

News You Can Use for Communities April 2008

Government Training Services releases spring schedule:

Government Training Services, an organization that offers workshops for staff and appointed officials from all levels of government, is offering educational workshops to share information on trends, tools, and processes that help local units of government.

Registration is now open, go to <http://www.mngts.org/LandUse/LandUse2008.html>

The remaining schedule for the spring includes:

- Your Role as Planning Commission Member, April 30, Little Falls, 1-5 p.m.
 - Beyond the Basics of Planning and Zoning, May 21, Little Falls, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
 - Advanced Zoning Applications, June 11, Little Falls, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
 - Conservation Design in Shorelands, June 18, Walker, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
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Xcel Energy Foundation Grants

<http://www.xcelenergy.com>

In 2007 over \$4 million was contributed to non-profit organizations across Xcel Energy's service territory. Letters of Intent are accepted in four focus areas on these dates:

- Environment: August 8, 2008
- Education: February 14, 2008
- Community Development: May 7, 2008
- Arts & Culture: August 8, 2008

The foundation's Community Development grants address low-to-moderate-income populations and historically disadvantaged or underrepresented groups. The Environmental grants focus on environmental education and partnership projects. Grants range up to \$30,000.

Grants, Training Available to Faith Based Nonprofits Fighting Poverty

Central Minnesota faith-based and community-based organizations can strengthen their internal operations in the fight against poverty and other critical issues, thanks to \$75,000 in grants and training available through a new partnership between the Initiative Foundation and the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches.

Organizations that serve low-income people and/or meet vital needs are eligible for grants up to \$10,000 and related training on several nonprofit management

topics. Awards will be announced in August. For more detailed information visit, www.ifound.org.

To learn about this new program and obtain application information, organization leaders should attend one of two identical, informational sessions scheduled from 1:30 to 4 p.m. or 6:30 to 9 p.m. on Thursday, May 8th at The Kelly Inn in St. Cloud. To register, contact Tricia Holig at tholig@ifound.org or (877) 632-9255 by May 6th.

The project is funded by the Compassion Capital Fund of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Other partners include Fairview Health Services and Minnesota Council of Churches.

Community Growth Options

<http://www.1000fom.org/CommunityGrowthOptions.htm>

1000 Friends of Minnesota has begun a six-year project to build capacity for ongoing planning and implementation in ten growing communities. Proposals for assistance with financial and community planning, ordinance development and implementation are being accepted through May 15, 2008 from growing cities and townships with an estimated population between 600-12,000 located in the following counties: Hennepin, Ramsey, Dakota, Washington, Carver, Scott, Anoka, Isanti, Chisago, Sherburne, Wright, and Goodhue.

Green By Design 2008 featuring keynote speakers: [Mark Fenton](#) and [Van Jones](#).

May 21 & 22, Minneapolis

Both days include expert workshops and a luncheon keynote address on a wide array of affordable, sustainable development topics, including residential green building, Minnesota Housing funding requirements, energy conservation and climate protection strategies, equitable green economic development, and healthy homes and communities.

Discounted Early Bird registration available through May 6, 2008:

* \$220 – Full 2-Day Conference (\$250 value)

* \$135 – 1-Day (\$150 value)

Scholarships Available:

Because learning how to incorporate “green” into your affordable housing work is critical to be competitive for Minnesota Housing (MHFA), Greater Minnesota Housing Fund (GMHF) and Family Housing Fund resources, we don’t want cost to be a barrier for our partners to attend this important conference!

For more information, please contact Green By Design staff:
Greater Minnesota (80 counties outside of Twin Cities Metro):
Contact John Harrington, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund (651) 221.1997 x115,

jharrington@gmhf.com

Hometown Minnesota Workshop on reviving a statewide Main Street Program
May 23, 2008, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Do small cities in Minnesota need a source of technical and financial assistance for strengthening their downtowns? Many states have a formal statewide Main Street™ program that provides such assistance to communities revitalizing their historic downtown areas. Minnesota has not had a formal statewide program for 14 years. **Join Hometown Minnesota at the Initiative Foundation in Little Falls on Friday, May 23rd to let us know how a statewide program could help your community.**

A group of interested organizations and individuals are working to create a new statewide Main Street™ program. **Thom Guzman, Director of the Iowa Downtown Resource Center** will describe the benefits and limitations of a statewide program, and **Bonnie McDonald, Preservation Alliance of Minnesota**, will describe the opportunity for creating a new statewide Minnesota program.

