

**Blandin Community Broadband Program**

**Blandin Broadband Communities:**

**Community Project Grant Application Instructions**



In winter 2020, Blandin Foundation selected five rural Minnesota communities to participate in the Blandin Broadband Communities (BBC) program: Chisago Lakes Area, Le Sueur County, Otter Tail County, Red Lake Nation, and White Earth Nation.

While each BBC is different, all share the same structural components:

* **The ‘Community**’: the geographical region covered.
* **Lead Organization:** each BBC is led by a governmental unit or 501c3 nonprofit tasked with leading the local effort.
* **Steering Team:** each BBC has convened a diverse local steering committee to guide their work.

Each BBC will submit a single community project grant application for up to $75,000 once its allocated $35k-45k in grant funds to projects. The applications will be reviewed by the Blandin Broadband Strategy Board, who will consider the grant application based on the community’s technology goals and proposed projects. The Steering Team may submit 1-2 subsequent rounds of project ideas and budgets to Blandin Foundation staff for approval by the program director; who will consider project ideas in light of community priorities along with the evaluation criteria listed below. Steering Teams should plan on allocating all grant funds to projects by March 31, 2021 and complete all projects by December 31, 2021.

The Blandin Broadband team worked with each BBC Steering Team to host community meetings to define their community’s technology goals, develop a plan to meet those goals, and seek ideas for projects that will advance their technology goals.

Each community held a vision meeting and brainstorm meeting where community members helped develop technology goals, began brainstorming ideas for projects to advance those goals, and formed small teams to further explore project ideas. The small teams were charged with developing project proposals and submitting them to their local BBC Steering Team. The Steering Team ranks the proposals in light of community priorities set through the BBC planning process. Projects endorsed by the BBC Steering Team should be submitted to Blandin Foundation for approval prior to project implementation.

**Evaluation Criteria**

The following criteria will be used in evaluating grant applications:

1. Project meets an identified community need.
2. Community partnerships are evidenced in the proposal.
3. Project increases the technological vitality of the community.
4. Project uses appropriate technology for the stated purpose.
5. Project purpose is charitable.

Ineligible project activities include:

1. Projects benefiting metropolitan areas of the state (Minneapolis/St. Paul, Duluth, Moorhead, Rochester, St. Cloud, Mankato)
2. Projects outside the state of Minnesota
3. Religious activities
4. Medical research
5. Travel grants for individuals or groups
6. Camping and athletic programs
7. Ordinary government services
8. Grants solely intended to influence specific legislation or a specific candidate

**Response Instructions:**

Application materials should be prepared simply and economically, avoiding the use of elaborate promotional materials beyond those sufficient to provide a complete, accurate and reliable presentation. BBCs may apply for $75,000 in grant support for projects. Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis.

Applicants should contact Blandin Community Broadband Program administrator Mary Magnuson (memagnuson@blandinfoundation.org or 218/327-8738) with any questions regarding application, including transmitting draft versions of proposals for pre-submittal review, and for guidance on the online application form. Application materials not submitted via the portal may be emailed to Mary.

**Funding**

Matching funds are required; 25% (1:3) of total project cost for projects that provide community-wide cross-sector benefit, and 50% (1:1) for projects that are mainly for equipment purchase, or benefit only one specific entity or sector. Tracking and reporting matching funds should be accounted for in the project design.

Projects that do not meet community priorities are not likely to receive funding.

**Online grant portal instructions:**

Applicants may submit grant applications via the portal. The portal works best in Chrome or Firefox, and *worst* in Internet Explorer. The instructions for doing so are as follows:

1. We recommend you use this document to draft your responses to the application questions, and then copy and paste your responses into the application portal.
2. To access the Blandin Broadband Communities Project Grant portal, go to <https://blandin.foundationconnect.org/GrantsManager/pages/GrantApplication.aspx?OrgID=00DA0000000B6on&RequestRT=012A00000017Shy&IsDirect=true>. If this is your first time applying via the portal, click ‘Register’ as a new portal user. If you have applied via the portal previously, you may skip step 3.
3. Fill in the grantee registration information. The grantee should be the fiscal/organization lead as stated in the BBC program application. Click ‘Save.’ You will then be directed to login to the account you just created.

***Note – you must click on the original link above in order to log in (consider bookmarking it!) Each time you log in to the portal, you’ll need to click on the original link – the logout screen may look just like the login screen, but it often doesn’t work.***

1. Log in to the portal. Tab 1 is the application questions. Some of the questions are worded differently on the portal than they are on the application instructions due to space limitations on the portal. When you are finished copying and pasting your responses into the portal, click ‘save.’
	1. You may save the form, exit, and log back in later (click the original link – you are not likely to be able to log in from the logout screen) to continue your application at any point before click ‘submit’.
	2. The BBC organization lead (as specified in the BBC program application) is the entity eligible to apply for the grant.
	3. Leave the “fiscal sponsor information” section blank if the grantee and fiscal sponsor is the same entity.
2. Tab 2 is optional.
3. You have the option to upload up to five attachments on tab 3. The attachments are described in detail under section V below. You may also choose to mail or email attachments to Blandin Foundation.
4. Continue to tab 4 to review and submit. Once you’ve submitted your application, you may not log back in and make changes to your application.

