

2025

Annual Plan

Serving Schools, Cities, and other Governmental Agencies in Northeastern Minnesota

NORTHEAST SERVICE COOPERATIVE

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Company Overview

Northeast Service Cooperative is committed to serving our members.

Established by the Legislature

Northeast Service Cooperative (NESC), located in Mountain Iron, Minnesota, was established by the legislature as a nonprofit public corporation. It is one of nine service cooperatives in the state. It operates under State Statute 123A.21.

Governance

NESC is governed by a nine-member Board of Directors of which the majority must be current members of school board elected at large from the NESC area. The remaining members may be representatives of other participating agencies, such as cities, counties, or other governmental agencies.

Serving members for more than four decades

NESC services schools, cities, counties, and other governmental agencies throughout northeastern Minnesota.

Programs and Services

NESC provides an array of niche services including Group Health and Dental Insurance, Medical Spending Accounts, Environmental Health & Safety, Education Services, Telecommunications & Technology, Cooperative Purchasing, Online Learning, Wellness Initiatives, Academic Programs, and Fiscal Hosting.

Contact

Paul Brinkman Executive Director 218-748-7603 paulb@nescmn.net



Business Services

Risk Management

The Northeast Service Cooperative partners with various providers to form pools to address the needs of schools, cities, counties, governmental agencies, and their employees. The insurance pools provide expanded employee contracts and more effective fiscal control of premiums. All insurance programs are offered in partnership with qualified and reputable providers that are financially sound and capable of delivering the services required. Schools, cities, counties, governmental units and their employees may access these programs at any time:

- Dental
- Medical
- Medical Spending Accounts (HSA, FSA, VEBA)
- Life
- Employee Assistance Program
- Long-Term Disability
- Long-Term Care
- Vision

Other Administrative Services

- Fiscal Host Services
- Grant Management
- Financial Reporting

Contact

Jeanette Mellesmoen CFO/Senior Director of Operations 218-748-7617 jmellesmoen@nescmn.net



Business Services

Environmental Health and Safety

The Northeast Service Cooperative (NESC) is a partner with the Institute for Environmental Assessment, Inc. (IEA). IEA is a small business founded in 1984. IEA is committed to provide practical, cost-effective environmental safety consulting compliance for private and public organizations. Clients include school districts, hospitals, government agencies, and businesses in a variety of industries throughout the country. IEA experts design and execute solutions that accomplish specific goals of your company. IEA maintains an office at NESC. The contact is Taylor Dickinson, CSP, Regional Manager for Virginia and Brainerd. She may be reached at 218-410-9521 or taylor.dickonson@ieainstitute.com. Their website is www.ieasafety.com.



Institute for Environmental Assessment (IEA) Hosts the Following Divisions:

Environmental Project Design and Management

IEA employs a team of experienced and EPA-certified licensed asbestos inspectors, management planners, site supervisors, project designers, and lead risk assessors. IEA provides asbestos awareness training, demolition surveys, material inspection sampling and assessments, hazardous waste removal and clean-up management plans, AHERA inspections, lead sampling inspection, and project management. They are widely recognized for its knowledge in asbestos and lead project design and management, including AHERA and NESHAP compliance.

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)

IEA has capabilities to provide comprehensive IAQ assessments and solutions to building owners and managers. Their team of certified industrial hygienists, environmental consultants, public health personnel, and engineers are available to assist in resolving IAQ concerns. IEA can provide investigative mold/moisture assessments, proactive IAQ management, remediation design and monitoring, HVAC performance evaluations, ventilation system commissioning or recommissioning, and healthcare infection control consulting and design.

Environmental, Health and Safety Services

IEA specializes in custom solutions to EH&S concerns, no matter how big or small. IEA experts will evaluate and provide the best consultation services for your organization.

IEA has trained and experienced personnel able to assist with OSHA, MSHA, DOT, and EPA compliance. Compliance assistance includes program reviews/audits, employee exposure assessments, developing health and safety management plans, and much more.

IEA's staff have access to existing written programs, plans, management systems and proven, time-tested implementation procedures to offer a health and safety compliance team that is poised to provide cost-effective, efficient, and professional compliance services.



Revitalization Building Solutions

Creating collaborative teams to guide our member groups through project planning, facility assessments, building design, and construction management services is an opportunity for all member groups working with InGensa, Inc.

To see what services they offer, visit their website at www. Ingensainc.com.



