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Commissioner

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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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Developments to Improve Broadband in Alaska

Wednesday, July 20, 2022 (ANCHORAGE, AK) – The Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED) Office of Broadband announced two actions this week to advance the planning and development of improved broadband access throughout Alaska. The Office of Broadband submitted to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) the state's application for a new Digital Equity Planning Grant and has partnered with the Rasmuson Foundation to administer the accompanying digital equity planning process over the next 10 months.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) authorized \$65 billion in public investment to improve broadband access, infrastructure, and digital equity throughout the country. This funding included \$2.6 billion to implement the new Digital Equity Act (DEA) designed to help states improve digital inclusion and equity within historically underserved communities and populations. The state expects to receive an initial \$567,000 grant to prepare Alaska's digital equity plan. The plan will identify existing barriers to broadband access, outline potential solutions to eliminating them, and will establish the foundation for supplemental federal funding to build Alaska's broadband capacity and improve digital equity.

"Access to broadband for all Alaskans has been a priority of my administration," said **Governor Mike Dunleavy**. "Digital equity means unprecedented access for our residents to work, learn, and receive health care, even in the most remote areas of the state."

The Office of Broadband has partnered with the Rasmuson Foundation to assist in the development of the state's Digital Equity Plan. Operating as the State's designated administering entity, the Foundation will manage a number of activities to include conducting stakeholder outreach, holding statewide listening sessions, and facilitating the data collection required to develop a comprehensive plan.

"I am so thankful for the partnership with the Rasmuson Foundation. Their willingness to serve as administering entity preserves the eligibility of Tribal, municipal, and other non-profit entities to receive funding through upcoming Digital Equity Capacity and Competitive grant programs," said **DCCED Commissioner Julie Sande**.

The Rasmuson Foundation has agreed to supplement these federally funded efforts with additional foundation staff and financial resources, allowing 100% of the state's planning grant to go towards public outreach and stakeholder activities.

"Numerous Alaska communities face prohibitive broadband costs or lagging speeds which results in a meaningful or complete lack of access to tools broadly taken for granted elsewhere," said **Rasmuson**

Foundation CEO Diane Kaplan. “Impaired broadband access relates to so many core Rasmuson Foundation grantmaking areas like healthcare, economic development, arts, culture, and education. The foundation wants to assist the State and Alaska Tribes with taking advantage of this once-in-a-generation opportunity.”

Other significant partners in this broadband planning effort include the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), Tribal entities, the Alaska Municipal League (AML), local governments and representative non-profit organizations across Alaska.

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