

# Connections

November 2024

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric

Volume 28, Issue 11

## Operation Round Up: thanks members for nearly \$1 million local reasons

During this month of Thanksgiving, we reflect upon all of the good things possible from Operation Round Up and Federated members enrolled in the program.

Started in 1994, Federated members began participating as their electric bills are “rounded up” to the nearest dollar amount. For example, an electric bill of \$65.75 is rounded up to \$66. The extra 25 cents goes into the Operation Round Up Trust Fund.

Small change adds up! Since 1995, nearly a million dollars — \$982,854 — was returned to local organizations, schools, fire departments, ambulance services and scholarships. About 75 percent of Federated members participate in this local program.

In addition, unclaimed capital credits from Federated members who died or moved who we cannot locate them are transferred to Operation Round Up to create spring high school senior scholarships. What started as seven \$600 scholarships has grown to nine \$700 scholarships for the sons or daughters of Federated members. A \$900 scholarship is also awarded with preference to a Jackson or Martin County student attending Minnesota West Community & Technical College in Jackson enrolled in the lineworker or electrician programs. Scholarship amounts have totaled \$149,000 helping 256 students over the past 29 years. Operation Round Up helped 1,225 applicants since 1995.

The average Federated member’s annual contribution amounts to \$6 a year or the maximum is \$11.88 a year. If your electric bill is not rounded up and you want to join the cooperative effort to help our local organizations, call Federated during business hours, drop a note with your bill payment or e-mail [billing@federatedrea.coop](mailto:billing@federatedrea.coop).

Federated also thanks our volunteer Federated members who currently serve on the Trust Board:

- President Stuart Smart, Welcome, for District 5



**Federated Trust Board awarded \$26,095 in funding at its fall meeting. Trust Board Officers holding the big check are: Dawn Skow, secretary/treasurer; Stuart Smart, president; and Ruth Dicks, vice president. See Page 5 for the latest recipients.**

- Vice President Ruth Dicks, Lakefield, for District 1
- Secretary/Treasurer Dawn Skow, Alpha, for District 4
- Jessica Williams, Jackson, for District 2
- Lea Hendrichs, Jackson, for District 3
- Jessica Sauck, Truman, for District 6
- Robert Poush, Fairmont, for District At-large.

The Trust Board meets in the spring and fall to review applications. The application is available at [www.federatedrea.coop](http://www.federatedrea.coop); otherwise, call or e-mail [info@federatedrea.coop](mailto:info@federatedrea.coop) to request a hard copy. The application lists eligible and ineligible entities and use of funds. See Page 5 for this fall’s recipients. The next application deadline is February 17, 2025; the scholarship deadline for 2025 high school seniors is April 1 with applications in the February electric bills.

Thank you Federated members for making a difference! 🙏

### At A Glance



Take time for the co-op satisfaction e-mail survey

Please complete our member satisfaction survey. Your feedback helps us improve. The week of November 11 you may receive an e-mail from [noreply-cfigroup@qualtrics-survey.com](mailto:noreply-cfigroup@qualtrics-survey.com). This e-mail will be sent by the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI®). Responses are anonymous. Thank you! 🙏



**Energy Wise**

# Does your electrical panel pass today's safety standards? Tax incentive exists to upgrade it

Are you taxing your electrical panel? Blowing fuses often? Tripping breakers too much? Lights dimming when a microwave or other major appliance runs?

Take advantage of a federal tax incentive to boost safety and upgrade your home's electrical panel. A home's electrical panel features a lifespan of 25 to 40 years. It may be time to hire an electrician to upgrade your home for safety's sake and for the addition of more electrical devices. Plus, your insurance company may offer lower premiums for a new electrical panel due to less risk.

Let's look at some of the electrical warning signs so you can make some upgrades.

1. Do you often trip the same electrical breaker or fuse? That could be a sign of overloading on a circuit or a bad breaker. Breakers wear out over time.

2. Homes built before 1960 used fuses, instead of circuit breakers. If you still have a panel with fuses, upgrade to a larger size panel with breakers.

3. Does your electrical panel show signs of rust, water damage or is broken? Do not touch. It's time for an electrician.

4. Do you use power strips in several rooms because not enough outlets exist for today's technology? Extension cords and power strips should be temporary and not permanent solutions. Extension cords should not be run through walls or different floors. It's time for an electrician.

