

STAFF:**Kari McCann Boutell**
President**Laura Riordan Berardi**
Member Services Coordinator**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:****Matt Mendenhall**
Chair**Nicole Brua-Behrens**
Vice Chair**Kaye Englin**
Secretary**Gina Rooney**
Treasurer**Rob Barron**
At-Large**Beth Jones**
At-Large**Karla Twedt-Ball**
At-Large

March 20, 2023

To whom it may concern:

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Iowa Council of Foundations, to submit this letter of support for the designation of the Grinnell Newburg School District as a Broadband Intervention Zone.

The Iowa Council of Foundations supports a network of more than 70 grantmakers throughout Iowa that work to solve problems and provide solutions for their community's challenges. Our Grinnell-area funder members have been particularly active in the Grinnell Education Partnership, which is part of the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. This important work is helping ensure all children – regardless of economic or access barriers – are reaching crucial reading literacy milestones by the end of third grade. As you well know, in today's world access to the internet is essential for students to succeed.

Making broadband readily available in this community would significantly bolster the reach of this program, which is already established and supporting students. The Campaign for Grade-Level reading has noted many successes; but we also saw the effects the pandemic had on students who no longer had access to in-person educational programming – and especially those without easy access to online instruction and supports. Our Grinnell partners have been working hard to reach all area students to help them succeed; bringing broadband to them would remove a significant hurdle.

You can learn more about the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading at <https://gradelevelreading.net/>. I'm also happy to answer any questions you have; please don't hesitate to contact me at 515-989-1188.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kari McCann Boutell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kari McCann Boutell
President, Iowa Council of Foundations



March 17, 2023

Re: Letter of support, the Grinnell-Newburg Community School District Application, OCIO Invitation to Qualify for a Broadband Intervention Zone

To: Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Iowa:

The national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (CGLR) is a network of 380+ communities across the country united in the shared agenda of addressing intergenerational poverty through education. The community of Grinnell, Iowa joined our network in 2015 and is led by the Grinnell Education Partnership (GEP) with Grinnell-Newburg Community School District as a primary partner. This letter is in support of the community's application to qualify as a Broadband Intervention Zone.

The primary focus of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is to provide our network with tools, resources, and professional development towards ensuring positive outcomes in literacy for children. We have emerged from the pandemic with a new understanding of what children need to be successful in school and the urgency became clear when many schools and out-of-school learning providers switched to virtual learning formats. Access to affordable internet service is essential for K - 12th grade student success and other activities leading to social mobility for families with low incomes. One of the main themes in our engagement efforts this year is digital equity and digital connectivity initiatives. We became aware of the exemplary work by the Grinnell Education Partnership and in 2022 recognized the community's efforts with Pacesetter's honors, our annual recognition of coalitions. Most recently, we featured the Grinnell Education Partnership team, the superintendent of Grinnell-Newburg Community School District, and the general manager of the local internet provider, Mahaska Communication Group (MCG), in one of our national webinars. The team shared how their coalition mobilized in a strategic and innovative way to provide devices and internet access to students and families in the community.

The work of the coalition in Grinnell continues and is essential for ensuring all students have what they need to achieve graduation and step successfully into the workforce. As a leader in demonstrating both the importance of digital connectivity and how communities can come together to apply solutions, the national Campaign for Grade-Level supports Grinnell-Newburg School District, MCG, and the GEP with taking the necessary steps to deepen impact for children and families. Equitable internet access is critically important for education and designation as a Broadband Intervention Zone further ensures this community can continue working towards their collective goal.

Sincerely,

Malai Amfahr,
Senior Program Officer, Constituency Outreach and Engagement

Dan F. Agnew
Mayor, City of Grinnell
520 Fourth Avenue
Grinnell, Iowa 50112

March 22, 2023

To the Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Iowa:

Grinnell, Iowa is submitting an application to the OCIO to Qualify for a Broadband Intervention Zone. We have been identified as a geographic area of concern for existing broadband availability. We request that a Broadband Intervention Zone be established for the area in and around our community. Based on the Iowa Broadband Map v.5, this area is served by a single broadband provider and with speeds that do not meet the required 100/20 minimum threshold for needed connectivity.

