

Draft Harvest Template: Regional Broadband Gatherings
Fall, 2021

- Region: South Western, MN

Organizational hosts: Blandin Foundation , Southwest Initiative Foundation, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission, Southwest Regional Development Commission, Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission, MN Office of Broadband

- Date and duration: Thursday September 16th (1 hour and 30 minutes)
- Venue/format: _x_ Virtual
- Participants: quantitative and quantitative (as possible): 55 persons

Please gather and attach/save:

1. Meeting agenda:

SW Minnesota Broadband Regional Convening Agenda
Thursday, September 16
1:-2:30pm

Welcome and Technology Tips for Participating: 1-1:10pm

I. Setting the stage: What does broadband look like in SW MN? 1:10-1:20

II. Financing Tools for Local Governments 1:20-1:35pm

III. Broadband Grant Programs: 1:35-1:50pm

IV. Local Panel: 1:50-2:10pm

- A. Madison Healthcare Services: Erik Bjerke CEO: Why broadband is critical to serve our patients (confirmed)
- B. Windom Schools **Scott**
- C. Ryan Lange, Lange Ag Systems, will discuss the impact that broadband internet service has on the agriculture and agriculture construction industry - (confirmed)
- D. Schweiss Doors **Scott**

V. Q&A: :2:10-2:20pm

VI. Prioritizing Regional Opportunities, Next Steps and Adjourn 2:20-2:30

Closing 2:28 - 2:30pm

Collect comments/input by anticipated theme, identifying contributing participant for possible role in statewide conference:

Theme	Comments
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Best Practices: Working with Providers	We talked briefly about this relationship with funding interactions. Nothing was talked about aspects that need to be taken into consideration when choosing an ISP to invest in. It seems that no one is happy with the ISP relationship, it seems problematic to be continually investing into these organizations from a community perspective.
☑️ Accessing Resources: Use of ARPA and state funds	This was a highly anticipated part of the meeting due to the presence of the office of broadband. We were told that much is in flux and that we will be hearing more. Also, no ruling yet on using ARPA funds to provide the local match for the B2B grant. Much of the state/federal information is extremely dense for the lay person, who trying to bring broadband to their community. It does not make sense that these programs are run from FAQs rather than from the document itself.
Best Practices: Regional Collaboration	Throughout the meeting a large emphasis was placed on Windom, MN, who built their own fiber network within the city limits to bring broadband to the community. One concern is still how do we effectively reach the “more rural” population.
Best Practices: Fostering and Supporting Community Leadership (what does capacity for broadband planning look like for small towns?)	<p>The panel addressed this idea the most. It highlighted that much of this is driven by business’s going to ISP’s and asking for specific service to their brick and mortar. I believe that people in small towns understand the need for this technology in their everyday life, I sensed there is a need for leadership and vision in how to best bring this technology out the towns and into the rural areas.</p> <p>I believe their needs to be a greater influence placed on strategies for rural America, rather than saying well it’s in the cities, so we need it here. I believe we need to create an affordable and economic model of rural broadband that weighs different factors and allows for people to “play” with different scenarios in their own community</p>
Best Practices: Digital Inclusion and Closing the Digital Divide	This was mentioned briefly to keep in mind while these systems are being developed, many of this communities have nothing, so it’s difficult to have these conversations at this point. Little was talked about regarding education or integration in these communities.
“Other”/wild card: what else are we hearing?	<p>Prevailing wage came up at the end as possible barrier to grants being issued and executed in rural communities.</p> <p>As well as a need for support in selling this idea to local branches of government. For example, the commissioner level</p>

- **Priorities.** Some regions will ask participants to prioritize challenges/opportunities. What did we hear? Mapping came up to take a first step in jumping off the ledge. Additionally, it was encouraged to join the broadband consortium.
- **Recommendations:** Any voiced? Nothing exactly, but I believe we need to pair “communities/groups” of similar standings together, I believe it will allow for cross community building. (Creating a buddy system of sorts) Its powerful to have a peer ally, who is going through many of the similar struggles that you are going through. They can bounce ideas off each other or approach an ISP together. I think we need to build a more “intimate” network of people doing rural broadband more than just people that sit on a zoom screen and hear about the details of some government program.

- Commitments/resolutions/next steps?: I think this meeting highlighted that we have significant problems in our region with access and investment into this technology. Even though we have this ARPA funds I would be curious how many/ what percent of communities are able to understand/access this money for broadband. (Counties, Cities, Townships)