



## Reflections on Intelligent Community Forum's Global Summit

New York City  
June 11 – 13, 2019



The Intelligent Community Forum (ICF) is a global network of communities that uses a broadband-enabled framework of community and economic development to create inclusive prosperity, tackle social and governance challenges, and enrich quality of life.

Each year ICF identifies Smart21 Communities of the Year, then culls that group down to the Top7 Intelligent Communities, and finally, to the Intelligent Community of the Year.

Blandin Foundation has been using the ICF framework in its community work since 2008. In 2019, Blandin team assisted two Minnesota communities - Red Wing and Brainerd – complete applications to participate in the Intelligent Community of the Year competition.

This ICF annual Summit brought together participants from cities and towns in Canada, Taiwan, Scandinavia, Australia, Europe and South America, as well as from across the United States.

The Minnesota delegation to the conference was made up of Blandin Broadband Community partners from across the state who are using the ICF framework in their economic and community development efforts:

- Sheila Haverkamp, Executive Director, Brainerd Lakes Area Economic Development Corporation
- Neela Mollgaard, Executive Director, Red Wing Ignite
- Elissa Hansen, President and CEO, Northspan Group
- Whitney Ridlon, Community Development Officer, IRRRB
- Erin Echternach, Assistant Director, Greater Bemidji
- Elizabeth Olivanti, UMD Center for Economic Development
- Blandin team:
  - Bill Coleman, Community Technology Advisors
  - Bernadine Joselyn, Public Policy & Engagement Director, Blandin Foundation
  - Mary Magnuson, Broadband Program Coordinator, Blandin Foundation
  - Ann Treacy, Treacy Information Services



### **Summit Program Elements:**

*Matchmaking:* delegates participated in a daylong “matchmaking” event with peers from other communities from across the world and attended sessions on doing business in Taiwan, Vietnam, Canada, Finland and Australia.

*Learning from the Top7:* Participants met delegates and heard panel presentations and discussions with peers from the ICF 2019 “Top 7” Intelligent Communities: Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada; Chicago, IL; Hudson, OH; Sarnia-Lambton County, Ontario, Canada; Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia; Taoyuan, Taiwan.

*Panels included:*

- FAANGS: Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix and Google – the opportunities and costs to communities when they come to town.
- A Tale of Two Economies - What are communities doing to ensure equal opportunity for all?
- Reaching Rural Places – bringing connectivity to the hardest to serve areas, moderated by Bill Coleman.
- Tech for the Rest - What are the opportunities for community prosperity without tech giants in town, moderated by Bernadine Joselyn.
- Lifelong Learning as an alternative to traditional workforce development.
- Roundtables with CIOs and IT experts discussing challenges and opportunities facing municipal governments as they deploy technologies.

- Masterclasses with ICF Founders on applying the model.
- Reflections from NYC, Arlington VA and Toronto on negotiating with big Tech companies.

### **Reflections from Travelers:**

#### ***What were your key learnings?***

“As a Blandin Broadband Community we have incorporated the pillars of the Intelligent Community Forum into the foundation of our efforts. The conference affirmed our organization and community is on the right track.”

“It was an “aha” for me that to have smart infrastructure you need to have smart people. Smart infrastructure is more than broadband. It’s also the alignment of partners with a shared vision, resources, and people to address the pillars of the ICF model.”

“Partnership is paramount. In all the Top 7 Cities, the local government valued public-private partnerships. They knew they were stronger working collaboratively with ALL organizations to affect change.”

“Quality of place matters. As one representative of a Top7 community put it, “It’s not where you live, it’s why you live there.”

“I was so impressed with the framework provided by each of the Top7 Intelligent Communities in how they applied this holistic approach to development within their individual community.”

“All of the conversations that I had with the speakers and members within the Minnesota cohort just solidified the need for us to convene and exchange knowledge.

“The week spent with people who understand the need to develop your economy in a responsible and inclusive way was very empowering.”

“Creating a learning economy will be the winning battle against the workforce shortage.”



***What would you like to learn more about?***

“It requires many stakeholders and funding sources to build an “intelligent community.” The challenge is to show stakeholders their return on investment for these efforts. It would be good to seek data on the ROI of communities around the globe. This would help incentivize more dollars to invest in this work.”

“It would be valued to learn examples of best practices from the numerous intelligent communities how they best developed and enhanced each of these pillars of the ICF model: Knowledge Workforce, Digital Equality, Sustainability, Advocacy, Innovation, and Broadband.”

“I would like to learn more about the community engagement strategies that everyone is using and how they are measuring success.”

***What key connections did you make at the Summit?***

“It was valuable to meet the founders of ICF, Robert Bell, John Jung, and Louis Zacharilla to learn about the history and development of ICF. Meeting like-minded individuals, from the world, was fascinating. We were all gathered to make our communities stronger. It was also a gift to be able to deepen relationships with others from Minnesota. To make the impact needed in Minnesota, our communities will need to help each other learn and grow.”

“I made some key connections with the Minnesota delegation.”



“Fabulous connections with the team we went with, I feel so blessed to have had the time out of the office to connect and learn about what other MN communities are doing.”

“My best connection outside of the Minnesota cohort attending this summit was made in connection to the Westerville, Ohio maker space. This concept is one that I’ve tried to put into words many times and to finally have a sounding board of how to best leverage various sectors

of our community in the creation of a community MakerSpace is so encouraging. Erin Bender is the Executive Director at Otterbein University and her willingness to support and help guide the conversations between our different community members and businesses will be of the utmost importance as I look to frame the MakerSpace concept for Bemidji and move forward.”