5. If you smell burning plastic, see if it is coming from an overloaded outlet or your electrical panel. If it's overpowering, call 911 if a fire has started.



**Does blowing the same fuse frequently cause you to blow your fuse personally? That's a sign you need work done on your electrical panel. Upgrade your fuse panel box to circuit breakers for priceless safety reasons and reap a federal tax credit up to \$600.**

6. Is your outlet, plug or circuit breaker overheating? Is it warm or hot to the touch? This indicates a severe malfunction requiring an electrician.

7. Do your lights flicker or dim when turning on an appliance? For example, does this occur when the dishwasher, microwave or a major appliance starts? This indicates too much power is being drawn from a circuit. An electrician is needed to add more circuits or upgrade from a 60 or 100-amp panel to a 200-amp panel.

8. Adding a new electrical load to the house? If you are adding an electric water heater, solar, electric vehicle, freezer or central air/heat pump, you may need to update your electrical panel.

9. See major sparks when plugging something in? See a burnt outlet? Heed these warning signs and call your local electrician.

10. Remodeling? It's the perfect time to upgrade the old wiring and junction boxes first.

The wiring upgrade can include adding a ground fault circuit interrupter at the panel to prevent electrical shocks. If you are adding a backup generator, an electrical transfer switch is required too; this keeps the co-op's line crews safe during outage restoration.


Investing in a new electrical panel now can save you the heartache from a shock or electrical fire, which is priceless. In addition, a federal tax credit exists for 30 percent of the panel upgrade — up to \$600. A typical upgrade for a home could range from \$2,000 to \$5,000. You'll then have a safer, more efficient electrical home that boosts your house's resale value. (E)

# Stop with the broom and mop!

## Clean up hard floors with cordless wet dry vacuum cleaner/mop

Make cleanup a breeze without getting on your knees! The old way of cleaning the kitchen floor: sweep first and then down on your knees to mop. You ended up going over the floors twice, which is so time consuming and labor intensive!

Now a cordless wet dry vacuum tackles the mud, spilled food, floor grit and cleans it all at once. Check out the Tineco iFloor 2. Vacuum and wash the floor all at the same time, whether you have hardwood, tile, laminate, vinyl or marble floors.

Fill the tank with fresh water and the cleaning solution. Go over the floor. Dog hair, food and grit is sucked up and drops to the bottom tray. Dirty water goes to a different tank for dumping. When you are done, the self-clean flushes the brush roller. The vacuum suction sucks up the majority of the water for a fast, streak-free dry floor. Found a stubborn sticky spot on the floor? Use the spot-mode button. Plus, it's lightweight (only 8 pounds) and self propelled with a rechargeable runtime of 22 minutes. Find the Tineco2 at Walmart, Best Buy or Amazon for about \$200. Several brands exist with various price ranges and features. 



**Mopping magic!**  
Suck up dirt, pet hair and spilled food, plus mop at the same time!  
Add the Tineco iFloor2 to your clean team!

## Safety


### Be seeing green! Protect the padmount 'machine'

Protect your lean, green machine that delivers power to you! The green padmount transformer brings electricity from underground power lines to many homes, farms or businesses.

The padmount transformer is housed in a green steel cabinet on a concrete pad at ground level. It converts high-voltage electricity to a lower voltage that can be used by the co-op member. The interior contains high-voltage components that are dangerous to touch.

Keep these electrical safety tips in mind for padmount transformers:

- Avoid contact with the padmount transformer. Never touch or enter open, damaged or unlocked cabinets.
- Instruct younger family members to not play on top or around any electrical infrastructure.
- Immediately report damaged or open equipment to 911 and the electrical cooperative. The most common damages with padmount transformers occur in the winter when snow is being moved where it was covered by a snow drift. However, vehicle and farm accidents can also push the cabinet off the concrete pad exposing live wires.

Use caution around padmount transformers to keep family and friends safe, plus prevent power outages. 



