

Blandin Foundation Application Questions

Organization Name? Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC)
What is your project's name? Kandiyohi County Robust Broadband Network Feasibility Study

Proposal Overview

Start Date? January 2, 2016

End Date? September 30, 2016

Geographic and Project Summary?

The Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC) in cooperation with Kandiyohi County and the EDC's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee plan to conduct a Broadband Feasibility study that includes the entire County of Kandiyohi. The goal of the study will be to provide the necessary information needed to install Fiber to the Premise (FTTP) broadband network to all residents and businesses with-in Kandiyohi County through a public/private partnership with area providers. Kandiyohi County, with its challenge of many lakes, topography issues, areas of low density, and funding constraints, may require a phased-in process of broadband deployment. The proposed project for a feasibility study will help in determining how to expand affordable robust high-speed broadband service throughout Kandiyohi County

Budget Summary

Fiscal Year Start? January 1, 2016

Fiscal Year End? December 31, 2015

Total Project Budget? \$62,500

Amount Requested from Blandin Foundation? \$25,000

Proposal Narrative

Organizational Information

Brief summary of organizational history, current mission, activities, and accomplishments

Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar operate the Economic Development Commission (EDC) through a Joint Powers Agreement. The EDC consists of two boards, the Joint Powers Board and the Joint Operations Board. Kandiyohi County and the city of Willmar each appoint three elected representatives to serve on the Joint Powers Board.

The EDC's Joint Operations Board of Directors consists of seven members appointed by the Joint Powers Board of Commissioners and includes representatives from communities throughout the county, education providers, business owners and consumer groups. The EDC has a number of standing committees, including the Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee.

The mission of the EDC is "to be a catalyst for economic growth of the greater Kandiyohi County area." The EDC helps with technical assistance, business counseling, location, referrals to other business assistance entities and finding appropriate funding avenues for business needs. The EDC also works with the County's local units of government to help provide infrastructure and amenities that are needed to create an environment for businesses to prosper.

Why is your organization best positioned to do this work?

Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar have created the EDC to be the primary organization to create, recruit, retain and expand businesses within the County. Part of this mission is to help ensure that Kandiyohi County has quality infrastructure and amenities (which includes a robust high speed internet service countywide) needed for our business institutions and residents.

The EDC works with a large number of county partners in working on its various projects and is well situated to work with all providers on a viable broadband network solution within the County. The EDC's Broadband and Advanced

Technology Committee has 18 current members made up of industries, businesses, banks, institutions and government. This committee will assist staff in assuring that a high-quality robust broadband network feasibility study will be conducted.

The EDC has been grateful for the assistance the Blandin Foundation has given to the organization in the past. The EDC has shown it can manage broadband initiatives that have created successful, highly desirable outcomes throughout the county.

What steps does your organization take to include a broad range of perspectives?

In order to achieve maximum connectivity with our constituents the EDC is formatted with two boards and numerous committees:

The Joint Powers Board is the EDC's 'senior' board and is made up of the two elected bodies that created the Joint Powers Agreement. Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar each have three members on the six-member Joint Powers Board. These members are each elected to their respective board or council by the general public and are accountable for EDC activities as part of their elected position.. The Joint Powers Board determines the 'strategic objectives' of the EDC.

The Joint Operations Board is the board that deals more closely with the daily activities of the EDC. The Joint Operations Board consists of seven individuals appointed by the Joint Powers Board representing all geographic areas of the county. The Joint Operations Board makes the 'tactical' decisions on planning that will achieve the strategic objectives determined by the Joint Powers Board.

The EDC has several standing committees to give specific advice and direction to its goals and objectives:

- Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development (Ag)
- Broadband and Advanced Technology
- Business Retention, Expansion/Recruitment* (BRE/R)
- Finance
- Marketing and Public Relations

The EDC is responsive to appointing 'task forces' that address specific issues for a limited period of time, as well.