“I met with a few people from Taoyuan and we have continued to connect.”

“I greatly enjoyed the opportunity to connect with the other communities and learn about their initiatives and strategies. I also feel like I developed friendships that will last beyond the conference.”

“I plan to investigate the work being done by the Drucker Institute to understand what we can bring from this work to the Iron Range.”

***How will you use what you learned in your community, and how will your new connections enhance your work?***

“I will be sharing information about the smart cities with a local philanthropic foundation to use as a benchmark. I will also update the City of Red Wing at a council meeting on the efforts of other local governments around the world. I also now have other cities in Minnesota I feel comfortable reaching out to learn or ideas to form new ways of collaboration.”

“I’d like to explore to see whether we could form a collaboration between the education systems and the libraries in our communities to deliver learning opportunities into each community in a more effective and economical way. With constant changes in technology and, consequently, employment opportunities, our Iron Range populations need to be more adaptable than ever. Ready access to additional learning opportunities to allow our workforce to learn new skills and/or improve their home-based businesses would provide a last impact on our economy.”

“We are focusing on getting our leaders to our next steering committees including the mayors and city staff. The stories at ICF were incredibly compelling when the local leaders were engaged and began to lead efforts.”

“We are bringing back ideas for how the communities could use their grant dollars. We are engaging with the hospitals, senior facilities, and school teachers to encourage unique ways to solve problems with technology or increase awareness of the need and potential connectivity that technology can bring to our communities.”

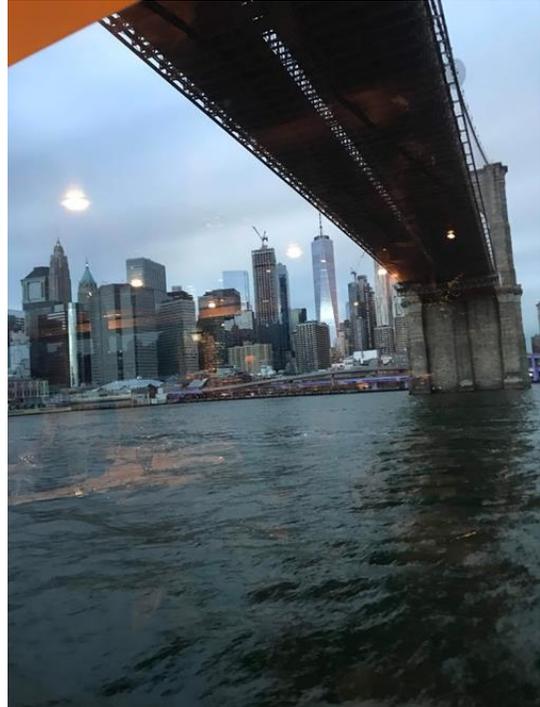
“I do believe we can and should use the ICF framework for more of our programming and planning. I plan to use it as a filter for all our community work on the East Range as I believe it will really help the leaders and community members grasp the purpose behind community and economic development as well as how we plan for change. How do we better encourage the use of the ICF framework outside of just broadband?!”

“I’d like to learn more about how lifelong learning and digital equity/inclusion are currently at work on the Iron Range and how we could be more intentional about this work. In order to gain a better understanding, I need to work with the community colleges, local public schools, local public libraries, and the workforce strategists in my community.”

“The trip to the New York Public Library on Tuesday, opened my mind to the prospect that our local Carnegie Libraries could be tourist destinations. I will be working with the Tourism Board and staff to see if we can’t develop something around this idea and other assets that we don’t consider destinations, presently.”

“It will help me bring new ideas and framework to current projects and objectives back to Bemidji. I look forward to reviewing New York’s proposal to recently attract tech company.”

“I hope to develop a new initiative in the Brainerd Lakes and Cuyuna Area. I have already started thinking about it and shared with my co-workers. After I flush it out, I intend to request the services of Bill Coleman to help develop the concept further.”



***What suggestions do you have for the Foundation in light of this new learning, and how might the Foundation use this knowledge and relationships to benefit rural Minnesota?***

“The Blandin Foundation is clearly the leader in Minnesota for the ICF model. Their past investments in our community continue to grow in sustained programming and knowledge. I believe a statewide ICF effort would make Minnesota more competitive in the 21st-century economy.”

“My suggestion for the foundation is to stay the course with an emphasis on Broadband for rural communities. The Foundation’s investments are garnering great returns and will only multiply into the future.”

“It would be great to do our smaller mayor’s meeting at the broadband conference as well as getting our group together again to reflect on where we have come since NYC at that time!”

## **Conclusion:**

The takeaway, then, for the Foundation is that broadening horizons for community members engaged in Blandin Cohorts/Community Projects should be a focus and sought out. Meaningful travel opportunities for people who are a part of the Blandin work across rural Minnesota that coincide with the projects being done could be a valuable addition to the Blandin Cohorts/Community Projects when a mix of participants across the state are brought together to learn. These learning opportunities will bring back new ways of thinking and engagement that a presentation in our local communities just wouldn't provide.

Information on the Minnesota delegation's experience at the conference can be found at this link on the Blandin on Broadband blog: :

<https://blandinonbroadband.org/2019/06/15/intelligent-community-forum-icf-summit-minnesota-learns-and-shares-with-top-7-smart-communities/>

