzie, Director and Jane Leonard, Grants Specialist, Minnesota Office of Broadband Development

Danna MacKenzie heads the Minnesota Office of Broadband Development, which is housed within the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development. As Executive Director, Danna leads broadband strategy and program development efforts within the state, and provides support to both the Governor's Subcabinet on Broadband and the Governor's Task Force on Broadband. A large part of what the Office is responsible for is administering the state's Border-to-Border Broadband Infrastructure Incentive fund that is now in its third year.

Prior to joining the Office, Danna served as technology director for Cook County, Minnesota for 17 years. One of the roles she held there was administrator for the Cook County Broadband Commission, which was instrumental in bringing fiber to the home to rural Cook County. During these years she also served as a member of the Blandin Foundation Broadband Strategy Board, focusing on connectivity and broadband use throughout rural Minnesota.

Jane Leonard is the Grants Administrator for the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grants program at the Minnesota Office of Broadband Development in the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development, coordinating various aspects of the grant-making process and grant administration. In previous state roles with the MN Department of Administration and the MN Office of Technology, Jane co-led efforts in the state and nationally in the 1990s to bring advanced information and communications technology across Minnesota and across rural America. She also co-led community technology development for private companies including MRNet and Onvoy.

In the 2000s, Jane directed the Minnesota Rural Partners organization for several years and was the Executive Director of the Minnesota Statehood Sesquicentennial Commission in 2007-2008. She was also senior manager co-leading the Bush Foundation's leadership and community action programs and has served for many years as an independent grant reviewer and consultant for foundations, non-profits, and the federal government on community, economic, and rural development initiatives. Jane is a past-president of the Community Development Society (CDS) and most recently served on the Local Host and Program Planning Committees for the 2016 CDS and International Association for Community Development annual conference, held in Minnesota this summer.

10:15   Break

10:30

Advancing the Vision – Community Success Stories

Learning Stations featuring projects funded through the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program. *See page 14 of the program for Learning Station Profiles.*

> **Session I:** 10:30-10:50
> **Session II:** 10:55-11:15
> **Session III:** 11:20-11:40

Project	Location
Hiawatha Broadband Communications: *Public-Private Partnership with Trusted Local Partner*	West Wing Lounge
MVTV Wireless: *MVTV Improves Wireless Broadband*	The Living Room
Northeast Service Cooperative: *Leveraging a Public Sector Middle Mile Network to Spur Last Mile Broadband Deployment*	South Ballroom (windows)
Paul Bunyan Communications: *Using Data, Social Media and Community Champions to Demonstrate the Market*	The Quarters
Rock County Broadband Alliance: *The Right Time, The Right Partner*	The Suite
RS Fiber Cooperative: *Creating a New Broadband Cooperative to Serve Rural Counties and Cities*	North Ballroom (stage)

11:45   Lunch

Honoring and Learning from our Past

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of MRNet

1:00
Navigating Challenging Broadband Decisions
Moderated by Bill Coleman, Community Technology Advisors
Speakers: Valerie Halvorson, City of Madison
          Scott Higgins, Martin County
          Nancy Hoffman, Chisago County HRA-EDA
          Tom Johnson, Nobles County

As more modern broadband networks are deployed across Minnesota, elected officials in counties without high-quality, ubiquitous broadband are feeling the pressure from residents and businesses to make it happen. At the same time, the availability of DEED grants and CAF2 funding and changes in technology are making the landscape all the more uncertain.

Local broadband champions discuss their decision making process around key questions in a dynamic broadband deployment landscape.

Bill Coleman helps communities make the connection between telecommunications and economic development. As owner of Community Technology Advisors since 2000, he assists community, foundation and corporate clients to develop and implement programs of broadband policy, infrastructure and market development. Earlier in his career, Bill managed Onvoy's (now Zayo) Integrated Community Network rural market development efforts and staffed the MN Department of Trade and Economic Development Star City and Business Retention and Expansion Programs.

Bill participates in his own community by leading TEDxMahtomedi, serving on the board of the nonprofit PCs for People and as a member of the Mahtomedi Community Education Advisory Council.

