



Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

Mission

To be a trusted partner and advocate to strengthen rural Minnesota communities, especially the Grand Rapids area.

Vision

Healthy, inclusive rural communities.

Values

As stewards of the Blandin Foundation legacy, we commit ourselves to a leadership role on these deeply held beliefs:

- **Inclusion is Vital** – We recognize all people, voices and worldviews as essential to healthy community.
- **Relationships Matter** – We encourage courageous dialogue, trust, and reciprocity among partners to create positive change.
- **Integrity is Core** – Our actions are guided by honesty, transparency and trustworthiness.



Principles for Building Partnerships

Introduction and Context

Developing and strengthening partnerships to leverage more resources for greater impact in rural Minnesota is one of the Foundation's six core principles for optimizing effectiveness. The Foundation believes that the power of shared ideas, resources, and experiences will help us create healthier communities. Partnerships also help the foundation achieve two other operating principles: *engaging at scale* and *further leveraging the Foundation's assets*. Ideal partnerships are synergistic and build capacity allowing the whole to be greater than the sum of its parts.

Blandin views its relationship with each member of the Blandin Broadband Communities Program as a partnership. While partnerships as a strategy for social change are gaining recognition and momentum, they are not cost free. Working in partnership requires time, commitment and can encumber the full range of organizational assets—monetary, talent, reputation, and relationships.

The following principles build upon the Foundation's core values of Leadership, Engagement, Learning and Integrity. Their purpose is to clarify the organization's expectations of the terms of engagement for entering into partnership with others. Recognizing that each partnership is unique, the principles are not intended to be strictly prescriptive, but rather to provide a starting point or framework for discussion when forming or periodically reflecting on the progress of our partnerships. The principles were drawn from a variety of sources and practices across the philanthropic community, and approved by our trustees.

Partnership Principles

- I. Partners' mission, values and culture are complementary.
- II. Actions and language in developing partnerships reflect a commitment to inclusion.
- III. The relationship between partners is characterized by mutual trust and respect.
- IV. The partnership balances power among partners and enables resources among partners to be shared.
- V. Partners establish clear, open and accessible communication channels and practices.
- VI. Partners are committed to continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes.
- VII. Roles, norms, and processes for the partnership are established with the input and agreement of all partners.
- VIII. Partnerships are reality-based and action-oriented. This requires coordination based on concrete operational capacities.
- IX. Partners share the credit for the partnership's accomplishments.
- X. Partners recognize and acknowledge that partnerships take time to develop and that they evolve over time.

Blandin Broadband Communities

Proposed Partnership Norms and Expectations

Blandin Foundation's role in the Blandin Broadband Communities program include overall project management, assessment, coaching, facilitation and other technical support for communities, communication and information support.

Partners can count on the Blandin Foundation for the following:

- **Professionalism** – Highly organized, well executed management of the overall project.
- **Respect** – Responsible use of partners' time and attention in all communications and meetings, both electronic and in person.
- **Accountability** – Timely response to all grant administration and project management inquiries from communities and project grantees.
- **Honoring the work of others** – Building on, promoting and leveraging the accomplishments of each community.

Blandin Foundation expectations of Blandin Broadband Communities:

- **Reliability** – Communities are expected to meet all grant or contract obligations, including managing the local effort, and narrative and financial reporting.
- **Effectiveness** – Communities are expected to strive to make the best possible use of project dollars.
- **Mindfulness of the whole** – Communities are expected to collaborate with and leverage, to greatest possible extent, the programs and services available through the Blandin Community Broadband Program (PCs for People and Treacy Information Services), as well as those resources already available in their communities. This is our collective opportunity to add value for the common good.
- **Commitment to Inclusion** – Communities are expected to prioritize efforts to ensure that programs and services they resource and support through the Blandin Community Broadband Program benefit "vulnerable" and historically marginalized populations (persons of color, the elderly, people in poverty, and the disabled). These populations are the least likely to have access to broadband and the skills necessary to use broadband effectively. Including representatives from these population groups in all aspects of your project planning and implementation will increase the effectiveness of your efforts.



Blandin Broadband Communities: Guidelines for Building an Inclusive Steering Committee

Creating an inclusive steering committee is an important part of becoming a Blandin Broadband Community. Here are six things to do to help ensure that your steering committee is inclusive.

1. Know your community demographics and how your technology issues connect to various stakeholders. Know your community as a whole and how your efforts will impact the community.
2. Make sure you have representatives from your community's underrepresented populations on your leadership team. In addition to ethnicity, age and gender, consider residents who are unemployed and seeking employment, small main street businesses which have not yet adopted Internet-based technologies, and city and county government. This can be tricky if these are not populations you've worked with before. Here are some tips:
 - a. To avoid 'tokenism,' aim for including a minimum of 3 people from underrepresented populations on your team.
 - b. Include on your team a community leader who works with and already has established a trusted relationship with some or all of the vulnerable or underrepresented populations you are targeting to recruit as members of the steering committee.
 - c. When recruiting people to represent a minority population, don't rely on positional leaders alone. Talk with a variety of sources to find leaders who are respected within the community you are reaching out to. For example, talk to union representatives, local businesses, churches, schools, or others familiar with the community.
3. Be clear and upfront about the expectations and time commitments of the steering committee members (see "Job Description of a BBC Steering Committee Member" handout). It is really helpful to have a handout that includes your project's purpose and expectations that you can leave with possible steering members. Community members are busy people and knowing what they are signing up for is important in order to help maintain volunteers and momentum.
4. Look for steering committee members who are: credible, open-minded, passionate about the specific issue, and willing to work collaboratively.
5. Your steering committee should represent a broad network of individuals who have the ability to access information and resources needed to move your project forward.
6. When recruiting steering committee members, make sure to visit them face-to-face and not via email or letter. Creating a more personal invitation really reinforces that they (not just anyone) are valued and needed as members of the steering committee