MINNESOTA
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May 3, 2010

Lawrence E. Strickling
Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce/NTIA
Herbert C. Hoover Building (HCHB)
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Strickling:

Thank you for the opportunity for the State of Minnesota to provide comments to the NTIA regarding the Round 2 Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) applications that have been submitted for projects in Minnesota.

In conducting our review, we examined the information available on the www.broadbandusa.gov website (including the executive summaries), for all projects that propose to serve areas of Minnesota. Based on that analysis, copies of the complete submissions were requested and information was received from 22 of the applicants. The information received from these applicants was loaded onto a SharePoint website and used as the basis for the decision-making by the Minnesota evaluation team. Each team member performed their own review and analysis and then the team came together to make decisions. Due to the highly technical nature of the projects, the substantial documentation that was reviewed, and the number of projects under consideration, the evaluation team decided to conduct its evaluation on a consensus basis.

In reaching consensus, the team used its knowledge of the state balanced with the information contained in the applications. For Comprehensive Community Infrastructure projects, a lower level of broadband availability weighed more heavily than the subscription rate whereas for the Public Computer Center and Sustainable Broadband Adoption projects, the level of broadband subscription was an important review factor. Other factors that the team discussed with regard to the proposals included the goals to be achieved by the project, the economics of the area to be served, the endorsements for the project, the quality and thoroughness of the application, the track record of the applicant and its partners, and any overlap with Round 1 grant recipients or areas.

The evaluation team would like to acknowledge the benefits to the state that an NTIA award of any of the projects reviewed would bring to Minnesota and the difficulty we had in making our decisions.

As the result of our discussion of the many projects, consensus was reached to convey to the NTIA, in accord with your expressed preference to receive a narrow list of high-priority projects designated into either a "recommend" or "highly recommend" category, the following projects:

Comprehensive Community Infrastructure:

Highly Recommend

Easy Grant ID #: 6607
Applicant: US Cable of Minnesota, Inc.
Name of Application: US Cable Fiber Ring Southern Minnesota

Recommend

Easy Grant ID #: 4866
Applicant: Enventis Telecom, Inc.
Name of Application: Greater Minnesota Broadband Collaborative

Easy Grant ID #: 4433
Applicant: TTM Operating Corporation, Inc.
Name of Application: The Southern Minnesota Broadband Enhancement Program

Sustainable Broadband Adoption:

Highly Recommend

Easy Grant ID #: 6698
Applicant: A-Vu Media Corp.
Name of Application: New Bundled Broadband for Older Adults, Disabled, and Healthcare Adoption

Recommend

Easy Grant ID #: 6405
Applicant: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities/Southwest Minnesota State University
Name of Application: Regional Electronic Learning Commons

Easy Grant ID #: 5423
Applicant: Special School District #1, Minneapolis, MN
Name of Application: BridgIT.now: Urban Broadband Access Project

Public Computer Center:

Highly Recommend

Easy Grant ID #: 5177
Applicant: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
Name of Application: Opportunities and Pathways to Education (OPEN) at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

Recommend

Easy Grant ID #: 4472
Applicant: County of Anoka, MN
Name of Application: Anoka CAN (Computer Access Now)

We would also like to note that information provided in your March 2010 letter indicated that the NTIA would be inviting tribal leaders to comment upon applications for projects proposing to serve only Tribal Lands. Therefore, the Minnesota evaluation team did not include in its review process two projects that we identified as being entirely on Tribal Lands. We would instead defer to the expertise of the tribal leaders to comment on those applications and what would best advance their broadband technology objectives.

In closing, the State of Minnesota would like to again note its appreciation for this opportunity to provide the above recommendations regarding BTOP projects in our state. We acknowledge the enormous responsibility the NTIA has in carrying out this program from inception to conclusion and the many factors to be addressed and balanced in reaching your ultimate decisions. If we can be of any further assistance or if you wish to discuss our recommendations in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact me at 651/296-6025 or via email at glenn.wilson@state.mn.us.

Sincerely,

Glenn Wilson
COMISSIONER

c: Honorable Tim Pawlenty
Ian Martinez, National Telecommunications and Information Administration