*The BRE/R Committee has implemented several business surveys in the county:

- Agriculture producers—EDC staff and Ag Committee volunteers visited at least two Ag producers in each Kandiyohi County Township
- Countywide (other than Spicer and New London)—interviewed 60 service businesses and 22 manufacturing businesses to determine their satisfaction with area business conditions
- Provided financial assistance and physically assisted the cities of Spicer and New London in conducting their own BRE survey
- Currently assisting the city of Atwater with its BRE survey

We have assisted with marketing enhancement programs with a few of our county's cities:

- New London
- Raymond
- Spicer

And have hosted:

- a workshop for Entrepreneurs, Inventors and Innovators;
- a Marketing Your Community seminar for all Kandiyohi County cities

- business Internet seminars, including basic website set-up and marketing, website optimization, E-Commerce, social media and doing business online
- various listening sessions and public meetings to collect public opinion

Identify specific steps your organization takes to improve organizational effectiveness?

The EDC has had three 'Five-Year Plans. The plans determine the condition of the macro and micro economy combined with the determinants of local companies, production of raw materials and potential access to markets.

The EDC conducts an Annual Planning Session where the Joint Operations Board and Joint Powers Board meet with staff to determine the next year's strategy to meet the overall EDC objectives. The Annual Planning Session is conducted by a professional facilitator.

The Executive Director is reviewed annually by the two boards with feedback given to the director regarding his/her past year's performance.

II. Purpose of Gant

Background

Describe how your proposal supports the goals of the Robust Broadband Networks Grant and supports the communities' technology goals?

1) A recent Business Retention and Expansion Study (November 2014 – December 2014) conducted in Kandiyohi County revealed inadequate broadband access and speed as a critical issue affecting the ability of businesses to compete and be successful. In response to the study, community and business leaders selected projects to move forward. One of the selected projects is to expand broadband availability in Kandiyohi County with specific goals of survey, document specifics, assess utilization, train, and submit grants to improve access and speed.

2) The Willmar Lakes Area Vision 2040 Group has been birthed to develop an actionable plan to help the Willmar Lakes Area become an even better place to live, work, and play by 2040. Goal number one for Vision 2040 is to, "Attract and Retain Newcomers to the Willmar Lakes Area." The committee members identified access to broadband as a critical infrastructure issue to attract and retain newcomers and have since started a subgroup to work in conjunction of the EDC's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee to move this plan forward.

The EDC plans to hire and work with professional consultants to provide the needed information to install an FTTP broadband system that covers the entire county. Hard factual data must be gathered related to technology alternatives, costs and market opportunities that will be provided in this feasibility study to allow us and the providers we work with the needed information to move forward in making the necessary broadband network improvements in Kandiyohi County. Some key questions the broadband feasibility study answer include:

- What is the competitive Telecommunications environment in the County?
- What Telecommunication services and type of infrastructure are currently in place and what is needed?
- What is the market demand?
- What are the preferred technology options?
- Who are our likely private sector partners and how can we best proceed with needed partnerships?
- Which financial components will show how investments will cash flow?
- How can we best combine private and public sector efforts to have successful collaborations to achieve our goals?

How will this project include a broad range of perspectives in decision making?

The RFP for the market study portion of the feasibility study will be written to ensure that a broad range of perspectives will be gathered. This will include data and information from telecommunication providers, businesses, farmers,

institutions such as education and health care, government entities and residents. The study will be designed to gather data and factual information from as many sources as possible. The EDC's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee members represent a wide scope of business, institution, government and other interests that will be a strong part of the study's process and decision making.

List key relationships in place/need to be developed to make the project a success

The EDC has formed a partnership with Federated Telephone Cooperative (FTC) to help pay for the match for this broadband network feasibility study. FTC is very interested in expanding its services into the county after it deploys service within Swift County. FTC received a \$4.9 million State Broadband Grant this November to build fiber infrastructure in Swift County. While FTC is a financial partner in the study, it is aware and most agreeable that the study will include discussions with Kandiyohi County's current providers and study results will be open to all to utilize. The EDC will actively work with FTC, while at the same time hold discussions with the County's current providers to discuss the feasibility study findings and encourage their participation in expanding a robust high-speed broadband network.