**Keep an eye out for the green padmount transformer cabinets when moving snow, mowing and doing farm tillage. Never make a snow pile on top of it either in case line crews need to access it during an outage.**

# Federated Focus

## Operation Round Up deadline



The next Operation Round Up deadline when funds will be distributed

is in the spring. The application deadline is February 17, 2025. Applications can be found at [www.federatedrea.coop](http://www.federatedrea.coop). Otherwise, call the office or e-mail [info@Federatedrea.coop](mailto:info@Federatedrea.coop) to request one. See the November recipients listed on Page 5.

## Power through dirty dishes!



The holidays mean more baking and dirty dishes, plus more house cleaning and guest showers. Be ready with a new water heater from Federated. Don't risk a cold shower with a water heater more than 20 years old! Upgrade today before it leaks or washes out in its performance. Federated's water heaters cost \$589, plus tax, and feature free installation! The only extra charge is if you want us to haul the old one away for \$75 or \$25 for a gas conversion wiring/breaker. Call the co-op to schedule the installation on a date that works for you.

## Hate the old fridge or freezer?



Wait no more! Buy a new Energy Star refrigerator or freezer. Receive a \$75 Federated rebate with proof of recycling the old unit. Find the rebate form on our website. Otherwise, call or e-mail us to mail it to you. Check out the other rebates for Energy Star dehumidifier and heat pumps too! ☺



Scott Reimer

# Manager's Message

## Minnesota awards Border-to-Border broadband grant to us for members in portions of Martin County

Have you heard our great news? Federated will be bringing underground fiber to 457 members in rural Martin County!

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's (DEED) Office of Broadband Development announced October 9 that Federated was one of 26 recipients for grant round 10. Federated was awarded an \$8 million Lower Population Density grant to establish a Fiber-to-the-Premise (FTTP) in portions of rural Martin County. The grant includes the townships of Lake Belt, Tenhassen, Rolling Green, Manyaska, Nashville, and Westford. The project involves 457 households, businesses and farms, including 431 unserved and 26 underserved addresses based on state speed goals. For the map and additional details see Page 8.

We are ecstatic for the opportunity to continue building out a fiber-optic network to serve our members in Martin County. It is an incredible honor to receive this second broadband development grant from the state. It proves a commitment not only from Federated, but also the state to improve internet access and help bridge the digital divide for rural Minnesotans, like our members.

The project's total cost is estimated at \$10.6 million with Martin County, Lake Belt and Rolling Green Townships partnering and contributing \$800,000. Federated will secure long-term loans for the remaining balance, similar to what is done for financing the electric distribution line system.

The service we will be able to provide to more of our members through this grant will help improve quality of life in our rural landscape. Fiber optic opens wider the doors for telehealth, distance learning, improved entertainment opportunities and better access to financial management. This grant provides a two-year time frame for project completion and we will be working with Finley Engineering, as we have for our Jackson County grant project.

Minnesota announced grants totaling \$51.9 million across 26 projects in the Round 10 Grant. This includes 18 Border-to-Border grants and eight Low-Density grants. Federated's grant is funded under the Low-Density program.

## Update on Border-to-Border grant 8 for Jackson County

This is the first Border-to-Border grant that Federated was awarded back in 2023. This grant with a total around \$10 million will serve 515 rural members in Jackson County. Even with the late start, our contractors made great progress with the portion south of Interstate 90 (I-90) or phase 1 being substantially completed with fiber and electronics installation. Crews are currently terminating and splicing fiber with plans to have several, if not all in phase 1, lit up by the end of the year. They have already crossed I-90 starting on phase 2 and will remain in the area until freeze up. In the spring of 2025 contractors will resume and hope to be done by late summer. This project's construction needs to be completed by December 31, 2025.

## Next steps for broadband's expansion

With these two grants, along with serving the towns of Dunnell, Ceylon and Northrop, this means we have the potential of serving 1,317 with fiber; it leaves a lot of Federated members unserved. We are not done applying for grants; next on the horizon is the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD). About 1,026 serviceable addresses exist in Jackson, Martin and Cottonwood Counties that are unserved or underserved and are eligible for funding. This grant opens in late 2024 or early 2025 and will be administered by the Minnesota Office of Broadband Development. We will continue applying for more state Border-to-Border grants once the BEAD cycle runs its course. We are creating a work plan to finish things up. Federated's goal is to serve all of our members with fiber to the home and see this as a short-term goal — five years or less. ☺

