



Blandin Foundation™

STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

Equity statement

September 2021

The Blandin Foundation is a philanthropic organization. The word philanthropy means “the love of all humanity.” It is in this context that we do our work. Rural communities are each unique. Though we may choose to live with a bit more space between our homes and our neighbors, we know that rural life requires interconnectedness, barns aren’t raised alone, community potluck fundraisers are group efforts, and when resources are restricted, we are poised to develop shared solutions for challenges. Because of our remote lifestyles, we are in relationship with the land. We carry various realities of rural industries. But this is often our livelihoods and homes, so we feel strongly about environmental stewardship and sustainability. Rural people are uniquely situated to understand equity work because for years they have experienced inequities in areas like education, housing, wages, and healthcare. We face the future with hope, ready to change.

We recognize that racism perpetuates inequity. To guide our work we acknowledge equity:

- is a journey - that can be uncomfortable, bumpy, imperfect, non-linear, and growth-filled.
- is the presence of opportunities to develop one’s own potential.
- is impacted by power dynamics that can have a positive or negative influence.
- is elevating the power and voices of our communities and partners.
- is a journey rooted in history and projected into the future.
- is not the same as equality.
- is understood on a gut level by rural people because of historical inequities.

The Foundation will put rural culture at the center of our work. We strive to be a catalyst for fair access to opportunities and conditions where all rural people can choose their future. This will require change and personal growth for the Foundation and our communities.

The Foundation will do this by looking at our work and policies through an equity lens by asking these questions:

1. Why do we have this policy or program? What is the historical context? Do we understand the lens of the people who created it?
2. Does this policy perpetuate or help acknowledge and dismantle historical inequities?
3. Who is impacted and what is the nature of the impact?
4. Who benefits and who is harmed?
5. How does this policy/program impact marginalized rural people?*
6. Have people most impacted been engaged?
7. How do we evaluate this work?

**Marginalized rural people are those who don't have access to opportunities due to the color of their skin, who they love, where they live, how they worship, the ableness of their body, the country they were born in, or the size of their paycheck.*