RuralConnect: Broadband Success for Electric Cooperatives

Agenda

Monday, March 16

7:00 a.m.  Breakfast

8:00 a.m.  Why are You Here?  Doran Dennis, CoBank
There are many reasons cooperatives decide to pursue a broadband strategy. Learn about the forces you should consider as you make a decision regarding the deployment of a high-speed communications network.

8:15 a.m.  Understanding a Feasibility Study and the Resulting Business Plan  TBD, Vantage Point
A feasibility study evaluates all of the risks and opportunities associated with a broadband deployment. It typically evaluates all of the possibilities for the project, makes a recommendation for deployment, and serves as a basis for the business plan. This session will familiarize participants with all of the planning aspects of a broadband strategy that should be conducted prior to making the decision to move forward or abandon the project.

9:15 a.m.  Deploying the Right Technology  TBD, NRTC
While deploying fiber to every premise may be the most robust and future proof solution, it is also the most costly. A combination fiber and fixed wireless alternative may be a more cost effective solution for your most rural members. Explore the pros and cons of deploying different technologies to provide the bandwidth required by your membership while serving them in a cost effective manner.

10:00 a.m.  Break

10:30 a.m.  The Right Products, the Right People, the Right Pricing, the Right Promotion  TBD
Marketing is key to success in a competitive environment. To succeed, you must deliver products and services that your customers will buy, hire people who will maximize your returns, develop pricing that will entice and retain customers, and implement a promotion strategy that will achieve the necessary customer penetrations.

11:15 a.m.  Funding Your Broadband Project  Doran & Jonathan, CoBank/Conexon
This session will include a discussion of the different funding sources for a broadband project from private loans to government loans to grants. It will also include a brief description of the common loan structures available as well as a discussion of the lending requirements for providing financing.

12:00 p.m.  Lunch

1:00 p.m.  Business Structures, Legal and Regulatory  Ty Thompson, NRECA
What legal and regulatory issues arise by deploying a high-speed communications network? What are the tax and other legal/financial implications for each of the most common business structures? This session will address best practices in these areas.
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1:45 p.m.     Break

2:15 p.m.     Panel Discussion     CEO Panel
Hear from a panel of cooperatives that have recently deployed broadband. Learn how they came to the decision to deploy broadband, their road to success, and the pitfalls that you can and should avoid.

3:15 p.m.     Partnering for Success     NRECA
One way to mitigate risk and minimize cost is to work with others. These partnerships take many forms and participants will hear from experts about their experiences.

4:00 p.m.    Broadband Operations     Randy Klindt, Conexon
In a competitive environment, it is critically important to deliver a superior customer experience. From the initial stages of construction to the daily operations of a broadband company, people make a huge difference. In this session, learn about the roles that set you up for success, strategies for hiring the right people, and opportunities to develop your existing work force.

5:00 p.m.    Meeting Concludes