# \$26,000 awarded to Operation Round Up recipients from Federated members

Organization	Amount	Purpose
JCC High School Media Center	\$150	Buy chess board, chess instruction book & Origami book/papers
Foster-Bernhardt Post 373, Trimont Legion	\$300	For a student to attend Minnesota Boys State
JCC High School Foods Classes	\$395	Supplies for two canning kits, cutting boards & canning jars
HLO Robotics	\$400	Toward 2024 team game kit
Fairmont High School Robotics Team	\$400	Toward robotics competition expenses
Red Rock Center for the Arts, Fairmont	\$400	Scholarships for summer art & music camp for students
Jackson County Ag Society	\$450	Six wooden benches for audience for commercial bldg. free stage
HLO Elementary School	\$500	For wooden large world wall map in hallway
Fox Lake Association	\$500	Toward seining rough fish & restock desirable fish
HLO Elementary Phy Ed classes	\$500	Toward rental of rollerskates for phy ed class
HLO FFA	\$500	In-class computer used for FFA applications & state degrees
Helping Hands of Ceylon	\$500	Toward Veterans Garden memorial stone in city park
Martin County Historical Society	\$700	Toward the cost of a new copy machine
East Chain Activity Center	\$850	For LED lighting in main lobby, restrooms & 2 meeting rooms
Salvation Army, HeatShare program	\$1,000	Emergency-energy assistance for Federated members
Bravo Zulu House, Winnebago	\$1,000	To fund the gap for transportation, food, clothing & rent for veteran's sober home with a this "Pay it forward fund"
Martin Luther High School, Northrop	\$1,000	For deciduous trees to shade greenhouse in summer
JCC Pleasantview Positive Behavior	\$1,000	Supplies for assemblies, school celebrations & Husky Pride
HLO Family/Consumer Science class	\$1,000	Sewing machine for sewing class & community ed
JCC High School Metal Shop	\$1,000	Toward new Tig welder upgrading old arc welder
HLO Elementary First Grade	\$1,000	Classroom books kit for various reading abilities
Jackson Ambulance Service	\$1,000	Two chairs at the employee computer station
Des Moines Valley Health & Human Svcs	\$1,000	Buy diapers for families in Baby Bundle program
Caregiver Response Effort & Svc Team	\$1,000	For volunteer handbooks, mailings and other program supplies
JCC Speech/Language Therapy Dept	\$1,050	Two iPads for assisting 75-100 students with therapy
Sherburn Fire Department	\$1,500	DeWalt portable LED lights with tripod for night-rescue safety
Minnesota Valley Action Council	\$1,500	Assist Federated members with last resort energy-assistance
Granada First Responders	\$1,500	Buy three pagers and a charger
Heron Lake Fire Department	\$2,000	For two torpedo nozzle sets for brush & structure fires
Jackson Fire & Relief Assn.	\$2,000	Buy two self-contained breathing apparatus air tanks
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$26,095</b>	

## Congrats Federated employees for 65 years service!



**Jeff Broitzman**  
Journeyman Lineman  
25 years



**Jon Beckman**  
Marketing Specialist  
20 years



**Brian Hansen**  
Staff Accountant  
10 years



**Alex Kunz**  
Journeyman Lineman  
5 years



**Casey Schoellerman**  
Journeyman Lineman  
5 years

These employees celebrated their Federated work anniversaries in 2024. Thank you for your dedicated service! 🎉

# Reforming Minnesota residential solar rates ensures a sustainable, equitable & modern energy future



— By Jenny Glumack, director of government affairs, Minnesota Rural Electric Association

As new technologies and the transition to cleaner resources rapidly change our electric grid, some of Minnesota's energy policies, including our antiquated net-metering laws, remain ineffective. Minnesota's net-metering policy allows residents and businesses with distributed energy systems, like solar panels, to generate their own electricity and require the cooperative to pay more for excess power sent to the grid than it would normally pay for power. This policy is outdated, expensive and inequitable and must be reformed to be effective in the modern world.

## Outdated policy

First off, the policy is outdated. Minnesota's net-metering policy was established when solar technology was in its infancy and no longer addresses the modern energy landscape. Comprehensive reform is needed to reflect current realities and capabilities, including storage. As the first state to implement net metering back in 1984, Minnesota played a pioneering role in promoting solar energy, but it is now time to update this policy to align with today's realities. Given the state law mandating carbon-free electricity by 2040, the environmental incentive for maintaining costly net-metering policies is obsolete.