The workshop will address questions such as:

- Will a statewide program would provide meaningful assistance to local communities?
- Does the proposed MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) funding for downtown revitalization suffice for statewide assistance to small cities?
- What do small cities believe are the critical components of a statewide program?

Cost: \$75.00 per workshop per community Workshops are free to Hometown members. For more information and/or to register contact Leah Posterick at 320-631-2053 or lposterick@ifound.org.

Target Corporation's Local Store Grants provide funding support to "Target" communities in the areas of arts, reading programs and family violence prevention.

To be eligible, organizations must be located in communities where Target does business. The average grant is between \$1,000 and \$3,000. **The deadline is May 31.** For communities offering unique opportunities outside the scope of the program's focus areas, Target provides each store limited funds for Target GiftCard donations. GiftCard donations are available March through December. Visit <http://fconline.foundationcenter.org/pnd/15012103/target> for more information.

IQ. Issues of Leadership.

In 2008, no issue of IQ Magazine will be more powerful than the next one.

Within the pages of our summer magazine, we'll share the human stories of poverty in central Minnesota. Learn about the one-third of our families who are working, but aren't making a living wage.

This year, Minnesota is renewing its interest in understanding and conquering poverty. For community and business leaders, it's the right issue at the right time. Among our topics:

- **The Working Poor**
- **Challenges & Hardships**
- **Shattering Stereotypes**
- **Could Poverty Happen to You?**
- **How Families are Breaking Out**

If you haven't already, make sure to reserve your advertising space today. Nearly two-thirds of our space is already sold, but there are excellent positions still available.

Check out our ad reps, rates and readership at www.iqmag.org.

Foundation Seeks VISTA Volunteers to Serve Central Minnesota Nonprofits

Through a partnership with the AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) program, the Initiative Foundation is seeking 20 volunteers for community service in one of many project sites across central Minnesota.

AmeriCorps*VISTA is a national service program similar to the Peace Corps. Working with administrative organizations like the Initiative Foundation, it places volunteers in local nonprofit organizations and government agencies to help bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

The Initiative Foundation is seeking VISTAs to serve in: Bemidji, Becker, Brainerd, Cambridge, Holdingford, Little Falls, Mora, North Branch, Onamia, Pine City, Pine River, St. Cloud, and Staples in a wide variety of programs including:

- Financial Literacy
- Child Care Training
- Youth Development / Youth Mentoring
- Legal Services
- Transition Support for Inmates
- Job Training
- Work with the Elderly
- Solar Energy

- Volunteer Development
- Mentoring of Low Income
- Organic Farming
- Refugee & Immigrant Services

Although the program is coordinated by the Initiative Foundation, each nonprofit organization interviews and selects its own VISTA, who must commit to a one-year community service leadership position. Benefits include training, a monthly living allowance of \$865, health insurance, and a \$4,725 education award or end-of-service stipend of \$1,200.

“Whether you’re a recent college graduate looking for experience, or a person in mid-career or recently retired looking for a way to make a difference, this is a great opportunity to learn new skills while serving your community,” said Chris Fastner, Initiative Foundation VISTA program manager.

Interested persons can visit the Initiative Foundation website at www.ifound.org for more details on these positions or contact Chris Fastner at (877) 632-9255 or cfastner@ifound.org.

Applications are currently being accepted until all of the positions are filled or June 1, 2008.

6th Annual Symposium on Small Towns
"The Power of Small: Building Solutions for Energy Self-Reliance"
June 3 – 4, 2008

There are many self-reliant approaches to small-scale food, fuel, and power systems for schools and local governments. This year's Symposium will focus on social, economic, environmental, and political factors that surround the building of these systems.

Please Join us for exciting opportunities for networking, learning, and celebration!

Hosted by the University of Minnesota Morris Center for Small Towns in partnership with Minnesota Public Radio and the University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnership

Sign up now for early registration at www.centerforsmalltowns.org or call (320) 589-6451.

Funds for Youth Art Programs

National Endowment for the Arts: Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth

The National Endowment for the Arts is committed to providing leadership in arts education by inspiring all young Americans through rich arts experiences. The Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth grant program offers funding for projects that help children and youth acquire knowledge and understanding of and skills in the arts. Projects must provide participatory learning and engage students with skilled artists, teachers, and excellent art. Funded projects may take place in school-based or community-based settings and should focus on children and youth in the general age range of 5 through 18 years. The application deadline is June 9, 2008. Online applications must be submitted through [Grants.gov](http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/GAP09/LITA.html). Detailed program and application information is available at: <http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/GAP09/LITA.html>.