Valerie Halvorson is the City Manager for Madison, a community of 1,500 residents in west central Minnesota, since November 2015. With an accounting degree from the U of M's Carlson School of Management, Halvorson worked in county government – most recently with Lac qui Parle County as a Fiscal Officer for 14 years. Her journey with broadband began at her first council meeting, where the city contracted with the Upper Minnesota Regional Development Commission to determine the number of households and businesses interested in better broadband in Madison. The Broadband committee has worked to determine the goal, educate and survey residents, and explore models to bring Fiber to the Premises access to Madison.

Scott Higgins has served in county government for over 21 years, and has been the County Coordinator for Martin County, Minnesota since 1999. His duties include county administration, Personnel Director and is the staff person for the Martin County Economic Development Authority. Scott graduated from the University of Iowa, and served four years (1995-1998) with the County Board of Supervisors of Warren County, Iowa.

Nancy Hoffman has been in the Economic Development field for over 20 years, working with rural and suburban cities, regional development commissions and counties. Since July 2012, she has served as the Executive Director for the Chisago County HRA/EDA. Nancy has been actively involved in statewide economic development associations including as past Chair of the Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers (MAPCED) and past board member and Legislative Committee member of the

Economic Development Association of Minnesota (EDAM). She holds a master's degree in Urban and Regional Studies from Mankato State University. Nancy sits on the Blandin Broadband Strategy Advisory Committee and the Workforce Investment Board of the Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Council.

Tom Johnson is the County Administrator for Nobles County and Chairs NEON (Nobles Economic Opportunity Network), a group representing the county, school districts, townships, cities, public utilities, watersheds and economic development within Nobles County. NEON was formed in 2013 and quickly defined broadband as a top priority. In 2015 Nobles County became a Blandin Broadband Community, and Tom provides leadership to this work.

Tom has deep experience in leadership, project planning and management, continuous improvement and is a strong advocate of local government and cross-sector collaboration. He sits on several boards and advisory committees in Nobles County including the Worthington Regional Economic Development Corporation, Joint Powers Transit Authority, Rock-Nobles Community Corrections Executive Board, and serves as Chair of the Revolving Loan Fund Committee and the Emergency Management Planning Advisory Committee.

Tom earned an undergraduate degree in Industrial Engineering from the University of Minnesota - Duluth and a master's degree in Manufacturing Engineering from the University of St. Thomas.

2:00   Break

2:15
A Broadband Vision for Minnesota Session II: Bringing our Vision to Life
Moderated by Bernadine Joselyn, Blandin Foundation
Speakers: Stacy Cluff, Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative
                    Robin Doege, Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative
                    Kent Hedstrom, Runestone Telecom Association
                    Kristi Westbrock, CTC-Consolidated Telecommunications Company

When rural Minnesotans first needed electricity and then telephones, cooperatives formed to meet the challenge. Today, we are seeing an expansion in the role that cooperatives are playing in meeting rural broadband needs. Leaders from four rural cooperatives will share how they are dealing with the demand for better broadband from their current members and neighboring communities. Learn how these cooperatives make their decisions about partnerships and new markets

Stacy Cluff is the Information Systems & Technology Administrator at Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative (MLEC), and has been with the member-owned cooperative for eighteen years. Her primary job functions are providing IT and network support at the cooperative. Stacy also oversees the cooperative's Internet business; which currently offers satellite and fixed wireless. She is committed to improving Internet options to people living in the rural areas and has been instrumental in developing and exploring new opportunities for the cooperative. Stacy is a member of the Blandin Foundation's Broadband Strategy Board.

Robin Doege Robin is the President/CEO of Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative (TWEC) headquartered in Wadena, MN. Robin has been CEO at TWEC for 6 ½ years. Prior to TWEC Robin worked in operations and training for a large Minnesota electric cooperative and an Ohio investor-utility. Robin also serves on several other local business and economic development boards.

Robin has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agricultural Business Administration from the University of Minnesota and an MBA from the University of St. Thomas.

In 2016 TWEC commissioned a broadband feasibility study for broadband for the unserved and underserved areas in TWEC's service area. TWEC, and its board of directors, is committed to supporting robust internet for residents in TWEC's service area.

