



Blandin Broadband Communities

People + Process



Agenda



- Welcome
 - Why we became a Blandin Broadband Community
 - Jayne Gibson (Austin Aspires), chair/leader
- The Intelligent Community Framework
 - Blandin Team
- Community Discussions
 - By Intelligent Community Element
- Group Reporting
 - Assets and Gaps
 - Desired Outcomes
- Next Steps
- Adjourn



Development Corporation of Austin



**Community
Opportunity**

**Creatively &
responsibly
allocate and spend
up to \$100,000 on
community-
benefitting
technology
projects**

Vision & Brainstorm

Design and Budget

Implement

Track & Evaluate

Achieving BBC Success



The Intelligent Community Framework



Broadband Discussion

- How is your broadband?
 - In the cities and towns
 - In the rural countryside
 - For schools, governments and health care
 - For business
 - Via cellular
- Where is Wi-Fi available?
- Who are the key players in this discussion?



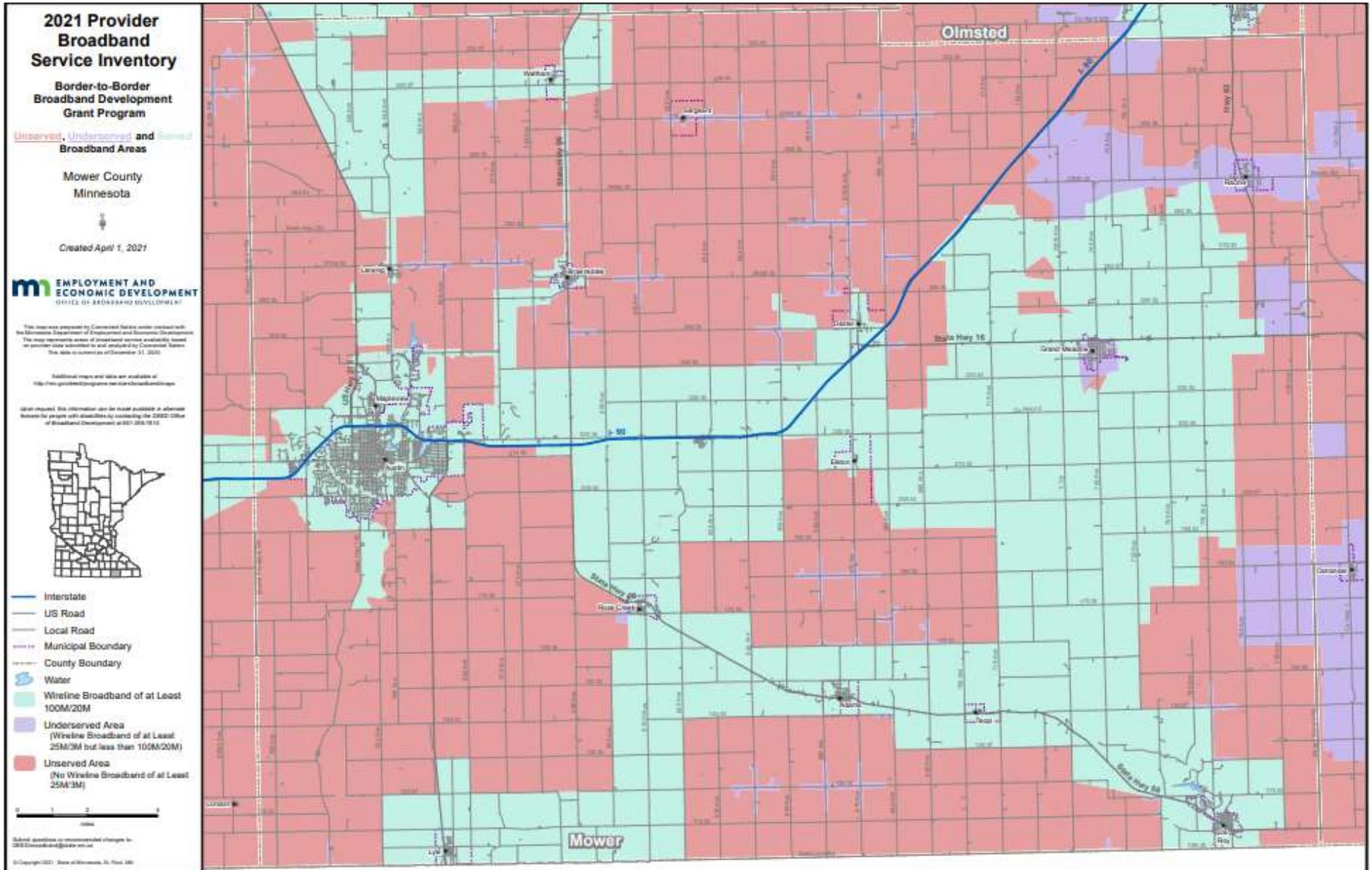
Our Broadband Story

Julie Clinefelter



- 2019/2021 Broadband Service Inventory
 - School reports many kids outside city limits
- Free Wifi availability
 - Library- grant based
 - School- grant based
 - Community
- Future opportunities
- Key issue may be affordability, not availability