Federated Telephone Cooperative and Farmers Mutual Telephone Company share the same staff, while being completely separate organizations. The employee group to both, ACIRA, has a great deal of recent experience and a solid track record with deploying passive optical high speed fiber robust broadband networks in rural Minnesota counties.

FTC's CEO, Kevin Beyer, informed us he has had experience working with a couple of "trusted" consulting firms and is confident they would provide the needed technical/engineering portion of the feasibility study. There will be a Request for Proposals (RFP) sent out to a minimum of four consulting engineering firms to do the required feasibility study components. As a couple of the trusted firms do not do marketing studies, the RFP will allow consulting firms to subcontract for the required market analysis work. The EDC has a list of consulting firms to include in the RFPs and has discussed the project with several of these organizations. The RFPs of previous Broadband Feasibility Study recipients have been secured for ease in creating one for the Kandiyohi County project.

The EDC will also utilize the talents of its Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee members, as well as Kandiyohi County and many other local partners to help out to make sure the study will be successful. There is currently a wide range of support for the need to improve broadband service throughout the county.

B. Implementation

What are the goals of the project?

The overall goal of the project is to conduct a feasibility study which will provide information needed for a broadband provider to install an FTTP broadband system to the entire county. This will assist our businesses and residents in bringing a digitally connected community through a world class, next generation broadband network.

Using informational maps from "Connect Minnesota," and the County's GIS department, we have determined there are 7,653 buildings (housing units and businesses) that are currently under and unserved by the state's definition of high speed broadband. The map data shows there is an additional 13,393 buildings in what is considered served areas, however, we feel there are some areas of the map that could be contested.

The broadband provider will use the feasibility study as a tool to perform due diligence, financial analysis and return on investment scenarios that will fit into the individual business plan of the broadband provider for the build-out of Kandiyohi County.

There are issues that need to be examined in Kandiyohi County, including sparseness and geographic density of population, topographic concerns, including lakes, streams and elevations and financial constraints. The build-out may require a mix of technologies and infrastructure may be performed on a phased-in basis.

What strategies and activities will be employed to achieve these goals?

After a funding stream has been established, the EDC will make available to the general public and to broadband feasibility study 3rd party vendors, a Request for Proposal (RFP). The RFPs will be carefully developed with input from current county broadband providers, possible new providers, the EDC, the EDC Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee, and other interested parties. The RFP will be comprehensive in nature and will provide, at a minimum, the following headings:

- General overview of the study
- Background information, as well as goals of the study
- Qualification requirements of 3rd party vendors
- Scope of Work requirements
 - Identify providers/service offerings
 - Preliminary fiber network designs showing aerial-buried-conduit. The mapping project will include locations of premises with an overlaid fiber route and possible alternative technologies.
 - Define service area/conceptual fiber route
 - Collect analyze/current and potential subdivision growth
 - Map showing current providers, current fiber routes/residents-businesses
 - Capital costs of construction with materials
 - Presentation of results//financial reports/engineering
- A Roles and Responsibilities Section
- Insurance Requirements
- Proposal Response Format including, but not limited to, contact information, firm profile, experience/references, key personnel, Statement of Objectivity, approach, deliverables, timeline, any additional information and contract price.

A Marketing Study/Survey will also have to be authored. The Marketing Study will include, but not be limited to:

- List of current providers and broadband offerings
- Business inventory/employment/industry, etc.
- Map(s) showing general locations of residences and businesses along with possible growth areas
- Utilization of focus group(s) and random sample, unbiased survey of residences, businesses, government, healthcare, and education to determine a likely market penetration rate and to evaluate relevant community uses of the network

Once a consultant is secured and a timeline established, EDC staff will require that the feasibility consultant provide monthly updates on progress of the study throughout the process.

Who will carry out these activities? Do they have the requisite skills and experience?

Kandiyohi County, through the EDC, is a Blandin Foundation Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities Partner and Demonstration Community. The EDC has performed well with grant funds and used Blandin grant funding with great fiduciary responsibility. The EDC has annual governmental audits performed. The EDC governing boards and committees are engaged and knowledgeable about local affairs and needs. EDC staff members are well educated and experienced and have the skills, knowledge and abilities to provide a successful outcome to the project. See attached resume. The EDC Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee's membership is compiled of individuals from telecommunication, agriculture, technology and healthcare industries. They are knowledgeable about broadband needs and issues and meet regularly to discuss broadband strategies. Committee members are listed in the attachments.