USDA Rural Development Invites Applications for Renewable Energy Loans and Grants

USDA Rural Development is now accepting applications for almost \$220 million in loan and grant applications within its Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements Program.

“Minnesota is a leader in the renewable energy field and in this program,” said Steve Wenzel, State Director of Rural Development in Minnesota. “The Bush administration’s Farm Bill proposal recommends a \$1.6 billion increase in renewable energy funding. This funding would benefit farmers and business owners in rural Minnesota and help the country work toward becoming energy independent.”

Loan guarantees and grants are available to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to purchase and install renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements. Since the program’s inception in 2003, Minnesota has been awarded over \$18.5 million in grants through this program, the most of any state in the nation. There are two separate deadlines for grant applications. The first round is due by April 15, 2008 and the second round is due by June 16. The deadline for loan guarantees or loan/grant combinations is also June 16.

More information is available at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn/rbs.htm>, or by calling Lisa Noty with Rural Development at (507) 373-7960, ext. 120, or lisa.noty@mn.usda.gov.

USDA Rural Development is making loan guarantees and grants available to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to purchase and install renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements.

Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation is one of the financial institutions that can originate the loans. In addition, it can help provide guidance for the grant applications. Eligible applicants may seek loan guarantees to cover up to 50 percent of a project’s cost,

not to exceed \$10 million. Grants are available for up to 25 percent of a project's cost, not to exceed \$250,000 for energy efficiency improvements and \$500,000 for renewable energy systems. USDA will issue one grant solicitation for two separate competitions. Applications for loan guarantees, grant-only applications, as well as those for loan/grant combinations, must be completed and submitted to the appropriate USDA Rural Development state office no later than June 16. For more information, visit <http://www.khic.org/news/show/46>.

Funds Available to Assist with Grant Writing Costs for Energy Projects

The Central Region Clean Energy Resource Team (CERT) has allocated part of its regional funds to assist with grant preparation costs for ag producers and businesses applying for USDA Rural Development's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Improvement grants. CERT grant assistance funds can cover up to 50% of the grant writer costs with a cap of \$600. Projects located in Becker, Otter Tail, Hubbard, Cass, Wadena, Morrison, Crow Wing, Todd, Wilkin, Mille Lacs, and Benton Counties are eligible. Funds are limited and distributed on a first come, first serve basis.

“We hope that this incentive will encourage more projects to be developed to take advantage of the USDA energy grants says Joel Haskard, Co-coordinator of the CERTs program.

Lisa Noty, USDA Rural Development added: “it is our hope that this partnership will motivate ag producers and business owners to move forward on renewable energy projects or energy efficiency improvements they may have been contemplating.”

“Once an applicant has submitted a complete proposal to USDA, they can submit a very brief form to CERT staff with their grant writer's invoice attached, and we will reimburse half the costs up to \$600,” Haskard said.

For more information about the USDA Rural Development Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency grants, please contact Lisa Noty, USDA Rural Development (Lisa.Noty@mn.usda.gov, 507-373-7960 ext 120). www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn

For more information about the Central CERT grant assistance incentive or about the CERT program in general, please contact: Melissa Pawlisch & Joel Haskard CERTs Coordinators,

University of Minnesota's Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships
(612) 624-2293 or (612) 625-8759

pawl0048@umn.edu or haska004@umn.edu
www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org

Grant Research and Writing Workshop

June 19, 2008, Initiative Foundation, Little falls

2 sessions offered, 8:30 – 11:30 am or 1:00 – 4:00 pm

\$40 registration fee. Contact Jolene at jhoward@ifound.org

Minnesota Critical Access Hospital and Rural Health Conference: Engaging Communities & Transforming Health Care

Register by June 9 to join us June 23-24 in Duluth, Minnesota!

Conference details are online at

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/orhpc/conf/2008/index.html> or contact the Rural Health Resource Center at (218) 727-9390 or rhrc@ruralcenter.org.

Grants Promote Youth Baseball

Baseball Tomorrow Fund

The mission of the Baseball Tomorrow Fund, a joint initiative of Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association, is to promote and enhance the growth of baseball in the United States and throughout the world by encouraging youth participation in the game. Nonprofit organizations involved in youth baseball and softball programs are eligible for support. Grants may be used to finance a new program, expand or improve an existing program, undertake a new collaborative effort, or obtain facilities or equipment necessary for youth baseball or softball programs. Letters of inquiry may be submitted at any time. The next deadline for invited grant applications is July 1, 2008.

