



broadband association of north dakota

BAND Together Newsletter

Executive Director Report:

Why North Dakota's Rural ISPs Deliver the Nation's Highest Customer Satisfaction

Across rural America—and especially here in North Dakota—community-based internet providers continue to stand out. **BAND members**, which include cooperatives and locally owned companies, consistently outperform larger regional and national competitors when it comes to customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Independent benchmarking helps tell the story. The **2025 Rural Broadband Benchmarking Report** shows rural providers achieving a median Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 88, a rating considered “world-class.” By comparison, the national ISP industry median is just -3. Rural providers also report take rates above 50% and churn rates near 1%—strong indicators that customers value the service they receive.

National consumer research points in the same direction. Recent **Consumer Reports surveys** and the **American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI)** continue to rank small and local broadband providers among the top performers for reliability, value, and customer service. Many large national brands, meanwhile, remain near the bottom of those rankings.

So what is driving this difference?

They are Neighbors. BAND members live, work and raise families in the communities they serve. Their board, owners, managers, and staff understand firsthand how essential reliable connectivity has become. That proximity creates a level of accountability and responsiveness that is difficult to replicate from a distant corporate call center. Research from Parks Associates' Rural Broadband Opportunity study confirms that rural consumers place significant value on local engagement and personalized service—areas where North Dakota providers continue to excel.

They are invested in the Future. Long-term investment also plays an important role. Despite the challenges of serving some of the most sparsely populated areas in the country, North Dakota's rural ISPs have continued to deploy fiber-to-the-home networks using a combination of private capital investment, universal service support, USDA loan programs, and grants. These modern networks deliver the symmetrical speeds, low latency, and reliability that today's households and businesses expect.

They are agile and responsive. Being community-based allows providers to remain nimble and customer-focused. Faster repairs, strong first-call resolution, and flexible service approaches all contribute to the positive experiences reflected in national satisfaction surveys.

Taken together, the results are clear. BAND members demonstrate that a community-first approach—paired with forward-looking fiber investment—produces exceptional outcomes for rural consumers.

As North Dakota continues the important work of connecting every North Dakotan, these strong customer satisfaction results serve as an encouraging reminder: locally led broadband solutions are not only

Key Performance Indicators

Superior performance of rural and local providers



Take Rates

Often exceeding 50% – High market penetration & consumer trust



Churn Rates

Near 1% – Exceptional customer retention



National Rankings

Consistently higher than large national brands in Consumer Reports and ACSI for reliability and value

BAND Member Spotlight:

United and Turtle Mountain Communications



UTMA's Support of Fiber Internet for the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians

United and Turtle Mountain Communications (UTMA) and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians (the Tribe), located within UTMA's service area, are partnered to provide tribal members access to multigigabit fiber internet, enabling telehealth, distance learning, economic development, and cultural preservation.



In 2024, UTMA endorsed the Tribe's **\$2.7M NTIA Tribal Connectivity Grant application** to help bridge the digital divide and increase broadband access, use, and adoption across tribal communities.

"Our partnership with the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians aligns perfectly with our mission to empower communities through reliable and affordable broadband services," said **Steve Swanson**, CEO of UTMA. Swanson also serves on the Turtle Mountain Community College's Technical Advisory Board for the Tribe to support education on the uses and benefits of fiber internet.

In addition to enabling fiber internet, high school seniors in UTMA's service area are eligible for college scholarships. Last year, UTMA awarded \$41,000 in scholarships to 31 outstanding high school seniors attending accredited universities. Since 1991, nearly a million dollars in financial support has been provided to hard-working students.

Headquartered in Langdon, UTMA serves 7,812 broadband customers with multigigabit internet across 19 North Dakota communities, operating roughly 4,500 square miles of fiber within a 3,700 square mile service area.

Upcoming Events

July 7-8

BAND Summer Meeting (Bismarck, ND)



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**Carissa Swenson,
Executive Director**

I am happy to provide information or speak at an event. If you aren't already subscribed to this newsletter, [please join our mailing list.](#)