Kent Hedstrom is the General Manager of Runestone Telecom Association located in Hoffman, MN. Kent began working at Runestone in 1987 during summer breaks while he was still in college. He began working there full-time in 1992. Kent is dedicated to ensuring Runestone Telecom cooperative members, and other rural residents have access to broadband connectivity to ensure they have equitable resources to enhance educational opportunities and can more fairly compete in the 21st century market place. He has an Associate in Arts degree from Fergus Falls Community College and graduated from the Telecommunication Electronics program at Wadena Technical College. He and his wife Gail currently live in Elbow Lake and they have two adult children.

Kristi Westbrock is the Chief Operating Officer at Consolidated Telephone Company (CTC) and has been with the Cooperative since 2007. She has over 18 years of experience in the telecommunications industry and has a strong background in Human Resources, Sales and Marketing and Business Operations, Strategic Planning and Product Development. Kristi also has her SPHR (Senior Professional of Human Resources) and SCP (Senior Certified Professional) accreditations and was named the Lakes Area Human Resources Professional in 2006. Kristi has a passion for organizational management, effective communication and creating unique work environments/experiences while driving business revenues. Ms. Westbrock has been integral in the Cooperative development and partnerships with new opportunities at CTC in the past five years.

Kristi has served on numerous local and state committees and board of directors within the industry as well as the Brainerd Lakes community including the United Way of Cass and Crow Wing County, Lakes Area Human Resources Association, Brainerd Lakes Area Chambers of Commerce, Lakes Area Safety/Health Organization, Minnesota Telecom Alliance, Brainerd/Baxter Business Council, Society of Human Resources, and First Lutheran Church. She also serves on the Blandin Foundation's Broadband Strategy Board.

3:00

Local Providers – Wired to Empower Rural Communities
Keynote Address by Gary Johnson, Paul Bunyan Communications
Introduced by Danna MacKenzie, Director, Minnesota Office of Broadband Development

Expanding broadband to rural areas requires innovation, partnerships, and a progressive provider who has a passion for delivering these important services. Gary will discuss one such provider, Paul Bunyan Communications, his perspective on rural broadband, and how local providers are uniquely invested in the success of rural communities.

Gary Johnson is CEO of Paul Bunyan Communications, a position he accepted in 2012. Originally hired as a computer programmer, Gary has served in various capacities throughout his 28 years with the cooperative, focusing on Internet, digital video, and other broadband technologies.

Paul Bunyan Communications has received substantial industry and media attention due to their aggressive rollout of one of the nation's largest gigabit networks. Known as the GigaZone, the advanced all-fiber network delivers gigabit upload and download speeds across a rapidly growing portion of their 5,000 square mile rural service area.

3:45

The Vision is in the Room Part I
Concluding activity reveals new opportunities and ideas

4:00 Closing Comments
Bernadine Joselyn, Director, Public Policy & Engagement, Blandin Foundation
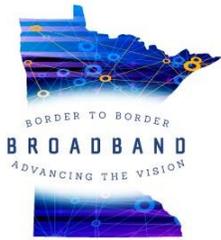
4:15 Adjourn

Advancing the Vision Learning Stations

Community Success Stories featuring projects funded through the Office of Broadband Development

"Public–Private Partnership with Trusted Local Partner"

Grantee: Hiawatha Broadband Communications
Project: Winona County Whitewater Area

Grant Award: $247,000   Total project cost: $773,320

Description: Build out broadband infrastructure in Winona County, in Elba and Norton Townships including Whitewater State Park to provide state speed goal broadband service and above to 418 passings including 135 households, 70 businesses and 5 community anchor institutions. County and Provider-led with extensive community engagement, including schools, health care, businesses, cities and county, townships, and residents.

Key Partners: Hiawatha Broadband Communications and Winona County. 68 percent local match provided by HBC and Winona County.

Community and Economic Development Impact: This area contains Whitewater State Park with an annual visitorship of about 300,000 people, Whitewater Wildlife Management Area, Crystal Springs Fish Hatchery, 75 farm operations, 32 commercial and industrial businesses, a school and numerous public institutions. The area has had an active group of citizens advocating for improved broadband so that businesses can grow and prosper, rural students can have improved educational opportunity, health care is more accessible, home values are supported, and public safety is improved. It also positions the area to compete for people and economic opportunities coming with the Destination Medical Center and growth occurring in the 7 Rivers Region in southeastern MN.

