

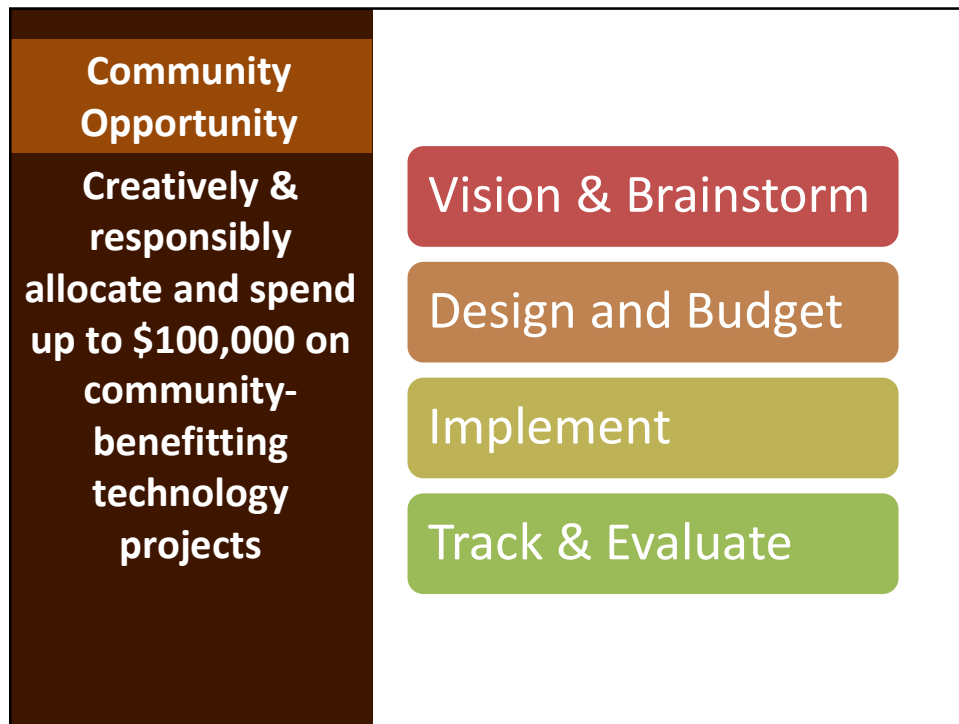


1

## Agenda

- Welcome
  - Why we became a Blandin Broadband Community
  - Vince Robinson, Executive Director, Lincoln County Enterprise Development Corp. (LCEDC)
- The Intelligent Community Framework
  - Blandin Team
  - Community Presentation
- Community Discussions
  - By Intelligent Community Element
- Group Reporting
  - Assets and Gaps
  - Desired Outcomes
- Next Steps
- Adjourn

2



3

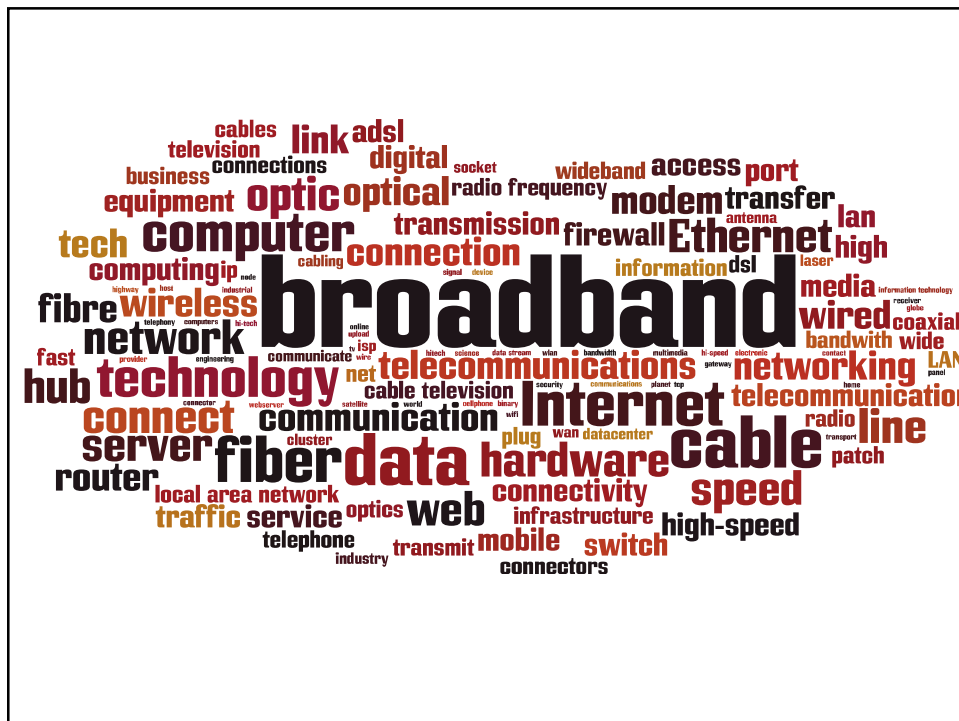


4

# The Intelligent Community Framework



5



6

## 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?

7

## Our Broadband Story

- In 2016 LCEDC began working with the Blandin Foundation to explore ways we could engage people and businesses towards the goal of improving our internet services within the County
- From those meetings we partnered with Murray and Pipestone Counties to form a Broadband Work Group.
- We applied to Blandin for a grant to complete a feasibility study for fiber-to-the-premise, which was completed in 2018

