

Introduction

Governor Mark Dayton issued Executive Order 11-27 in August 2011 creating the Governor's Task Force on Broadband and directing the Task Force to develop a *Minnesota Broadband Plan Outline* by January 31, 2012.

This Task Force reviewed the 2009 and 2010 reports of their predecessors as a foundation for the outline; building on prior recommendations where appropriate and suggesting new approaches to reflect the expertise of the Task Force and the state of broadband in Minnesota in 2012.

The most recent data show that Minnesota is making progress toward achieving the state broadband goals. It is the belief of the Task Force that moving forward with greater coordination and information sharing across public, private and nonprofit sectors will allow the greatest opportunity for success.

The outline presented in the following pages is the result of the Task Force's efforts over the past month to identify strategies, recommendations, and action items that will aggressively move Minnesota forward to meet the state broadband goals.

Minnesota Broadband Goals (Minnesota Statute § 237.012):

Universal access and high speed deployment as soon as possible, but no later than 2015 all state residents and businesses have access to broadband service that provides a minimum download speed of ten to twenty megabits per second and minimum upload speed of five to ten megabits per second.

It is the goal of the state that by 2015 and thereafter, the state of Minnesota will:

- a. Be in the top five states of the United States for broadband speed universally accessible to residents and businesses; and,
- b. Be in the top five states for broadband access (availability); and,
- c. Be in the top 15 when compared to countries globally for broadband penetration (adoption).

Minnesota Broadband Plan Outline

1. Generate an annual report that describes the current status (where we are now), long- and short-range goals (where we are going), and action plans (how we will get there) with regard to meeting our ubiquitous broadband goal.

- The Task Force will generate an annual report on the state of broadband that includes comprehensive analysis and recommendations.
- The annual report will reflect the work of the Task Force during the year leading up to the reporting deadline, document progress, and reflect the change in long- and short-range goals and action plans as movement towards the state broadband goals occurs and lessons are learned.
- The annual report will include, as needed, suggestions for legislation that could assist the state with meeting the broadband goals.

2. Explore collaborative strategies to expand broadband use through advanced applications such as e.government, telehealthcare, telework, and distance-learning; examine ways to measure the economic impact for Minnesota of advanced application of ubiquitous broadband (budget savings, overall economic impact, etc.)

- The Task Force will identify private and public sector organizations, including nonprofits, working on advanced application efforts.
- The Task Force will survey existing economic data (Minnesota specific and other) on impact of advanced applications on private sector economy and public sector budgets.
- The Task Force will track and evaluate strategies to expand broadband use; serve as a repository and a resource; and suggest legislation if appropriate to support advanced application development.

3. Maintain an up-to-date public-facing information dashboard describing progress towards reaching the state's ubiquitous broadband goals; Maintain and promote an up-to-date list of broadband focused organizations and conferences; Recognize and promote successful efforts; Identify and monitor locations that are unserved, underserved or served by only one broadband provider.

- The Task Force will identify existing resources that collect and present research and data on the state of broadband in Minnesota.

- The Task Force will work to continue and enhance existing resources available to the state, including the Department of Commerce and Connect Minnesota websites.
- 4. Dig Once - coordinate infrastructure construction projects with broadband projects. Examine Right-of-Way issues to ensure a maximization of efficiencies to assist providers and communities.**
- The Task Force will convene a discussion with those that are already actively pursuing policy in this area to determine lessons learned, barriers, and ways of propagating successes state-wide. (Dakota County is one that has done work in this area.) The Task Force will also develop a primer on what is being done on the national level in this arena, and a discussion about how that does or does not meet the needs within Minnesota.
 - The Task Force will examine legislative opportunities that would eliminate barriers or propagate success.
- 5. Tax incentives for broadband infrastructure; tax deduction equity for fiber, equalization of Minnesota depreciation to federal levels; tax forgiveness to build out in areas without access and/or low population.**
- The Task Force will explore incentive opportunities through discussion with state officials and outside business groups and individual businesses.
 - The Task Force will work with personnel from the Minnesota Department of Revenue to gauge the impact of incentive opportunities identified as having potential success for Minnesota.
 - The Task Force will develop legislation, where needed, on tax incentive issues most likely to succeed.
- 6. Promote current broadband mobilization efforts, including county level organizing; find ways to incent formal community planning.**
- The Task Force will survey counties in Minnesota to identify existing efforts underway that utilize comprehensive community planning in efforts to expand broadband availability and adoption. The Task Force will continue to track such projects through to completion and evaluate outcomes.
 - The Task Force will look at best practices across the country where community planning for broadband has been/is being used and the impact (positive or negative) of those efforts.