## Expensive policy

Second, net metering is expensive. With Minnesota's mandate for carbon-free electricity by 2040, net-metering incentives have become redundant. Utilities are already charged with reducing carbon emissions; no reason exists to keep expensive incentives to achieve the same goal. Net metering is also ineffective since it forces



cooperatives to pay retail rates for energy they could purchase at cheaper wholesale prices. Additionally, generating electricity from small distributed solar systems is more costly than from larger utility-scale projects, resulting in less carbon reduction for the same investment. Utility-scale systems offer a faster, more cost-effective means of decarbonizing the electrical grid, making net metering an inefficient tool for achieving environmental goals.

**Minnesota's energy policy vs. practice has greatly changed from 1984 to 2024. The net metering policy for solar and wind that passed in 1984 needs to be updated as it is outdated, expensive and inequitable. Electric cooperatives are ready to advocate for a reformed policy that benefits all members to provide reliable, affordable and a sustainable energy future.**

cooperatives to pay retail rates for energy they could purchase at cheaper wholesale prices. Additionally, generating electricity from small distributed solar systems is more costly than from larger utility-scale projects, resulting in less carbon reduction for the same investment. Utility-scale systems offer a faster, more cost-effective means of decarbonizing the electrical grid, making net metering an inefficient tool for achieving environmental goals.

## Inequitable policy


Finally, net metering is inequitable. This policy leads to cost-shifting, where those without distributed systems end up paying more to cover the costs of maintaining the grid. Those who can afford these systems are generally wealthier, leaving poorer members to face the brunt of the cost increases. Studies show that in Minnesota, this disparity is growing, with affluent households increasingly dominating solar installations. Reform is essential to prevent financial strain on those

least able to bear it.

The current model is unsustainable and unnecessarily drives up the electric bills of most co-op member-owners. Reforming net metering can enhance grid stability and reliability, ensuring that both traditional and renewable energy sources are effectively integrated and managed.

By taking a balanced approach to reforming our outdated net-metering policies, Minnesota has the potential to become a national leader in renewable energy policy and ensure a fair, sustainable and modern energy future for all Minnesotans. Embracing reform will support renewable energy growth and facilitate the connection of solar sized to load for those who want it. Minnesota's electric cooperatives stand ready to support these necessary reforms, advocating for policies that benefit all cooperative members and advancing our collective goal of a reliable, affordable and sustainable energy future. ☑


## Let's get rolling with crescent roll recipes for holidays & hearth

Roll out the crescent dough recipes! Share your favorite crescent dough recipes with us, whether it's the made from scratch family recipe or using refrigerated crescent dough for pizza, hot dish or even pigs in a blanket. Send your favorite crescent roll recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by November 22. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 

### Pumpkin Pie Bars by Barbara Sellner, Sleepy Eye

**Crust:** 1 c. flour    ½ c. quick oats    ½ c. brown sugar    ½ c. butter  
Combine until crumbly. Press into a 9x13" pan. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes.

**Filling:** 2 c. pumpkin    1 can evaporated milk    3 eggs, beaten  
¾ c. sugar    1 tsp. cinnamon    ¼ tsp. cloves or pumpkin pie spice  
Combine ingredients. Pour over baked crust. Return to the oven for 20 minutes.


**Topping:** ½ c. chopped nuts    ½ c. brown sugar    2 T. butter    2 tsp. flour  
Mix together. Sprinkle over baked filling and return to the oven for 15 minutes.  
Serve with whipped cream or your favorite whipped topping. 

### Apple Crisp Bread

by Elizabeth Shimon, Granada

1½ c. oil  
2 c. sugar  
2 eggs  
2 tsp. vanilla  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1 tsp. salt  
1 tsp. cinnamon  
3 c. flour

Mix well. The batter will be very stiff. Add 3 c. chopped apples (unpeeled), 1 c. nuts, chopped.

Bake in greased pans until the toothpick comes out clean. Use two large loaf pans or five small loaf pans; bake at 350° 50-60 minutes. It has a crispy crust. 



