

**Chisago County Blandin Broadband Community**

**Vision Meeting Summary**

**North Branch Schools**

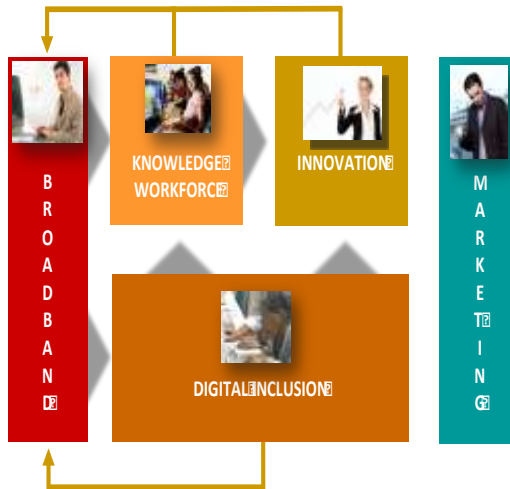
**February 25, 2015**

**Background and process:**

This report documents the discussion and decisions made by the participants at the Blandin Broadband Community Visioning meeting. Thirty-nine community members attended, representing key sectors of the community.

After introductions of all attendees and a brief review of the Blandin Community Broadband Program and our community’s involvement, attendees listened and offered input into the preliminary Intelligent Community benchmarking report. The benchmarking process used published data and information gathered from community organizations as a community conversation starter and as a tool to measure progress over the two-year Blandin Broadband Community program.

In essence, the Intelligent Community ([www.intelligentcommunity.org](http://www.intelligentcommunity.org)) can be summarized as follows: Based on a base of broadband infrastructure and services, a community can work to support the creation, attraction and support of a knowledge workforce; spur the adoption of innovation throughout the community; and address digital inclusion. With these activities, a community can create both internal and external marketing and advocacy messages to attract people and investment.



Following this presentation and discussion, one work group for each Intelligent Community element was formed. Each participant chose which group they wanted to join. These groups delved more deeply into that topic area. Attendees used the presented data and brought their own more specific and nuanced knowledge to the discussion.

Each of the groups were charged with and accomplished the following tasks for their assigned Intelligent Community element:

- a) Create a list of Assets and Gaps
- b) Create a list of Desired Outcomes
- c) Create a list of Project Ideas that would move the community towards the Desired Outcomes

After group reporting, attendees voted to establish project priorities. They also had an opportunity to join specific project teams of their choice.

The following is a summary of the discussion as captured on the flip charts.

**ASSET/GAP ANALYSIS**

<b>Broadband</b>	
<b>Assets</b>	<b>Gaps</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*About average within state for wired broadband access coverage</li> <li>*Good coverage in higher population areas</li> <li>*Free WiFi in libraries</li> <li>*Some local businesses have public access WiFi</li> <li>*There are a few pockets with only cellular mobile broadband</li> <li>*There are several broadband options in some areas</li> <li>*Desire for better broadband</li> <li>*There are many small businesses that provide a good market for better broadband</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Rural areas are underserved</li> <li>*71% broadband coverage greater than 10 Mb compared to 78% statewide average</li> <li>*Higher broadband speeds are expensive</li> <li>*Providers sometimes lack capacity to provide broadband (no available ports)</li> <li>*Rural businesses lack adequate broadband</li> <li>*No community WiFi</li> <li>*Mobile broadband is expensive</li> <li>*Poor cellular coverage, depending on location and provider</li> </ul>
<p><b>Desired Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Better infrastructure and quality of service in rural areas</li> <li>2) Better cell phone coverage across the county</li> <li>3) Better business broadband</li> </ul>	

<b>Knowledge Workforce</b>	
<b>Assets</b>	<b>Gaps</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Growing workforce – 2x the state average – 7.1% between 2004 -2014</li> <li>*In 2014, one in four jobs were in health care and social services</li> <li>*Average wages higher than state average wage</li> <li>*Many training options</li> <li>Additional available services available from DEED, etc.</li> <li>*GPS Workforce Committee</li> <li>*School programs</li> <li>*New employment opportunities</li> <li>*k-12 Robotics team</li> <li>*Libraries as resource for training programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Lots of commuters – 32% travel more than 45 minutes; Less than 25% travel less than 15 minutes</li> <li>*Lower wages than adjacent metro counties</li> <li>*Lack of corporate employment hubs</li> <li>*Applications for employment</li> <li>*Metro-outstate wage gap</li> <li>*Skilled workers</li> <li>* Attracting workers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Desired Outcomes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Better linkage between employers and employees</li> <li>2) Better broadband capable of attracting employers</li> <li>3) Create a strategic plan to create and promote a workforce that will attract employers</li> </ol>	

