

## News Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Pine County, Minnesota, March 5, 2021

Contact: David Minke, County Administrator 320-591-1620

### **Blandin Foundation Selects Pine County for CBR: Accelerate Program with the Goal to Improve Broadband Access**

Today, the Blandin Foundation announced that Pine County has been selected to participate in the Community Broadband Resources (CBR): Accelerate Program. The program will provide a 15-week course of study and education about broadband for a community team. The program consists of three parts 1) Leadership Education, 2) Information Gathering, and 3) Analysis and Next Steps. The project will also include community surveys and interviews with internet service providers. It is anticipated a final report from the team will be available by July 2021.

In January, the Pine County Board of Commissioners identified broadband as one of its top priorities for 2021. On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the commissioners held a special meeting to discuss broadband with interested community members. Over 50 community members joined the meeting. The attendance and comments at the meeting demonstrated the need for expanded broadband access in Pine County.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the disparity in broadband coverage and left many in the community without a reliable way to attend school remotely, work from home, or participate in their community.

More information on the project will be available on the project website

[https://www.co.pine.mn.us/government/board\\_of\\_commissioners/index.php](https://www.co.pine.mn.us/government/board_of_commissioners/index.php)

The following 19 community members volunteered for the program.

Josh Asp	CFO, Welia Health
Jodi Blesener	Child Support Supervisor, Pine County
Ailene Croup	PICK News
Dustin Goslin	Vice President, Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures
Angela Grochowski	Hinckley-Finlayson School Board
Beth Gruber	Dir. of Organizational Effectiveness, Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures
Steve Hallan	County Commissioner & Chair, Pine County
Justin Jahnz	CEO, East Central Energy
Joe Keyport	News Director, WCMP Radio
Becky Lourey	Owner, Nemadji Research
Terry Lovgren	County Commissioner, Pine County
David Minke	County Administrator, Pine County
Josh Mohr	County Commissioner, Pine County
Joe Mulford	President, Pine Technical and Community College
Katy Overtoom	Chengwatana Twp. and Chair Township Assoc.
Bill Peel	Superintendent, Willow River School District
Lezlie Sauter	City Administrator, Pine City
Brian Scholin	Pine City Resident
Becky Schueller	Executive Director, Pine City Area Chamber of Commerce

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