Cooperative Purchasing



Our Cooperative Purchasing Program (CPC) offers members a wide range of high-quality products and services at discounted rates. By combining the purchasing power of all members, we can achieve volume pricing on quality products and services from reputable vendors. You, the member, can purchase a small quantity and get the large quantity discount.

Visit www.purchasingconnection.org for a listing of vendors.

For a convenient purchasing experience, visit www.cpcexpress.org.

The contracted vendors we have are established through formal bids. Members may access those contracts and satisfy Minnesota competitive bidding requirements - regardless of the amount of the purchase. The ability to do so is outlined in Minnesota Statutes 123A.2 and 471.345.

Utilizing our purchasing program gives you more buying power and choice in the contracts you can use to save time and money and bring value to your organization. Plus, all the contracts have been awarded through the required competitive process.

Contacts

Jeanette Mellesmoen CFO/Senior Director of Operations 218-748-7617 jmellesmoen@nescmn.net



Cooperative Purchasing

Athletics Furniture Technology Gym Floor Renovation/New Classroom Furniture Computers **Electronic Scoreboards** Libraries/Media Centers **Technology Equipment** Synthetic Field Turf General Office **Educational Software** Lobby/Bathroom **Track Surfacing Amplification Solutions** Wall Mats for Gymnasiums **Ergonomic Furniture** Software **SMART Boards & zSpace Telescopic Seating** Senior Living Athletic Field Press Box Recreational Access Control **Outdoor Bleachers** Cafeteria Tables Voice and Data Infrastructure Athletic Equipment Fire Alarm Intrusion Detection/Monitoring Sports Facility LED Lightning **Instructional Resources Lockers & Storage Products** Online Reading Solutions **IP Video Systems** eBook Mgmt/Software Office Equipment **Educational Math Software Health & Wellness** Copy Machines **Professional Services** Safety Equipment Printers Color/Black & White **Health & Safety Supplies** 3D Printers **Classroom Supplies** Portable Air Purifiers Wide Format Printers Early Childhood Scanners **Elementary Classroom** Security Middle & High School **Metal Detectors Facilities & Grounds Art Supplies** Finger/Palm Capture Floor Cleaning Equipment **Industrial Technology** Safety Management Tools STOPit Software **Electronic Recycling Services Special Needs** LED Lighting Equipment **STEM Supplies** Playground Systems/Equipment **Electronic Content Management Precision Lawn Mowers Office Supplies** Food Service & Bread Program **Custodial Supplies General Office Supplies Online Safety Management Roofing Solutions** Breakroom and Kitchen **Mobile Educational Broadband** Carpet/Resilient Flooring Copy Paper/Colored Paper **Vehicle Auction Services Resin Concrete Flooring Printer Ink Cartridges Commercial Vehicle Purchasing** Air Filters, Plumbing Supplies **Theatrical/Auditorium Products** Kitchen Smallwares/Lg Equip **Recycling/Waste Containers**

Education Services continues to develop its programming and services to best fit our region and make an impact for our educators and students. Although we continue to provide quality facilitation and training services, our workshops have developed to encompass the larger role technology plays in the way business is conducted.

Workshops, Trainings & Conferences

- Teacher/Administrator Development Series
- Facilitating Online Learning
- Creating Online Course Content
- Literacy and Math Cohorts
- Improvement Plan Development

Planning, Facilitation and Research Services

The Northeast Service Cooperative will continue to offer facilitation services to our members. These services are customizable to meet specific needs within an organization. A representative list includes:

- Strategic Planning
- Mediation Services
- Team Building / Leadership Skills / Program Evaluation
- Action Planning / Goal Setting / Data Analysis
- Research Services / Grant Writing
- Meeting Facilitation

NESC provides staff development planning, facilitation, grant research and writing, and program evaluation services for school districts and other NESC members in the region.

Grant Writing

One of the objectives of the Northeast Service Cooperative's mission is to seek out and help our members apply for funding opportunities to support their initiatives.

NESC provides services under the following grants:

- Minnesota Department of Education
- Minnesota Department of Health
- United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service
- Center of Excellence
- Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board
- Economic Development Administration
- Public Health Workforce supplemental funding from the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, administered by the Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS)
- Rural Career and Technical Education (CTE)



MSC Online Learning Program Initiatives

The MSC Online Learning Program is proud to help meet the needs of school districts across the state by providing challenging online learning opportunities for students. Our program is a part-time non-diploma program so students remain enrolled in their home district while taking their online courses. We are approved by the Minnesota Department of Education to offer online courses for middle and high school students.