<b>Innovation</b>	
<b>Assets</b>	<b>Gaps</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*All three school districts have interactive web sites, portals and WiFi networks for student access. Schools have excellent broadband</li> <li>*Many online classes are offered; Wolf Creek is all online</li> <li>*State R&amp;D and Angel Tax Credits and loans for high tech firms</li> <li>Initiative Foundation gap financing</li> <li>*All cities have an online presence</li> <li>*North Branch meetings are streamed and archived.</li> <li>Fairview uses MyChart e-health portal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Lack of telemedicine services</li> <li>*Lack of affordable broadband options for all students (including adult learners)</li> <li>*Businesses struggle to find high-tech workers</li> <li>*Frontier services are a barrier to innovation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Desired Outcomes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Equal access of broadband (wired and WiFi) – in towns and the countryside – and devices for all students</li> </ol>	

<b>Digital Inclusion</b>	
<b>Assets</b>	<b>Gaps</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*50 computers coming from PCs For People</li> <li>*Schools provide in-house tech staff development</li> <li>*Four libraries w/in county provide WiFi and computers</li> <li>*WiFi hotspots in each community at local restaurants</li> <li>*Schools have good student-device ratios</li> <li>*Churches and other community groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Rural area students and families lack access to broadband</li> <li>*Low income families cannot afford devices and/or broadband</li> <li>*Limited training opportunities for low-income families and elderly</li> <li>*Public access locations not advertised or listed</li> <li>*Volunteers to do training</li> <li>*Gathering places for training</li> <li>*Marketing of training opportunities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Desired Outcomes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) WiFi on school buses</li> <li>2) High school students serving as volunteers for tech training and support</li> <li>3) Utilizing old school and other used computers for low-income families</li> </ol>	

<b>Marketing/Advocacy</b>	
<b>Assets</b>	<b>Gaps</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*County EDA/HRA advocating for economic development via the web site</li> <li>*Cities have web sites to attract growth</li> <li>*Chamber of Commerce marketing with web site</li> <li>*Chamber and Community Education offer business technology training courses</li> <li>*Data center attraction efforts to specific qualified sites due to infrastructure</li> <li>*Geo-Cache activities at Historical Society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Marketing does not focus on “tech-ready” indicators</li> <li>*Besides BF BBC, no community is promoting broadband access and adoption</li> <li>*Information on local web sites is not updated</li> <li>*Lack of education to the private sector on why and how to use broadband</li> <li>*Businesses do not understand the potential of broadband and online activities</li> <li>*Businesses need to claim their Google places</li> <li>*Device specific web sites that work on mobile devices</li> </ul>
<p><b>Desired Outcomes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Information resource created to highlight access options, public info tech resources, lists of consultants and vendors.</li> <li>2) Increase awareness of value of broadband and online activity</li> <li>3) Expand, update and improve web presence</li> </ol>	

## Projects

The following ideas were proposed by participants and then ranked through a voting process. Everyone received two votes and participants could earn more votes by volunteering to participate on work groups. The first voting number reflects the total votes; the second number is the number of people who volunteered to work on the particular project.

#	Votes	Project Idea	ICF Pillar	Project Team
1	19/9	Conduct a community survey about current broadband services, problems, and willingness to pay	BB	Dennis Johnson, D. Larkin, Linda Cullen, Tim Kastelein, Judy O'Claire, Ted Krause, Daree,
2	9/2	WiFi on school buses	DI/BB/IN	Terry Trudeau, Darin Marcussa, Ken Orell
3	8/4	Digitize historical records	IN	Neil Gatzon, John Fino, Bob Chadek, Sarah Hawkins
4	6/2	High quality business technology training on web sites, e-commerce, social media	IN	Daree, Jamie Scheffer
5	5/1	Tourist attraction mapping on Google	MKT	Nancy Hoffman
6	5/1	Lobby for political support to improve broadband services	BB, MKT	Daniel Hoffman
7	5/1	PCs for People – low incomes and people with disabilities	DI	Jose Clemente
8	5/0	Local activity app with calendar and resource listing	IN	
9	4/2	County strategic workforce development plan	KW	Carla Vita, Nancy Hoffman
10	4/1	Hot spot lending program	DI	Carla Lydon
11	3/1	Create a techie gathering place with activities	KW/MKT	John Olinger
12	3/1	Expand public WiFi access, including parks	BB	Jamie Scheffer
13	3/0	Educate community of impact of broadband on economy and quality of life. Keep public informed of BBC activities.	MKT	
14	3/0	Student centered high quality tech training	KW	
15	2/1	Student exposure to local tech jobs/businesses	KW/MKT	Darin Marcussa
16	2/1	Gather information and opportunities in our area to bring in broadband	BB	Judy O'Claire

