Cheryal Hills, Pam Mahling, Janelle Riley, Kevin Larson, Kristi Westbrock, Stacey Stockdill, Sally Fineday, Paul Drange, Anna Gruber, Janet Johnson, Rich Utech, Matt Killian, Mary Gottsch, Sheila Haverkamp, Megan Rehbein, Maureen Ideker, Brenda Thomas, Glenn Anderson
REPORTING PERIOD:
October 2015 through December 2015

What NEW success have you had in moving your theme goals forward over the reporting period?	
Goal 1: All Action Steps	**Over the past 2 years, NJPA has provided $200,000 in support and assisted the Virtual Highway Project team in many ways. These are highlighted below**
	State of Minnesota Broadband Fiber Project. In 2014, CTC along with the Region 5 Virtual Highway Committee embarked on an application for State of Minnesota grant funds to build broadband infrastructure in Crow Wing, Cass and Morrison counties, in the townships of Ft. Ripley and Fairview. In 2015, the grant was awarded to our Region in the amount of $2M with a project match of $2.3M from CTC. In conjunction with this funding, NJPA graciously donated $75,000 to get the engineering for this project off the ground. This project today is reality. Fiber optics have been placed in both townships, passing over 400 locations that were unserved with broadband connectivity. Residences, businesses and public institutions are being connected to a state of the art network that will enhance public safety, education and telehealth along with great economic impact. **CTC was successful again in 2015 in receiving a State of MN Boradband Project Grant.** The broadband infrastructure will be built out in the Fort Ripley area to provide service to 272 households. Total project costs are $1.6 million. The State grant is for $759,525 with the remaining $839,475 (52% local match) provided by CTC and regional and local development agencies.
	WCTA Broadband Infrastructure Project. With a generous commitment of financial support from NJPA, local telecommunications provider WCTA was able to complete extensive pre-engineering work and regional broadband strategic planning. Based on the results, WCTA selected sections of Wadena County and a portion of Todd County that are considered "unserved" where WCTA could cost-effectively build fiber optics out from their existing infrastructure, and thereby be well-positioned to bid in the expected upcoming FCC "CAF II" auction and/or apply to other future grant programs. (The full project including future phases does include sections of Cass County as well). WCTA then drilled down to find the most cost-effective starting projects to submit applications for a total of $399,000 to the Minnesota Border-to-Border Broadband Development grant program for 2015. If both project applications are awarded, a total of over $4 million will be invested installing gigabit-capable fiber options to 361 rural locations covering a total of 112 fiber route miles in the Region Five area, with a solid foundation for much wider gigabit coverage in future years. **WCTA received a 2015 State of MN Broadband Project Grant for $193,515.** The project will provide high-speed broadband service to 162 households, 43 businesses and 3 community anchor institutions. Project costs are $2.12 million. The remaining $1.93 million (91% local match) will be provided by WCTA and local and regional organizations.
	City of Long Prairie Infrastructure Project. With support from NJPA, Blandin Foundation, Initiative Foundation and The City of Long Prairie, a pre-engineering study and application were completed and submitted in September to the Office of Broadband Development for a Border to Border grant to JumpStart Todd county by building a fiber ring throughout and around the City of Long Prairie. This project will reach 1,409 entities (38.7% which are unserved and 56.5% that