Advice for people preparing a project application: HBC has found that partnering on an application strengthens the impact on underserved rural areas. Our preference has been to partner with a county and use their public relationships along with our private sector connections to fully impact broadband development.

Key Learnings: The expansion of fiber networks into unserved and underserved areas always creates more opportunity. Quality of life improvements through fiber optic broadband availability always creates demand from the areas contiguous with existing FTTH networks.

For more information:

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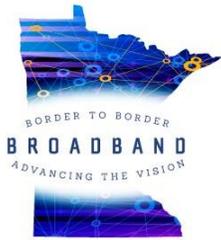
Advancing the Vision Learning Stations

Community Success Stories featuring projects funded through the Office of Broadband Development

"MVTV Improves Wireless Broadband"

Grantee: MVTV Wireless
Project: Middle Mile

Grant award: $808,080   Total project cost: $1.8 million

Description: This project is a Middle Mile broadband infrastructure buildout to upgrade backhaul capacity between site locations within 20 southwestern Minnesota counties that will improve services to state speed goal levels and above to 6,000 households and businesses that are current MVTV customers, with leverage possibility of 29,000 more. The counties are: Blue Earth, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Meeker, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Rock, Redwood, Renville, Sibley Swift, Watonwan, and Yellow Medicine. In conjunction with existing and identified fiber points of presence, MVTV will enhance wireless backhaul aggregation links in select areas. The project deployment consists of 58 11GHz licensed radio links. Radio full duplex capacity will reach a maximum scalable throughput in excess of 1Gbps download and 1Gbps upload.

Key Partners: As a non-profit member owned cooperative, MVTV Wireless understands the value of local and regional collaboration. By working with private and non-profit businesses, local government, service groups, regional EDCs, chambers, U of M Extension, regional Blandin and DEED Grant recipient steering committees, we have been able to identify unserved and under-served communities for maximum impact. This support is made evident by the hundreds of letters of support we received when submitting the grant request.

PCs For People - MVTV Wireless strives to not only provide a service, but to also improve our member's way of life. By offering a low-income plan, with NO expiration date, recipients have access to broadband service that fits within a managed budget.

Community and Economic Development Impact: Agricultural data usage is exploding nationally and very apparent in MVTVs service area, from drone services, GPS-based millimeter farming to machine-to-machine data transfer. This broadband investment will improve broadband access and speeds for more than 6,000 rural residents, which includes 3,000 current farm-based businesses, across a nearly 30,000 square mile footprint.

Advice for people preparing a project application: Collaboration is KEY! By aligning yourselves with community broadband centric projects, everyone succeeds.

Key Learnings: Stay focused on the outcomes envisioned when preparing the application. The Border-to-Border Grant program presents an opportunity to develop and deploy network infrastructure in a rapidly accelerated timeframe. Make the most of those opportunities in conjunction with your ongoing operations.


For more information:

MVTV Wireless   For information on community events, contact Market Development:
http://www.mvtvwireless.com/   Pam Rosenau - 320.444.7544 or
Phone: 320.564.4807   Julie Foote - 507.360.9651

Subscribe to the MVTV Wireless Blog - http://www.mvtvwireless.com/news/
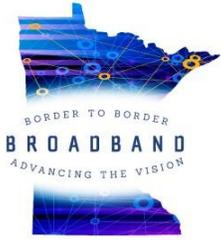
"Leveraging a Public Sector Middle Mile Network to Spur Last Mile Broadband Deployment"

Grantee: Northeast Service Cooperative – Frontier Communications Corp.
Project: Border to Border Phase I

Grant Award: $1.96 million   Total project cost: $4.35 million.

Description: This project utilizes Northeast Service Cooperative's Northeast Fiber Network to provide middle mile fiber to Frontier Communications that will impact at least 877 households. It will also provide direct connectivity to rural town halls and fire halls across St. Louis County and within the IRRRB service area. There will be around 70 miles of new fiber in St. Louis County.

