



Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities: Light Speed Grant Program Request for Proposal Issued: September 2010

Objective:

This Request for Proposal (RFP) is an invitation by the Blandin Foundation (Foundation) to qualified community institutions and/or organizations to implement new, innovative bandwidth intensive communications applications. These applications should connect between institutions or connect institutions to end-customers and homes within the community or region. Blandin Foundation is most interested in promoting applications that utilize video, images and large file transfers, preferably with two-way interactive communication. Applications that engage multiple partners and/or community segments are encouraged.

Funds are currently available for rural Minnesota communities, excluding only the seven county metro area and the Cities of Duluth, St. Cloud and Rochester.

A total of \$600,000 has been made available for Community Grants through the Foundation's federally funded grant project, Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities (MIRC).

Timeline:

Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis until all funds are expended. Applications will be reviewed quarterly by C. K. Blandin Foundation's Broadband Strategy Board, and approved by the C. K. Blandin Foundation MIRC Grants Committee. Applicants must be able to begin their projects immediately.

Qualified Organizations:

To be considered a qualified applicant, your organization must comply with all of the specifications within the RFP. You must also respond to all items in the RFP.

Light Speed Grant Program Goals

1. Spur the implementation of broadband intensive, innovative applications by community institutions that will increase the community's competitiveness and/or improve the community's quality of life.
2. Demonstrate the value of robust ultra-high speed networks.

3. Help local institutions develop strategies to overcome barriers to application deployment, providing a model for similar institutions within the community and around the state of Minnesota.

Funded Application Examples:

- Home tele-health care services connecting post-operative and chronically ill patients to a rural Minnesota hospital.
- Fiber connectivity between multiple group homes enabling remote monitoring and counseling, electronic records exchange and staff meetings and training.
- Tele-pharmacy services connecting a small rural community retail outlet to a licensed pharmacy in an adjacent regional center community.
- Digital recording and streaming of multi-cast educational videoconferencing.
- Network equipment to enable regional health care networks.

Network Requirements:

The Light Speed program is technology-neutral. Preference will be given to applications that require significant symmetrical communications. Network ownership can be private, public or operated by a private-public partnership.

Funding:

The Foundation will accept applications for up to \$50,000 though the average grant is expected to be approximately \$35,000. All Foundation grant funds must be matched on a 1:1 cash¹ basis. In-kind contributions are welcome and will be considered as an indicator of organizational support for the project. Grantees should plan to expend the funds within one year of funding.

Uses of Funds:

Light Speed funds may be used for equipment or software purchase or lease, technical services, or staff or customer training. Funds may not be used for studies to determine the feasibility of a new application. Additionally, this grant money is only to be used for direct costs of the project as defined by the Federal Government in OMB Circular A122:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars_a122_2004/?print=1

Grantee Blogs:

Grantees will be encouraged to maintain an active project blog on the Foundation web site describing the project and project progress. Active is defined as a minimum of monthly project updates.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Applicants are to explain how their activities will contribute to the Light Speed Program goals listed above.

¹ Cash match will need to be accounted for according to standards accepted by the IRS. For further explanation, please contact Mary Magnuson at 218.327.8738 or memagnuson@blandinfoundation.org.

- Describe how you will measure these changes and who will be involved in evaluating this work (staff, board, constituents, community, and consultants)?
- Timeliness and cost
 - Explain how this activity could not be undertaken, “but for” the availability of these funds.
- Is this project linked to any ARRA stimulus funds? Which programs? *[Note: Federal Funding may not be used for 1:1 cash match for this grant program.]*

Response Instructions:

All proposals submitted in response to this RFP should be prepared simply and economically, avoiding the use of elaborate promotional materials beyond those sufficient to provide a complete, accurate and reliable presentation.