	underserved). **Although not successful this round for state grant funding, partners are committed to strengthening the application for a 2016 grant round.**
	Long Lake Township Infrastructure Project. With support from NJPA, Blandin Foundation and Long Lake Township – a Broder-to-Border proposal was submitted to the Office of Broadband development for a fiber project to 516 establishments spread across 96 miles.). **Although not successful this round for state grant funding, partners are committed to strengthening the application for a 2016 grant round.**
	Telehealth Meetings: NJPA provided a convenient centrally located meeting room for a 2014 Resilient Region telehealth meeting that brought together healthcare stakeholders from around the region to learn about telehealth applications, new federal funding opportunities, and discuss current barriers to implementation. Key findings from this meeting were submitted to state and federal representatives and the Minnesota Broadband Task Force.
	Regional Planning: NJPA staff contributed many hours participating in regional broadband planning meetings, learning about this complex issue and helping to search for solutions. In addition, NJPA hosted many broadband-related meetings ranging from small "steering committee" meetings to a community-wide Blandin Broadband Community planning event. Technology installed in the meeting rooms enabled remote conference access for those who could not attend, and enabled advanced presentation options.
	Videographer Internship: WCEDA received an NJPA grant to support a videographer internship working with Central Lakes College and the West Central Economic Development Alliance showcasing local businesses and regional amenities with professionally created youtube videos.
	Wi-fi mapping project. Through support of an NJPA intern and funding support from the Initiative Foundation, WCEDA finished mapping all businesses and amenities in the Sebeka and Menahga communities. It now turns to completing the other communities in Wadena County. In the process WCEDA learned that many businesses needed assistance with their online presence, and were interested in the videography services WCEDA provided with support from NJPA. The organization has chosen to focus its efforts on this aspect of the project at this time, rather than mapping the 5-county region's wi-fi hotspots, and has withdrawn its Blandin application for the wi-fi hotspot mapping project, making the funds available for other projects.
	The Resilient Region Connectivity/Virtual Highway Taskforce was also successful in becoming a Blandin Broadband Community. In March the team held a visioning session and from that a number of projects received funding. Highlights follow.
	BBC: High Tech Center Project Update. Earlier this year, BLAEDC researched the possibility of a High-Tech Live/Work Center in our region in order to determine the functionality and viability of such a resource. This tech center would continue to build on our region's technology sector initiatives by not only connecting technology employees and entrepreneurs with each other, but also by attracting talent to our area and creating an environment that is efficient and also welcoming to the technology community.

BLAEDC finished working with our summer intern and are putting the finishing touches on our "High-Tech Center" document, to be used as a continuum to grow and attract workforce and technology business to our area, as well as be used as a resource for other communities interested in creating a tech center for their area. BLAEDC hopes to wrap-up the entire project by the end of the year and will be able to share the information early next year.

This project and document was meant to be a "first" stepping stone to the live/work tech center |

	proposal. During our research, we have found that there would be people interested and we do have possible locations that would work, but we also learned that we need to dig deeper and create more serious strategies if we want to act on this idea in the near future.
	BBC: Telehealth project. Significant accomplishments this reporting period: The first daylong session was conducted in Wadena County on August 31. 10 participants attended including representatives from 6 different healthcare settings, home care, long term care hospitals, clinics, mental health centers, mining and telecom. Health Care disciplines represented included: psychiatrist, social workers, administrators, nursing and business. All the educational programming planning has been completed and is templated. Evaluator comments were incorporated after session one and changes were made in the length of the session (another hour was added,) the order of two sections were changed on the agenda. Feedback was provided to the presenters who joined via videoconference. The evaluation summaries rated the program as excellent, very worthwhile with understandable and helpful information. Five additional daylong sessions were held in Cass, Crow Wing and Todd Counties. The attendance averaged about 10 per session. Active partnerships discussed at each session. Evaluations are all positive. **The Morrison County session was rescheduled for Dec. 18 and so far27 individuals have registered for this session. The Resilient Region Telehealth Project was a featured project at the Blandin Foundation's Conference.**
	Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Replication of The Shop PC4People Youth as Technicians Project. There has been a shift from the Leech Lake Boys and Girls Club to working with Leech Lake Tribal College to host this project. The college is willing to bring into their technology programs the PCs for People affiliate membership and educate and inform their own students through the model. They have the capacity, the facility and the participants from the tribal college to bring the PCs for People to the area. They are willing to work students of the Cass Lake Bena Schools into the new model when this rolls out. They also have a student at the Tribal College who will fill the VISTA position left by Linda Wilson. The PCs for People model is needed in the tribal lands of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe as it is a great asset currently available to low income students in grade school and in college. This definitely is a good fit for the tribal colleges' STEM program too.
	The Early Childhood Project (Update). The youngest learners in the ISD 181 school district are utilizing the SMART boards that were installed on August 11. The 4 SMART boards were installed with projectors for the ECFE program. All 8 teachers were trained on SMART board on August 24th for 3 hours by a district employee. Ongoing trainings and teacher collaboration regarding the implementation of the SMART board in the classroom will continue during teachers' professional learning communities The district will also review how implementation is going and teacher comfort level to determine if future full group trainings are needed.

Teachers have learned how to create learning tools and lessons on the SMARTboard to allow students to manipulate and work on the screen. All SMARTboard classrooms have created check in procedures using the board as well as many other visual opportunities like picture schedules and visual timers that are very helpful for preschool aged children.

