

# 2021 REGIONAL GATHERINGS

## A SYNTHESIS OF COMMON THEMES

Collected by LFMN's American Connection Corps Fellows

*Minnesota's American Connection Corps is supported by:*



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)



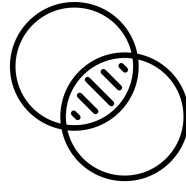
James Clark  
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe  
Region 7

# 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

Promote initiatives that further digital adoption and access.



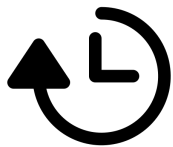
Provide 1:1 clinics to teach digital literacy to residents. Invest in community education networks (i.e. libraries) to deliver support.



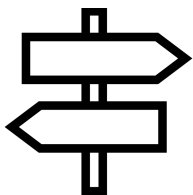
Use federal funds and private partnerships to provide devices to those without access, and ensure that EBB benefits are taken advantage of.



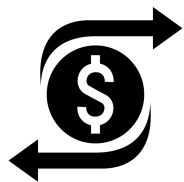
**People-Power!** Cultivating  
local champions



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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& Coordination



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Coordinated  
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**Digital Literacy** Investment

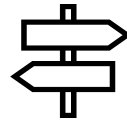
# HOW WE'LL GET THERE



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Local Champions



Frequent (and digestible)  
**Funding Updates**



**Cross-County** Coordination on  
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**Adaptive Funding**  
Mechanisms that Incentivize  
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