



Light Speed Grant Program

Request for Proposal

Re-issued: April 2009

This Request for Proposal (RFP) is an invitation by the Blandin Foundation (Foundation) to qualified community institutions and/or organizations to implement new, innovative bandwidth intensive communications applications. These applications should connect between institutions or connect institutions to end-customers and homes within the community or region. Blandin Foundation is most interested in promoting applications that utilize video, images and large file transfers, preferably with two-way interactive communication. Applications that engage multiple partners and/or community segments are encouraged.

Funds are currently available for 28 southwest Minnesota counties including: Chippewa, Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Nicollet, Renville, Sibley, Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Redwood, Yellow Medicine, Brown, Cottonwood, Jackson, Martin, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Rock, Watonwan, Blue Earth, Faribault, Freeborn, LeSueur, Rice, Steele, and Waseca.

Submission of a proposal does not create any right in or expectation of a contract with the Foundation. The Foundation reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, and the Foundation further declares that it will incur no financial obligations for any costs by any company in preparation of proposals. Qualified community institutions and/or organizations may submit their proposal responses to:

Bernadine Joselyn, Director, Public Policy & Engagement
Blandin Foundation
100 North Pokegama Avenue
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Proposal deadlines: June 5, 2009; August 1, 2009; November 1, 2009; February 2010; May 1, 2010.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Bill Coleman at 651-491-2551 or bill@communitytechnologyadvisors.com with any questions regarding this RFP; this includes transmitting draft versions of proposals for pre-submittal review.

Background

Brief Description of the Foundation

Blandin Foundation is a private foundation based in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The Foundation was created in 1941, and is Minnesota's largest rural-based and rural-focused foundation. The Foundation is funded through annual contributions from the C.K. Blandin Residuary Trust and earnings from its own investments. At the end of 2004, the net assets of the Foundation and the Residuary Trust were approximately \$410 million.

The Foundation's mission "To strengthen rural communities in Minnesota, especially the Grand Rapids Area," and vision "Healthy rural communities grounded in strong economies where the burdens and benefits are widely shared," guide our three program areas, grant making, community leadership training and public policy. See www.blandinfoundation.org for additional information.

The Blandin Broadband Initiative

The Blandin Broadband Initiative is designed to catalyze broadband investment and use, raise awareness about the value of broadband and encourage public and private investment in rural broadband capacity. Expanding the use of broadband technology increases the potential to retain jobs in rural areas, grows new markets for business, strengthens health care, enhances educational access and improves the quality-of-life.

The Blandin Broadband Initiative began its efforts in 2003. A Strategy Board was convened and identified the need to increase broadband use as an urgent goal of first priority. Responses by the foundation's Broadband Initiative have included the *Get Broadband* community grant program, the *Robust Broadband Networks Feasibility Fund*, and *Community Broadband Resources*. Over 35 communities have participated in these programs to date.

The Strategy Board also created a vision of ubiquitous ultra high-speed broadband across Minnesota, which the Foundation has been actively promoting.

To ensure a high quality of life and a globally competitive future for its citizens, businesses and communities, Minnesota is committed to making the necessary investment to become a world leader in the universal deployment and use of ultra high-speed next generation broadband.

Today some communities have robust networks capable of supporting very advanced communications applications. Some of these networks are citywide; others serve only a particular community segment, like the government, health care or education sector, while others reach regional partners. These networks help people do more and benefit more from advanced telecommunication systems and services.

However, advanced networks alone are not sufficient for the deployment and use of advanced applications. Additional barriers persist, including in software, experience, training, understanding, and commitment.

The *Light Speed Program* is designed to help reduce these barriers, enable more rapid deployment and demonstrate the benefits of advanced applications as engines of economic and community development.

Light Speed Grant Program

Goals

1. Spur the implementation of broadband intensive, innovative applications by community institutions that will increase the community's competitiveness and/or improve the community's quality of life.
2. Demonstrate the value of robust ultra-high speed networks.
3. Help local institutions develop strategies to overcome barriers to application deployment, providing a model for similar institutions within the community and around the state of Minnesota.

Application Examples

- Real time videoconferencing from a school to homes to provide instruction to home-bound students, home-schooled students, non-traditional students or other purposes.
- Store and forward video instruction from a school or college to a home or business.
- Electronic medical records, including images, shared between hospitals, clinics and nursing homes within a community or region.
- Real-time videoconferencing between a home health care provider and housebound clients.
- Senior citizen peer support visits via videoconferencing.
- Real time monitoring by corrections officials of persons subject to restrictions.

Network Requirements

The Light Speed program is technology-neutral. Preference will be given to applications that require significant symmetrical communications. Network ownership can be private, public or operated by a private-public partnership.

Uses of Funds

Foundation funds may be used for equipment or software purchase or lease, technical services, or staff or customer training. Foundation funds may not be used for studies to determine the feasibility of a new application.

Grantee Blogs

Grantees will be expected to maintain an active project blog on the Foundation web site describing the project and project progress. Active is defined as a minimum of monthly project updates.