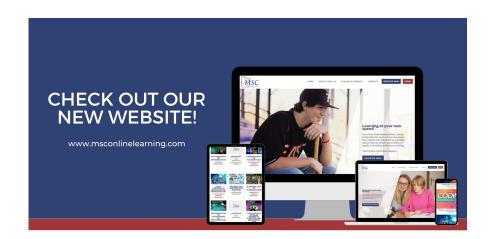
MSC Online continues to utilize Minnesota-approved curriculum providers. Our curriculum offers a wide range of rich multi-media courses that are aligned with national and state standards and several industry certifications under career and technical education. We continue to add new

course offerings to help meet the needs of our students, parents, and the school districts we serve. A full list of courses offered by our program is available for your review at www.msconlinelearning.com

Our course LMS is Moodle. Moodle is an open-source learning platform designed to provide educators, administrators, and learners with a robust and secure learning environment. We continually upgrade to the newest long-term, stable support version of Moodle. Genius (SIS) is our current student information system. Students and teachers will continue to see numerous improvements and course enhancements within each system.

The Northeast Service Cooperative supports the MSC Online Program with designated staff for program direction, administrative support, technical support, and training. The MSC Advisory Council meets throughout the year to provide input and program guidance. We will continue our efforts to make MSC Online Learning the online program of choice for schools in Minnesota.

MSC Online continually explores ways to better market our services to students, parents, and schools across the state. We plan to participate in various professional conferences to share information about how MSC Online can assist students experiencing scheduling conflicts or who are in need of credit recovery, advanced, additional, or specialized courses.





Academic Enrichment Programs

The Academic Enrichment Programs coordinated by the Northeast Service Cooperative continues to remain strong as a result of the stability and success of our regional academic teams and students. During the last school year, thousands of students in our region continue to participate in our academic enrichment programs in person.



Knowledge Bowl

Knowledge Bowl (KB) Interdisciplinary academic competitions for over 1,700 regional students in grades 5-12 from 33 schools are held at NESC. Just under 300 teams of students compete in both written and oral contests that challenge students' recall, problem solving and critical thinking skills while reinforcing core curriculum. Our top six senior high teams advance to a state competition.



Spelling Bee

Regional spelling competition for students in grades 5-8 is held at NESC. Our top region winner advances to the National Spelling Bee held in Washington, D.C.

Contacts

Tara Lindstrom
Senior Coordinator, Education Services
218-748-8111
tlindstrom@mnce.org



Kijo Stallings Coordinator, Education & Student Services 218-748-7611 kstallings@nescmn.net

Northern Pines Regional Center of Excellence

The Northeast Service Cooperative, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education, is home to the Northern Pines Regional Center of Excellence (one of six RCEs in the state). The Regional Centers of Excellence (RCE) provided support directly to regional districts and schools to strengthen local capacity to facilitate school improvement efforts focused on equity of underserved populations.



The Northern Pines RCE has been collaborating with MDE along with the eight other service coopera
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Education (MDE), Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC) and Regional Centers of Excellence (RCE). COMPASS is designed to meet schools and districts where they are in the work to accelerate student learning and match the state's response to those needs. Throughout the 2024-25 school year and beyond, educators, school staff, and school leaders will have new opportunities for professional learning and coaching, along with support from experts. NESC will be expanding its RCE staff to include a regional supervisor and staff who will be serving the region as math leads and coaches, an MnMTSS lead, an equitable access specialist with special education focus, literacy coaches, culturally responsive instructional leadership lead, and school advocates. Hiring is in process with positions to begin July 1, 2024.

MDE is partnering with the Regional Centers of Excellence and the Minnesota Service Cooperatives on the focus areas of:

- Data and Assessment Literacy
- Literacy
- Math
- School Climate and Mental Health

COMPASS Theory of Action

We believe if we meet district and school teams where they are in the work to accelerate student learning and match our response to their needs, the result will be student success with improved outcomes in social-emotional and academic learning.

The RCE team members support regional districts and schools with on-site coaching, technical assistance, professional development, resources, and networking opportunities with the ultimate goal of eliminating gaps and inequities while improving outcomes for all students.