Our Broadband Story



Community Survey Response

- *We do a lot with digital outreach through social media, our webpage, and utilize online and cloud-based resources, so a broadband connection is necessary.*
- *Interrupted connection or important stakeholders who do not have access are unable to collaborate and share voice*
- *I have internet access to my home, but it is impacted by demand. Certain times of the day it is very slow.*
- *We use Spectrum for our Internet services and rely on this service to run our server and POS workstations. We have experienced outages and other problems that affect our business.*
- *We are not hindered but our monthly expense is high*
- *There would be no working from home without it. There would be no way to communicate in a timely manner with medical, mental health and school needs. We cannot function efficiently or effectively without it.*



Knowledge Workforce Discussion

- How would you describe your local workforce?
- What are the strengths?
- What are the shortcomings?
- What assets do you have for improving workforce skills and availability?
- Who are the key players in this discussion?

Our Workforce Story

Mike Postma

- We have a growing business community in town
 - Hormel Foods, Mayo Clinic, Nu –Tek
 - All are cutting edge industries with need for broadband
- We have a workforce shortage & the only solution is to add more people to Mower County
 - Need to have the amenities they are looking for
 - Coworker who moved back from Ashville, NC to but family homestead in rural Mower, couldn't get internet

Workforce
DEVELOPMENT, INC.

*The Workforce Development Board
of Southeast Minnesota*

Our Workforce Story

Mike Postma

Broad disparity when broken down by race

- 90% of all population in Mower homes have a PC
 - 10% of those don't have broadband
- Black population of 1115: 87% have a PC
 - 24% don't have broadband
- Multi race population of 860: 99% have a PC
 - 37% of them don't have broadband

Source MNDEED 2019



Our Workforce Story

Mike Postma

Job applications are almost all online

- Having internet access with working email key to getting and responding to companies looking to hire
- Technology literacy is constantly evolving
 - taking even a year or 2 off from having internet can result in world passing you by
- Think about how many new tech habits you've developed since March 2020

Community Survey Response

- *I don't know about it but I know we need it.*
- *Systems and structures are in place, but a sustainable platform to create great connection will accelerate the work*
- *Austin has a growing school system with ongoing investment in facilities and support for education beyond high school. This can hopefully lead to more high school graduates staying in the area.*
- *The Austin area is positioned well by having a fortune 500 company in its town, community support and the Hormel Foundation to help support and have a high-quality of workforce. There is also a variety of workforce opportunities ranging from lower to higher level positions and degrees.*
- *Austin has many opportunities in the workforce, many of which are high-quality.*



Include

**Digital equity means computers,
skills, and access for all!**

Digital Equity Discussion

- Who in the community is being left behind on technology?
- What are the biggest challenges?
 - Internet connectivity
 - Computers and devices
 - Skills
- How can the responses made during the pandemic be carried forward?

Our Digital Equity Story

Kristi Beckman and Nitaya Jandragholica

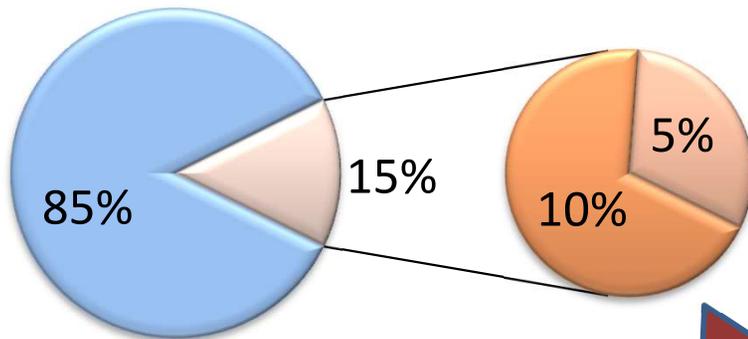
- Access to internet and devices
 - Mower County Senior Center report many seniors don't have access to broadband
- Digital Literacy
 - Classes being offered in Spanish at Austin Public Library
 - Community Tech Navigator from Austin Aspires

Digital Equity/Digital Literacy in the Justice Program

- How does digital equity and digital literacy impact people who are navigating the criminal justice system either as a defendant or a victim?
- Does access and digital literacy play any role in justice outcomes?

Mower County Court Hearings 2020

Total Court Hearings with and without Interpreters.



- Hearings without Interpreters
- Hearings with Interpreters
- In person Interpreters
- Remote Interpreters

Pre pandemic 4 % of hearings were remote - Post pandemic 71%

Jails are set up to hold Zoom hearings to minimize transport and COVID exposure.