The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) will also provide professional technical assistance as requested on a pro-bono or limited cost basis. The MMDC staff has an extensive history of grants administration, fiscal agency

hosting, and providing assistance with successful outcomes. MMDC staff also serve on the EDC's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee.

The EDC has obtained a list of Broadband Feasibility Study Consultants and has been in contact with consultants and current broadband providers to establish a cost "range" of the project. Many of the consultants that would receive the RFP are already working in other counties of Minnesota.

The feasibility consultants will be vetted on their professional histories of performance and their abilities to deliver a complete and useable product in a timely manner. References will be checked and former authored products will be reviewed.

FTC experienced staff, including its CEO, Kevin Beyer, will be able to provide a vast amount of knowledge in helping prepare RFP documents and vetting consultants who submit responses to the RFPs. The project is benefited by this public/private partnership.

The project will be coordinated by EDC staff, MMDC staff and the EDC Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee. There will be monthly project timeline updates submitted by the feasibility consultant.

What are the long-term strategies (if applicable) for sustaining this effort?

This is considered to be a short-term process and project. The timeline includes:

- Completing and providing RFP's to consultants: 2 weeks
- Consultant analyzing RFP and responding 3 weeks
- EDC analyzing proposals and selecting consultant 2 weeks
- Consultant completing feasibility study 12-18 weeks
- **ENTIRE PROJECT TIMELINE 19 – 25 weeks**

The long-term strategy will provide a comprehensive feasibility study that will serve as an economic development and community development tool to be used by a broadband provider or providers to bring FTTP broadband to the entire county. The EDC will facilitate discussions with the private providers to share results and help initiate plans to move forward. The EDC and Kandiyohi County will continue to push for legislative action to increase funding in the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program, make applications to this program, and seek out other sources for funds needed to proceed with implementation of a robust broadband network throughout Kandiyohi County.

III. Assessment

Describe what success looks like and how you will measure success?

- The completed Broadband Feasibility Study will produce the needed meaningful factual data and information for Kandiyohi County, the EDC, FTC and any other private industry partners to be able to reach the needed decisions to move forward in implementing an affordable robust FTTP broadband network. This will include information on what level of investments, grants, and/or public subsidy is required to secure private providers to move forward on implementation. Success will almost certainly need to come in phases as implementing county-wide service at one time will be financially infeasible given the limits of grant dollars needed to assist in making the project viable.

Some of the results we are looking for in the feasibility study are:

- Knowledge of existing fiber/copper cable locations, speeds, and vendors
- Pre-engineering and network design

- Deployment options
- Comprehensive cost estimates
- Internet service providers that will partner and help the County move forward with expanding broadband services
- Determining the areas and stages of deployment most feasible to eventually cover all of Kandiyohi County.

How will you know you've met your project goals?

The project goals will be met when the partners have secured a study report that outlines the marketing analysis, preliminary engineering, operations planning, financial modeling and business planning information necessary for Kandiyohi County, FTC and other potential ISP partners to determine how to expand affordable robust high-speed broadband service throughout Kandiyohi County.

The study will lead to an implementation plan that is acceptable to the Kandiyohi County Board and leads to approval of financial support as necessary. The plan will have potential for use in executing agreements with FTC and/or other private industry partners and securing the essential funding to move forward with expanding broadband service to locations in the county that are currently un-served and underserved. The end result will be that there will be FTTP network throughout Kandiyohi County. At a minimum, expansion of the broadband network needs to meet state broadband objectives for all of our residents and businesses.

Give specific examples of how your project/program contributes to a healthy rural community?

In today's world, the availability of robust high-speed broadband is essential for our businesses and residents to access services and opportunities provided by digital technologies. Broadband enables residents to conduct business, receive or deliver education and healthcare, and connect to the rest of the world from their homes and offices. Areas that do not have quality broadband services have difficulty attracting businesses and workforce. Housing values increase if there is broadband service available and can be greatly harmed if service is not available.