Details on developing letters of interest are available at:

http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/official_info/community/btf.jsp.

Blandin Foundation announces Community Broadband Resource Program Initiative will help rural communities connect to broadband's worldwide advantages

Grand Rapids, MN-Blandin Foundation is pleased to announce the Community Broadband Resource Program (CBR). This newly created program offers technical and business consulting services to rural communities interested in researching, developing or advancing broadband capacity. Participating communities receive services at no charge. CBR is the most recent program addition to Blandin Foundation's Broadband Initiative, which also includes the "Get Broadband" and "LightSpeed" grant programs, the Blandin on Broadband blog and the Open Networks Feasibility Fund. The initiative is guided by a 16-member Strategy Board representing a broad range of private and public perspectives. In designing this program, Blandin Foundation has applied its broadband experience gained from working with leadership in 29 rural communities.

"Blandin Foundation's Community Broadband Resource Program is unique in the state," says Bill Coleman, project leader for the program. "This program will be customized for each community because when it comes to broadband decision-making, we know that no two communities have the same set of challenges or priorities.

"While some communities may already have committed resources and know what they want to do, others may not really understand broadband capabilities and don't know where to start," Coleman says.

"Our job is to facilitate the good work that community leaders are capable of doing. We help identify and clarify key community priorities, involve project stakeholders and assist community leaders in developing their plans and understanding their planning needs-- whatever would help them move forward to the next step."

How communities link up to Blandin Foundation's CBR Program

Community leaders who understand that ultra high-speed connectivity is critical for the future economic vitality of their community may apply for Community Broadband Resource Program assistance by downloading or completing the [application form](#) online at www.blandinfoundation.org. Applications will be accepted anytime between January 2008 and December 2009.

This program will provide, free of charge, up to 32 hours of high-level consulting services for 15 rural Minnesota communities. Services delivered will depend upon the needs of each community and could include technical assessments, establishing priorities, planning, market development and business expertise to help organize joint ventures with providers.

Why Some Rural Communities Prosper While Others Do Not

Andrew M. Isserman, Edward Feser and Drake Warren penned a paper in May 2007 that examines rural prosperity, something often overlooked and unknown. In fact, more than 300 rural counties and 200 mixed rural counties are more prosperous than the nation as a whole. Each has lower unemployment rates, lower poverty rates, lower school dropout rates, and better housing conditions than the nation. This research seeks to understand why. The diverse theories considered focus on location, the economy, urban-rural linkages, highways and airports, human and social capital, diversity and homogeneity, knowledge and creativity, and climate and topography. Read the paper at http://www.ace.uiuc.edu/Reap/IssermanFeserWarren_070523_RuralProsperity.pdf.

Program, Job Shadowing for 100,000 Students, Research and Community Engagement Support to Address High School Dropout Crisis

Doing its part to help address the issue of nearly one-third of U.S. high school students dropping out, AT&T Inc. today announced the launch of AT&T Aspire, a \$100 million philanthropic program, which includes job shadowing for 100,000 students nationwide, to help strengthen student success and workforce readiness.

"In the U.S., 1.2 million students drop out of high school every year. This has implications for individuals and for our nation's global economic leadership," said AT&T Chairman and CEO Randall Stephenson, who will address the topic Thursday at the Economic Club of Chicago. "AT&T Aspire is about supporting the great work already underway to help our kids succeed in school, and helping students see the connection between education and their best future."

Through the Aspire initiative, AT&T and the AT&T Foundation are committing \$100 million (over four years, 2008 - 2011) toward high school success and workforce readiness. The platform includes four key elements:

- Grants to schools and nonprofit organizations that are focused on helping students graduate from high school and become better prepared for college and/or the workforce.
- A student job shadowing initiative, involving 400,000 AT&T employee hours, that will give 100,000 students a firsthand look at the skills they will need to succeed in the 21st century workforce.
- The underwriting of national research that will explore the practitioner perspective (teachers, principals, superintendents, school counselors and school board members) on the high school dropout issue.
- Support for 100 state and community Dropout Prevention summits, announced earlier this month by America's Promise Alliance.

For more information about the AT&T Aspire initiative, please visit <http://www.att.com/education-news>.