Ten Minnesota Commitments to Equity



Contact

Tara Lindstrom
Senior Director, Education Services, and COMPASS Regional Supervisor
218-748-8111
tlindstrom@mnce.org



Career & Technical Education (CTE)

VISION STATEMENT:

Equity - Opportunity - Flexibility

MISSION STATEMENT:

Connecting learners with careers while promoting equity, opportunities, and flexibility for students and schools.



In 2024, the Northeast Service Cooperative's Career & Technical Education (CTE) program will continue to promote our vision of equity, opportunity, and flexibility for students and schools. The program focused on providing a diverse range of CTE courses and opportunities that catered to the needs and interests of all students, regardless of background or ability.

Through partnerships with local businesses, the program offers real-world experiences, internships, and mentorship opportunities, ensuring students are prepared for success in their chosen career paths. Additionally, the program emphasized flexibility by offering online and hybrid CTE courses, allowing students to access high-quality education regardless of location or circumstances.

The Northeast Service Cooperative's CTE program remains committed to equity by actively working to eliminate disparities in student access and achievement. By providing equitable access to resources, support, and opportunities, the program aims to ensure that all students have the chance to thrive and success in their educational and career endeavors.

In partnership with the Minnesota Service Cooperative (MSC), the Northeast Service Cooperative (NESC) is dedicated to providing opportunities for regional students through funds from the MN Service Collaborative Rural CTE Grant. In 2024 and 2025, NESC plans to allocate over \$700,000 from the grant to support its CTE courses, programs, students, and teachers. These programs aim to promote post-graduation outcomes aimed at enrollment, enlistment, or employment, ensuring students are well-equipped for success in their chosen path. This partnership reflects NESC's commitment to enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes for students in the region.

Career and Technical Education for All

The Minnesota Service Cooperatives Career and Technical Education Consortium and the Northeast Service Cooperative are committed to strengthening their relationships with each other and our education, economic development, and workforce agency partners.



The Minnesota Service Cooperative

Mission: Leveraging statewide and regional approaches to ensure robust CTE experiences for students with an eye on future success.

Vision: All students have access to innovative, career-connected learning through a vibrant CTE education network with solid industry connections, providing students with the knowledge and skills needed for the future.

We support and develop:

- Accessible, equitable, and inclusive career-connected learning that builds pathways to local/regional careers for all students.
- Highly trained and engaged educators who help students build CTE pathways through relevant coursework, collaborative partnerships, and advanced equipment.
- Advanced collaboration with business, industry, labor, workforce, and higher education fosters innovation, harnesses creativity, and accelerates quality CTE learning/pathways.
- Integrated and aligned efforts that enhance and sustain quality CTE.

Together we work towards a future where:

- All students have access to innovative, career-connected learning showcasing local careers.
- Minnesota has a vibrant CTE teacher network with strong industry connections.
- Business, labor, and industry are key to student career awareness and life/work skills.
- Education recognizes the benefit of CTE courses/experiences for all careers.
- Students make informed financial investments in post-secondary training and education.
- Public and private investments in CTE help address workforce challenges across Minnesota.

Making a regional impact across the state:



and welding skills to use building

cabins for local county parks.

Contact

John Engelking
Senior Regional Manager, Career & Technical Education (CTE)
218-390-9860
jengelking@nescmn.net



gains four students for their PSEO Welding

program through the competition.

Behavioral and Mental Health Services

Mental health is essential to overall physical health, wellbeing, and cognitive development. Behavioral and Mental Health Services continues to develop programming and services to best fit the needs of our region. We remain committed to mental health literacy, workforce mental health and wellbeing, workforce development, and collaboration.

Mental Health Literacy

Mental Health Literacy is the knowledge and beliefs people have about mental wellbeing and mental health disorders which plays a large role in prevention, awareness, management. NESC focuses on:

- Education for how to obtain and maintain positive mental health,
- Education on mental health disorders and their treatments,
- Mental Health Campaigns designed to reduce stigma related to talking about mental health and mental health dis
 orders, and
- Programming to increase knowledge of when and where to seek help.

Workforce Mental Health and Wellbeing

with efforts focused on the mental health and wellbeing of organizations:

- Research Services
- Data Analysis,
- Strategic Planning,
- Improvement planning,
- Implementation Planning
- Improvement Plan
- Program Evaluation
- Grant Writing
- Meeting Facilitation
- Customizable Trainings

Workforce Development

Increased access to critical mental health services.