There is a need for broadband fiber to the premise FTTP service throughout Kandiyohi County. Four recent community meetings called by area legislators and Senator Amy Klobuchar revealed community concerns including the following:

- 1) Lakes area people want to work remotely but are not finding the access and speed sufficient to do so. This includes medical doctors and new graduates who want to live in the lakes area.
- 2) New farm technology requires high speed internet. Utilizing data for making decisions about application of fertilizer and pesticides "as needed" requires timely information. Precision ag specialists such as Haug Implement would like to do processing of farm data in-house but cannot because of inadequate internet speed. Farmers report that they are putting data on flash drives and driving it into town to process. They cannot process over wireless connections.
- 3) Broadband is needed for timely transmit & process of information. Rural business managers are reporting difficulty in accessing emails, video for training, on-line markets and on-line marketing opportunities. Jennie-O Turkey Store is experiencing dead spots and speed issues when trying to push training through the internet to farm operators. Internet traceability is a big issue for turkey barn security issues.
- 4) The leaders in our schools and colleges are concerned for students who are required to utilize learning management software and video to complete assignments. A RITA (**Research and Innovative Technology Administration**) grant was received by Ridgewater to help students access the internet anytime/anywhere but that is not possible for students in areas with internet access and speed issues.
- 5) Emergency services experience communication difficulties. Internet connection needs improvement for adequate monitoring of patients at home, video chatting doctor to patient, ambulance to hospital communication and the law enforcement Next Gen System.

- 6) County social workers who work in the homes need to return to the office to input data because of internet access and speed issues.
- 7) Inadequate and inconsistent broadband can contribute to decreasing market values for homes.
- 8) High speed internet is a necessary ingredient to attract and keep young people in the area.

Securing affordable high-quality broadband services throughout Kandiyohi County will address and solve the stated issues and will assist in producing a higher quality of life and a healthier rural community for all of Kandiyohi County.

Explain the process to measure and document progress?

The EDC's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee will meet monthly to review the progress of the project including the creation and distribution of the RFP document, analysis and selection of the feasibility consultant, responding to the requests for assistance by the feasibility consultant as appropriate and with-in budget, and facilitating meetings with potential service providers. Committee meetings will include a written outline of progress on the study and a timeline of the next steps. EDC staff will communicate with the feasibility consultant to ensure provision of monthly reports.

After the feasibility study is completed, progress will be measured with each planned phase of construction of FTTP network being completed. Success will be additionally measured by the actual increased number of residents and businesses affordably utilizing the broadband services, including advancing digital inclusion throughout Kandiyohi County.

IV. Budget and Sources of Funding

Provide a statement of the amount and type of funding needed to see the project through.

To determine estimated costs for the broadband feasibility study, five consultants were contacted to discuss the study. Estimates ranged from \$50,000 to \$80,000. The \$60,000 consultant estimate is used in the attached budget. FTC is familiar with the agency the provided the \$60,000 estimate and is comfortable in their ability to provide necessary information and results.

The proposed budget of \$62,500 includes \$60,000 in estimated consultant services and \$2,500 in estimated costs for additional work including preparation of the RFP, committee meetings, public notifications or ads, meetings with private service providers, and assistance with the study.

Sources of Funding:

- The Kandiyohi County Board \$25,000
- Federated Telephone Cooperative \$12,500
- Blandin Foundation Grant \$25,000 pending
- Total \$62,500

Additional Kandiyohi County and EDC staff time, including technical services and administration, will be contributed to ensure success of the project. Kandiyohi County's GIS system will be available to be utilized as needed. The wide diversity of skills of persons who serve on the EDC's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee will also be utilized as needed to assist with the project's efforts.

