

## **Partnership for a ConnectedMN Awards \$2.1 Million in Grants to Organizations Serving Digital Access Needs of Minnesota Students**

*Communities throughout state positioned to address student needs for technology and resources*

MINNEAPOLIS (September 23, 2020) – To address digital inequities faced by students in Minnesota, [Partnership for a ConnectedMN](#), a public-private partnership of private businesses, philanthropic entities and community leaders, today announced that it has awarded \$2.1 million in grants to 23 nonprofits serving the connectivity needs of students and their families. ConnectedMN grants will serve an estimated 68,000 students and families in urban and rural communities, who will gain access to computing devices, critical support services and the internet.

ConnectedMN was founded by Best Buy, Comcast, Blandin Foundation, Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation and the Minnesota Business Partnership, in collaboration with the administration of Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan. In June, ConnectedMN [announced](#) that their goal was to bring technology and internet access to students most challenged by the sudden shift to online school, including low-income families, Indigenous and students of color, and communities across both urban and rural Minnesota.

“The challenges facing our communities are significant — particularly for families with school-age children, and especially for families of color and lower income families,” said Governor Walz. “Ensuring that each and every student receives the best education possible must be a top priority for all of us. We cannot let the lack of a device or connectivity stand in the way of educational opportunity for Minnesota’s students. I commend the willingness of philanthropy, business, and nonprofits to come together to help address these urgent needs and put students first.”

Among the 23 organizations stepping up to ensure distance learning success through ConnectedMN grant funds are 16 nonprofits, one tribal entity, and six rural-based Minnesota Education Technology Network members serving numerous school districts across multiple counties. With these resources, grant recipients are providing access to devices, internet connectivity, supportive mentors, coaching, and tech support.

“What’s an afterthought for most of us, wi-fi connection and access to technology, shouldn’t be a dream for Minnesota children facing homelessness,” said Monica Nilsson, Executive Director at Haven Housing, a ConnectedMN grant recipient. “A ConnectedMN grant will allow homeless children, those with the fewest resources, connectivity, stability and consistent support to complete their homework, even when they don’t have a home.”

ConnectedMN came together quickly to raise funds and address the clear and growing challenges students are facing at school and at home. Grant recipients were chosen by a review committee comprised of community members with a broad range of geographic, community and education and education technology expertise. Without action to address digital access disparities, Minnesota students will continue to face challenges when learning at school and at home. ConnectedMN is committed to meeting the needs of students impacted by COVID-19 while also finding long-term solutions to ensure that they have equitable access to education through distance learning.

Additional funders for the Partnership include Accenture, Allianz Life Insurance Company, Andersen Corporation, Boston Scientific, Bush Foundation, Ecolab Foundation, EY, F. R. Bigelow Foundation, Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation, Land O’Lakes, The Margaret A. Cargill Foundation Fund at the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation, Mardag Foundation, Minneapolis Foundation, Protolabs

Foundation, Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation, Securian Financial, SPS Commerce Foundation, Vantage Financial, Xcel Energy, and individual donors who contributed through [GiveMN](#).

**Grants have been awarded to:**

- Aeon
- Austin Aspires
- Boys & Girls Club of the Leech Lake Area
- Centro Tyrone Guzman
- Change Inc.
- East Central MN Education Cable Cooperative
- FamilyMeans
- Haven Housing
- Itasca Area Schools Collaborative
- Little Crow Tele-media Network
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation - Duluth
- Minisinaakwaang Leadership Academy
- MN Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs
- Neighborhood House
- New Vision Foundation
- Northfield Healthy Community Initiative
- NW-LINKS
- Port Group Homes
- Project FINE
- Project for Pride in Living
- ResourceWest
- South Central Regional Area Telecommunications System / South Central Service Cooperative
- Southwest West Central Service Cooperative

For more information about ConnectedMN and how businesses, philanthropic organizations and individuals can get involved, visit [connectedmn.us](http://connectedmn.us).

For additional questions or media inquiries, please contact [connectedmn@spmcf.org](mailto:connectedmn@spmcf.org).

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