Qualified community institutions and/or organizations should submit one printed copy of the proposal along with an electronic version of the proposed narrative (financial statements required with the submission need not be mailed electronically) to:

*Bernadine Joselyn, Director, Public Policy & Engagement
 C. K. Blandin Foundation
 100 North Pokegama Avenue
 Grand Rapids, MN 55744
 brjoselyn@blandinfoundation.org*

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact C. K. Blandin Foundation consultant Bill Coleman at (651) 491-2551 or bill@communitytechnologyadvisors.com with any questions regarding this RFP; this includes transmitting draft versions of proposals for pre-submittal review.

Background

C. K. Blandin Foundation:

C. K. Blandin Foundation is a private foundation based in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The Foundation was created in 1941, and is Minnesota’s largest rural-based and rural-focused foundation. The Foundation is funded through annual contributions from the C.K. Blandin Residuary Trust and earnings from its own investments. As of April 2010, the net assets of the Foundation and the Residuary Trust were approximately \$371 million.

The Foundation’s mission “To strengthen rural Minnesota communities, especially the Grand Rapids area,” and vision “To be the premier partner for building healthy rural Minnesota communities, grounded in strong economies, where burdens and benefits are widely shared.” guide our three program areas, grant making, community leadership training and public policy. See www.blandinfoundation.org for additional information.

The Blandin Broadband Initiative:

The Blandin Foundation has long believed that absent adequate broadband access and technologically literate populations, rural communities will be unable to take advantage of

the extraordinary benefits that ultra high-speed next generation broadband can provide. Broadband technology can help rural communities overcome the economic disadvantages - smaller labor markets, fewer capital resources, reduced access to research institutions and greater distance from markets and suppliers - that traditionally challenge rural places.

In December 2002, the Foundation launched its Broadband Initiative to improve the economic vitality of Minnesota's communities by encouraging the development of rural telecommunications markets and infrastructure. In partnership with leadership across Minnesota, through its Broadband Initiative the Foundation seeks to:

- Increase awareness about the value of broadband telecommunications use and services
- Increase business and residential use of broadband in rural communities
- Increase public and private investment in rural broadband capacity

Based on input from a Strategy Board of statewide leaders who guide the initiative, Blandin Foundation has developed a Broadband Vision for Minnesota...

"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."

and a set of principles that further define the vision:

- **Ubiquity:** Ultra high speed broadband needs to be available to everyone in Minnesota, including businesses, institutions, and individuals. *While ultimately all Minnesotans will need this service, this goal will necessarily be achieved in stages.*
- **Symmetry:** Ultra high-speed broadband needs to provide symmetric speeds and facilitate source-to-source communication. *More communication in the future will be "two-way" as we work more from our homes.*
- **Affordable:** Ultra high-speed broadband needs to be available at rates people can afford.
- **Competition:** Competition among service providers should be encouraged. *Competition increases customer choice and promotes innovation.*
- **World Class:** We must achieve world class state-of-the-art service based on global standards. *We cannot afford just to be better than our neighboring states.*
- **Collaboration:** The deployment and utilization of ultra high-speed broadband is a challenging goal that can benefit from public and private entities working together.
- **Neutrality:** Ultra high-speed broadband policy should be promoted regardless of the technology platform that delivers it. *The best technology for delivering ultra high-speed broadband may not have even been invented yet.*
- **Interoperability:** Regardless of the technology used for ultra high-speed delivery, all systems must seamlessly interoperate with all other technologies.

This is important work. Broadband is revolutionizing business, government, education, work and lifestyles. By opening markets, broadband-based applications and services create new jobs and give new focus and hope to communities. By making possible the export of services and skills, broadband puts workers into wage and skill competition with people around the globe.

Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities Project

The Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities project is a multi-sector, comprehensive approach to sustainable broadband adoption targeting residents, small businesses, local governments, and critical services providers in rural Minnesota. MIRC expects to reach each of Minnesota's 80 rural counties through education, training, technical assistance, and by removing barriers to broadband adoption. The projects will nurture and support an enhanced "culture of use" of broadband-based services. The Economic Development Administration (EDA) Center at the University of Minnesota, Crookston will help track the impact of the project, including the number of subscribers generated.

Goal:

Create technologically and economically vital rural communities, competing and thriving in the broadband economy, with sustainable broadband adoption, job growth and wealth creation.

