

June 18, 2026

Editor's Note: In observance of Juneteenth, this week's edition is arriving a day earlier than usual. Bandwidth will return to its regular schedule next week.

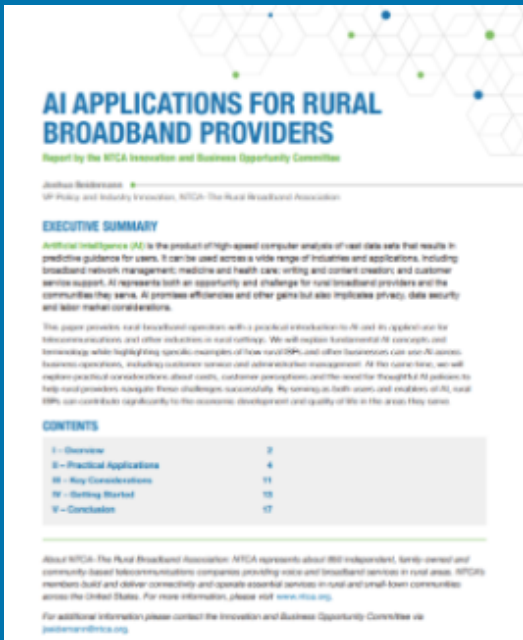


Skills Challenge: Madison Communications (Staunton, Ill.) technicians Bryan Huffstutler, Erick Goode, Greg Crabill and Tanner Pieri celebrate after **earning** 10 medals and capturing the Overall Team Championship at the SCTE Broadband Skills Challenge in Chesterfield, Mo.

FCC June Meeting to Tackle Permitting Reform, E-Rate Review

The FCC's June 25 **Open Meeting** is expected to feature a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking aimed at cutting red tape and accelerating wireline infrastructure deployment. The item would seek comment on when state and local requirements have a prohibitive effect on service, including excessive delays and fees that can impede deployment and discourage investment. NTCA has **previously urged** the commission to address these permitting barriers, emphasizing the need for more efficient and cost-effective deployment processes in rural areas.

The meeting is also expected to feature an E-Rate item, examining whether program support is being used to fund duplicative broadband networks serving schools and libraries. The commission also will consider an NG911 item intended to support the transition to modern, IP-based 911 networks that can improve emergency communications reliability and capabilities.



New Opportunity Hub Helps Members Explore AI with Confidence

AI is rapidly changing the business landscape, creating new opportunities to improve operations, customer service, network management and strategic planning. To help members navigate this evolving technology, NTCA has launched the **AI Opportunity Hub**, a centralized resource bringing together practical AI insights, educational materials, real-world examples and emerging industry trends.

Whether you're just beginning to explore AI, evaluating potential use cases or already deploying AI-powered tools, the Hub is designed to help you identify meaningful applications that align with your organization's goals and community commitments. As AI continues to evolve, so will the Hub. Visit regularly for new resources, peer insights and guidance to help your company prepare for the future of rural broadband.

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30-Day AI Challenge Returns for Second Year

NTCA and the National Rural Economic Developers Association (NREDA) have launched the second **30-Day AI Challenge**, a hands-on initiative designed to help participants explore practical AI applications for rural economic development. The challenge encourages participants to test AI tools that can save time, improve service, streamline workflows and spark new ideas.

Submissions are due in September, and participants and winners will be recognized during upcoming NTCA and NREDA conferences.

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Foundation for Rural Service Community Grant Program Now Open

The Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) is **now accepting** applications for its 2026 Community Grant Program, which supports local efforts that help build and sustain a high quality of life in rural America. Grants of up to \$5,000 are available for community-based organizations supporting business and economic development, education and workforce, health and well-being, and public service and first responders.

Organizations must apply through their NTCA member company in Member Central, and each member company may submit up to three applications. Applications are due September 4. For more information, visit the [FRS website](#) or contact the [FRS team](#).

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Make the Most of Smart Rural Community Tools and Resources

The NTCA Smart Rural Community (SRC) team recently hosted an “Office Hours” webinar that brought members together to share ideas, ask questions and explore practical ways to elevate summer community engagement efforts. From marketing and

communications strategies to broader community development initiatives, the conversation focused on how to make the most of SRC tools and resources to strengthen local connections and highlight the value of broadband in your communities. Interested in learning more about the program? Visit the [SRC website](#) or email the [SRC team](#).

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NEED TO KNOW

Elections for commercial and cooperative company seats on the [2026 NTCA Board of Directors](#) for the Northeast and Southwest regions will be held this fall. Nominations for both cooperative and commercial seats representing the regions are now being accepted, and the deadline for nominations is July 13.

The NTCA Rural Broadband PAC supports advocacy on issues affecting rural broadband providers and the communities they serve. Member companies can provide [prior approval](#) to get more involved with the PAC through a brief online form, which is required only once per company and may be authorized for multiple years. [Get more involved](#) in NTCA advocacy today.

Registration for the 10th annual [Women in Telecom Fly-in](#) on July 22 in Washington, D.C., is now open. The program will feature meetings with FCC Commissioners Olivia Trusty and Anna Gomez, fundraisers for two female members of Congress, discussions with industry leaders, professional development and networking opportunities.

OUTREACH

NTCA Senior Vice President of Policy and General Counsel [Justin Faulb](#) spoke on a panel about broadband challenges and opportunities facing electric and telecommunications members at the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation Forum in Chula Vista, California.



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