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STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

MN Intelligent Rural Communities Initiative

Seeking funds for Sustainable Adoption of Broadband Technologies in Rural Minnesota

Bernadine Joselyn, Blandin Foundation
Bill Coleman, Community Technology Advisors
Kelly Peterson, KP Grants

Mission

To strengthen rural communities in
Minnesota, especially the Grand
Rapids Area



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Introduction and Overview

- Blandin Foundation has been engaged in broadband policy and sustainable strategies for five years
- Measurably successful statewide rural activity
- Availability of cash match
- Credible applicant
- Too good to pass up!



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Blandin Broadband Vision

To ensure a high quality of life and a globally competitive future for its citizens, businesses and communities, Minnesota is committed to making the necessary investment to become a world leader in the universal deployment and use of ultra high-speed next generation broadband



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Our Goal

Receive \$5 – \$7 million in funding for all of greater Minnesota for the purposes of enhanced public access, increased market development, and sustained adoption of broadband to increase community vitality and economic competitiveness



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The Opportunity

- NTIA Broadband Technology Opportunity Program
 - \$250 million for Sustainable Broadband projects
 - Definition of sustainable BB
 - Blandin Foundation access to approximately \$500,000 of cash match through Alltel settlement fund dedicated to south and southwestern Minnesota plus additional foundation commitment
 - No other visible statewide applicant

Waiting for NOFA

- Call for partners
- Partner workshop and discussions
- Informal call for proposals
- Directed requests for specific services
- Obtaining organizational commitments