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
BROADBAND AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

November 2, 2015

EDC Board Room, Willmar

Present: Travis Bonnema, Donna Boonstra, Dean Bouta, Kathy Dillon, Scott Froemming, Larry Handlin, Wes Hompe, Larry Kleindl, Les Nelson, David Sisser and Donn Winckler

Excused: Bruce DeBlieck, Linda Kacher, Jean Marthaler, Justin Mattern and Paul Smith

Absent: Mark Boeschen and Mike Malone

EDC Staff: Steve Renquist, Executive Director and Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Chairperson Dean Bouta called the meeting to order at approximately 12:04 p.m.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Les Nelson, SECONDED BY Donna Boonstra, to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2015 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

REPORTS

Wi-Fi community grant. Connie Schmoll reported the Wi-Fi partners met. Bids on the equipment were higher than budgeted, but the partners agreed the additional cost will come out of the grant funds. A contract was entered into with the city of Willmar for its portion of the grant. The grant is to be completed by the end of December and the final report to the Blandin Foundation is due in February 2016. Included in the final report will be any comments from users of the hotspots. Should committee members hear any comments from users, they are asked to provide those to Schmoll. Bouta indicated he will report this information to the Vision 2040 Goal 1 group.

Hack₂0 grant. Schmoll reported an RFP (Request for Proposal) was sent to the Hack₂0 participants to apply for funds from the \$10,000 that remains to develop apps. It is hoped that two out of the four apps will be developed. Larry Handlin offered to assist with the connections for the yellow bike app. The application deadline is November 20 with the deadline to develop the apps being March 2016.

Broadband meetings. Schmoll reported that at Rep. Dave Baker's request, a meeting was held on October 21 at Haug Implement Co. which included Rep. Baker, Rep. Kurt Daudt and representatives of the business community. Donna Boonstra, Kathy Dillon, Handlin and Schmoll attended from this committee. Local providers were invited, but did not attend. MVTV Wireless

did attend and provided information on wireless access they are installing in the county. Bouta reported he attended a meeting last week with Rep. Baker, Tim Flaherty and Marty Seifert, lobbyists with the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities, Willmar Mayor Marv Calvin and council member Audrey Nelson, who wanted an overview of what is happening in the Willmar area as to broadband and what is being done. Bouta informed them the focus is on working with Federated Telephone Cooperative (FTC) and how communications have gone with the incumbent telcos. It is a positive sign that Rep. Baker continues to ask questions and seek information. Boonstra reported she met with Rep. Baker, provided him with a copy of the brochure, *What Fiber Broadband Can Do For Your Community*, explained to him that a telco must apply for the state grant and informed him of the upcoming Border to Border Broadband: Better Together conference. Larry Kleindl informed the committee that Rep. Baker will be attending the conference and wants to meet with anyone from this committee who will be attending. Boonstra, Handlin and Schmoll indicated they will be attending. Handlin stated he will be a presenter at the conference and will speak on the Hack₂0 grant and hackathon. Boonstra stated Rep. Baker asked if Kandiyohi Power Cooperative would share its poles, but was informed that is not possible for several reasons. Boonstra indicated Kandiyohi Power Cooperative could become a telco, if approved by its board and could request funds from the Rural Utilities Service. This may be a consideration if Swift County's grant is not approved and FTC does not move into Kandiyohi County. Scott Froemming indicated it would be preferable for Kandiyohi Power Cooperative to work with a company such as FTC. Wes Hompe stated Rep. Baker also contacted him about using Willmar Municipal Utilities' poles, which they currently share with Charter Communications. The feeling was good that Rep. Baker is looking at broadband with a fresh view and thinking of alternatives. Larry Kleindl reported MVTV Wireless approached Kandiyohi County to install 10-12 hotspots with the county paying \$1,000 per hotspot for two years. After the second year, citizens would be given the option to continue the hotspots. The hotspots have a one mile radius. Haug Implement has stated WiFi hotspots are too slow for its use. The request for hotspots will be presented at a future county board meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

