**Blandin Community Broadband Program**

**Arrowhead Intelligent Region grant application instructions**

This document outlines the application and selection process for projects developed through the [Arrowhead Intelligent Region (AIR)](https://blandinfoundation.org/programs/broadband/arrowhead-intelligent-region/) process. Projects should address the priorities established by the process, notably at the AIR Summit and Project Development Meetings. Projects must be implemented within the seven county Arrowhead Region of Aitkin, Cook, Carlton, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis Counties.

Blandin Foundation and Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation have partnered with multiple communities within the region to implement projects that address broadband infrastructure and technology-driven economic competitiveness using the Intellligent Community framework. This initiative will bring those efforts to regional scale.

The AIR grant program will provide matching funds to eligible applicants within the Arrowhead to implement projects that address one or more Intelligent Community elements defined here: [www.intelligentcommunity.org/method](http://www.intelligentcommunity.org/method).

* Broadband
* Knowledge Workforce
* Innovation
* Digital Inclusion
* Sustainability
* Engagement

Projects that address two or more Intelligent Community elements and engender collaboration between organizations will receive priority over projects involving a single entity.

**Project Development Process**

Prospective applicants are encouraged to participate in the online AIR initiative process. Sessions will be archived and available for viewing after the events.

* [Arrowhead Intelligent Region Summit](https://blandinfoundation.org/news-room/events/arrowhead-intelligent-region-initiative-summit/) - February 10th
	+ Intelligent Community elements overview
	+ Arrowhead Region benchmarking report
* [Intelligent Region Webinars](https://blandinfoundation.org/articles/arrowhead-intelligent-region-webinars/) – Tuesdays and Thursdays, February 16th – March 9th
* [AIR Project Development Meeting](https://blandinfoundation.org/news-room/events/arrowhead-intelligent-region-project-development-meeting/) – March 12th

Throughout the series of meetings, project ideas will emerge. The project development meeting will facilitate the exchange of project ideas and the formation of project teams. These teams will collaboratively outline project objectives and strategies, create budgets and seek matching funds as well as establish timelines. Each team will determine the project fiscal agent and/or grant applicant.

Prospective applicant teams can also develop projects outside of the formal AIR meetings.

**Evaluation Criteria**

Blandin Foundation will use the following criteria to determine project selection:

1. Identified regional need
2. Enhanced technology adoption
3. Mobilized regional participation
4. Demonstrated cross-sector collaboration
5. Increased regional technological sophistication
6. Impacts multiple Intelligent Community elements
7. Charitable in nature

Regional projects will receive priority over locally-focused applications. Projects that address more than one Intelligent Community element and promote collaboration between organizations will also be viewed favorably.

Projects to obtain bulk equipment (computing devices for example) will not be funded except in the context innovative projects designed to advance use of the technology outside of institutional settings.

Ineligible project activities include:

* Projects outside the state of Minnesota
* Religious activities
* Medical research
* Travel grants for individuals or groups
* Camping and athletic programs
* Ordinary government services
* Grants solely intended to influence specific legislation or a specific candidate

**Application Deadlines**

The initial grant application deadline is May 3, 2021. The second round funding deadline is August 2, 2021. Future funding for AIR Grants is not guaranteed.

**Funding**

The maximum grant is $50,000. All projects require 1:1 cash or in-kind matching funds. Projects demonstrating greater than 1:1 match will be viewed favorably. Projects should be designed as to be able to track and report matching funds.

Projects should be completed within 24 months of award date.

Funders include Blandin Foundation, Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation, and Northland Foundation. Some of the funding is restricted by geographic area. Projects should be designed to be able to track geographic benefit; specifically Duluth metropolitan statistical area versus rural, and [Taconite Assistance Area](https://mn.gov/irrrb/assets/Taconite%20Assistance%20Area%202016%20List%20%26%20Map_tcm1047-218942.pdf) (TAA) versus surrounding area.

**Response Instructions**

Application materials should be prepared simply and economically, avoiding the use of elaborate promotional materials beyond those sufficient to provide a complete, accurate and reliable presentation.

Applicants should contact Blandin Community Broadband Program administrator Mary Magnuson (memagnuson@blandinfoundation.org or 218/327-8738) with any questions regarding application, including transmitting draft versions of proposals for pre-submittal review, and for guidance on the online application form. Application materials not submitted via the portal may be emailed to Mary.

**Online grant portal instructions**

All applicants are encouraged to submit grant applications via the portal.

