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Cheboygan Economic Development Corporation (EDC)

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For Immediate Release:

Cheboygan County poised for Massive Broadband Expansion.

The Cheboygan County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) identified Technology as a leading priority for countywide development with a strong focus on supporting energy and broadband initiatives. To that end, they teamed up with Connected Nation to engage in the Connected Community Engagement Program. Designed to facilitate broadband and technology expansion, Connected offers start-to-finish guidance that measures supply, demand, and use of technology in communities with unprecedented data gathering, analysis, and planning. With Connected, Cheboygan successfully mapped their local technology ecosystem, identified many gaps, and are moving forward with support and solutions to improve their standing digital economy.

Increasingly, internet access has become critical for education, health care, remote work, tourism, business, and general connectedness within communities. It is a cornerstone for prosperity, growth, and well-being. With strong leadership and a unified understanding of the significant need, the EDC is able to use Connected Nation as a gateway to emerge a regional leader in digital expansion. "Cheboygan County is experiencing a general rising tide of growth and investment. With this new momentum comes the perfect opportunity to capture and focus some of that energy into long term solutions that support sustainable and healthy communities, like a comprehensive broadband plan." shares EDC chair, Sharen Lange. She continues, "Stakeholder partners throughout Cheboygan County activated quickly to support the Connected survey and helped create a clear picture of what our internet looks like. In doing so, we can now take it to the next level, guiding decisions that are data driven for a future with vastly improved access."

Federal and state funding is being channelled into both provider and municipal hands to help technologically under-served areas, such as Cheboygan, to expand quality service. Cheboygan County is focused on building a supportive culture for these resources and broadband infrastructure. One such critical opportunity has been presented by Presque Isle Electric and Gas Co-op (PIE&G). With a regional expansion plan that has already begun topping 130 million dollars, PIE&G's vision for growth, expansion, and success is strengthened by strategic local support. Working with the EDC, they have requested Cheboygan County consider being the applicant of record for a 23 million dollar federal NTIA grant to help fund their first phase; a very

significant portion of which lies in Cheboygan County. This combined effort positions Cheboygan to be the springboard for deploying a cutting edge technology network throughout N.E. Michigan.

In Cheboygan County, technology providers are finding responsive, positive, and unified support for broadband growth. Lange concludes, "Our leaders in all sectors understand the critical need and are working cooperatively to help ensure Cheboygan communities are in line for connection. As rural America battles for funding and resources to capture access for their communities, our efforts to date are a shining example of community success. Cheboygan is overcoming the significant challenges of getting, and keeping, our area connected."

For additional information please contact Sharen Lange.