- The Task Force will identify resources that are or could be made available to support such mobilization efforts.

7. Examine best practices being employed in other states and countries related to ubiquitous broadband; what initiatives have worked, what could be used in Minnesota.

- The Task Force will review reports, news articles, etc. to learn about initiatives in other states and countries.
- The Task Force will conduct outreach to other states identified as more advanced than Minnesota on progress to ubiquitous broadband and identify successful initiatives for possible replication or trial in Minnesota.

8. Focus on adoption issues: who is not adopting high speed broadband and why; where are digital divides most prevalent (rural/urban, low income, age); identify barriers to adoption; address digital literacy and skill-building gaps.

- The Task Force will use existing Minnesota adoption data to understand shortfalls.
- The Task Force will identify what groups across the state are working on adoption and digital literacy issues.
- The Task Force will evaluate programs to determine success.
- The Task Force will identify public-private partnership opportunities that could result in successful adoption outcomes.
- The Task Force will ensure Minnesota is positioned to take advantage of federal level initiatives, such as the FCC's Connect2Compete program.

9. Survey, Research, Data: Ongoing identification of levels (speed) and scope of service related to broadband accessibility; annual surveys of consumers and business, along with targeted other research; utilize existing state resources (Connect MN) to ensure an accurate understanding of the state of broadband in Minnesota.

- The Task Force will include in its annual report an updated chart of applications and upload/download speed ranges necessary to perform those applications.
- The Task Force will review available survey research for Minnesota and mapping data and incorporate that information into the status, short- and long-range goals, and action plan contained in the Task Force's annual report.
- The Task Force will explore inclusion of a satisfaction measure of end users to move away from specific speeds and get to end use measurement.

- The Task Force will prioritize where the state should focus its efforts (on the areas with the greatest need and/or areas with the best likelihood of success)

10. Coordination across government: ensure Minnesota's local/state/federal officials (and stakeholders) are aware of resources available across all levels of government and coordinating efforts to maximize Minnesota's ability to leverage these resources.

- The Task Force will stay informed and incorporate into its knowledge base activities to advance broadband deployment and adoption conducted by the interagency subcommittee on broadband, leadership organizations for the Association of Minnesota Counties, League of Minnesota Cities, Association of Minnesota Townships, the University of Minnesota System, MNSCU, state library and education groups, etc. The Task Force will make this knowledge base publicly accessible and also use this information to identify areas where coordination across government could lead to maximum leveraging of resources.
- The Task Force will engage Minnesota's Congressional delegation by providing them with updates on Task Force activity and associated research and reports on the state of broadband in Minnesota.

11. Establish an ongoing, post-Task Force mechanism within state government for high-speed broadband focused efforts.

- The Task Force will include in its later work a recommendation regarding the type of entity that should succeed it to carry on the work necessary post-2015.

The 2009 Task Force's *Minnesota Ultra High Speed Broadband Report* included a graphic illustration that provided a framework to support their recommendations:



While this outline does not incorporate all the elements or language of this graphic, the Task Force recognizes the value of the comprehensive approach it represents and will utilize portions as appropriate in its work going forward. The outline was informed, in large part, by the ideas of *Lead*, *Oversee*, and *Stimulate* related to achieving the state broadband goals.

Conclusion

The Task Force plans this outline to serve in large part as a work plan for its period of service. As monthly meetings are held in St. Paul and around the state, the action items and recommendations presented in this document – in conjunction with the tasks described in the 2011 Task Force Report - will be a focus of meetings and future work products, including an annual report, the first of which will be released in December 2012.

Strategies for achieving the statutory broadband goals in Minnesota will need to evolve. This outline provides a starting point that can be refined not only based on input and guidance from stakeholders, (including providers, public officials, adopters and non-adopters) but also from what the Task Force learns as it engages in its work.