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Mackenzie Named to Head State Broadband Office

*~New office will guide state
broadband
policy and development~*

ST. PAUL – Gov. Mark Dayton named Danna MacKenzie executive director of the Office of Broadband Development, a new state entity that was created during the 2013 legislative session to direct broadband planning and policy statewide.

Mackenzie, who has 18 years of experience with broadband issues in rural Minnesota, has been the director of information systems for Cook County in Grand Marais since 1998. She has been an administrator on the Cook County Broadband Commission since 2009 and a member of the Blandin Broadband Strategy Board since 2005. She also is a member of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband, which was created in 2011 to increase broadband access in Minnesota.

"Danna is an outstanding choice, with the leadership skills and experience to direct broadband growth in the state," said Katie Clark Sieben, commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), which will oversee the office. "She is highly regarded in the broadband community and has a unique ability to balance

community development and business interests.”

Broadband – or high-speed Internet access – is considered a key economic development tool, with a number of national studies finding that communities with access to broadband have a competitive advantage over areas that don’t have broadband.

Increasingly, corporate site selectors expect broadband services to be available in communities where they are considering expansion projects. In many communities, broadband is considered an important piece of the local infrastructure – like gas, water, electricity, wastewater and telecommunications.

Specifically, the Legislature wants the office to collaborate on the development of broadband infrastructure, plan strategy, find federal funding for expansion, recommend policies to improve access, and regularly report on its progress.

MacKenzie, who grew up in the Twin Cities, has a bachelor’s degree in organizational management and leadership from Concordia University in St. Paul. She was a public policy fellow at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota in 2011.

DEED is the state’s principal economic development agency, promoting business recruitment, expansion and retention, workforce development, international trade and community development. For more details about the agency and our services, visit us at <http://mn.gov/deed/>. Follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/mndeed.