

Governor-Elect Tim Walz  
321 State Capitol  
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155



Dear Governor-Elect Walz:

The Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition would like to extend our sincere congratulations on your election! We are excited to begin working with you and your forthcoming administration on important issues like broadband access and funding. As you know, Minnesota has made progress toward providing affordable, world-class broadband internet access to its citizens over the past four years. Our intention is to build on that progress by partnering with you and the Legislature to ensure the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant program is fully funded—among other legislative priorities—and every Minnesotan has access to this crucial service.

On behalf of our more than 70 members, the Rural Broadband Coalition presents our 2019 Legislative Priorities for your review and consideration. Our coalition represents a broad cross-sector of statewide and community interests: education, agriculture, main street businesses, manufacturing, health care, and more. We strongly urge you to consider the following priorities as you develop and adopt recommendations and plans for your budget.

- 1. Base Funding for the Border-to-Border Broadband Fund:** The grant program is essential to reaching the state broadband goals and allowing providers to extend and improve networks in the hardest to reach places in Minnesota. This program went unfunded for fiscal year 2019, and there remain significant portions of Minnesota, especially low-density rural areas, that continue to lack broadband service. Stable, biennial funding—incorporated into DEED's base funding—would give confidence to providers and communities alike to continue to plan and build partnerships and prepare effective project proposals. The Coalition believes that funding the Grant Program at \$70 million as part of the base budget in FY 2020/21 is of highest priority.
- 2. Continue to Support the Office of Broadband Development:** (OBD) is a symbol that improving broadband networks and services across the state is a shared, non-partisan priority for Minnesotans. The OBD provides a critical link between communities and providers, documenting successful infrastructure project design and management. We believe the office should be maintained in the future and enhanced to include a role in promoting the adoption and use of broadband, including broadband based economic development strategies, so that the highest possible value is gained from broadband infrastructure investments. As we move towards the 2019 budget session, base budget funding for the OBD remains a priority for the coalition.
- 3. Continuation of the Task Force:** The Governor's Broadband Task Force is crucial to the success of the Border-to-Border Broadband Fund. It provides an opportunity for community members, advocates, providers, consumers, and others to have input and make recommendations on broadband policy in Minnesota. We encourage you to take appropriate steps to assure the continuation of this effort.

Thank you for your work on behalf of the citizens of Minnesota and for your consideration of our priorities and recommendations.

Sincerely,

Nancy Hoffman  
Chair, Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition

# Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition Members

- Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
- Association of Minnesota Counties
- Cloquet Valley Internet Initiative
- Chisago County HRA/EDA
- Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota
- City of Winthrop
- Clay County
- Cloquet Valley Internet Initiative
- Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities
- Community of Minnesota Resorts
- Community Technology Advisors Corp
- Consolidated Telephone Company
- Cooperative Network
- Cooperative Network Services
- Development Services, Inc
- East Central MN Educational Cable Cooperative
- East Central Regional Development Commission
- Economic Development Association of Minnesota
- EssentiHealth
- Finley Engineering
- Fond du Lac Tribal Communications
- GPS 45:93
- Great River Energy
- Greater Minnesota Partnership
- Growth and Justice
- Headwaters Regional Development Commission
- Hiawatha Broadband Communications
- IMPACT 20/20
- Institute for Local SelfReliance
- Iron Range Economic Alliance
- ISD 317 Deer River
- Isanti County
- Kanabec County EDA
- Kandiyohi County Economic Development
- League of Minnesota Cities
- Leech Lake Tribal Telecommunications
- Lincoln County EDC
- MidMinnesota Development Commission
- MiEnergy Cooperative
- Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative
- Meeker County EDA
- MN Association of Community
- Telecommunications and Administrators
- Minnesota Association of Professional
- County Economic Developers
- Minnesota Association of Small Cities
- Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers
- Minnesota Association of Townships
- Minnesota Farmers Union
- Minnesota Library Association
- Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association
- Minnesota Public Broadband Alliance
- Minnesota Rural Education Association
- Minnesota Rural Electric Association
- Minnesota Soybean Growers Association
- MN River Valley Education District
- MN Rural Counties Caucus
- MVTV Wireless
- National Joint Purchasing Alliance
- Neighborhood National Bank
- Nemadji Research Corporation
- Nobles County Economic Opportunity Network
- Northeast Service Cooperative
- North Region Health Alliance
- North Star Township
- Northland Foundation
- Northwest Minnesota Foundation
- NW Regional Development Commission
- PCs for People
- Project FINE
- Range Association of Municipalities and Schools
- Redwing Ignite
- Redwood County
- Region 5 Regional Development Commission
- Region Nine Development Commission
- Sherburne County EDA
- Schools for Equity in Education
- Sourcewell
- Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative
- Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
- Southwest Initiative Fund
- Southwest Regional Development Commission
- SPIRE Credit Union
- Turtle Island Communications
- Treacy Information Services
- Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission
- West Central Initiative
- Winthrop EDA