Collaboration

We are working with our regional, state, and national partners to make systemic changes including policy, institutional, and individual changes in how we view and prioritize mental health.

Contact



Lisa Kvas

Aubrie Hoover
Regional Manager, Behavioral and Mental Health Services
218-748-7618
ahoover@nescmn.net

Regional Coordinator, Mesabi Behavioral Health Network and NESC Planning and Development 218-748-7613/ lkvas@nescmn.net

Our Telecommunications and Technology (TnT) division plays an essential role at the Northeast Service Cooperative and working with members to find solutions and form plans for efficient and effective operations. The TnT team designs, develops, supports, and manages networks. We train our staff to be at the cutting edge of technology and telecommunications in order to provide expertise and valuable information to our members.

Services

- Network Services
 - ♦ Ethernet Transport: Transport for point-to-point and point-to-multipoint connections
- Broadband Internet Services
 - ♦ Ethernet: Direct Internet access from local central office
- Space and Power Services
 - ♦ Collocation: Rack and floor space, back-up power and storage
- Leaded Fiber Services
 - ♦ Dark Fiber: Unit fiber for point-to-point connections
- Professional Services
 - ♦ Information Technology
 - Project Management
 - Strategic Planning
 - Engineering/Design
 - Network Support/Administration
 - Installation & Repair
 - Remote Support
 - Records
 - ♦ Telecommunications
 - Project Management
 - Engineering/Design-Large Scale
 - Engineering/Design-Small Scale
 - Installation & Repair
 - Testing
 - Records & Mapping
 - ♦ Administration
 - Project Coordinator
 - Scheduling/Dispatch
 - Purchasing/Inventory
 - Service Order & Ticket Management



Network Operations Center (NOC)

1-866-306-3926

support@nescmn.net

Our daytime hours of operation are from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. There is access to someone on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by calling or email.

Call Routing:

The call is answered by one of our TnT staff on duty, unless excessive call volume necessitates a call be routed through the voicemail. Callers have the option to leave a message which creates a ticket in our ticketing system.

Technical Support:

We have experienced technical staff available to troubleshoot issues.

Network Monitoring:

Critical systems are monitored 24 x 7 by our Network Management system. We have a live response support system in place, where members can manage and track internal incidents / troubles.

Northeast Fiber Network

The Northeast Fiber Network is a fiber optic network that spans across northern Minnesota in the counties of St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Koochiching, Carlton, Pine, Itasca, and Aitkin. It was designed by the Northeast Service Cooperative to serve unserved and underserved regions in northeastern Minnesota. The network serves critical service sites including schools, libraries, sovereign nations, counties, cities, health care, and state entities. We also have dark fiber, wavelength services available to the public sector and to private sector service providers. The network provides 2.8 Terabit current core switching capacity using DWDM technology. There are Optical Transport Network facilities across the region with collocation availability.

- \$43.5 million federally funded project
- 50% grant / 50% loan through the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service
- More than 1,220 miles of fiber optic network in the counties of St. Louis, Cook, Lake, Pine, Itasca, Koochiching,
 Carlton, and Aitkin
- Approximately 685 critical service sites connected
- Additional expansion under the EDA grant of 136 miles of fiber optic plant construction underway



Border-to-Border Broadband Development Project

This project utilized the Northeast Fiber Network to expand 70 miles of fiber network into underserved and unserved regions in St. Louis County. The NESC/Frontier Border to Border Phase I Broadband Project leverages funding from the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB). The fiber to the node equipment upgrade by Frontier Communications exceeded project goals of increasing capacity to 877. As part of this project, 30 township hall and fire halls are connected with high-speed connectivity and wireless access.

- \$4.35 million state funded project
- 45% DEED funded, 35% IRRRB funded and 20% NESC match
- Approximately 70 miles of fiber network in St. Louis County
- Provides middle mile fiber to Frontier Communications that impacts at least 877 households.
- Provides direct connectivity to rural town halls and fire halls

NE MN Broadband & Economic Development Initiative

The Department's Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded a \$3.4 million CARES Act Recovery Assistance grant to support broadband expansion in Northeast Minnesota.