Funding

The Foundation will accept applications for up to \$50,000 though the average grant is expected to be approximately \$35,000. All Foundation grant funds must be matched on a 1:1 cash¹ basis. In-kind contributions are welcome and will be considered as an indicator of

¹ Cash match will need to be accounted for according to standards accepted by the IRS. For further explanation, please contact Mary Magnuson at 218.327.8738 or memagnuson@blandinfoundation.org.

organizational support for the project. Grantees should plan to expend the funds within one year of funding.

Application Information and Process

Specifications for Proposal

All proposals submitted in response to this RFP should be prepared simply and economically, avoiding the use of elaborate promotional materials beyond those sufficient to provide a complete, accurate and reliable presentation.

Submit one printed copy of the proposal along with an electronic version of the proposed narrative (financial statements required with the submission need not be mailed electronically). Proposals should be sent: Attention Bernadine Joselyn, Blandin Foundation, 100 North Pokegama Avenue, Grand Rapids, MN 55744, and, emailed to brjoselyn@blandinfoundation.org.

All proposals must be no longer than eight pages (excluding financial statements and other legal documents) and contain the following information:

- Cover letter that introduces your organization and your proposal, and makes a strategic link between your proposal and the Foundation's mission and grant making interests.
- Organization Information
 - Summary of lead organization's history, including the date your organization was established.
 - Please indicate if the project's lead organization is a 501(c)(3) or a unit of government. An officer of the project's lead organization/fiscal agent should sign Grant application cover letters.
 - Summary of lead organization's mission and goals.
 - Description of organization's current programs or activities, including any service statistics and strengths or accomplishments. Please highlight new or different activities, if any, for this organization.
 - Description of all participating organizations. This should include: legal name, mission statement, services and programs, addresses, and staff contacts.
 - Description of the role of the lead and participating organizations, inter-organizational coordination and collaboration during the project, and decision-making processes.
- Purpose of Grant
 - Situation
 - The opportunity, challenges, issues that your proposal addresses.
 - Activities
 - Overall goal(s).
 - Strategy for achieving the goal(s).

- Identify all proposed activities. Clearly note those for which you seek funding, who will carry out those activities, and the time frame in which the activities will occur.
- Indicators of success.
- Long-term sustainability. Identify funding strategies (if applicable) for sustaining this effort.

➤ Evaluation Criteria for this Proposal

- Applicants are to explain how their activities will contribute to the Light Speed Program goals listed above.
- Describe how you will measure these changes and who will be involved in evaluating this work (staff, board, constituents, community, and consultants)?
- Explain how this activity could not be undertaken, “but for” the availability of Blandin funds.
- Is this project in alignment with any ARRA stimulus funds? Which programs? Will ARRA funds be sought for this project?

➤ Attachments (financial information required only of lead/fiscal agent organization)

- Most recent financial statement from most recently completed year, audited if available, showing actual expenses. This information should include a balance sheet, a statement of activities (or statement of income and expenses) and functional expenses.
- Organization budget for current year, including income and expenses.
- Project Budget, including income and expenses
- Additional funders. List names of corporations and foundations from which you are requesting cash funds to implement project activities, with dollar amounts, indicating which sources are committed or pending.
- Brief description of key project staff, including qualifications relevant to the specific request.
- A copy of the lead organization’s (or your fiscal agent’s) IRS determination letter indicating tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status.

Proposal Checklist

- Cover letter
- Cover sheet
- Proposal narrative
- Lead organization budget
- Project budget

- ❑ Financial statements from lead organization, preferably audited, showing actual expenses including:
 - ❑ Balance sheet
 - ❑ Statement of activities (income and expenses)
 - ❑ Statement of functional expenses
- ❑ List of additional funders
- ❑ Brief description of key staff
- ❑ IRS determination letter

Disposition and Disclosure of Proposals

All proposals submitted in response to this RFP will become the property of the Blandin Foundation.

Modification or Withdrawal of Proposals

Responses to this request for proposals may be modified or withdrawn by written notice (e-mail notice acceptable). Reservation of Rights

The Blandin Foundation reserves the right to:

- Accept or reject any and all proposals received in response to this RFP, and to solicit new submittals.
- Waive or modify any irregularities in proposals received after prior notification to the vendor.
- Request the submission of proposal modifications at any time if deemed in the best interest of the Foundation with the understanding that such requests may change the cost of services provided.
- Consider proposals or modifications received at any time before the contract is made if such changes are deemed in the best interest of the Foundation.
- Request clarification and/or additional information from the vendor during the evaluation process.
- Utilize any and all ideas submitted in the proposals received unless those ideas are covered by legal patent or proprietary rights and the patent of those rights is indicated by the vendor. Proposals will become the property of Blandin Foundation.
- In the event of contract termination, enter into contract negotiations with other qualified firms that submitted proposals, rather than redoing the proposal process for the project.

Thank you for your submission of a proposal to the Blandin Foundation.