Conservation Design Template for Rural MN

<http://www.nextstep.state.mn.us/download/lid-hanover.pdf>

In conservation design, housing is clustered on a land parcel in ways that reduce environmental impacts, decrease costs to developers, government and residents, and create great neighborhoods in which people want to live. The City of Hanover (population 1,400; 35 miles northwest of the Twin Cities) worked with Barr Engineering (<http://www.barr.com/environmental/LandArch.htm>) and the MPCA to design a residential development on 380 acres outside of town that, compared to a typical rural residential design, has these features and outcomes:

- 289, 1/3-acre lots vs. 103, 2.8-acre lots (sprawl reduction of 64%).
- Preserved open space of 211 acres, vs. 50 acres. Every home backs up to open space.
- 9 miles of walking/biking trails vs. 1 mile.
- \$16,000/lot development costs vs. \$33,000/lot.

- Total hard surface (e.g., roads) of .18 acres/lot vs. .41 acres/lot. Narrower streets and shorter driveways cut stormwater creation and save plowing and maintenance costs.
- Medium-sized lots cut yard maintenance chores and irrigation costs.
- Natural functions of the land, which borders the Crow River, are preserved by protecting natural waterways, woodlands, wetlands, and restoring former fields to prairies, which could be managed for biofuels or partially used for community supported agriculture.
- Captures over 80% of stormwater and infiltrates it into the land by means of rainwater gardens and stormwater meadows.
- Heating and cooling energy costs are cut by establishing windbreaks (which would funnel wind to an eventual wind turbine to power the homes) and orienting homes to the south for passive solar gain. South orientation also creates prime locations for roof-mounted solar panels.

For those interested in promoting conservation design / low-impact development, see the web page above for a 3-page graphical brochure summarizing this prototypic design for the property in Hanover, and contact Don Berger, MPCA, at Donald.Berger@pca.state.mn.us or 651/297-8494 for more details and assistance.

Announcement of DNR's new Community Conservation Assistance grant program

DNR's Metro Greenways Program is pleased to announce its new Community Conservation Assistance grant program to help local governments with what is called GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE. Green Infrastructure is a way of planning for and implementing conservation and development projects that adopts a 'bigger picture' systemic and proactive approach. It helps communities visualize remaining natural areas as an interconnected green network rather than as patches of open space isolated by development. In this context, DNR's new Community Conservation Assistance program is especially interested in supporting efforts by local units of government that seek to resolve the challenges associated with the conservation of remaining natural habitats in the face of projected increases in population, households, and impervious surfaces.

Eligible applicants for the grant program include cities, townships, and counties, soil/water conservation districts, and watershed districts/management organizations in the 12-county region (7-county metro core and Chisago, Isanti, Sherburne, Wright, and Goodhue counties).

For further information on evaluation criteria, examples of fundable projects, and the application/budget forms, please visit <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/index.html>.

Wal-Mart Community Grant Program

The Wal-Mart Community Grant Program allows local nonprofit organizations, such as schools, youth programs, fire departments, and libraries, to hold fundraisers at their local Wal-Mart or SAM'S CLUB. Through the Matching Grant Program, the store/club can elect to match a portion of the funds raised up to \$1,000. Events held off the premises are also eligible for funding when a company associate is actively involved. Additionally, once each Wal-Mart or SAM'S CLUB has met certain criteria in the Matching Grant Program each year, a second source of funding is awarded to the store/club to use in the community. These funds do not require a fundraiser to be held, instead the funds can be awarded directly to deserving organizations. To learn more about the program visit the website: <http://walmartstores.com/CommunityGiving/> or contact the Community Involvement Coordinator at the local Wal-Mart or SAM'S CLUB.

The Reader's Digest Foundation has announced that it will donate a total of \$1 million to nonprofit organizations through a new initiative called "Make it Matter." Grants will be inspired by individuals who are taking action and giving back to their communities in significant ways. Deadlines are rolling. For more information, visit <http://www.rd.com/foundation/>.

Tracks to Success

[Writing Grant Proposals: Making Space – Creating Time](#)

The number one reason people give for not applying for a particular grant is that they don't have the time. And it's probably true. In this series, I'm going to share with you some of the tricks of the trade to help you organize your approach to grantseeking. We will cover everything from big picture thinking and how it can drive your grantseeking efforts, to how best to use volunteers. Throughout this series, I encourage you to send me your own tips, thoughts, and ideas about how to make grant writing more efficient. (Email me at cadams@grantstation.com. Be sure to note the subject: Tracks to Success Series Comments.) To read the first article in this series, "Big Picture Thinking," visit the GrantStation website)
