2021 Blandin Broadband Communities (BBC) Online Process Guide

In March of 2020, in order to help keep everyone safe through COVID, our Blandin team accepted the challenge to conduct the BBC process in a very different way than with communities past. Rather than onsite group meetings, we moved everything online to Zoom meetings and online surveys and communications. Our 2020 experience with an all-virtual format was a mixed bag – some of our processes, relationship-building and fun interaction suffered. On the other hand, moving our process online made participating more accessible for some and provided new and interesting ways for community members to participate and contribute.

Clearly, at a minimum, the pandemic spotlighted the need for widespread broadband networks and online services and added a heightened sense of urgency to our efforts.

Now in September 2021, we are launching a new cohort of six communities:

Austin/Mower County | Big Stone County | Clearwater County
Lincoln County | Pine County | Warroad/Roseau County

Through necessity, folks of all tech skill levels have adapted to online tools like Zoom, Teams, Survey Monkey, Doodle and others. So has our Blandin team! We now have adopted a tested set of technology tools that communities can successfully use with a minimum of difficulty. When we have a choice of technologies, we error on the side of simplicity. We commit to making your steering team feel comfortable using these tools before trying to engage the wider community participants.

It is our goal for you to have your initial set of projects developed and funded by January 30th, 2022.

High Level Process Overview
Technology
We will be using these technology applications to inform the community, support community conversation, set goals and desired outcomes, brainstorm project ideas, prioritize projects and form project teams.

- Project web site – The Blandin team will create an online presence tied to the Blandin site that will hold key information about the process, meetings, links, and documents

- Zoom – this group videoconferencing application has become incredibly widespread in a very short period of time. We will use Blandin Foundation's Zoom account for the primary process meetings. Free accounts are available to use with smaller community project meetings.

- Survey Monkey

When	What
Week one	**Steering Team meeting** – Two Hours
	A Zoom meeting where we provide an orientation to the steering team – 10 to 15 members – about the BBC program and the process. We will do some team building and develop a plan to successfully host the Vision Workshop. We will also select community members to participate in the Intelligent Community presentation that covers the Intelligent Community pillars – Broadband; Knowledge Workforce; Innovation; Digital Equity; Sustainability; and Advocacy.
	Recommended attendees: steering team members
Week 3	Launch invitation and survey effort. We will ask prospective participants to register for the Vision Meetings and will include a survey to gather their perspective on assets, needs, opportunities and prospective projects. They will also pre-register to select their preferred small group discussion topics – one of the five Intelligent Community elements.
Week 5	**Vision Meeting – Two Hours**
	A Zoom meeting where we present the BBC process, present the five elements of the Intelligent Community framework, hear local experts assess the current community strengths and gaps across the Intelligent Community indicators, have break-out sessions for small group discussion on the community's Intelligent Community elements. The small groups will discuss and determine the community's desired outcomes for each of the five elements.
	Note: Communities could hold multiple Vision Meetings to encourage participation by targeted populations, such as students and/or New Americans.
	Recommended attendees: review worksheet highlighting targeted attendee as presented at the Steering Team meeting.
	We will need two local facilitators for each of five Intelligent Community pillars (total of ten), one person to lead the conversation, one person to record information on Google Docs. We will have an easy facilitators' guide (need to update).
	Vision Agenda Welcome and logistics (5 minutes) ICF presentation – Coleman and community reps (55 minutes) *Small groups by topic* -Asset & Gap discussion (15 minutes) -Desired Outcome discussion (10 minutes) -Report outs (15 minutes) -Closing (5 minutes)

Online input	Offer an online opportunity to suggest project ideas. Report on input received at any secondary Vision Meetings.
Later in Week 5	**Brainstorm Meeting – 90 minutes**
	A Zoom meeting for brainstorming project ideas.
	Agenda -Review work from Vision 1 meeting (15 minutes) -Random breakout in rooms to develop project lists. Preliminary categorization by Intelligent Community elements. (30 minutes) -Round robin listing of projects by room reporter. Discussion and clarification and enhancement of project ideas. Possible combination of project ideas – (20 minutes) -Discussion of voting process. (10 minutes) -Wrap-up. (5 minutes) Need facilitator and recorder with Google docs.
Online input continues via online survey	Close before voting begins
Week 6	**Project Prioritization and Voting** Use voting tool via Survey Monkey. People need to be able to vote and volunteer to be on project teams. Survey will allow voters to allocate their support among projects by dividing their 100 points among projects.
	People will also be able to volunteer to work on the specific projects of their choice.
Week 7/8	**Project Team meetings** Volunteers and key stakeholders meet to create goals, tasks, budgets, and raise matching funds via Zoom, social distancing, etc.
Week 9	**Steering Team Meeting – 90 minutes** Receive and discuss project proposals and allocate $50,000 - $65,000 of your project funds.
Week 10-12	Complete planning on priority projects, finalize budget and match. Submit grant application to Blandin Foundation that will include Vision/Brainstorm report (provided by Blandin team), project worksheets and budget worksheet.
Post Grant Approval	Launch project activities
6 – 8 months	Reopen formal discussion and submittal of additional projects by team members. Projects could include expansion of existing efforts, projects

	emerging from other ideas from the Vision/Brainstorm process, or new ideas from community institutions/members.
6-8 months	Submit project worksheets and budgets for the remainder of the available grant funds.