8

## Our Broadband Story Cont'd

- We used the feasibility study to approach ITC about expanding their services into eastern Lincoln County
- Lincoln County committed \$6 million to ITC to assist them with installing fiber-to-the-premise in the rural areas of eastern half of the County
- In 2020 ITC installed fiber to the eastern half of the County and completed the build out of their fiber network to their existing customers in the Lake Benton and Hendricks exchanges

9

## Our Broadband Story Cont'd

- Also in 2020 Woodstock Telephone Company installed fiber-to-the-premise in the City of Tyler
- The City of Ivanhoe is now the only part of the County without fiber optics to their homes and businesses and we have begun conversations with ITC about the potential for them to expand their system to include Ivanhoe

10

## Community Survey Responses

- Since I have access to broadband at home through ITC, I feel our home internet is very good. However, we do own business property in Ivanhoe, MN and that broadband has been very archaic and cumbersome for years. We had a choice between Frontier telephone and Mediacom. We used both at different times and it was extremely frustrating because of speed and access. Horrible!!

11

## Community Survey Responses Cont'd

- I just moved back to my hometown area after 15 years because of this great new internet service!
- Not fast enough to compete in the business atmosphere
- We are currently very satisfied with our home internet connection as provided by ITC

12



13

## 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?

14

## Our Workforce Story

- Lincoln County population is 5,568 (down 328 from 2010)
- 3,218 available workers (down 176 from 2005)
- 129 unemployed (4%) – State UE is 6.2%
- Labor Force projected to decline by another 75 by 2030
- Hendricks Hospital alone has 23 job openings

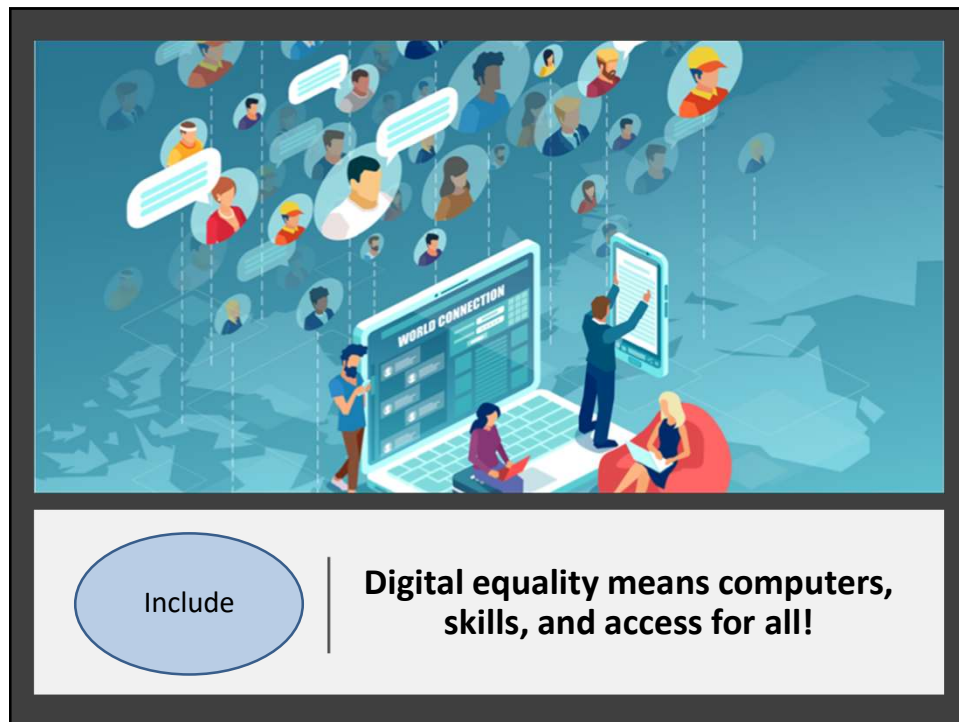
15

## Community Survey Responses

- Our position would be greatly enhanced if better internet was provided
- The quality of labor is good value for the local hourly pay rate
- Lincoln County has a lot of great outdoor and recreational opportunities paired with a low cost of living. More people than ever are working remotely or working for the gig economy. People are fleeing lawless populated areas to find peace and sanity in the countryside. Now is Lincoln County's chance to capitalize on these shifting population and work trends!