Key Partners: DEED, IRRRB, NESC, Frontier

Community and Economic Development Impact: This project expands broadband into rural unserved and underserved regions of Northeast Minnesota. There will be service to more than 877 homes and businesses in St. Louis County, including areas in and around the townships of Alborn, Breitung, Crane Lake, Culver, Eagles Nest, Elmer, and Greenwood. Town halls and fire departments will connect to the project enabling wireless deployment, voting and polling opportunities, improved emergency service connectivity and public safety efforts, a gathering point for communications, access to application for filing required reports, and a basis for future build out.

Advice for people preparing a project application: Identify partners, public institutions, businesses, households, educational entities, and community organizations that can work together to define goals and achieve them. Utilize the rich fiber resources currently in place, such as the existing fiber optic backbone in Northeastern Minnesota. Generate support from community leaders and keep the community involved and updated on the project. Provide education on the importance and impact of broadband in the region on the front end and also continue future education as to economic development and community growth opportunities it provides. Gather stories of those needing broadband for business growth and development, work at home jobs, access to education for rural students, rural telemedicine, applications for jobs, and day-to-day living. Also, highlight the significance of broadband for retaining and attracting people to our region.

Key Learnings: It's important to keep the message going and fresh about the significance of broadband, educate leaders and the community, and generate support. Expanding broadband in rural areas can be a challenge with the expensive cost of fiber. Working together, extensive planning and forming good relationships can be key in implementing these type of projects.

For more information:

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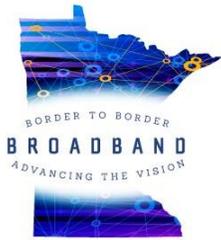
Advancing the Vision Learning Stations

Community Success Stories featuring projects funded through the Office of Broadband Development

"Using Data, Social Media and Community Champions to Demonstrate the Market"

Grantee: Paul Bunyan Communications
Project: Central Itasca County Fiber

Grant Award: $1.98 million   Total Project Cost: $5.52 million

Description: Build out broadband infrastructure in Itasca County, in portions of Balsam, Lawrence, Nashwauk Townships, and the former Iron Range Township that is now located within the City of Taconite, to provide state speed goal broadband service and above to a minimum of 1193 households, 53 businesses and 5 community anchor institutions.

Key Partners: Paul Bunyan Communications, IRRRB and Itasca County (together provided a 64 percent local match), with support from all sectors of the communities and residents.

Community and Economic Development Impact: The proposed project area is home to an estimated 3,500 people and approximately 100 small businesses. Businesses include restaurants, resorts, retailers, health care, professional service providers, home-based ventures, and construction and landscape companies, all economic engines that make a rural way of life possible. The broadband project investments will open up new markets, provide new options for training and education of employees, increase opportunities for sales and marketing, and deliver a new world of business-related resources. In addition, it will improve the region's viability and attractiveness to telecommuters, freelancers, and others who are dependent on technology and the Internet for work.

It will also help maintain and improve health care resources, such as the Bigfork Valley health system which maintains an outreach clinic in Balsam Township. Currently, the clinic uses a cell phone hot spot which doesn't allow the clinic to fully utilize electronic medical records, electronically share files between sites, or access online medical databases and resources. Most tele-medicine services are completely unusable with the existing technology at the clinic. The lack of broadband access seriously threatens the long-term viability of this rural clinic.

Advice for people preparing a project application / Key Learnings:
1) Get Data. Work with your community champions to get as much data as possible. Who wants service? Where are they located? How much are they willing to pay for service? How much for activation?
    · Survey. Online / Mail / In-person   · Community Champions
    · Local/Regional Economic Development Authorities
2) Map & Package the Data
    · Identify potential customers
    · Suggest areas that make sense to your provider
3) Recognize that you may only be able to convince a provider to build to a small area
    · Don't let relationships or politics break your project if people need to be left out
    · Encourage your provider to build the network for future expansion
4) Identify non-monetary items that may be valued by your provider(s).
5) Offer to help your provider(s) with grant applications.
    · You know your community, get their support

For more information: Steve Howard, Information Technology & Development Manager showard@paulbunyan.net
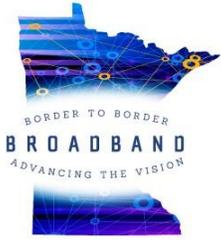
Advancing the Vision Learning Stations

Community Success Stories featuring projects funded through the Office of Broadband Development

"The Right Time, The Right Partner"

Grantee: Rock County Broadband Alliance (RCBA)
Project: FTTP Project Communications

Grant Award: $5 million   Total project cost: $14.85 million

Description: Provide fiber to the home for unserved and underserved areas, approximately 600 miles of fiber.