We have students unable to complete assignments satisfactorily because of internet speed. We have employees who struggle to complete their workloads when working from home because of slow broadband speed. These individuals and families are being penalized due to their physical residence location. We need to do better.

It is my hope that the ITQ application and review by OCIO will designate Grinnell as a geographic Intervention Zone for the next broadband grant program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan F. Agnew", written in a cursive style.

Dan F. Agnew, Mayor



March 21, 2023

To: Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program

From: Steve Langerud, Executive Director *SL*

Re: Support of Broadband Access

Mayflower Homes, Inc. in Grinnell, Iowa, seeks to support the effort to increase broadband access in rural Iowa.

Mayflower is a senior living community that employs about 120 people and serves approximately 240 residents in independent living, assisted living, and nursing care. Access to reliable and affordable internet services is crucial for our business.

Business functions and vendor relationships rely on internet speed and reliability. To compete in today's business environment, high-speed and reliable internet is not a luxury but a requirement.

Residents see internet speed and reliability as critical utilities in their daily lives. Our residents move to the Mayflower from all over the United States, and having less than top-quality internet service is not attractive to them.

Mayflower Homes, Inc.
616 Broad Street, Grinnell, IA 50112
Phone (641) 236-6151
Fax (641) 236-6154
www.mayflowerhomes.com



Bayer Crop Science

Highway 6

Grinnell, IA 50112

641-236-6179

My name is Matt Moyer, and I am Production Lead of Bayer Crop Science located in Grinnell, Iowa. Bayer employs roughly 160 people (in Grinnell) and we have been part of the local community for over 80 years. Dependable internet is an issue at our site as we sit about five miles east of town. This is also an issue for our employees who live in rural households outside of Grinnell. This causes frustration for our employees, their families, and our customers. Over the past three years we have been forced to enable a business continuity plan seven times as the internet has been out. We simply cannot pause our operations waiting for the issue to be resolved, so we implement a manual method that leads to an increased potential for quality concerns, inventory concerns, and general communication lapses. On a more personal level, employees are often at work frustrated by the lack of consistency with their internet providers at home as it causes issues for children/students in their homes, as well as significant others who have moved to a hybrid working model.

As mentioned above, a dependable, effective, and affordable internet connectivity is necessary for our business and our employees in our rural community. Improvements here would have a tremendous impact on numerous local businesses, homeowners, and students across Grinnell/Poweshiek County. All of which would have a positive impact on the City of Grinnell, our home, as well.

Matt Moyer

Grinnell-Newburg School Foundation
1530 Penrose Street
Grinnell IA 50112
641-990-8166



My name is Elizabeth Hansen, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Grinnell-Newburg School Foundation in Grinnell, Iowa. GNSF is a nonprofit organization established in 2006 to raise funds to support academic excellence in the Grinnell-Newburg schools. Grinnell is a 1 to 1 district and students in grades 5-12 are allowed to take home their devices to enhance their learning.

Digital Equity is essential for school participation, employment, learning, and access to essential services. In 2020, GNSF raised over \$40,000 to fund hotspots and home wifi for families when the pandemic closed our schools and classes went online. We continue to support families who are unable to afford wifi because all students must have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy. GNSF is able to assist students to continue their learning, as long as they live in the city of Grinnell or within the reach of a hotspot.

Rural students are at a distinct disadvantage. The GNCSO district covers 224 square miles, and if our rural families are able to find wifi, it simply is not affordable and is often unreliable. This digital divide exists for families who are unable to afford pricey wifi, and also extends to where they live. Please give unserved Iowa students to opportunity to learn on par with their peers.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Hansen
Executive Director, Grinnell-Newburg School Foundation.



March 16, 2023

RE: OCID Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Program

Dear Program Staff,

This letter is written in support of the Grinnell-Newburg School District's application to the OCIO Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program. Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation (GPCF) and the district partner with many other community organizations and businesses to enhance the lives of individuals and families living in and around the Grinnell community as well as provide focused support to families in need.

