

## MN OBD Annual Report - rough draft narrative

### Report Requirements *(just for reference)*

The Task Force will create an annual report ("Report") due no later than December 31 each year which includes an inventory and assessment of:

- A. The needs, barriers, issues, and goals for broadband access;
- B. The needs and use of broadband in Minnesota's education systems, health care system, agriculture and energy sectors, industries and businesses, libraries, governmental operations, federally designated tribal nations, public safety, and other key economic sectors;
- C. Digital inclusion definitions, along with benefits, needs, and strategies for addressing identified gaps;
- D. Broadband availability and accessibility for unserved and underserved populations;
- E. Advances in technologies used to deploy services;
- F. Opportunities to coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies; and
- G. A review of the continued adequacy and appropriateness of the existing statutory broadband goals
- H. The Report must also include updated recommendations on state-level actions identified during the year to aid and assist in the deployment and adoption of broadband in Minnesota.

### Introduction

The Governor's Task Force is composed of 15 appointed members from across the state, representing multiple sectors. Meeting monthly, they seek to review the current state of broadband deployment, access, adoption, and affordability relative to the stated goals to serve 100% of Minnesota families and businesses.

This annual report is required under the Governor's Executive Order (EO19-10) that continues the work of the Task Force, which is to continuously review and evaluate the State's progress toward achieving the goals stipulated in the MN 2018 broadband statute, section 237.012. Additionally, the Task Force makes recommendations to the Governor, and the legislature, that if adopted, would improve the likelihood of achieving the state's broadband goals.

### Executive Summary

One no longer needs to be a technical expert to understand the critical and essential need for every Minnesotan to have high speed broadband (homes and businesses). Broadband has become a foundational way all households gain access to every day services: education, health access, employment resources, and transportation. Yet in MN, there are still well over 250K families that don't have this access (no service, or inadequate service). An even greater number of families all across the state (urban and rural) have access to broadband, **but can't afford to purchase it.**

As the pandemic continues, so does the heightened urgency for addressing the access and affordability issues facing families, particularly as it relates to meeting state education standards and mandates for equitable education.

### Key Challenges and Concerns

- Mapping

- Speed
- Affordability
- Education (usage/digital navigation)
- System expansion in unserved areas
- Coordination of Federal Funding Options

## Recommendations

Insert Summary Report Card on previous recommendations (what is the status?)

The following are preliminary recommendations from each of the subgroups (*no editing has been done at this point - direct from subgroup notes / templates*).

- **Access, Affordability & Education**
  - Establish and fund a position within the MN Department of Education to provide leadership and support to schools (and families) in areas of digital equity, digital literacy, funding (E-rate, etc.), cybersecurity, instructional technology and other areas of education technology.
  - Provide funding to the Office of Broadband Development to promote broadband adoption and use and redress digital inequity.
  - Fully fund the Telecommunications Access Equity Aid (TEA) program (by raising the funding cap to at least \$9 million) in order to allow school districts to equitably procure the Internet and network bandwidth needed to fully support digital learning. This state aid benefits school districts by making access to broadband more affordable by fully funding the eligible costs of the federal E-rate program.
  - Establish a state of MN Emergency Broadband Benefit Program that would continue benefits to eligible low income Minnesotans if the federal program is not continued.
- **Mapping and Speed Goals**
  - The Task Force recommends that the Legislature require that all future expenditures of state broadband grant dollars be spent on service that is capable of delivering 100 Mbps download and 100 Mbps upload at the time of deployment.
  - Minnesota should continue, and plan to continue, to make the investments necessary to ensure that all Minnesotans, regardless of zip code, have access to broadband at speeds that meet state goals. Federal investments should not be seen as a substitute for ongoing state investment.
  - MN should strive to achieve ISP cooperation in producing address-level broadband maps
- **Unserved, Underserved, Funding**
  - To ensure accuracy of the broadband grant funds being disbursed to the households in need, the current definitions should remain for unserved and underserved as they define areas on the maps where there is little or no internet services available.
  - All grant funds should be directed at unserved areas. Minnesota has more than 140,000 locations. If necessary, the 100 synchronous requirement should be

waived to provide those hardest to reach areas with at least 25/3 mbps by any technological means available.

- Geographic considerations should be considered when allocating broadband grant funds. A one-size fits all grant allocation will not secure service for those areas of the state where a fiber/cable option is difficult or impossible.
- If a provider is delivering service under a waiver of the 100 synchronous requirement, the contribution from the Broadband Grant Program should be reduced in recognition that: (1) the service is likely less costly to install, reducing the provider's need for State investment; and (2) the service does not provide the same value compared to service providers who are meeting the 100 synchronous requirement.

### **Economic Impact**

### **Inter/Intra Agency Cooperation/Coordination**

### **Policy / Statutory Goals**

### **Appendixes**

- **Technology Updates**