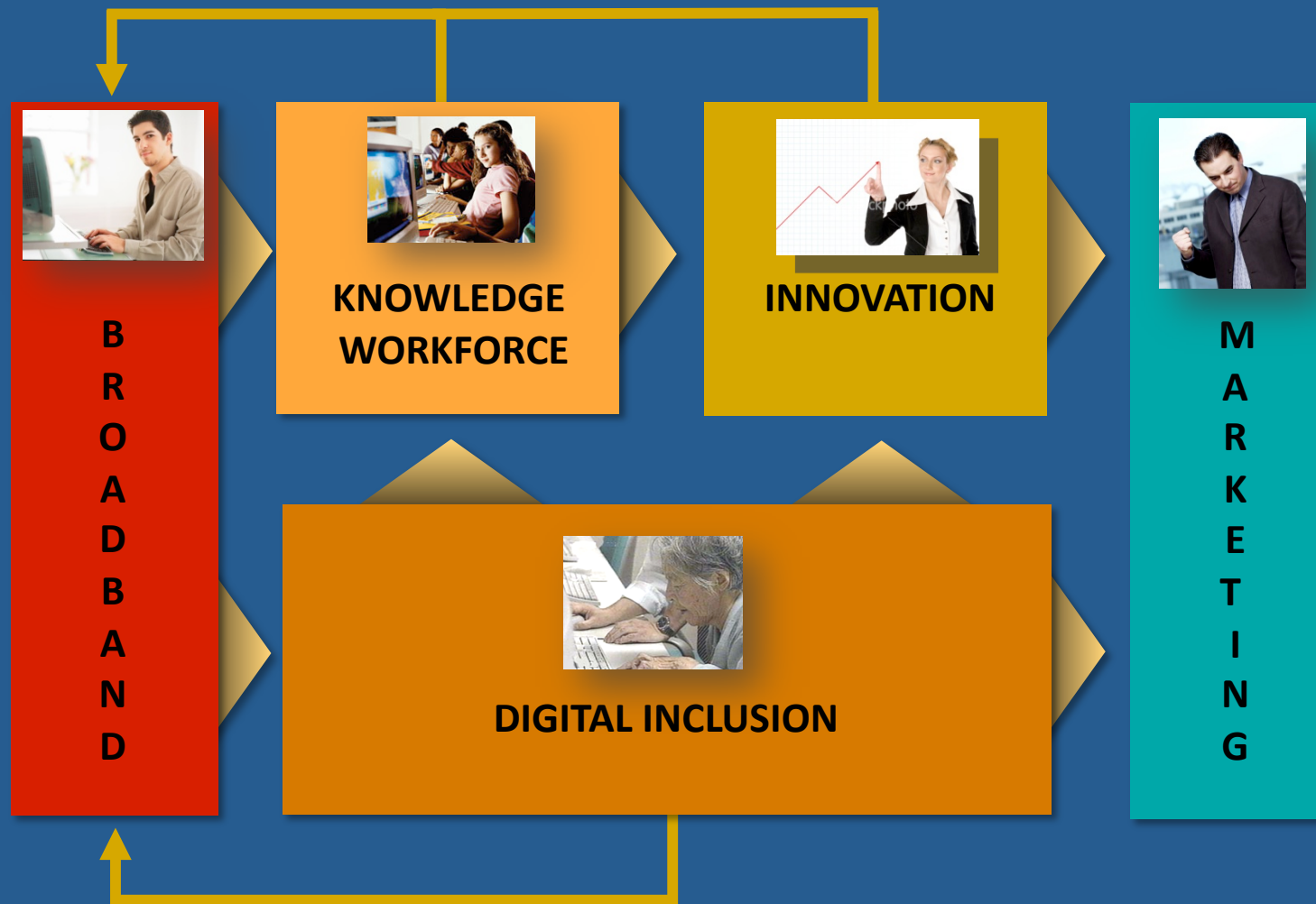


Theme & Compelling Narrative

- Early drafts lacked a theme
- Intelligent Community provided a coherent framework for a culture of use
 - Broadband
 - Knowledge Workers
 - Innovation
 - Digital Inclusion
 - Marketing/advocacy



The ICF Virtuous Cycle



Partners

- Regional Development Commissions
- University of MN Extension
- MN Learning Commons
- MN Renewable Energy Marketplace
- Workforce Partners
 - MN DEED
 - Workforce Centers
- MWFCA
- PC's for People
- Association of MN Counties
- University of MN – Crookston
- Intelligent Community Forum



Partners

- Broadband Demonstration Communities
 - Benton County
 - Cook County
 - Grand Rapids Area
 - Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
 - Stevens County
 - Thief River Falls
 - Upper MN Valley RDC
 - Willmar
 - Windom
 - Winona



Application Components

- Existing Blandin Programs
 - Community Broadband Resources
 - LightSpeed Application Implementation
 - Robust Networks Feasibility Fund
- E-commerce training for business
 - Focus on Main Street and renewable energy companies
- Workforce customers
 - Expand online access, provide online learning and computer training for dislocated workers
- Demonstration Communities
 - Ten communities (city, county, region, tribe) around MN to engage in active broadband development activities

Statewide Activities

- Enhanced public access at workforce centers with access to training and online learning
- E-entrepreneurship / small business training and support
- Support community broadband initiatives in:
 - Community planning
 - Market development
 - Application development
 - Feasibility studies



Broadband Demonstration Communities

- 10 greater Minnesota communities (9 selected)
- Funds for adoption of community-impacting technology applications (health, education, government, business)
- Community may be city, county, region or reservation
- Requires community commitment of key partners, including providers



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Application Development Process

Document Needs

- Use of statewide data
 - Center for Rural Policy and Development, 2007
 - Pew Internet and American Life, 2009
 - MN's EDA Center at Crookston, EDA Broadband Report 2009
 - Own experience with Blandin Broadband Initiative programs
- Focus on rural adoption lags, offline small businesses, and persons who are not yet using the Internet for education and employment



Program Activities

- Move from conceptual to detail
 - What problems are we addressing?
 - Who is best positioned to provide this service?
 - Who can help market programs?
 - Who can deliver locally?
- Interactions with partners varied
 - Some brought their concepts to the table
 - Some accepted our concepts



Budget

- \$6.4 M project; \$4.8M grant request
 - 4% - Blandin Foundation program management, marketing and outreach
 - 8% - Program management, marketing, outreach
 - 7% - Evaluation
 - 39% - Community implementation, training or technical assistance
 - 27% - Individual training or assistance
 - 15% - Targeted small business training and technical assistance
- Over \$1.5 M in matching dollars; \$690,000 from Blandin Foundation (\$500,000 cash), and \$836,000 in in-kind from various partners

Administration

- Compliance with Federal regulations, thorough audit, grantee meetings, share evaluation information and best practices
- Reporting, Quarterly reports on BTOP outcome measures
- Annual reports with baseline and post implementation evaluations on communities' progress within the IC framework



Evaluation

- University of Minnesota-Crookston, EDA Center
 - Jack Geller
- BTOP Measures
 - Increased residential broadband subscribers 2% of normal growth (over 38,000 households)
 - Increased small business subscribers 240
 - Jobs created or retained 13.5
 - Small business reached (6,000), trained (2,000), provided extensive technical assistance (200)
 - Individuals reached (25,000), trained (2,500).
- ICF Measures, within each of the five Intelligent Community indicators



Submittal

- Web Process, Slow and fraught with technical challenges
- Key Lessons Learned
 - Complexity is challenging
 - Importance of clearly defined roles and expectations
 - Focus on mission, values, funder objectives, and partner synchronicity



Review Process

- Process in chaos
- Phase One
- Phase Two
- State Review
- Awards



When/If we get the funding...

- Celebrate!
- Administration
 - Grant agreements
 - Partner agreements
 - Processes and procedures
- Project Launch





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Bernadine Joselyn

brjoselyn@blandinfoundation.org

218-327-8728

<http://broadband.blandinfoundation.org>