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MINNESOTA'S 2019 BROADBAND GRANT RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

The Minnesota Office of Broadband Development (OBD) has released its broadband grant recipients for the 2019 grant cycle. Here is a quick overview of the grants awarded:

- \$23.2 million in state funding was available for the 2019 grant cycle.
- 80 applications were received totaling \$70 million in requests for broadband projects across the state.
- 30 projects funded.
- \$35.9 million in matching investments from applicants.
- Total investment in new broadband infrastructure (grants plus matching funds) equals \$59 million.
- Over 9,000 households, 400 businesses, and 1,000 farms will receive new or improved broadband speeds and infrastructure.

The Border to Border grant program was created in 2014 and receives funding appropriated by the Minnesota legislature. As such, the funding for the grant program can vary year to year. In 2017, over \$20 million was apportioned for the grant program, while in 2018 the program did not receive any state funding. In the 2019 legislative session, \$20 million were approved for each of the next two years.

Since the creation of the grant program, broadband providers, cities, and Native American tribes across the state have applied for the grants to expand broadband access in their area. In order to be eligible for a grant, the proposed projects must be located in unserved or underserved areas. According to OBD, an unserved area is an area in which households or businesses lack access to wire-line broadband service at speeds that meet the FCC threshold of 25 megabits per second download and 3 megabits per second upload. An underserved area is an area of Minnesota in which households or businesses receive service at or above the FCC threshold but lack access to wire-line broadband service at speeds 100 megabits per second download and 20 megabits per second upload. Each applicant identifies its need for broadband funding and applies for State dollars through the grant program. The grant can provide up to half of a project's broadband infrastructure costs, up to \$5 million, and must be matched with local funds to finish the project.

The grant application process is extremely competitive. Broadband providers near the proposed project areas have the opportunity to challenge proposed projects each grant cycle. The challenge filing must explain that the provider currently services or has begun construction to provide broadband service in the proposed project area at equal or greater broadband speeds in a timely matter. If OBD deems the challenge as credible, funding is denied to that project. In the 2019 grant cycle, there were 23 projects that were challenged. Of those, 12 challenges resulted in partial or non-funding of a proposed project.

The application window for the 2020 cycle has not been set but should be announced in the coming months.

To read more about the 2019 grantees, please click this [link](#). A map of the locations of the 2019 awards is attached on the following page.

Minnesota Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program

2019 Project Awards

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