

2021 REGIONAL GATHERINGS

A SYNTHESIS OF COMMON THEMES

Collected by LFMN's American Connection Corps Fellows



LAND O'LAKES, INC.



LFMN'S American Connection Corps Fellows

*6 of the 50 Fellows spanning 16 states,
bringing local capacity to broadband
challenges. Supported by Land
O'Lakes and 20 American Connection
Project partners.*



Carter Grupp
Otter Tail County
(West Central)



Amber Lewis
Northspan
(Northeast)



Matthew Sauser
Warroad Community
Development LLC
(Northwest)



Patrick Garry
Redwood County EDA
(Southwest)



Alex Young-Williams
Martin County / Project 1590
(South Central/Southeast)



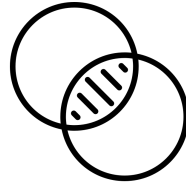
James Clark
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
Region 7

WHAT CAN WE SEIZE NOW?

The greatest opportunities
for our regions.



Provider **Collaboration**
& **Coordination**



Public Partnership with
Providers to increase
transparency & access



Coordinated
Communications Strategy



Digital Literacy Investment

PROVIDER COLLABORATION & COORDINATION

Figure out who's doing what and where.



Bring trusted providers together to divide up areas they will work on.



Townships, cities, counties, and neighboring counties approach ISPs together.



Develop local steering committee members that include ISP representatives from the start.

PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP WITH PROVIDERS TO PROMOTE TRANSPARENCY & ACCESS

Foster consumer trust through community involvement.



Explore the broad continuum of public partnership for what works locally.
(i.e. Municipal owned networks, Cooperative networks, Private ISP with strong provider-community relations)



Understand the short & long term economic forecasts for telecom and cooperatives, and proactively plan with them.




Develop a mechanism for public leverage to ensure provider maps are accurate, and encourage use of citizen-based speed maps.



Get creative with your natural assets. Explore how grain elevators, white pine trees, and school buses can offer fixed wireless + hotspot services.

COORDINATED COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Build public momentum for broadband as an essential community need.



Coordinate a statewide PR campaign on the importance of broadband, similar to the saturation & effectiveness of the “Veterans billboard” strategy.

Ensure that broadband messaging reaches general public by engaging at township + city levels and at general community events (i.e. County fairs!).

Participate in networks that foster best practice sharing between communities.

DIGITAL LITERACY INVESTMENT

Foster consumer trust through community involvement.



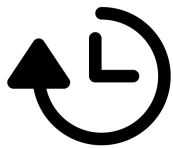
Provide 1:1 clinics to teach digital literacy to residents. Invest in community education networks (i.e. libraries) to deliver support.



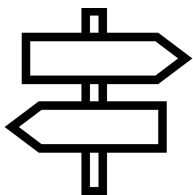
Use federal funds and private partnerships to provide devices to those without access, and ensure that EBB benefits are taken advantage of.



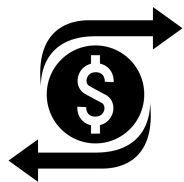
People-Power! Cultivating
local champions



Frequent (and digestible)
funding updates



Cross-County Coordination
on Projects



Adaptive funding
mechanisms that incentivize
providers

WHAT DO WE NEED TO GET THERE?

How to build capacity to
seize the opportunities.

Cultivate a network of local coordinators to reach out to the public, to providers, and to decision-makers, and to stay attentive to new opportunities. (I.e. “More Barbs! More Kips!”)

Provide facilitation and planning support, such as from Blandin, to bring together and move local stakeholders forward.



PEOPLE-POWER!

CULTIVATING LOCAL CHAMPIONS

Technical capacity to organize local stakeholders & engage community

Seek clarity on federal and state funding opportunities and how they can complement one another.

Activate the Township Association & League of MN Cities to disseminate digestible information on broadband funding opportunities.

Expand government funding streams, particularly at the state level.

Expand MN Rural Broadband Coalition membership, and engage regularly with elected officials.



FREQUENT (AND DIGESTIBLE) FUNDING UPDATES

Distribute funding information through local channels (and in lay terms).

Develop regional maps that share where providers are planning projects, or are currently servicing, with details on the projects attached.

Build cross-county consortiums, especially for fiber line development, to jointly apply for state/federal funding opportunities.

Work across county lines to accurately count the households that could benefit from potential broadband projects.

CROSS-COUNTY COORDINATION ON PROJECTS

Working regionally to strengthen project viability and continuity.

Waive 50% match requirement rule for providers working on projects in geographically challenging areas.

Solve / overcome supply chain challenges, especially in high-cost and delayed fiber construction materials.

Advocate that local ARPA funds can be used as local matches to incoming federal Infrastructure Bill funding.

ADAPTIVE FUNDING MECHANISMS THAT INCENTIVIZE PROVIDERS

Address pain points in current funding pathways.

WHERE WE'RE GOING



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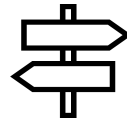
HOW WE'LL GET THERE



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Local Champions



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Mechanisms that Incentivize
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