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3-29-2010

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Recommended Citation

Cookson, Matt and Mantz, Erika, "Statewide Collaborative Seeks Broadband Expansion" (2010). *UNH Today*. 3259.
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/3259>

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Statewide Collaborative Seeks Broadband Expansion

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Mar 29, 2010

DURHAM, N.H. -- Network New Hampshire Now (NNHN), a collaboration of public and private partners from across the state, submitted a \$66 million proposal to the National Telecommunications & Information Administration's Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (NTIA BTOP) to fund critically needed broadband expansion in New Hampshire. The proposal, submitted on behalf of NNHN by the University of New Hampshire March 26, calls for building a middle-mile fiber optic network that will connect homes, businesses and community organizations to help advance economic development, education, health care and public safety across the state. NTIA will decide by late summer whether to accept the proposal.

"The middle-mile fiber network is seen as a major opportunity for economic development. In particular, the network designed for New Hampshire has openness as its core purpose – it will enable affordable choices for all providers to reach areas of the state that have been difficult to service," said George Bald, commissioner of the state Department of Resources & Economic Development (DRED), one of the collaborating partners involved in the grant application. "The Network New Hampshire Now proposal puts the state on par with international fiber optic broadband capacity and capability."

The NNHN project will expand broadband in all 10 counties in New Hampshire in three ways. First, existing middle-mile fiber from the Seacoast, across to the southwest, up to the northwest, on to the North Country, and through the Lakes Region will be expanded and new fiber will be put in place. Second, an innovative model called FastRoads will be implemented to provide fiber optic connectivity in communities, starting with Rindge, in the southwest near the Massachusetts border and Enfield in western New Hampshire. Finally, the project includes the construction of a middle-mile microwave network for public safety, public television and mobile broadband communications on mountaintops across New Hampshire.

In addition to UNH and DRED, NNHN partners include the Community Development Finance Authority, all University System of New Hampshire institutions, the Community College System of New Hampshire, the Keene Municipal Broadband Committee, Southwest Regional Planning Commission, North Country Investment Corporation, the City of Keene, WCNH.net, state legislators, and telecommunications vendors.

"UNH is proud to submit this proposal on behalf of the citizens of New Hampshire," said Joanna Young, chief information officer at UNH. "A key strength of this proposal is the public and private partnership it represents, as well as its scope and reach."

The NNHN initiative is endorsed and supported by numerous entities that understand its potential to expand broadband in the state and provide high speed access to areas where such access will have an instant impact on economic development efforts. Numerous letters of

support have been received from hospitals, libraries, business associations, state legislators, and university presidents.

"The growth engine of education, health services, and economic development requires this technology to help New Hampshire be competitive today and in the future," said Scott Valcourt, the principal investigator at UNH for the grant proposal. "With NTIA funding, the dream of an open access, high speed broadband network will be realized."

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