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## This fall... Just make the call before digging:



Call Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12" deep — 48 hours before digging

for foundations, trees and tiling. Register at [www.gopherstate-onecall.org](http://www.gopherstate-onecall.org) or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 



**HAPPY**  
Thanksgiving

From our table to yours,  
we hope you have a  
wonderful holiday.

**We are closed  
November 28-29.**



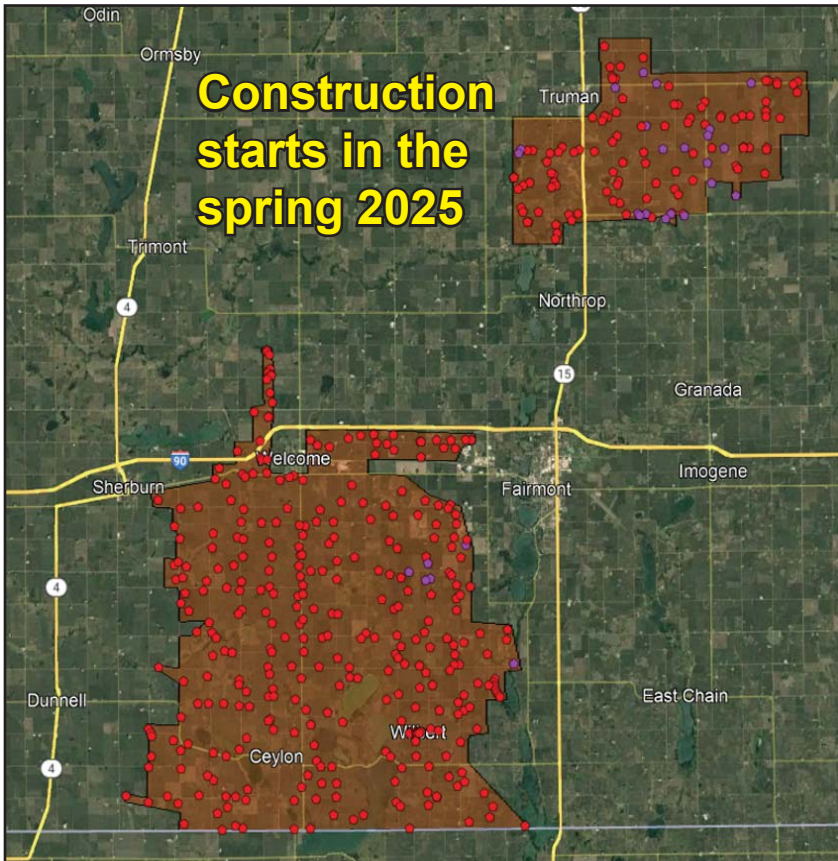
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The Board of Directors generally meets the last business day of the month at 8 a.m. at the Jackson office. Regular board meetings are open to the membership. Members interested in discussing business items should contact the general manager or president three days before the meeting.

## Martin County Border-to-Border Round 10 grant serves nearly 500 rural members with fiber



**Construction starts in the spring 2025**

The red dots indicate the unserved areas and purple dots show underserved locations. With this grant these Federated members will have access to fiber internet services in these two areas. See the story on Page 4 and tentative timeline on the right. (L&D)

### Martin County Round 10's grant timeline:

- October 9: grant recipients announced by the state of Minnesota to fund fiber to homes and businesses in the red area. (See map.)
  - Contract signed by year-end 2024.
  - Members in the grant area need to fill out a construction consent form outlining existing underground power lines, gas, tile and other private utilities. More info on how to sign up will be coming later this month. This grant covers the cost of construction up to the house. Residents will only be responsible for the monthly service rate should they choose to take fiber service.
  - Groundbreaking occurs in late spring of 2025.
  - The contractor starts installing 250 miles of fiber in the spring 2025.
  - Work will occur in three phases: construction of the main line along the roadways, drops will be completed up to the homes of those who signed up and finally, customer premise installation for service.
  - Martin County Round 10 grant project must be completed by June 2027.
- If you are on Facebook, be sure to follow Federated Broadband for updates on fiber construction. (L&D)



info@federatedbroadband.coop • www.federatedbroadband.coop

507-847-1001 or 1-833-847-8001