16





Include

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

17

## 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?

18

## Our Digital Equity Story

- We have done a great job of getting broadband availability, but not as good of a job at ensuring people are able to access and afford it
- Our local libraries do what they can to provide open access
- We need to do more research on who is being left behind and why

19

## Community Survey Response

- Older residents who are unfamiliar with using the internet are falling behind at a rapid rate
- Lower income households might not be able to always access the internet and might miss out on pertinent information because of no access
- From a business perspective, the workforce in the lower income levels face challenges having internet accessibility which causes issues during the hiring process

20



# Innovation

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

21

## 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?

22

## Our Innovation Story

- COVID forced our schools to embrace online learning models
- COVID also accelerated the use of online meeting tools for business and socialization
- Healthcare is working diligently to increase and improve tele-health options
- Many of our businesses still have not embraced the marketing power of the Internet

23

## Community Survey Responses

- Telemedicine, precision agriculture, remote work, teleconferences, and VPNs
- Schools have had to become very creative in using technology to reach students
- Lincoln county businesses and organizations have really adapted to promote their sales and events using social media accounts
- New industries and businesses have sprung up over the past few years

24

## Community Survey Responses

- Business computers are updated online via the internet to remain secure and up to date with their software versions. The City uses the internet to read water meters and to pay utility bills online. The local theater provides internet applications to book tickets online for upcoming productions. The bank uses it for nearly all their transactions. The churches use it to stream their worship services online. The schools use it for remote learning. Organizations use it to meet virtually versus in person. Tourists can access information about locations and events via the internet website for Chamber of Commerce and community information (accessing community and state tourism information).

25



Sustainability is economic  
development with the  
future in mind

26

## 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?

27

## Our Sustainability Story

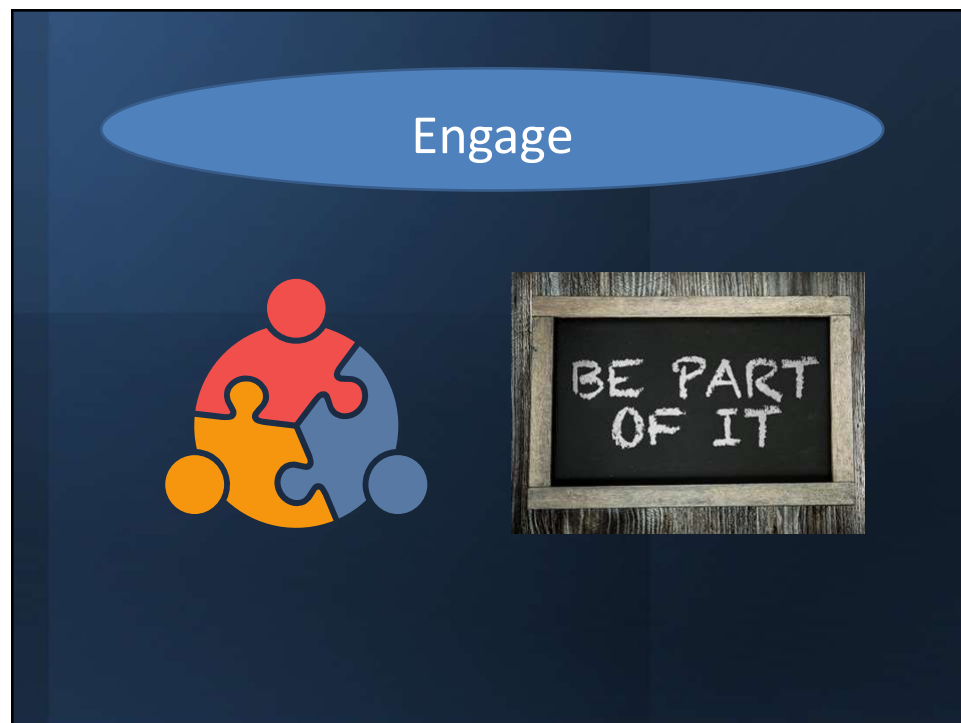
- As a County we have backed into the sustainability arena through our development of renewable energy and precision agriculture practices
- Few of our local units of government or organizations discuss sustainability on a regular basis
- With precision agriculture, recycling programs, renewable energy developments and energy conservation incentives and practices we are working towards sustainability, but without any clearly identified goals

28

## Community Survey Responses

- Wind towers have been very lucrative for this county
- I think there is a lot to be learned with regard to sustainability. I think probably a majority of the businesses and organizations could adopt one or two new sustainable practices
- We must incentivize soil health practices which will make farms more profitable and protect our natural resources

29



30

## 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?

31

## Our Community Engagement Story

- COVID has provided the need and the resources for our cities and the county to virtually meet and include public participation
- Many of our organizations, including churches, have learned much about virtual meetings and presentations
- We have a wonderful story to tell about life and work in Lincoln County
- Our struggle now is to get our message out to those beyond our County

32



## Community Survey Responses

- Having multiple safe places for individuals to use the internet would be a major improvement
- Property tax incentives to attract technology focused businesses
- We must create a vision of what the future could be and celebrate every small step towards that vision
- We must think outside the box and get going

33

## Community Survey Responses Cont'd

- Access to broadband county wide, affordable housing, safe and effective schools, safe communities, affordable real estate taxes, and access to outdoor recreation
- We also need to market and promote the wonderful businesses and services we have available. I feel we often undervalue what we have and feel that everywhere else is so much better - NOT TRUE!

34

## 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?

35

## Discussion Group Reporting

36

## Next Steps

- Brainstorm Meeting
- Project voting and volunteering
- Project development and budgeting
- Blandin grant application
- Implementation

37

## Adjourn

38