The pandemic shed light on the vital importance of broadband. This grant will allow Northeast Service Cooperative to meet the region's explosive demand for broadband connectivity to boost businesses, provide new opportunities and diversify the region's economy. The project consists of two main components: middle-mile fiber optic infrastructure and last-mile fiber optic service connections to businesses within Opportunity Zones & other locations across the NE region of MN. The middle-mile portion of the project will extend Northeast Service Cooperative's Fiber Network to other statewide fiber networks and wholesale bandwidth providers. This will increase the region's broadband capacity to 200Gbps. The last-mile component will install fiber optic, Gigabit broadband services to businesses across northeast Minnesota. This EDA grant, to be matched with \$835,000 in local funds, is expected to generate \$20 million in private investment.

- \$4.175 million federal funded project.
- 80% US EDA funded and 20% NESC match.
- Approximately 136 miles of fiber network in Aitkin, Pine, Kanabec, Isanti & St. Louis counties (expansion includes Barnum to Aitkin, Virginia and Hibbing sections, and Willow River to Cambridge)
- Diverse & redundant interconnection points to wholesale providers in Minneapolis and Fargo/Moorhead.
- Last mile Gigabit fiber optic broadband services to over 100 businesses.
- Groundbreaking was held in April 2024 and construction is scheduled to be completed by summer 2025.

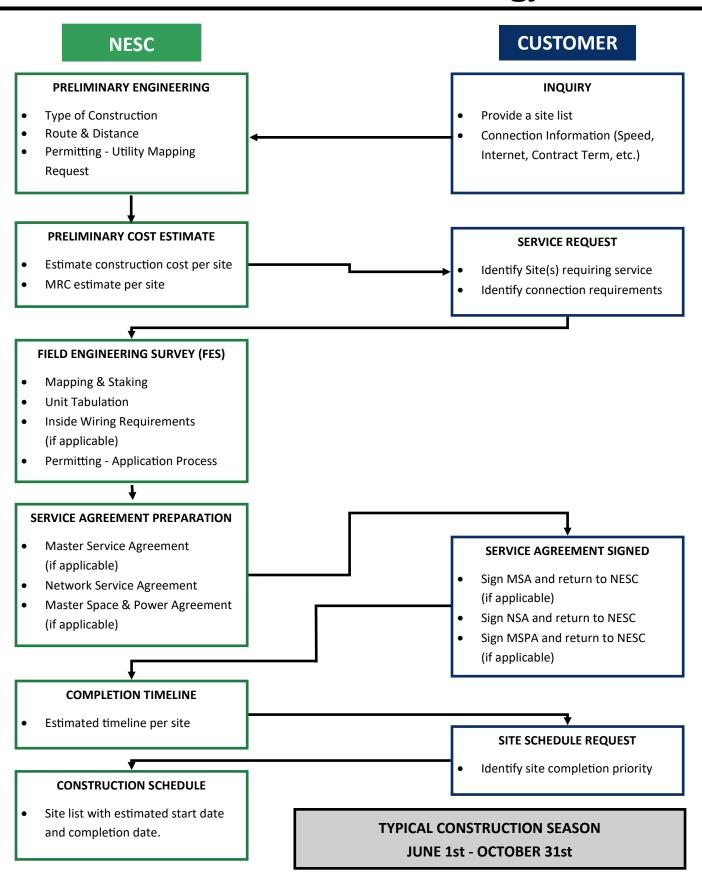
Innovation in Technology

As part of striving for excellence in service in the region and for our members, the TnT team at NESC reviews opportunities and ways to expand networking and technology.

Contact

Joe Weber Operations Manager, Telecommunications & Technology (TnT) 218-748-7626 jweber@nescmn.net





Communications & Marketing

Annual Plan

The Northeast Service Cooperative (NESC) publishes an Annual Plan which provides members with an overview of services and programs. We also highlight our services, members, and programs through emails, publications, handouts, and our website.

The Annual Plan is published on June 1 and posted on NESC's website www.nescmn.net.

Wellness Initiatives

NESC participates in conferences, conventions, and distributes newsletters as a way to connect with members and promote initiatives. Wellness has become a focus as NESC cares about the wellness of its members. We will continue to meet with our members and offer trainings, workshops, and information in the upcoming year.

Follow Us

NESC is on Facebook and LinkedIn. Our website underwent a major renovation this winter for a fresh updated and easier to use site.

