

# Arrowhead Regional Development Commission

221 W 1<sup>st</sup> St

Duluth, MN 55802

Phone 218.722.5545

[www.ardc.org](http://www.ardc.org)

24 April 2009

## **White Paper Regional Broadband Collaboration**

The following is a brief summary of a facilitated discussion regarding Regional Broadband Collaboration held at the 16 April 2009 ARDC Commission meeting at the Cloquet Forestry Center. (A copy of the entire flip chart notes is available upon request.) Pages two and three of this document were written by ARDC staff following the discussion at the Commission meeting and are submitted for review and further discussion.

### **Basis for Scoring Economic Stimulus Funding Proposals**

- Number of jobs post installation
- Competition for providers
- Leverage dollars with other projects (match)
- Combine with other projects
- Aggregate users
- Reach out to Native American communities

### **Some Points from Discussion ARDC Meeting 4.16.09**

#### **Comments from participants**

- Broadband could be source of revenue for municipal utilities
- Tag on to Ash River project
- Omaha as insurance center resulted from technology at SAC
- FiberNet project needed ARDC
- Economic stimulus dollars change the playing field
- Wireless is not satellite
- Be aware of challenges using grants.gov
- Fiber is data moving at speed of light—equipment on other end is only limiting factor
- Dark fiber along North Shore/in place/not turned on
- FiberNet completed feasibility study that can be accessed
- Need for accurate mapping/mapping drives funding
- Cook County goal: Fiber to every home in county.
- Opposition of telecoms/need to bring partners, including telecoms to table
- Telecoms don't need to be part of this
- Why dark fiber not turned on....cost, no demand
- Stimulus could generate the infrastructure to turn dark fiber on
- Why not wireless? Has trouble delivering high definition
- Define affordability and availability to homes

### **Proposed Goals/Objectives for Regional Broadband Collaboration**

**Goal A:** Understand the current broadband service level of the Arrowhead Region

Objective: Map the broadband service areas in the Region

Objective: Map the underused broadband services of the Region

**Goal B:** Understand the different factors that impact broadband expansion.

Objective: Learn about telecommunications companies and the issues they review when determining expansion possibilities in the region.

Objective: Examine successful expansions in the past and the different models for success (e.g. Windom, MN's public system vs. private expansions vs. public/private partnerships)

Objective: Learn about potential public funding sources for broadband expansion

**Goal C:** Position the underserved areas of the region for broadband expansion

Objective: Develop a regional action plan for broadband expansion

Objective: Provide local governments with tools that will assist them to expand broadband in their jurisdiction

Objective: Provide local governments with a forum for direct broadband assistance (grant applications, etc.)

### **Value Added/ARDC's Role**

ARDC membership includes the seven counties and the three Native American tribes in the Arrowhead region. The agency is the designated planning commission for the seven county region. The staff at the agency has experience working across boundaries and with many jurisdictions. It has been suggested that a combined application for Economic Stimulus funds would make for a stronger application.

### **What ARDC Can Offer**

- Facilitate Committee meetings
- Create the mailing list
- Find meeting dates, times, and locations
- Coordinate speakers
- Establish and maintain Committee website
- Document meetings
- Research and map development
- Research and present information
- Develop and publish documents for the committee
- Provide connections between communities and resources
- Connect to EDA funding opportunities

## **Timeline**

### Week of 20-24 April 2009

White paper to all Commission members and guests attending 16 April ARDC meeting

### Week of 4-8 May 2009

Meeting at ARDC office to include

- One county commissioner and IT staff person from each county
- One representative from each tribe and IT staff person from each tribe

Decision to be made regarding proposed next steps

*(Due to schedule conflicts, it now appears that the first meeting will be held the week of 11 May.)*

## **Meeting One-Proposed Agenda Items**

- Review white sheet and add details from attendees' perspectives
- Discuss partnership with Blandin Foundation
- Define purpose
- Define ARDC 's role
- Agree on next steps (should we be applying to EDA?)
- Determine immediate action items
- NTI applications
- Other

## **Costs**

Any Regional Planning time must be accounted for; EDA planning grant could provide some hours after July 1; EDA can provide very minimal hours prior to July 1. To do all that is listed above, we 'd need additional funding.