		competition		
17	1/1	Build your own PC	DI/IN/KW	Andy Nordin
18	1/0	Community Craigslist	IN	
19	1/0	WiFi inventory and marketing	BB/MKT	
20	1/0	Promote robotics in HS and after-school	KW	
21	0/0	Community tech consultants	IN	
22	0/0	Statute designating broadband as public utility	BB	
23	0/0	Expand competition for providers	BB	

## **Next Steps**

### **General**

- 1) This meeting report should be sent out to everyone in attendance and other key stakeholders. Additional project ideas are welcome and people not in attendance should be welcomed to propose projects or volunteer to be on a project team. Steering team leaders may want to recruit leaders for some or all of those projects without volunteers or try to identify other projects that might want to incorporate all or a portion of the project concept.
- 2) Blandin consultants will schedule a project development meeting shortly, (possibly already scheduled), to assist team members to prioritize and develop their proposals. Groups are free to begin their work immediately. The formal Blandin Foundation BBC Grant application is done online and the link will only be made available to those projects endorsed by the Steering Committee for Blandin application.
- 3) The Project Teams are charged with developing the project, with the lead organization writing and submitting the application. Projects proposals will first be submitted to the Steering Committee for review. The Steering team will prioritize the applications as necessary. The Steering Team may provide feedback for strengthening selected projects through combining projects, enhanced collaboration or other strategies.
- 4) Final project proposals must be submitted to Blandin by April 1<sup>st</sup>. The next funding deadline is June 19.
- 5) Some projects may need to be withheld to await Round Two Blandin Broadband Community Grant funding, may be recommended for other Blandin Broadband funding programs or may be recommended to pursue other sources of funding.

### **Specific**

Chisago County should consider:

- 1) Increasing efforts to obtain the participation of area broadband providers

- 2) Encouraging participation from the Taylors Falls area and any other under-represented areas
- 3) Creating a dedicated sub-committee around broadband availability and quality
- 4) Discussing the relative weighting of projects with countywide impact versus projects affecting a smaller geographic area within the county

**Attendance List from BBC Visioning Session 2/25/15**

Ken Orwell – Chisago Lakes Schools	John Fileo – Wyoming Historical Society
Daree Selby – Gavia, Inc.	Eric Peterson - City of Wyoming
Nancy Hoffman – Chisago County HRA/EDA	Joe Thimm- Chisago Lakes School
Denise Martin – Chisago County Press	Di Larkin – Fish Lake Township
Linda Cullen – Private Citizen	Deb Henton – North Branch Area Public School
Kris Greene – North Branch Area Chamber	Carla Lydon – East Central Regional Library
Dennis Odin – Johnson – Natural Spaces Domes	Alicia Chapman – County Star
Tim Kastelein – Natural Spaces Domes	Daniel Hoffman – Chisago County HRA/EDA
Terrie Trudeau – City of Center City	Bridgitte Konrad – North Branch
Sarah Hawkins – East Central Regional Library	Jose Clemente – Rise
Andy Nordin – East Central Regional Library	Carla Vita – DEED
Judith O’Claire – Homeowner Chisago City	Jamie Scheffer – Rush City
Bob Chudek – Chisago Historical Society	Bob Oscarson – Rush City
Amy Mell – Rush City	Ted Krause – Wild River Log Homes
Mara Krinke – Parmly LifePointe	Michelle Anderson – Lakes Region EMS
Kathy Lindo – North Branch Chamber of Commerce	Kirsten Kennedy – City of North Branch
Mark Utech – City of Stacy	Ben Wasman – Lakes Region EMS
David Boniface – Chisago County HRA/EDA	Rick Olseen – Congressman Nolan’s office
Darin Marcusin – North Branch Area Public School	Laurie Warner – Resident