

MINNESOTA BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

Minnesota's broadband plan began in 2008 and the program is reassessed on an annual basis by the legislature as it considers adjustments to the elements codified into law. Operationally, the legislature and Governor established the Office of Broadband Development (OBD) to serve as the central broadband planning body for the state and a yearly review process by members of a multi-stakeholder broadband task force. The plan consists of four interacting components: statutory goals, data and mapping, broadband office, and program tools.

This plan is dynamic and responds to the changing needs of communities and providers as well as to the intelligence garnered through data monitoring and measurement. This plan engages communities and providers where they are with broadband issues. It is a bottom up approach.

THE ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN AND ALIGNMENT

STATUTORY BROADBAND GOALS:

The first policy recommendation adopted into law was for the establishment of goals around the ubiquitous access to a broadband connection. The first round of goals adopted by the legislature happened in [2010](#). At the time, the speed goal was set at 10-20 Mbps download by 5-10Mbps upload by the year 2015. The 2015 task force [reviewed the progress toward these goals](#) and determined that, while progress had been made (91.45% state-wide and 80.16% rural), there was still a significant gap in access. New goals were proposed and adopted in 2016 that revised the speeds and extended the timeline. Current statute sets a deadline of 2022 to achieve universal access to 25Mbps download by 3 Mbps upload, and another deadline of 2026 to achieve universal access to 100Mbps download by 20Mbps upload. The statute also highlights competitive goals for being among the top states when it comes to broadband access and use.

These goals together function as the compass point that directs the focus of the other elements of the state plan.

STATUTE 237.012 – BROADBAND GOALS

DATA AND MAPPING:

Minnesota has conducted broadband mapping since 2008. Initially this work was done to determine whether there were broadband gaps in the state, and if so, how large and where. From 2010 to 2014, the State Broadband Initiative used funds provided from the ARRA stimulus to support broadband mapping and planning. Since 2015, Minnesota through the OBD has contracted with a vendor to gather data from providers and map broadband coverage; the OBD further verifies the information through site visits and feedback from the public. The mapping and data resources from this component of the plan are updated on an annual basis and are used by policy makers and staff. These resources are also made available to the public for use in the development of local plans and project proposals. <https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/maps/>

STATUTE 116J.396 – UPDATE BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT DATA AND MAPS

OFFICE OF BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT:

In 2013, the MN Legislature created the Office of Broadband Development. The office resides in the Department of Employment and Economic Development to recognize broadband access as a critical economic issue for all regions of the state. This office is responsible for overseeing and operationalizing the various elements of the state plan as outlined in law. These responsibilities represent a range of activities, from working with providers in understanding what the barriers are in bringing service to unserved areas; to working with communities to articulate and achieve broadband plans that take into consideration the unique variables in their area; to administering the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program.

The office is also required to report to the Legislature to help inform its annual review of the policy and programs.

STATUTE 116J.39 – CREATION OF THE OFFICE OF BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT

PROGRAM TOOLS:

BORDER-TO-BORDER BROADBAND GRANTS

After establishing the office, the next priority identified by the legislature was creating a financial tool to assist in addressing the primary cause for the lack of broadband in unserved areas of the state: high costs and lower population densities produced business plans that were not sustainable and thus broadband installations were not feasible. The legislature established a competitive matching capital grant program to address the financial gap. The MN Border-to-Border Grant program began in 2014 and has a portfolio of \$108.5M in state investments matched with \$146.5M in private and local matching funds in the form of 140 broadband expansion projects across the state.

Appropriations to this program had been on an annual basis made available through the general fund. In 2019, the legislature appropriated \$20M in each year of the biennium to the MN Border-to-Border Grant program. The awards from the first year of that appropriation are included in the above figures.

STATUTE 116J.395 BORDER-TO-BORDER BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM

STATUTE 116J.396 BORDER-TO-BORDER BROADBAND FUND

STATUTE 116J.394 DEFINITIONS

BUSINESS FIRST STOP

In addition to closing the financing gap for projects in unserved areas, the office also engages with other agencies to assist in removing impediments to broadband development projects. One of the mechanisms used for this work is the [Minnesota Business First Stop](#). This cross-agency team supported at the highest levels of leadership from nine Cabinet-level state agencies helps facilitate multi-agency involvement in business development projects, including broadband. The team assists in identifying the right people from different agencies to come together to address issues that may arise during broadband planning and deployment efforts.

COORDINATION OF BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

In 2013 legislators enacted Statute 116J.391 in recognition of the value in coordinating access to public rights-of-way and the installation of broadband infrastructure, such as conduit and fiber optic cables. In response to this enactment, the MN Department of Transportation created a resource for providers to use in identifying dig once opportunities in Minnesota: [Minnesota Dept. of Transportation's Minn. Broadband Initiative website](#)

STATUTE 116J.391 – COORDINATION OF BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

ADVISORY BODY:

The state recognized the importance of ubiquitous access to broadband by all of its citizens as a priority when the legislature commissioned the first multi-stakeholder advisory task force in [2008](#). The use of an advisory group provided a platform for those impacted by the issue to have a clear voice in what is recommended to lawmakers for implementation into policies and programs.

This component of Minnesota's broadband work has continued throughout the last three gubernatorial terms. Gov. Tim Walz created the current broadband task force by [Executive Order 19-10](#). Information on the work being done by the current task force can be found at <https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/task-force/>

Latest administrative review: January, 2020