1. We recommend you use this document to draft your responses to the application questions, and then copy and paste your responses into the application portal.
2. To access the AIR grant portal, click <https://blandinfoundation.force.com/grants/FGM_Portal__CommunitySignin?retUrl=/apex/FGM_Portal__CommunityApplication?id=7013m000001ZalA>
If this is your first time applying via the portal, click “New Portal User? Register Here!” If you have applied via the portal previously, you may log in as normal and skip step 3.
*The portal is NEW as of February 2021! If you have not applied for a grant since February 2021, you will need to register.*
3. Fill in the grantee registration information as prompted. If the grantee is using a separate fiscal sponsor, create the account under the grantee organization. You will be asked for fiscal sponsor information later.
4. Once you’ve completed registration, you will be asked to verify your account via email. Once you’ve verified your account, you can log in.
5. Most of the questions are on the first tab, “Project Poposal.” You’ll notice some of the questions are worded differently on the portal than they are on the application instructions, which is due to space limitations on the portal.
6. The second tab is for your fiscal sponsor information. If not using a fiscal sponsor, leave blank.
7. You have the option to upload up your attachments on the budget tab. The attachments are described in detail under section V below.

If you have any questions about the portal, contact Mary Magnuson at memagnuson@blandinfoundation.org.

**Application Form:**

Please use the following outline as a guide to your proposal narrative. Take the space needed to tell your story, but try not to exceed 5-10 pages, excluding attachments. Applicants are strongly encouraged to [apply online](https://blandinfoundation.force.com/grants/FGM_Portal__CommunitySignin?retUrl=/apex/FGM_Portal__CommunityApplication?id=7013m000001ZalA).

**Proposal Overview**

Project Name:

Duration of project (not to exceed 24 months):

**Organization Information**

Name of organization:

Legal name, if different:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Employer Identification Number (EIN):

Phone:

Website:

Name of CEO/Exec Dir.:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Name of contact person regarding this application:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Is your organization an IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit? **Yes / No**

If no, is your organization a public agency/unit of government? **Yes / No**

If no, list name for fiscal agent:

Fiscal agent address:

Fiscal agent’s EIN:

Geographic benefit? **Grand Rapids-Itasca Area / Rural Minnesota** *(If the project will take place in Itasca and other counties, choose Rural MN. If the project includes Duluth, choose Rural MN.)*

**Budget Summary**

Fiscal Year of Organization (month – month):

Total project budget: $

Total dollar amount requested of Blandin Foundation: $

Total annual organization budget: $

**Project Summary**

Please provide a 1-2 paragraph description of your project

**Proposal Narrative**

1. Organization Information
	1. Brief summary of organization history, current mission, activities, and accomplishments.
	2. Is your organization best positioned to do the proposed work? Are there opportunities to work together with other organizations for increased impact?
	3. Describe what steps your organization takes to include a broad range of perspectives from the community you seek to serve, such as board and staff members from diverse backgrounds.
	4. Identify specific steps your organization takes to improve organizational effectiveness.
2. Purpose of Grant
	1. Background
		1. Describe how your proposal fits the goals and evaluation criteria of the AIR grant program (listed above.)
		2. What organizations and individuals are involved in planning and implementing the project? Would this project benefit from any new/diverse perspectives?
		3. What key relationships critical to the success of this project are in place, or under development?
	2. Implementation
		1. What are the goals of your project?
		2. What strategies and activities will be employed to achieve these goals?
		3. Who will carry out these activities? Do they have the requisite skills and experience?
		4. What are long-term strategies (if applicable) for sustaining this effort?
3. Assessment
	1. Describe what success looks like and how you will measure success (use goals and metrics wherever you can.)
	2. How will you know you’ve reached your project’s goals?
	3. Give specific examples of how your project/program contributes to a healthy rural community.
	4. Explain the process that will be used to measure and document whether progress is being made toward achieving your project’s goals.
4. Budget and Sources of Funding
	1. Provide a brief statement of the amount and type of resources that will be needed to see this project through, and steps you are taking to mobilize the necessary resources. Include budget breakdown between Duluth/rural, TAA/other.
5. Attachments (please attach the following):
	1. A copy of your organizational budget.
	2. Project budget; please submit a **detailed** project budget including both sources of income for the project (indicate if these funds have been secured or are pending) as well as major expense categories. Be certain to include cash and in-kind matching contributions to the project. Feel free to attach a narrative explaining your numbers if necessary. Include budget breakdown between Duluth/rural, TAA/other.
	3. Most recent financial statement, from a formal audit 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. If a formal audit is available, please include the management letter. This audit may be submitted electronically by providing a link to this information.
	4. Brief description of key staff, including qualifications relevant to the specific request. Also provide information on the number of staff and volunteers in the organization.

Should your application be funded, you will also be required to submit an IRS Form W9: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>. You may choose to submit it at the time of your application by emailing it to Mary Magnuson.