We do have one or more Zoom Rooms and tablets within each courthouse that **allows a person without technology to come to the courthouse and use that tablet to attend their hearing.**

The inherent disadvantages for ELL are exacerbated by additional challenges which include: • Lack of awareness that courts are available and open for business. • Technology barriers such as: Lack of access to computers; public sites where patrons can use and learn how to use computer equipment, such as libraries, are limited. Lack of internet access for financial or geographic reasons. Lack of a smart phone or sufficient “minutes” on the usage plan. Etc.

Community Survey Response

- *My wife is a teacher and I know access was a challenge during the earlier part of the pandemic when kids were communicating with teachers from home. My wife's EL students in particular struggled.*
- *There are families who do not have access to internet, or the service does not meet their needs, the schools and Austin Public Library have been provided hundreds of hotspot to student so that they could be educated.*
- *Often financial limitations are the cause of unequal access to technology and the internet. I also see older people who can afford it but lack the skills to use it to it's potential.....*
- *Technology is very expensive. There are many families that cannot afford internet. This makes it hard for families to receive communications sent via email from businesses, schools etc. This creates a divide because much information is sent this way.*
- *Yet the proportion of U.S. adults with no computer experience is much higher for immigrants, the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) found, at almost 21% compared to approximately 5% for non-immigrants.*

Innovation

Innovation refers to doing new things and doing old things in new and better ways



Innovation Discussion

- Which people or organizations in the community are doing great things with technology?
- Which sectors/organizations are falling behind?
- What are we doing to support entrepreneurs?
- How does our community handle change?



Development Corporation of Austin

Our Innovation Story

John Garry, Wendy Anderson, Juan Molina

Community Survey Response

- *Mayo, the schools and other businesses in Austin have utilized tech systems such as Zoom and Schoology during the pandemic in order to provide services families and elders.*
- *Mental and physical health providers provide telehealth appointments which reduces stress for those who need transportation and mobility support.*
- *The EAT DRINK SHOP Austin Facebook page is a good example of businesses banding together to promote what they have, build each other up and support each other for the good of the community.*
- *Quality inexpensive internet is not an option anymore. All businesses need it.*
- *I don't think there's anything particularly innovative about how Austin area businesses and industries use technology. It would be interesting to have a competitions/contests -- 1) best current innovative use of technology by a small business 2) best new idea for innovative use of technology by a small business. Brainstorming here...this would help us understand what the issues and ideas are.*

A serene sunset over a lake. In the foreground, the pointed bows of two kayakers are visible, one slightly ahead of the other. The water is calm, reflecting the golden light of the setting sun. The sky is a mix of deep blues and oranges, with a large flock of birds flying in a curved path across the upper left. The background shows a dark silhouette of a forest along the shore.

Sustainability is economic
development with the
future in mind

Sustainability Discussion

- Has the community had conversations about sustainability as an important goal?
- Which local organizations have included sustainability in their operating practices, including ongoing measurement of energy use, carbon footprint or waste reduction?

Our Sustainability Story

Luke Reese

- Hormel Nature Center

- What the HNC has done:

- Solar panels, geothermal HVAC, and bird glass
 - Land management:
 - Local, watershed, and regional contexts
 - Environmental education

- Future opportunities:

- DC fast chargers for EVs
 - Replace lost trees – 1 to 1



Community Survey Response

- *The Utilities has many programs to help people improve energy efficiency and lower water use. I think cost, knowledge of the programs, and a lack of understanding of why they are necessary are all barriers.*
- *Solar power is one way; however, this can make it hard as well as many solar panels are needed to keep businesses running.*
- *I have not heard of any*

Engage



Community Engagement Questions

- How do local organizations communicate with community members? Is this a two-way discussion? How is technology used?
- What are the messages, and through which means are they transmitted, is the community sending out to the world to attract people and investment?

Our Community Engagement Story

- Austin Public Schools

Community Survey Response

- *We use print advertising, weekly radio, social media, our website, and a semiannual newsletter to communicate with the Austin area.*
- *Our diversity is our strength. Have the young train the old on tech and the internet. Have the young observe and work with the middle aged in careers to gain exposure and experience. Have those that speak the language mentor those that are new to our culture/language and traditions.*
- *We need to make sure Austin area has affordable access to technology and investments should be in that area. Having areas such as the library, maybe YMCA etc be places or hubs for people to go to access technology easily.*
- *Greater access to resources and community connection*
- *Quality and affordable housing, childcare*

Small Group Discussion

- What are our strengths in this area?
- Where are our gaps in this area?
- What could we hope to accomplish in the next 18 months (our desired outcomes) that would really make a positive difference in our community?

Discussion Group Reporting



Next Steps



Brainstorm
Meeting

THURSDAY,
DECEMBER 2ND
11:00-12:30



Project voting and volunteering



Project development and
budgeting



Blandin grant application



Implementation

Adjourn

**"There is no
power for change
greater than a
community
discovering what
it cares about."**

MARGARET J. WHEATLEY

**See you on
Thursday,
December 2nd
11:00-12:30
for the
Brainstorming
Session!**