Contact

Sharon Haavisto
Senior Coordinator, Administration, Marketing & Human Resources
218-748-7624
shaavisto@nescmn.net



Board of Directors



John Berklich
Board Chair
ISD #701
Hibbing



Walt Hautala
Vice Chair
ISD #2711
Mesabi East



Julie Peterson

Clerk

ISD #97

Moose Lake



Bob Rahja
Treasurer
ISD #695
Chisholm



Tim Riordan

Director

ISD #2909

Rock Ridge



John Klarich
Director
ISD #696
Ely



Kerry JuntunenEx-Officio
ISD #704
Proctor



Susan Kaslow
Director
Hill City



The Northeast Service Cooperative employs a dedicated, committed staff.



Paul Brinkman

Executive Director &
Interim Sr. Director of
Telecom & Technology
(TnT)

Tel 218-748-7603 paulb@nescmn.net



Stephanie Allan

TnT Telecommunications Specialist

Tel 218-748-7625

sallan@nescmn.net



Karen Butkovich

Fiscal Services
Accountant II

Tel 218-748-7607

kbutkovich@nescmn.net



Gina Cole

COMPASS MnMTSS Lead

Tel 218-410-2430

gcole@mnce.org



Alyssa Dahlke

Fiscal Services
Accounting Coordinator

Tel 218-748-7636

adahlke@nescmn.net



Russ Davidson

Education Services Math Specialist

Tel 218-260-8393

rdavidson@nescmn.net



Andrew Doll

TnT Telecommunications Specialist

Tel 218-748-7610

adoll@nescmn.net



John Engelking

CTE Senior Regional Manager

Tel 218-390-9860

jengelking@nescmn.net



Frank Germ

Building & Grounds

Manager

Tel 218-748-7612

fgerm@nescmn.net



Education Services
Education Specialist
Tel 218-966-5849

Igrundstrom@nescmn.net

Lisa Grundstrom



Administration, Marketing & Human Resources Senior Coordinator

Sharon Haavisto

Tel 218-748-7624

shaavisto@nescmn.net



Aubrie Hoover

Behavioral and Mental
Health Services
Regional Manager
Tel 218-748-7618

ahoover@nescmn.net



Kathy Jankila

Fiscal Services

Senior Accountant II

Tel 218-748-7627

kjankila@nescmn.net



Sarah Klyve

COMPASS Equitable
Access Specialist SPED

Tel 218-750-0286

sklyve@mnce.org



Regional Coordinator for Mesabi Behavioral Health Network & Planning & Development

Lisa Kvas

Tel 218-748-7613

kvas@nescmn.net



Tara Lindstrom

Education Services Senior Director and COMPASS Regional Supervisor

Tel 218-748-7614

tlindstrom@mnce.org



Amy Maki
COMPASS Regional
Literacy Lead
Tel 218-750-4574
amaki@mnce.org



Mellesmoen
CFO/Director of
Operations

Jeanette

Tel 218-748-7617 jmellesmoen@nescmn.net



Jonelle
Mellstrom
COMPASS Advocate
Point
Tel 218-410-7715



Renae
Nesburg-Busse
COMPASS Culturally
Responsive Instructional Leadership Lead
Tel 218-421-4010
rbusse@mnce.org



Greg Peterson

IT Network Architect

Tel 218-748-7608

gpeterson@nescmn.net

jmellstrom@mnce.org



Marlo Peterson

Consumer-Directed
Business Consultant

Tel 952-393-2796

mpeterson@nescmn.net



Richard Pfeifer
Information Technology
Specialist, Support
Tel 218-748-7628
rpfeifer@nescmn.net



Dustin Smither
Information Technology
Specialist, Operations
Tel 218-748-7633
dsmither@nescmn.net



Kijo Stallings

Education & Student
Services Coordinator

Tel 218-748-7611

kpulford@nescmn.net



Teresa Rautiola

IT Network
Administrator
Tel 218-748-7616

trautiola@nescmn.net



Suzi Ruper

Member Services
Senior Coordinator

Tel 218-748-7604

sruper@nescmn.net



Lauren Sterk

Fiscal Services
Insurance Pool &
Business Office Analyst

Tel 218-748-7622

Isterk@nescmn.net



TnT Operations
Manager
Tel 218-748-7626

jweber@nescmn.net

Joe Weber

Company Information



Northeast Service Cooperative

5525 Emerald Avenue Mountain Iron, MN 55768

Tel 218-741-0750

Fax 218-741-1719

www.nescmn.net

Annual Plan Contact

Sharon Haavisto
Senior Coordinator, Administration, Marketing & Human Resources
218-748-7624
shaavisto@nescmn.net

