

# Blandin on Broadband

News and information on broadband use, policy, and trends

## What is the American Connection Corps? And what do they do?

Posted on [November 30, 2022](#) by [Ann Treacy](#)

The Farmer posted a nice article on the American Connection Corps (ACC). I have had an opportunity to work with ACC; they are impressive and energetic and doing great work in the community. The [Farmer reports...](#)

*ACC specifically focuses on supporting its fellowship program that places young adults in rural areas to work alongside local community leaders on broadband development, digital access and digital literacy.*

*ACC falls under the umbrella of Lead for America, co-founded in 2018 by four young college-educated adults interested in returning to and revitalizing their home communities. One of the cofounders, Benya Kraus Beacom, returned to her family's sixth generation farm near Waseca, Minn., in 2019. Once considering a career in international relations, Beacom redirected her interests after her college junior year, when she spent the summer at home.*

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*Beacom reached out to Tina May, Land O'Lakes Inc. vice president of rural services, who shared similar interests in small community development. The co-op also had been working to improve digital connectivity in rural communities. They decided to pilot a cohort, and in August 2021, along with the Mayo Clinic, Midwest Dairy and Scoular, placed six ACC fellows in Redwood and Ottertail counties, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe community, the East Iron Range and the cities of Warroad and Fairmont.*

*Today, ACC has 250 fellows across 40 states.*

What do they do?

*When fellows start working in a community, their focus is threefold — on broadband development, digital access and digital literacy. They work at coordinating all providers in*

*the area, obtain accurate digital maps, work with engineering firms to determine fiber needed, and engage with the community, Beacom explains.*

What do they do in Redwood County? Led by Patrick Garry...

*The county's largest project currently underway, referred to as the "Cadillac Project," looks to serve 30% of the county with fiber. The \$4.4 million project pools the county's American Rescue Plan funds, internet provider contributions and the state's Border-to-Border Grant. Population-wise, it serves 1,870 structures making up eight cities.*

What do they do in Ottertail Count? Led by Carter Grupp...

*ACC fellow Carter Grupp, based in Fergus Falls, Otter Tail County, has an impressive resume of accomplishments in his first year, too. He has helped establish 10 Zoom conferencing rooms and built an app to use them. He developed STEM curriculum and kits for three county libraries. He promoted a speed testing campaign to get real data on how his community was being served by internet service providers.*

And more...

*Closest to his heart these days is promoting computer science as a potential career to high school students — his second pilot project. Grupp teamed with Luke Heine, who works for Microsoft and last year, held the first remote statewide youth computer science training program — the Northland Hackathon. The educational event teaches youth how to code, design their own apps and websites, and showcases career opportunities with companies such as Meta, TikTok or Microsoft. Last year, more than 30 high schools participated virtually. The event in 2023 is set for April 23.*

This entry was posted in [Building Broadband Tools, MN](#) and tagged [American Connection Corps](#) by [Ann Treacy](#). Bookmark the [permalink \[https://blandinonbroadband.org/2022/11/30/what-is-the-american-connection-corps-and-what-do-they-do/\]](https://blandinonbroadband.org/2022/11/30/what-is-the-american-connection-corps-and-what-do-they-do/).



### About Ann Treacy

Librarian who follows rural broadband in MN and good uses of new technology ([blandinonbroadband.org](http://blandinonbroadband.org)), hosts a radio show on MN music ([mostlyminnesota.com](http://mostlyminnesota.com)), supports people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota ([elimstrongtowershelters.org](http://elimstrongtowershelters.org)) and helps with social justice issues through Women's March MN.

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