Grinnell has pockets of poverty where many social and economic barriers exist including limited broadband access mainly because families cannot afford the service. The same area of the community that reports lower numbers of broadband access has also received the Opportunity Zone Federal designation. The percentage of households living in poverty in Grinnell's Opportunity Zone is 5% higher than the state average and the median household income is 39% lower than the state of Iowa. Median home value in the Opportunity Zone is 31% lower than the median home value for the state of Iowa. These indicators highlight some of the social and economic barriers that some families in Grinnell experience.

GPCF has worked with the school district on broadband access in the past and will continue to be a partner providing financial and staff support through the Grinnell Education Partnership or new work groups focused on digital equity and broadband access. Thank you for your consideration of the Grinnell-Newburg School District's request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Brua-Behrens", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Nicole Brua-Behrens
Executive Director



Anne F. Harris
President

Nollen House
1121 Park Street
Grinnell, IA 50112

Office: 641-269-3000
Email: harrisanne@grinnell.edu

grinnell.edu

March 20, 2023

Office of the Chief Information Officer
200 E. Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

Subject: The Grinnell-Newburg Community School District Application in Response to the OCIO
Invitation to Qualify for a Broadband Intervention Zone.

To the Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Iowa:

As one of Grinnell's major employers and anchor institutions, we are writing in support of the Grinnell-Newburg Community School District application regarding the OCIO Invitation to Qualify for a Broadband Intervention Zone to address local unserved and underserved areas.

Grinnell College is one of Grinnell's largest employers with over 800 employees – the majority of whom reside in the rural city of Grinnell or the surrounding rural areas of Poweshiek and Jasper Counties. As a rural business, reliable fast broadband is important for the regular operations of the college. We have experienced significant challenges in delivering the world class instruction for which our institution is known due to limitations of rural broadband connectivity in our surrounding area. For example, some faculty were not able to teach effectively when required to do so remotely during the pandemic, and staff with critical infrastructure roles continue to be hampered in what can be done remotely. This not only has a negative impact on delivering the mission of the college, but also on our attempts to ensure equitable workplace engagement. In the more remote-centric workforce environment in which we find ourselves post-pandemic, reliable and fast broadband availability is now a critical part of our employee recruitment, retention, and development efforts. As an internationally recognized institution, we seek to attract and retain professionals from across the country and around the world. These potential community members are making choices about whether to settle in central Iowa with their families – robust broadband is a key consideration for these people who recognize as we do the impacts on quality of life: education and professional development, health, safety, recreation, and spousal employment. Attracting a technology workforce is particularly challenging when considering both our rural location and competition with tech companies nationwide. To this end, we must be creative in potential solutions such as our recently developed apprenticeship-style employment program that provides recent graduates an applied work-based skill-building opportunity. This program will grow our own technology workforce with young graduates who would consider staying local as they launch their careers. The success of attracting and retaining this next generation of technology professional requires access to robust broadband.

Apart from our direct business needs, we also recognize that the vitality of Grinnell College is closely linked with the vitality of our hometown. For this reason, we take our role as an anchor institution



Grinnell College

Office of the President

Anne F. Harris
President

Nollen House
1121 Park Street
Grinnell, IA 50112

Office: 641-269-3000
Email: harrisanne@grinnell.edu

grinnell.edu

seriously and are committed to collaborating with other community organizations to address local economic and quality of life issues. Most recently, one of these collaborations has been aimed at addressing rural digital equity. Beginning with the pandemic, it became clear to local stakeholders that broadband was a truly critical community infrastructure and a vital resource for individuals and families – particularly those in low income and rural households. For this reason, a cross-sector collaborative quickly activated to expand digital access, which is work that continues to develop. We are proud that this collaboration has been recognized as a national model in public-private partnerships serving youth and families, and together we view this OCIO qualification opportunity as an important step in taking that work to the next level. In addition to Grinnell College, digital equity partner organizations include the Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation, the Grinnell Newburg School Foundation, the Grinnell-Newburg Community School District, and Mahaska Communications Group (MCG).

