

**Governor’s Task Force on Broadband**

**Wednesday, May 15, 2024**

**10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

**Land O’Lakes Inc.**

4001 Lexington Ave N

Arden Hills, MN 55126

**Task Force Members in Attendance in Person**: Ini Augustine; Teddy Bekele; Bruce Crane; Steve Fenske; Adam Hutchens; John Twiest

**Task Force Members in Attendance Virtually**: Gail Hedstrom; Marc Johnson; Briana Mumme; David Wolf

**Task Force members Absent**: Brian Hood; Daniel Lightfoot; Paul McDonald; Phil Stalboerger; Melissa Wolf

**Others in Attendance in Person**: Phani Reddy; Carlos Garcìa; Megan Moudry; Anna Norcutt Preuss; Diane Wells

**Others in Attendance Virtually**: Carol Bossuyt; Jennifer Frost; Karrie Jansen; Bree Maki; Michelle Rebholz; Michael Wimmer; Ace Wesselmann; John Bassing; Angie Dickison; Bruce Fogelstrom; Brian Frederick; Rebecca Johnson;
Todd Kruse; Ann Treacy; Taylor Stuckert;

1. **Welcome and Introductions: Teddy Bekele, Chair, Minnesota Governor’s Task Force on Broadband**

Chair Bekele called the meeting to order, roll call was taken, and an overview of the agenda provided.

1. **Approval of minutes from April 11th and the April 18th Task Force Meetings**

Meeting minutes from April 11th and April 18th, 2024, were approved.

1. **Sustainability and the Connection to Broadband on the Field**

Teddy Bekele (Senior VP/CTO, Land O’Lakes) and Phani Reddy (Product Family Manager, Truterra Livestock) presented on the importance of connectivity in rural Minnesota as it relates to agricultural businesses, like dairy farming. A brief overview of different sectors of Land O’Lakes and Truterra were given. One goal of the work is to help dairy farmers, dairy cooperatives, and other downstream customers by providing a transitional pathway to more actionable sustainability insights. To do so, data is needed to generate insights, as well as a baseline understanding, and to deliver value to producers, processors, and other companies. Connection to this data via broadband is crucial as the work is done on a data-centric platform. While still utilized, manual data entry takes time and can produce more work, and it simplifies the process to use connectivity and more automated practices. The data can be used to generate an emission footprint and have scenario modeling, which can lead to practice change for dairy producers and increase sustainability. Task Force Members asked questions on the coverage for rural dairy farmers, the costs of these practices to dairy farmers, the practice of no-till farming, and OBD staff commented on how this connected back to Digital Opportunity and equity issues.

1. **BEAD Update**

Diane Wells (Deputy Director, Office of Broadband Development) provided an update on BEAD. Before OBD gets to the subgrantee selection process, each state needs the Initial Proposal approved, which comes in two parts—a Volume 1 and a Volume 2. The Volume 1 will include the starting list of locations eligible for BEAD and the BEAD Challenge process. Once Volume 1 is approved, Minnesota will conduct the challenge process with our vendor partner who is setting up a portal to receive and process challenges. OBD submitted the last round of curing on Vol. 1. It’s likely the BEAD challenge process will occur mid-June to mid-September. The Challenge process consists of three parts, 1) challenges submitted by providers, nonprofits and local governments including tribal entities; 2) rebuttals to the challenges; and 3) adjudication of the evidence to determine if the location is served. At the conclusion of the BEAD Challenge process, we will have a near-final list of locations eligible for BEAD. Once the Vol. 2 is approved, OBD will have 365 days to select the subgrantees for the BEAD funding. Subgrantees selected will be included in the submission of OBD’s Final Proposal which is due 365 days after Vol. 2 is approved. After NTIA approves the Final Proposal, then the state can enter contracts with each selected and NTIA-approved subgrantee. Once there is a fully executed contract, then the subgrantee has four years to complete construction—that puts us at the very earliest at late 2029 but more likely sometime in 2030 before some of these projects are fully constructed. So far, 7 Eligible Entities have had both of their Vol. 1 and Vol. 2s approved (Delaware, DC, Kansas, Louisiana, Nevada, Washington and West Virginia). More are likely to be announced soon.