Key Partners: Alliance Communications (telephone coop), State of MN and Rock County.

Community and Economic Development Impact: Service to 1,261 homes and farms, 68 businesses, and 21 community institutions in Rock County.

Advice for people preparing a project application: Meet with any and all potential partners to see who may provide the best fit/opportunity for your project.

Key Learnings: Be tenacious!! Continue to meet with potential partners and explore funding opportunities until you are successful. Determine what your local unit of government is prepared to commit? Know what assistance you can offer to a potential partner.

For more information:

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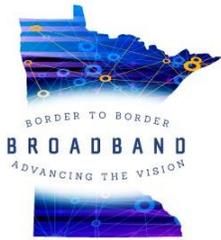
Advancing the Vision Learning Stations

Community Success Stories featuring projects funded through the Office of Broadband Development

"Creating a New Broadband Cooperative to Serve Rural Counties and Cities"

Grantee: RS Fiber Cooperative
Project: FTTH Project

Grant Award: $1 million   Total project cost: $3.32 million

Description: RS Fiber Cooperative is a community driven effort to deliver up to gig-a-bit symmetrical fiber-optic connections to Sibley County and portions of Renville, Nicollet, and McLeod Counties. The project will bring fiber-optic Internet, Video, and Phone services to ten cities and seventeen townships. The RS Fiber mission is: "To provide reliable advanced communication services with superior customer care that enhances communities, economic development, healthcare, education and public safety."

Key Partners: Key partners include Hiawatha Broadband Communications, the RS Fiber Joint Powers Board and the RS Fiber Cooperative.

Community and Economic Development Impact: Service to 62 unserved and 536 underserved locations in Sibley and Renville counties. The project is part of a larger cooperative project estimated at $50 million that will upgrade broadband services to up to 7,500 homes, businesses and other locations in the region.

Advice for people preparing a project application: Do your homework. Find willing partners. Be able to show community support for the project. Have a vision in mind for your project that will benefit people, businesses and institutions in your project area. Listen to the naysayers but don't dwell on them. Be sincere and forthcoming as you move your project forward. Remember, the goal is to make a positive difference.

Key Learnings: Be realistic with your plans and projections and specific with your answers. Congregate and collaborate with your partners. There is strength in numbers. Letters of support can add value to your application. There can also be an advantage if your application is part of a larger project.

Point out the benefits of your application but acknowledge the risks. Be upfront with risk because everything has risk. Sometimes there is more risk to a community by doing nothing. Status quo can be the wrong direction.

For more information:

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Resources

Conference Web Page http://tinyurl.com/hvxzefc or scan the QR code→

Conference materials will be archived and shared on the conference web page.

View the *Border to Border Broadband* Conference **Social Media Wall**. Visit www.mnbroadbandtalk.com or scan the QR code→

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Blandin Foundation stands with rural Minnesota communities as they imagine and claim ambitious, vibrant futures. It is one of only a handful of foundations in the U.S. focused exclusively on rural communities and the largest rural-based private foundation in Minnesota.

Blandin Foundation believes that encouraging the use of broadband is a critical component for increasing the technological vitality of Minnesota's rural communities. The Blandin Community Broadband Program works in partnership with others to increase awareness about the value of broadband; increase business and residential use of broadband in rural communities; and increase public and private investment in rural broadband capacity. Learn more at http://broadband.blandinfoundation.org.

With support from:

The Office of Broadband Development at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (MN DEED) is the central broadband planning agency for the state. The office advises policy-makers on broadband related issues; measures and monitors broadband access state-wide, including producing maps showing areas with and without access; administers the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program; tracks connectivity needs of community anchor institutions such as K-12 schools, libraries, and healthcare providers; helps to identify and remove barriers to broadband deployment; surveys digital literacy and inclusion issues and opportunities; monitors federal policies and programs that impact Minnesota; acts as a clearinghouse for information on broadband funding sources and other resources, works with communities to help find solutions to their identified gaps, and provides administrative support to the Governor's Task Force on Broadband. http://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/