



CONNECTING ONE MINNESOTA

2026 Broadband Summit Agenda

8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Registration & Check-In

Exhibitor tabling during check-in

9:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

General Sessions

9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

Welcome and Opening Address

9:15 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Keynote Address

- Julie Tesch, President & CEO, Center for Rural Policy & Development

9:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Panel 1: National Broadband Perspective: Insights from Leading Associations

- Panelists will explore what they are seeing nationwide: funding pressures, supply chain and workforce trends, changing federal guidance, and the evolving role of cooperatives, rural ISPs, and community-based providers.
- **Moderator:** Teresa Ferguson, Sr Director Broadband and Infrastructure Funding, NRTC
- **Panelists:**
 - Rick Cimerman, Vice President External and State Affairs Lead, NCTA
 - Joshua Seidemann, VP Policy and Industry Innovation, NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association
 - Brian O'Hara, Senior Director Regulatory Affairs – Broadband, NRECA
 - Derrick Owens, Senior Vice President of Government and Industry Affairs, WTA – Advocates for Rural Broadband

10:05am – 10:30 a.m.

Panel 2: Regional Leadership in Action: A Fireside Conversation with State Broadband Directors

- In this fireside conversation, broadband directors from Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan will share how they navigate the complexities of federal and state programs while addressing the unique needs of their states.
- **Moderator:** Kathryn de Wit, Project Director, The Pew Charitable Trusts
- **Panelists:**
 - Eric Frederick, Chief Connectivity Officer, State of Michigan
 - Alyssa Kenney, State Broadband and Digital Equity Director, Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
 - Bree Maki, Executive Director, Minnesota Office of Broadband Development

10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Break

10:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

Panel 3: Minnesota Broadband Next Steps: Progress, Priorities, and Pathways Forward

- Panelists will discuss what's next for Minnesota, building on the momentum from BEAD and federal investments, highlighting local success stories, ongoing challenges, and the critical next steps for partners.
- **Moderator:** Nathan Zacharias, Technology Policy Analyst, Association of Minnesota Counties
- **Panelists:**
 - Senate Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee Representative, Senator Aric Putnam (invited)
 - Mary Ehmke, CEO, KMTelecom
 - Scott Reimer, General Manager – CEO, Federated Rural Electric Association
 - Steven Schwerbel, Director of State Advocacy, WISPA - The Association for Broadband Without Boundaries
 - Melissa Wolf, Executive Director, Minnesota Cable Communications Association

11:20 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Panel 4: Navigating the New Broadband Landscape: Insights from Policy, Industry, and Community Leaders

- This session brings together experts from philanthropy, national organizations, and local leadership to unpack the current landscape and highlight emerging opportunities. Panelists will offer perspectives on implementation challenges, long-term sustainability, and the innovations shaping next-generation broadband.
- **Moderator:** Jake Varn, Officer, The Pew Charitable Trusts
- **Panelists:**
 - Gary Bolton, President and CEO, Fiber Broadband Association
 - TaTy'Terria Gary, Program Coordinator, Lead for America
 - Joseph Wender, Executive Director, Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB)

11:50 a.m.

Begin lunch service

12 p.m. – 12:50 p.m.

LUNCH

GENERAL SESSION ROOM: Networking lunch

CAPTAIN'S ROOM: Broadband Task Force meeting over working lunch, open to public

- Chair Tewodros (Teddy) Bekele, Senior VP/CTO, Land O'Lakes
- Ini Augustine, CEO, Technologist Computers
- Bruce Crane, Area Vice-President, Communications Workers of America
- Steve Fenske, General Counsel, Minnesota Association of Townships
- Gail Hedstrom, Director of the Fergus Falls Public Library
- Brian Hood, Operations Manager, Fond du Lac Communications
- Adam Hutchens, Marketing Representative, Laborers' International Union of North America
- Marc Johnson, Executive Director, ECMECC
- Daniel Lightfoot, Intergovernmental Relations Representative/Federal Relations Manager, League of Minnesota Cities
- Paul McDonald, Commissioner, St. Louis County
- Briana Mumme, Southwest Minnesota Community Capital Director, Southwest Initiative Foundation
- Phil Stalboerger, Senior VP, Medical Transportation Management
- John Twiest, CEO/General Manager, Arrowhead Electric Cooperative
- David Wolf, CEO, Gardonville Coop Telephone Association
- Melissa Wolf, Executive Director, Minnesota Cable Communications Association

1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

1:00 p.m. – 1:50 p.m.

