

## Excitement grows for April 19 grand prize event

In just one week, five leaders of the Chisago Lakes America's Best Communities (ABC) initiative will be in Denver, Colo., with hopes of returning home with a top prize in the ABC competition. The top community will be awarded \$3 million, second place \$2 million and third place \$1 million.

The national competition, sponsored by Frontier Communications, DISH Network, CoBank, and The Weather Channel, has made a total of \$10 million available to revitalize small towns and rural communities across the country.

For almost three years, a local team has been working toward this moment. First, they developed a comprehensive community revitalization plan packed with innovative ideas to stimulate economic development and community revival, and then they took strides to implement it.

To this point, Chisago Lakes has won a total of \$150,000 in grant funding from the program sponsors to develop its strategy and put it to work.

"The funding we've earned through ABC is certainly an accomplishment to celebrate, says local ABC Coordinator Tangi Schaapveld, "but we're most proud of how our community has come together to

believe in a shared vision for revitalization, prosperity, and enhanced quality of life."

"We have worked hard to make it this far in the competition, and no matter what happens in Denver, our community should be proud of what we've achieved," she adds. "Still, all we've accomplished will be even sweeter if we bring home the grand prize."

In addition to Schaapveld, four other members of the ABC team will represent Chisago Lakes in Denver. The rest of the extended team will gather at Winehaven in Chisago City, at 4 p.m. April 19 to celebrate and watch the 5 p.m. announcement via a live feed.

"It's clear this competition has sparked a renewed spirit of hope and collaboration in our community," says Schaapveld. "We know we can create a stronger future for Chisago Lakes, and America's Best Communities helped us find the path to make that happen."

When they launched the ABC competition in September 2014, Frontier Communications, DISH, CoBank and The Weather Channel challenged small towns and cities to envision a stronger future and to design a strategy to achieve it. More than 350 communities entered the competition, and now only eight



remain.

In Denver, each community will present the strategies they've developed to revive their local economies, and the top three—to be determined by the progress they've made in implementing those strategies and the potential for sustained revitalization—will be awarded grand prize funding to accelerate their communities' growth.

In addition to Chisago Lakes, other finalists are: Darrington/Arlington, Wash., Huntington, W. Va., Lake Havasu City, Ariz., Madison, Ind., Statesboro, Ga., Tualatin, Ore., and Valley County, Idaho.

To learn more about the competition itself, visit [www.americasbestcommunities.com](http://www.americasbestcommunities.com). To learn more about Chisago Lakes ABC initiative go to [chisagolakes.com](http://chisagolakes.com).