

2019 Annual Minnesota Broadband Profiles | Sibley County

Rank: 61 (out of 87) for broadband speeds 100/20 megabits per second (Mbps)

Background

Every year since 2017 Blandin Foundation has contracted with Ann Treacy of Treacy Information Services to synthesize data from the Minnesota Office of Broadband Development and broadband news from communities across the state to gauge progress toward the state broadband goals (2022: 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up and 2026: 100 Mbps down and 20 Mbps up).

Leaders can use this information to plan and act to improve broadband access and use in their communities.

Sibley County: data and community action

Despite a region-wide focus on broadband, Sibley is unlikely to meet the 2022 or 2026 Minnesota speed goals. But the region-wide focus will keep the vision alive.

Percentage of Served Population by Speed and Date			
	2019	2018	2017
100/20 (2026 goal)	62.87	62.84	51.01
25/3 (2022 goal)	73.59	63.47	53.60

Sibley County has benefited from three state grants:

- 2017 - Winthrop Telephone Company, Inc. - Cornish Township FTTP Project – GRANT \$365,895** This last mile project will serve 58 unserved households and 2 unserved businesses in Cornish Township located in Sibley County in south central Minnesota. In a funding partnership with the State of Minnesota, Winthrop Telephone Company, Inc. will improve broadband service levels to 1 Gbps down and 1 Gbps up, exceeding the 2026 state speed goal. The 60 locations are primarily agricultural-related sites, which given the size and technical sophistication of these operations, need advanced broadband to remain vital and competitive.
- 2015 - MVTV Wireless Middle Mile -- Grant award: \$808,080** This project is a Middle Mile broadband infrastructure buildout to upgrade backhaul capacity between site locations within 20 southwestern Minnesota counties: Blue Earth, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Meeker, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Rock, Redwood, Renville, Sibley Swift, Watonwan, and Yellow Medicine.
- 2014 - R-S Fiber Cooperative, FTTH Project** Award: \$1 million. Total project cost: \$3.32 million. Impact: Service to 62 unserved and 536 underserved locations in Sibley and Renville counties. The project is part of a larger cooperative project estimated at \$38.46 million that will upgrade broadband services to several thousand locations in the region.



Sibley County (along with Renville) is a community with many [ups and downs](#)¹ in their broadband story. Ten years ago, residents were getting fed up with poor connectivity. To address the issue, a joint Powers Board was formed that ultimately included all seven cities in Sibley county as well as the city of Fairfax in Renville County.

In 2010, Blandin Foundation awarded the group a feasibility study grant, and the JPB used the study results to educate the public about the need and opportunity for building a world-class network, and to seek financing.

In the fall of 2012, concerned about the project's plan for how to structure the project's debt service reserve fund, the Sibley Board of Commissioners, in a 3-2 vote, passed a resolution to withdraw from the JPB.

Undaunted, immediately following this vote, a group of farmers walked across the street and in an impromptu meeting, vowed to continue the effort by "going back to their roots" as one of them said, and form a coop.

[RS Fiber](#)² Coop hired Hiawatha Broadband Corporation (HBC) to build and operate the gigabit fiber-to-the-premise (FTTP) network when the project was launched, and in June of this year, RS Fiber announced the formation of a long-term operating relationship with HBC.

Sibley County was featured in a case study Blandin published on the community return on public investment in broadband...

The following investments have been made in the community:

- \$8.7 million Generally Obligated Tax Abatement Bond (between Sibley and Renville Counties)
- \$1 million Minnesota Border-to-Border Broadband Grant (2015) to RS Fiber
- \$150,011 from Blandin Foundation for broadband adoption
- **Total: \$9,850,011**

[Using formulas](#)³ devised to measure impact of broadband access, Sibley County has the potential to realize as a return on that investment:

- A combined household economic benefit of broadband of \$32,774,600 annually
- A combined increase in residential real estate value of \$104,825,572

Sibley County could benefit from future grants. In 2019, Winthrop Telephone applied to upgrade service in Sibley. (That doesn't mean they will get the grant; they have only applied.)

¹ <https://ilsr.org/report-mn-rural-fiber/>

² <https://blandinonbroadband.org/2016/09/27/blandin-broadband-community-tour-rs-fiber-build-innovation-through-schools-training-and-center/>

³ <https://blandinfoundation.org/learn/research-rural/broadband-resources/broadband-initiative/measuring-impact-broadband-5-rural-mn-communities/return-on-investment/#formulating-broadband-value>

Checklist:

- 100/20 ranking: 61
- 25/3 ranking: 68
- Has worked with Blandin: yes
- Has received a MN Broadband grant: yes
- Household density: 6.6
- Number of providers: 10

Details:

- [RS Fiber](#) has worked with the Blandin Foundation
- Find more articles on broadband in Sibley County (<http://tinyurl.com/ztm6c9n>)
- Districts: CD 7
Senate: 18
House: 18B
- [Find your reps⁴](#)

Analysis: Code Red

- Red (yikes)
- Yellow (warning)
- Green (good shape)

⁴ <https://www.gis.leg.mn/iMaps/districts/>