1. **Digital Opportunity Update**

Megan Moudry (Digital Equity Grant Administrator, OBD) provided updates on Digital Opportunity at OBD. The application for capacity grants is due May 28th, 2024. Through the first NOFO, Minnesota was awarded approximately $12M, which is expected to be about half of the total award. Closeout on the planning grant for is due July 27th, 2024. The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), as it stands, is in the final month and only partially funded – approximately 23 million households in the US are receiving $14 or $35 monthly for non-Tribal enrollees and Tribal enrollees, respectively.

1. **Office of Broadband Development, Office Overview**

Anna Norcutt Preuss (Community Engagement + Special Project Coordinator, OBD) provided updates on OBD’s eBlasts and Broadband Development Tuesday Training Series: Navigating PLUS (Permitting, Land Use, and State Systems) series. The eBlasts are currently going out regularly and biweekly. OBD is open to suggestions on what to cover and stories to highlight moving into the summer. Otherwise, eBlasts have been focusing on general OBD news and updates. The web series is completed and posted to the OBD website. In total, there were 4 presentation sessions by 6 different state agencies with over 275 attendees. Diane Wells (Deputy Director, OBD) provided updates on a new employee hire, and that someone would be starting to help with the additional financial reporting associated with receiving federal funds. The following updates were provided on events across the state: Border to Border, Low Density and Line Extension funding has begun; there are groundbreaking events occurring and annual meetings OBD is tracking and trying to attend when invited; Connected Nation is doing a field validation trip to Minnesota this week, helping verify and speed test projects that are coming up on completion from Rounds 6 and 7. OBD grants staff will be in the field this summer doing annual site visits to projects in progress. Round 2 Line Extension Awards have been made. The Round 3 list of addresses is in the challenge process, and the list should be going out for bid in a few weeks. Round 10 grant applications came in last Friday, with 40 Border to Border applications requesting funding totaling $47 million (OBD has $30M), and 28 Low Density applications requesting $79M (OBD has $20M). OBD is currently in the intake and review process. The state challenge process provides three business days for maps to be posted—and that happened this morning—and challenges are due by 4:00 pm on June 14th, 2024. The legislature is wrapping, and OBD is watching the Ag, Rural Development and Broadband - Bill SF4942.

1. **Presentation on Statewide Fellowship Models from the American Connection Corps**

Rebecca Johnson (Program Officer, American Connection Corps), and Taylor Stuckert (Executive Director, ACC) presented on the ACC. The ACC is nationally scaled and locally focused. To date, 22 members have been placed in Minnesota to serve 40 counties and communities. Of those, 90% of alumni have stayed in Minnesota. The digital divide is not just about broadband availability, but crosses other sectors, and include areas members serve – supporting areas around telehealth, agriculture, and resource needs in the community. State partnerships case studies were provided for Illinois, Idaho, and Massachusetts, and they are looking to expand and build upon those successes. Task Force members asked questions on retention, recruitment, and how future partnership could look and function in Minnesota.

1. **Sub-Group Discussion**

Chair Bekeleopened up for questions on sub-group discussions, and asked for groups to meet and identify if there are specific speakers or topics of interest for future meetings. OBD agreed to provide administrative support to schedule sub-group meetings.

1. **Public Comment, Other Business, June 18th Meeting Plans, Wrap-up**

Chair Bekele opened up questions to the Task Force members and other attendees for questions, there were none. For next meeting business, also explained that while OBD has been paying for lunch, due to continued excess and wanting to be mindful of resources, lunch may not be offered moving forward but members would be notified in advance either way.

**The meeting adjourned around 12:05pm.**