

To: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL.

FROM: Dave Maroney, Director of Economic Development.

SUBJECT: *Blandin Broadband Communities Program.*

DATE: May 10, 2018.

BACKGROUND.

The Economic Development Authority heard a presentation from Bill Coleman (Community Technology Advisors) and Dan Pecarina (Hiawatha Broadband Communications) outlining opportunities to improve and expand the use of broadband in Cannon Falls – see accompanying information. In the event that other local organizations express interest in the Program, the Authority recommends that an Application be prepared and submitted by May 31st. At this point, the Applicant is not required to contribute funding but is expected to commit considerable “time and effort” should the Application be approved.

REQUESTED COUNCIL ACTION.

The City Council is asked to support preparation and submission of the Application to the Blandin Foundation for the *Blandin Broadband Communities Program*.



Blandin Broadband Communities Program



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What's happening?



- Four new communities will be selected as Blandin Broadband Communities
- Communities will use the Intelligent Community approach to analyze their community assets and gaps, identify desired outcomes and develop projects
- Communities will be eligible for up to \$75,000 in funding for projects that improve broadband access and use

What is the Intelligent Community approach?

It's more than just broadband networks!



- Broadband
 - Are our broadband networks adequate to support advanced use?
- Knowledge Workforce
 - How are we creating, retaining and attracting a tech-savvy workforce
- Innovation
 - Are we adopting new technologies to increase our economic competitiveness?
- Digital Equity
 - Is everyone ready and able to connect?
- Sustainability
 - Is our community prepared for the long run?
- Advocacy
 - Does our community have a tech-focused brand designed to retain and attract investment and people?

How does broadband availability matter in this?



Our broadband is great! 😊

- This is an opportunity to get residents, organizations and businesses to use broadband to enhance economic development and quality of life
- We can focus on people (the hard part), not technology
- Projects like public access, e-commerce training, Wi-Fi hot spots, digital literacy, community marketing, home health care and distance education
- Choose to focus on youth, older adults, and/or business or use this program to support existing community initiatives

Our broadband is not so good 😞

- All of the same, plus...
- Communities will receive guidance from the Blandin team on broadband infrastructure development strategies
- Communities are eligible to apply for a \$25,000 Robust Network Feasibility Fund grant to analyze alternatives for improving broadband

What do you mean by “community?”



- We encourage you to define your own community
- We have worked with more than 36 “communities” including
 - Individual cities
 - Counties
 - Multi-county regions
 - Tribal communities
 - School districts
 - Uniquely defined “communities”
- KEY QUESTIONS
 - What makes sense for us?
 - Who can we work with for mutual and maximum benefits?

Selection Process

- Application available now
- May 31 application deadline
- Criteria
 - Commitment of lead organization
 - Demonstrated support from other organizations
 - Commitment to inclusive process
 - Commitment to be a good Blandin partner
 - Demonstration of past and current community broadband initiatives
- June 30 community selection
- A two-year process and commitment



Key Tasks

- Form and manage steering team
- Attend several BBC Cohort meetings
- Gather community data for each of the six Intelligent Community factors
- Host Community Vision meeting
- Host Project Development meetings
- Develop and fund projects using Blandin, local and other funds
- Manage and implement projects
- Host semi-annual Blandin team visits
- Attend annual broadband conference
- File required reports



For more information:

- Contact

- Mary Magnuson

- memagnuson@blandinfoundation.org

- 218-327-8738

- Bill Coleman

- bill@communitytechnologyadvisors.com

- 651-491-2551

- Application and resource material

- <http://broadband.blandinfoundation.org>

- <http://blandinonbroadband.org>



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