Six Mini ipads have arrived and need to be assigned out to teachers. ISD181 lead teacher, Tahnee Flowers, has worked with CTC to create specific training modules. CTC has created those videos which will be very helpful for teachers to review at their leisure and refer to as they work with the device. Ms. Flowers goal is to provide some optional after school times for teachers with ipads to gather together and explore on the ipads together. |

Our goal is to continue to integrate learning opportunities using the SMARTboard and ipads and increase staff's comfort level with the technology throughout this school year.

Photos: Superintendent Bob Gross stopped by while the classroom was learning about the letter Bb so he wrote his name on the SMARTboard for everyone to see. The one of the boy drawing a person was an extension to the mat man create where they built it and then made their own person.

6 Projects submitted applications to Blandin Foundation for the December 2015 funding cycle. The BBC Steering Committee confirmed that the following projects (chosen during the Community Visioning Session and who submitted white papers for review during the BBC Steering Committee Meeting in March) remain relevant and worthy to proceed with submitting a December 1 application to the Blandin Foundation. BLADEC: Video Conferencing $7,500; BLADEC: Tech Services $$5,000; The Shop: PCs4People $5,000; CTC: Fairview and Fort Ripley WiFi $4,000; Bridges: STEM $10,000; M State: Got Tech? Tech Expo: $10,000

6 Resilient Region BBC members attended the Blandin Foundation Broadband Conference in November: Sally Fineday, Dawn Espe, Pam Mahling, Maureen Ideker, Kristi Westbrock, Joe Buttweiler, and Kevin Larson.

Central Lakes College, BLADC and Region Five planning the region's first Hackathon. More to come in 2016.

How are you working with any of the other RR Theme areas?
Many Resilient Region Champions attended the March 17 visioning meeting. Thank you!!
List any Goals or Recommendations within the plan that your team are struggling to address?
How to truly serve the needs of the region and make sure that the system is sustainable and scale-able.

Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

BLANDIN BROADBAND COMMUNITIES

Quarterly Narrative Report

Reports are due by the last day of each calendar quarter (March 31, June 30, September 30, **December 31**).

Organization Name: Resilient Region Connectivity/Virtual Highway

Report Completed By: Dr. Stacey Stockdill

Date Submitted: December 7, 2015

PC's FOR PEOPLE:
The 50 PCs have been donated to the LLBO and Leech Lake Boys and Girls Club project

Resilient Region Plan: Connectivity

Connectivity Issue
Connectivity: Extending high-speed internet access to the entire region increases telecommuting opportunities, provides greater access to customers and markets for businesses, and allows all residents access to civic resources and commerce.

Connectivity Issue Goal
Connectivity: The number of households in the region served by high-speed internet services rises from the current level of 40% to 95% served. The (region/rural areas) community is willing to invest to increase coverage. This will include both public and private investment in service.

Action Step 1A
Access: Promote, support and develop high-speed internet access throughout region for telecommuting, educational benefits, and supporting business activity.

Recommendation 2
Efficiency: **Local units of governments will work across political boundaries to share equipment costs/facilities for more efficient delivery of high-speed internet.**
Action Step 2A
Efficiency in installation: Lay conduit for fiber optics when upgrading sewer and water or digging trench.

Recommendation 3
Access for entrepreneurs: **Provide access to technology needs and support to retain businesses and encourage potential entrepreneurs**

Action Step 3A
Economic development: Determine the compatibility and interface between communications, smart grid technologies, and internet systems. Develop a recruiting initiative encouraging technology-oriented companies to explore opportunities offered in non-urban spaces.

Telecommuting: Create a business plan that facilitates legitimate telecommuting jobs and promotes high-speed internet connection in the region. Upgrade and expand high-speed internet infrastructure in housing so residents may work from home.
Action Step 3C
Map of access sites: Develop map or list of accessible sites within region to conduct web-type meetings, free Wi-Fi etc.

Action Step 3B

Recommendation 4
Access for children: **All school aged children will have access to a computer with high-speed internet capabilities.**
Action Step 4A
Support sites: Make available sites providing educational, internet, support, financial resources, etc.

Recommendation 5
Funding: **Identify and pursue state, federal, and philanthropic grants to fund connectivity recommendations.**