We believe that equitable access to robust broadband will be transformative to our rural community. Please accept our thanks for your interest and support on behalf of rural Iowans and their access to robust broadband.

Sincerely,

Anne F. Harris
President

Monica Chavez-Silva
Vice President of Community Engagement and
Strategic Planning

Dave Robinson
Chief Information Officer



March 27, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

The Grinnell Area Chamber of Commerce is pleased to provide this letter of support on behalf of our partners at the Grinnell Newburg School District for the Broadband Invitation to Qualify program.

We first realized broadband was a critical issue in and around the Grinnell community nearly a decade ago. Since that time, the Chamber has partnered with a number of local businesses and organizations - including the School District - to better understand, and ultimately expand, broadband access in our community.

We are thrilled with the progress made to date, thanks in large part to our colleagues at Mahaska Communications Group (MCG); however, we know there is more work to be done to ensure our entire community and surrounding area, including that of our more rural school district, have adequate and secure access to broadband.

Through my personal work and role with the Empower Rural Iowa Connect task force, we know how critical broadband access is across our state. I am personally thrilled that the State is taking such an active role in improving these access points for businesses, organizations and individuals across Iowa.

We hope that this process through the Empower Rural Iowa broadband program will allow for Grinnell and its surrounding area to be recognized as a continued area of need for expansion of broadband services.

With thanks for your partnership and consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rachael Kinnick", written over a horizontal line.

Rachael Kinnick
President & CEO
Grinnell Area Chamber of Commerce



POWESHIEK COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

Board of Health

Diana Dawley, Chair

Kurt Brennan

Lauren Graham, MD

Melissa Strovers

Mary Lang

Public Health

Shauna Callaway, Dir

Deb Frakers, RN

Stephanie Crawford, RN

Brooke Holder, RN

Kristy Reedy, Office

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Shauna Callaway, Director of Public Health and Wellness at UnityPoint Health Grinnell. My healthcare organization employs approximately 300 individuals and has been a respected partner in the community for several decades.

Attracting and retaining qualified healthcare workers and employees has become increasingly difficult. One of the challenges to this is our community's inability to provide affordable, reliable internet services. Potential employees do not choose to relocate to areas that do not have good access to the internet. Similarly, we have lost several employees who have moved to more urban areas where internet is more readily available.

I am in support of the buildout of high-speed internet in rural areas which will have a positive impact on businesses, education, and health monitoring in our communities.

Sincerely,
Shauna Callaway

210 4th Avenue Grinnell, IA 50112 (641) 236-2385 –
Phone | (641)
236-2599 - Fax



March 23, 2023

To the Office of the Chief Information Center:

The Claude W. and Dolly Ahrens Foundation is pleased to express its support for the Grinnell-Newburg School District's application to qualify for an Empower Rural Iowa Broadband grant. We are a private foundation that has provided over \$20 million dollars in funding to many local organizations and community projects, working in close partnership with many of our nonprofit partners to help improve the quality of life here in the local area.

Grinnell is a remarkable community with industry, education, arts, culture and history at its very core. The buildout of rural broadband would vastly improve access to affordable internet services for workers and students in Grinnell. This will also help attract and retain additional individuals and families to help grow our community.

Thank you for the consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Gosselink".

Julie Gosselink
President & CEO



UnityPoint Health Grinnell Regional Medical Center

March 20, 2023

RE: Empower rural Iowa Grant Program, Grinnell Support

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Jennifer Havens, and I am the President and CEO of UnityPoint Health Grinnell Regional Medical Center. As the only hospital in the county, our ability to recruit physicians and new team members relies heavily on the quality of our local school district.

As technology evolves, and students must rely on internet to be successful, it is critical that every child have equal access to broadband services. MCG recently made broadband access a possibility for every Grinnellian, yet not every one can afford to have this service in their homes. When this happens, school aged children are at a disadvantage.

Therefore, I am in full support of the Grinnell-Newburg Community School District's application for this grant program and their intent to utilize funding to incent broadband providers to help with household internet access. In addition, as health care evolves, and more telehealth services become available, having every home equipped with adequate internet connection could make a big difference to the health of our community.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Havens, CEO