Breakout Session Block 1

Breakout 1A, Broadband grantees: Permitting & State Compliance for Broadband Projects

HARVEST A ROOM

- This session provides an accessible, practical overview of crucial state environmental and cultural resource compliance steps, safety requirements, and permits that broadband grant applicants must navigate.
- **Moderator:** Megan Messerole, Environmental and Land Use Coordinator, Minnesota Office of Broadband Development
- **Panelists:**
 - Lilly Geraghty, Cultural Resource Manager, Minnesota Indian Affairs Council
 - Kelly Gragg-Johnson, Environmental Review Specialist, State Historic Preservation Office
 - Patrick Wagner, Damage Prevention Specialist, OPS
 - Jim Zigman, State Utilities Engineer, Minnesota Department of Transportation

Breakout Session 1B, BEAD subgrantees: Navigating BEAD Grant Management in the READY System

CAPTAIN'S ROOM

- This session provides an overview of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) grant management process and the Ready.net Grant Management System for BEAD subgrantees.
- **Moderators:**
 - Jennifer Frost, State/Federal Programs Compliance Manager, Minnesota Office of Broadband Development
 - Karrie Jansen, Broadband Infrastructure Grant Supervisor, Minnesota Office of Broadband Development
- **Presenters:**
 - Keely Knight, Program Manager, Customer Success & Implementation, Ready.net
 - Aidan Jude, Embedded Engineer, Ready.net

Breakout Session 1C, General: Broadband Workforce Development: Partnerships, Pathways, and Minnesota Made Solutions

GARDEN CITY BALLROOM- GENERAL SESSION ROOM

- This session brings together leaders who are building innovative training programs, public–private partnerships, and collaborative models to ensure Minnesota has the talent needed to deploy broadband statewide.
- **Moderator:** Michelle Marotzke, Economic Development Director, Cities of Preston and Lanesboro
- **Panelists:**
 - Steve Gilbert, Director of Outside Plant, CTC
 - Anis Khemakhem, Chief Commercial Officer, Clearfield Inc.
 - Josh Lease, Director, MN LECET
 - Mark Muller, President, TelCom Construction, LLC

Breakout Session 1D, General: Broadband Digital Opportunity: Creative Action for Partnership in Minnesota

HARVEST B/C ROOM

- This session tackles the “now what?”—ensuring every household can afford service, have a working device, and knows how to get online safely and successfully. Speakers will share real-world models, outcomes, and practical steps for replication across Minnesota communities.
- **Moderator:** Joseph Wender, Executive Director, Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB)
- **Panelists:**
 - May yer Thao, President & CEO, Hmong American Partnership
 - Gary Spears, Technology Services Coordinator, Senior Community Services

Breakout 2A, BEAD subgrantees: Environmental and Historic Preservation Considerations for BEAD**HARVEST A ROOM**

- This session will present NEPA tools, documentation, and process flows that can help BEAD subgrantees navigate the environmental and historic preservation requirements.
- **Presenters:**
 - Messerole, Megan Environmental and Land Use Coordinator, Minnesota Office of Broadband Development
 - Josh Fitzpatrick, CEP, NTIA Environmental Program Officer, NTIA

Breakout 2B, BEAD subgrantees: Monitoring and Field Validation for BEAD Subgrantees**CAPTAIN'S ROOM**

- This session provides BEAD subgrantees with a clear understanding of monitoring best practices and how field validation is conducted in partnership with Connected Nation. With special guest in attendance, Carah Koch, NTIA Federal Program Officer, NTIA.
- **Presenters:**
 - Jennifer Frost, State/Federal Programs Compliance Manager, Minnesota Office of Broadband Development
 - John Determan, Director ETS, Connected Nation

Breakout 2C, General: How to Navigate and Use Minnesota's Public Broadband Maps**GARDEN CITY BALLROOM- GENERAL SESSION ROOM**

- This session provides a practical walkthrough of the broadband maps available on Minnesota's public facing website.
- **Moderator:** Mike Wimmer, Broadband Grants Administrator, Minnesota Office of Broadband Development
- **Speaker:** Colin Reilly, VP, Connected Nation

Breakout 2D, General: Community Engagement & Outreach: Building Broadband Momentum in Minnesota**HARVEST B/C ROOM**

- This session will explore strategies for engaging residents, local leaders, media, and underserved communities in broadband initiatives. Panelists discuss what broadband marketing looks like today and will share practical tools, storytelling approaches, and examples of what's working for internet service provider and community audiences.
- **Moderator:** Jake Varn, Officer, The Pew Charitable Trusts
- **Panelists:**
 - Doug Adams, CMO & Founding Partner, Broadband Marketers
 - Autumn Ricke, Marketing Manager, Pinnacle Marketing Group
 - Ann Treacy, Librarian, Treacy Information Services

CAPTAIN'S ROOM

- Office Hours for Broadband Grantees and Meet and Greet with OBD staff for BEAD Subgrantees
- Office of Broadband Development Grant Admins:
 - Carol Bossuyt
 - Samantha Ernst
 - Megan Moudry
 - Michael Wimmer
- Office of Broadband Development Megan Messerole, Environmental and Land Use Coordinator