Feasibility study. Donn Winckler provided information from a visit he had with Kevin Beyer of FTC and Mary Magnuson of the Blandin Foundation. The maximum available through the Blandin Foundation grant is \$25,000. The next application is due December 4, 2015 and grants will be awarded January 15, 2016. Beyer informed Winckler the cost for the feasibility study will be approximately \$50,000 and FTC is willing to pay 25% of that cost and would not expect its contribution to be returned. Beyer stated there are no firms that can do a full study. An RFP will be done first and would be done in two parts, one for marketing and one for engineering. Beyer provided a few possibilities for the marketing part: Cooperative Network Services of Menahga, Minnesota, Communication Network Engineering of in Fargo, North Dakota, and Compass Consultants of Perham, Minnesota. Winckler requested those who are attending the state broadband conference explore what other marketing firms might be available to respond to RFPs. The engineering part of the study will take three to six months and will cost approximately \$30,000 and the marketing part will cost \$20,000 or less. Winckler estimated the entire process from RFP to completion of the study would be approximately nine months. Blandin Foundation does not require the applicants to choose the lowest cost estimates. Beyer stated for FTC to implement in Kandiyohi County, the project would need to be done in a minimum of three phases and possibly

even four to five. The cost of the project will also be higher due to the number of lakes as they would need to hand trench. The study will include research on what sewer and water systems are around each lake. FTC will assist with completing the grant application and will provide information needed for the application. Tom Lorenz, manager of FTC's operations, will be this committee's secondary contact. Schmoll reported the feasibility study is owned by the applicant, which will be either the EDC or Kandiyohi County, in case FTC is not the company that deploys. Once completed, the feasibility study will need to be updated on a regular basis, which FTC will do if it is engaged. FTC suggested the feasibility study be done now, whether or not Swift County is awarded a grant. Schmoll informed the committee the EDC would like to contract with Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) to complete the grant application per the proposed contract provided (see attached). Winckler noted the MMDC will absorb any staff time above 32 hours.

IT WAS MOVED BY David Sisser, SECONDED BY Larry Handlin, to recommend to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Joint Operations Board that it enter into the Contract for Professional Services with Mid-Minnesota Development Commission to prepare a grant application for a broadband feasibility study at a cost of no more than \$2,400. MOTION CARRIED. Donn Winckler and Les Nelson abstained.

Winckler stated goals, vision statements and a current list of this committee's members are needed for the grant application, which the EDC will provide. Winckler would like to obtain copies of a couple of other applications that have been submitted to the Blandin Foundation to use as a reference. Les Nelson stated MMDC will include information from the EDC's BRE surveys. Winckler will provide a copy of the application to this committee before it is submitted to the Blandin Foundation. Winckler recommended the EDC be the grant applicant since it has a history with Blandin Foundation as a grant recipient.

IT WAS MOVED BY Donna Boonstra, SECONDED BY David Sisser, to recommend to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's (EDC) Joint Operations Board that the EDC, in cooperation with Kandiyohi County, be the applicant for a grant through the Blandin Foundation for a broadband feasibility study. MOTION CARRIED.

Kleindl informed the committee he intends to ask the Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners tomorrow to provide up to \$25,000 for the grant match. Schmoll and Chairperson Bouta will attend the county board meeting and provide any information needed for the board to make a decision. Winckler recommended informing the county board that having a public/private partnership scores better on the grant application. The county board should be made aware that this committee has been working on expanded broadband for some time and the county is being visited by state political representatives in this regard. Chairperson Bouta noted the committee is relying on state grants, but the county may need to come up with creative financing in the future.

IT WAS MOVED BY Wes Hompe, SECONDED BY Larry Handlin, to present information from the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee and the history of its work to the Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners and request Kandiyohi County provide

funds in an amount not to exceed \$25,000 for a grant application to the Blandin Foundation. MOTION CARRIED. Larry Kleindl abstained.

Update on Minnesota Broadband Infrastructure Grant. Chairperson Bouta reported that for those who applied, grants will be awarded in December, and suggested this committee look at the other applicants.

Connect America Fund funding. Chairperson Bouta asked Beyer if FTC was interested in the Connect America Funds, but did not receive much of a response. It is believed Senator Klobuchar may be recommending other uses for these funds.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, December 7, 2015**, in the EDC board room, Willmar.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business,

IT WAS MOVED, SECONDED AND CARRIED to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:02 p.m.