**Application Form:**

Please use the following outline as a guide to your proposal narrative. Take the space needed to tell your story, but try not to exceed 7-10 pages, excluding attachments. For information specific to current Blandin Broadband Communities, including the link to the application portal and final report templates, visit the BBC Member Page at <http://broadband.blandinfoundation.org/programs/bbc-member-page>.

**Organization Information**

Name of organization:

Legal name, if different:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Employer Identification Number (EIN):

Phone:

Website:

Project Name: *[Community Name]* 2018 BBC Project Grant

Name of CEO/Exec Dir.:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Name of contact person regarding this application:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Is your organization an IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit? **Yes / No**

If no, is your organization a public agency/unit of government? **Yes / No**

**Proposal Overview**

Duration of project (start date – end date): [probably app submission date – Dec 31, 2021]
*Note: grant period start date will be the day the Strategy Board approves the grant, which will probably be within a couple weeks of submission.*

Please give a 2-3 sentence summary of request. For example:

[org name] will increase broadband access/adoption/use by implementing projects designed to [increase technical capacity of residents through training/provide better high-speed access through public hotspots/etc.], including [list project names].

**Budget Summary**

Fiscal Year of Organization (month – month):

Total project budget: $

Total dollar amount requested of Blandin Foundation: $

Total annual organization budget: $

**Proposal Narrative**

1. Organization Information
	1. Brief summary of organization history, mission or purpose, programming/activities, and recent accomplishments.
	2. Why is your organization best positioned to do this work? Are there opportunities to work together with other organizations for increased impact?
	3. Describe what steps your organization takes to include a broad range of perspectives from the community you seek to serve such as board and staff members from diverse backgrounds.
	4. Identify specific steps your organization takes to improve organizational effectiveness.
2. Purpose of Grant
	1. Background
		1. Describe how implementing broadband projects (in general) will advance your community’s technology goals. What will be different upon completion of the projects?
		2. How will the projects include a broad range of perspectives in decision making? What organizations and individuals have been involved in planning and implementing your work/projects? What steps will you take to include community members who will be most impacted by your work?
		3. What key relationships are in place, or will need to be developed, to ensure the success of your community’s projects, and/or your BBC effort as a whole?
	2. Implementation
		1. List your community’s technology goals, as defined by the local steering committee, and informed by the Community Vision meeting.
		2. What projects have been developed to help achieve these goals? Please list the project name and a 1-2 sentence description. ([Project Plan](https://blandinfoundation.org/content/uploads/BBC-Project-Plan.docx) documents will have been filled out by project teams and submitted to the Steering Team for consideration. Project Plans should be submitted as attachments.)
		3. Who are the organizations and individuals involved in implementing the projects? Do they have the requisite skills and experience?
		4. What are your short-term or long-term strategies (if applicable) for sustaining this effort?
3. Assessment
	1. Describe what success looks like and how you will measure success (use goals and metrics wherever you can.)
	2. How will you know you’ve met or made progress on your community’s technology goals?
	3. Give specific examples of how your BBC efforts contribute to a healthy rural community.
	4. Explain the process that will be used to measure and document whether progress is being made toward your community’s technology goals?
4. Budget
	1. $75,000 / at least $25,000 match will be required
	2. If you plan to use any of the funds for planning or administration (such as hosting and attending meetings, you may indicate that here.)
	3. You can list each project developed so far here. For example:
	Meeting expense and other admin: $1,000 (plus match if applicable)
	WiFi on Buses: $6,000 grant + $2,000 match = $8,000
	Social media marking training: $10,000 grant + $3,000 match = $13,000
	Total: $17,000 grants + $5,000 match = $21,000
		1. Detailed project plans and budget are required for each project. They may be uploaded as attachments or emailed to Mary. ([Optional Budget Template](https://blandinfoundation.org/content/uploads/BBC-optional-budget-template-2020.xlsx) form)
5. Attachments – in portal-order (please upload the following or email to memagnuson@blandinfoundation.org):
	1. A copy of the grantee’s organizational budget.
	2. Project Budget
	3. The grantee’s most recent financial statement, from a formal audit if available, showing actual expenses. This information should include a balance sheet, a statement of activities (or statement of income and expenses) and functional expenses. If a formal audit is available, please include the management letter. This audit may be submitted electronically by providing a link to this information.
	4. Individual Project Summaries [Not necessary at this time]
	5. Additional attachment, optional. (Possibly a current form W-9; filled out and signed by the grantee. *Probably not necessary for recent Blandin Foundation grantees.*)

**Project Plans**

After the community Brainstorm Meeting, small teams will form to further develop projects for possible implementation by the BBC. About a month after the Brainstorm Meeting, the Steering Team will hold a project development meeting to consider those projects in light of budget, and community technology goals and priorities.

The team should choose several projects and plan to allocate about half of their funds at the first project development meeting.

The first set of project plans should be submitted along with the grant application. Subsequent project plans should be submitted to Blandin Foundation for approval prior to spending funds on projects.

Downloads:

* [Project Plan template](https://blandinfoundation.org/content/uploads/BBC-Project-Plan.docx)
* [Optional Budget template](https://blandinfoundation.org/content/uploads/BBC-optional-budget-template-2020.xlsx)