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Clearfield Supports East Central Energy's Historic BEAD Milestone and Fiber Broadband Expansion Across Minnesota and Wisconsin

Strong, collaborative relationship helps rural electric cooperative advance deployment as BEAD-funded projects move forward

MINNEAPOLIS--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Clearfield, Inc. (NASDAQ: CLFD), a leader in fiber connectivity solutions for telecom, data center, and network infrastructure environments, today announces its continued collaboration with East Central Energy (ECE), a Minnesota-based electric cooperative expanding fiber broadband access across rural Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin. Recently, ECE became the first broadband provider in Minnesota to secure an executed Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program agreement, with a project expected to bring high-speed connectivity to approximately 3,750 locations.

"Clearfield has been a trusted part of our fiber network since we began building it in 2023," said Dennis Rice, Broadband Manager at East Central Energy. "As we expand into more rural areas, we need equipment that's reliable and practical to deploy. Clearfield's team has been extremely responsive in helping us navigate the challenges of these grant-funded projects, and that level of support makes a real difference as we continue growing our network."

For its 2026 Wisconsin buildout, ECE selected several Clearfield solutions that comply with the Build America, Buy America (BABA) requirement, including FxMP fiber management panels, FxDS patch-only panels, and FieldSmart® Fiber Active Cabinet (FAC) enclosures. The panels feature Clearfield's Clearview® Blue Cassettes and support high-density fiber connectivity, while the active cabinets provide integrated fiber management and power infrastructure. Together, these solutions are helping ECE establish the foundation for its growing fiber network while meeting federal funding requirements.

As ECE prepares for its next phase of construction under the federal BEAD program, Clearfield's fiber management and active cabinet solutions are helping the cooperative build scalable networks while addressing deployment costs and federal funding requirements. The BEAD milestone builds on ECE's ongoing fiber expansion, which has connected approximately 8,400 members since residential installations began in Fall 2023. With continued construction planned through 2030, ECE aims to serve approximately 25,000 members across its service territory.

"East Central Energy's execution of Minnesota's first BEAD program agreement by a broadband provider marks an important milestone in our efforts to expand reliable, high-speed internet access to unserved and underserved communities," said Bree Maki,

Executive Director at the State of Minnesota's Office of Broadband Development, which is part of the state's Department of Employment and Economic Development. "Reaching rural locations requires strong partnerships, detailed planning, and a commitment to delivering lasting infrastructure. As BEAD-funded projects move toward deployment, ECE's relationship with Clearfield and build progress demonstrates the important role that local providers play in connecting more Minnesotans to the opportunities that broadband makes possible."

Since 2023, ECE has relied on Clearfield fiber connectivity solutions to support the cooperative's growing broadband network. As ECE fiber expands its footprint across Minnesota and Wisconsin, the relationship continues to play an important role in helping the cooperative manage deployment challenges, control infrastructure costs, and prepare for future network growth. Beyond providing equipment, Clearfield has worked closely with ECE to navigate BABA requirements, helping the cooperative prepare accurate equipment specifications and bills of materials for federally funded deployments. This support is particularly important as broadband providers transition from project planning to construction under BEAD.

"As BEAD-funded projects move toward construction, providers need solutions that help them manage costs, meet funding requirements, and build networks that will serve their communities for decades," said Cheri Beranek, Chief Executive Officer at Clearfield. "East Central Energy is a great example of a provider taking a thoughtful approach to rural broadband expansion. We're proud to support these efforts with reliable fiber infrastructure and the technical expertise needed to keep these projects moving forward."

The ECE network is built on 10-gigabit-capable XGS-PON technology to support residential and business connectivity. The cooperative continues to expand its broadband operations and is developing an internal lab to support network testing, provisioning, and future technology upgrades.

Learn more at www.SeeClearfield.com.

About Clearfield, Inc.

Clearfield, Inc. (NASDAQ: CLFD) designs, manufactures, and distributes fiber optic management, protection, and delivery solutions that enable high-performance connectivity across a wide range of markets, helping to close the digital divide. Clearfield's labor lite, craft-friendly platform is leveraged by community broadband providers, MSOs, incumbent service providers, ISPs, data centers, wireless providers, IoT networks, the military, municipalities, and cooperatives to connect homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure faster and more efficiently. Headquartered in Minneapolis, MN, Clearfield deploys more than a million fiber ports each year. For more information, visit www.SeeClearfield.com.

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