



Blandin Broadband Initiative

Celebrating 15 Years of Community Partnerships

Since 2004, Blandin Foundation has worked with rural communities across Minnesota to improve broadband **access, adoption** and **use**.

Original program goals:

1. Generate awareness about the importance of broadband for rural community vitality.
2. Increase rural business and residential use of broadband.
3. Catalyze increased public and private investment in rural broadband.

Since 2004, Blandin Foundation has:

- Formally partnered with 71 communities across rural Minnesota and provided technical assistance to a total of 138 communities in 58 (out of 87) Minnesota counties;
- Invested \$4,352,148 in 292 projects;
- Raised nearly \$12 million in public and private matching grant dollars;
- Funded feasibility studies in 42 communities;
- Hosted 15 annual statewide broadband conferences; and
- Published www.blandinonbroadband.org, the Blandin on Broadband blog, now with over 2,000+ subscribers.



Blandin Foundation™
 STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

Major Impacts

- Access
 - Of the 45 network feasibility studies funded by Blandin Foundation to date, 18 have been either fully or partially built, and four have been used to develop applications to the state's broadband grant program.
 - Participating communities have dramatically increased the presence of free, publicly-available Internet access in libraries, public parks, downtown areas, and township halls.
- Adoption
 - In partnership with PCs for People, Blandin Broadband Communities have distributed over 2,300 refurbished computers to income qualifying residents in participating rural communities across Minnesota.
 - Communities also have implemented a variety of digital literacy programs for local residents and businesses.
- Use
 - Blandin Broadband Communities have spurred more sophisticated use of technology through education, training, community events, learning circles and innovative partnerships – a total of 292 projects that address community technology goals.

Minnesota's Broadband Vision

First articulated at a Blandin Broadband Conference in 2015, and endorsed and adopted since by local governments and other entities across the state, our Broadband Vision for Minnesota has been central to our success:

Everyone in Minnesota will be able to use convenient, affordable world-class broadband networks that enable us to survive and thrive in our communities and across the globe.

The vision inspired the creation of the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition – that unites dozens of broadband champions from across the state to sustain broad, bi-partisan support for Minnesota's broadband grant program.

Broadband Access in Rural Minnesota: 2004/2019

In 2002, dialup access was the norm; 77 percent of surveyed rural Minnesotans reported access to dialup, while only 21 percent has access to broadband. By 2019 in rural:

- 83.7 percent of rural households have access to 25/3 wireline broadband;
- 68.43 percent have access to 100/20 and
- 22.42 percent have access to gig access.

What our partners say:

"Our elected officials now see the importance of broadband for economic development and community vitality."

– County Economic Development Director

"This framework brings people together that have not always worked together."

– County IT director

"This program has helped us develop wonderful community connections."

– High School Principal