Origin of MIRC funding:

The Foundation has received federal funds to facilitate broadband deployment in rural areas through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) of the U.S. Department of Commerce, under the auspices of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The activities to be completed by the applicant shall be paid using these funds, at least in part. Applicant and the C.K. Blandin Foundation agree that if the applicant is chosen, they will be a subrecipient of a federal award. The applicant, if chosen, therefore agrees to comply with the terms of Financial Assistance Award #27-43-B10515, made by the U.S. Department of Commerce and C.K. Blandin Foundation, and the BTOP Notice of Funds Availability, 74 FR 33104 (July 9, 2009), as a condition precedent to the agreement of the C.K. Blandin Foundation. If chosen, the applicant shall provide reports and information regarding funds expended in performance of its grant activities as required by BTOP or other federal financial reporting formats as the Foundation may require from time to time.

Application Information and Process

Proposals should be no longer than eight pages (excluding financial statements and other legal documents) and contain the following information:

1. Cover letter that introduces your organization and your proposal, and makes a strategic link between your proposal and the Foundation's mission and grant making interests.
2. Organization Information

- a. Complete contact information, including contact name, title, address, email address, phone number, website address, federal ID number and Duns number.
 - b. Summary of organization's history, including the date established.
 - i. Please indicate if the project's lead organization is a for-profit or non-profit organization, and submit a copy of the IRS determination letter and form W9.
 - c. Summary of organization's mission and goals.
 - d. Summary of corporate structure, including a brief description of key project staff, including qualifications relevant to the specific request
 - e. Description of organization's current programs or activities, including any service statistics and strengths or accomplishments. Please highlight new or different activities, if any, for this organization.
 - f. Description of parent company, affiliated companies, strategic partners or joint ventures (if applicable). This should include: legal name, mission statement, services and programs, addresses, and staff contacts.
3. Purpose of grant and ability to meet RFP criteria
- a. Situation: The opportunity, challenges, issues that your proposal addresses.
 - b. Activities
 - i. Overall goal(s).
 - ii. Strategy for achieving the goal(s).
 - iii. Identify all proposed activities. Clearly note those for which you seek funding, who will carry out those activities, and the time frame in which the activities will occur.
 - iv. Indicators of success.
 - v. Long-term sustainability. Identify funding strategies (if applicable) for sustaining this effort.
4. Attachments
- a. IRS Determination Letter
 - b. Form W9 (<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf?portlet=3>)
 - c. Most recent financial statement from most recently completed year, audited 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.
 - d. Project Budget, including income and expenses
 - e. Additional funders. List names of corporations and foundations from which you are requesting funds to implement project activities, with dollar amounts, indicating which sources are committed or pending.

Submission of a proposal does not create any right in or expectation of a contract with the Foundation. The Foundation reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, and the Foundation further declares that it will incur no financial obligations for any costs by any company in preparation of proposals.

Disposition and Disclosure of Proposals:

All proposals submitted in response to this RFP will become the property of the Blandin Foundation. Additionally, the submitted information *may* be reviewed by the US Department of Commerce, and *will* be reviewed by the Foundation's Auditors.

Modification or Withdrawal of Proposals:

Responses to this request for proposals may be modified or withdrawn by written notice (e-mail notice acceptable) prior to the final review of the proposal by the C. K. Blandin Foundation MIRC Grants Committee.

Reservation of Rights:

The Blandin Foundation reserves the right to:

- Accept or reject any and all proposals received in response to this RFP, and to solicit new submittals.
- Waive or modify any irregularities in proposals received after prior notification to the grantee.
- Request the submission of proposal modifications at any time if deemed in the best interest of the Foundation with the understanding that such requests may change the cost of services provided.
- Consider proposals or modifications received at any time before the agreement is made if such changes are deemed in the best interest of the Foundation.
- Request clarification and/or additional information from the applicant during the evaluation process.
- In the event of termination, enter into negotiations with other qualified firms that submitted proposals, rather than redoing the proposal process for the project.

Thank you for your submission of a proposal to the Blandin Foundation.