

Subject: Blandin Foundation Grants Program Update

Summer Greetings,

This is an exciting and busy time for the Blandin Foundation, with much going on behind the scenes. With the end of the second quarter of 2023 upon us, this is a good time to share a brief status update.

In preparing to transition to our [new strategic plan](#), we learned from our foundation colleagues around the country that many decide to halt grantmaking for a full year while technical or operational changes are underway. While that may be common practice, we believe the more responsible approach is to continue to provide transitional funding support to grantees. In recognition of our longstanding partnerships, and the time it will take to adjust to new grant programs, we are carefully bridging grantmaking to the new system using the following framework:

- All grants currently open are being honored.
- All active Committed Connection grants in the Grand Rapids area whose terms run through 2023 can apply for transition funding later this summer. We will contact these grantees directly with application guidance.
- Other current Grand Rapids area grant recipients whose terms end in 2023 will have an opportunity to apply for a bridge grant while we adapt to a new system.
- A small number of grant applicants that had submitted proposals targeting the new priority areas at the time of the grants portal closure in January of this year are being processed.
- In accordance with beta testing protocols, a handful of grant applicants were invited to help test our new online grant application system to ensure it is fully functional before it becomes broadly accessible.

In addition to the financial bridging, we are committed to realigning the Foundation's grant making with our founder's original intent: CK Blandin's focus was on strengthening organizations to ensure they could sustain their missions long-term. It is this intent that guided the development of the new strategic direction and priority areas. This process began deep in our communities three years ago, and we will continue to partner with you throughout implementation.

We do not yet have a firm date for the portal reopening to grant inquiries outside the above framework, but you will receive a direct communication from us when we do. While we have made good progress on the technical end of the project, our team is working to ensure the operational pieces are in place. What we learned from two years of statewide strategic planning is that it is more important to do this right than it is to do it fast; a principle that will continue to guide us forward.

Throughout the rest of this transition year, we will share additional information about the new grant priority areas. As with all major transformations, we expect there will be bumps along the way. But we pledge to be open about the status of the transition and to work closely with you as it progresses. We remain committed to boosting the ability of our grantees, especially in the Grand Rapids area, to achieve their goals and move rural Minnesota forward toward a sustainable, equitable future.

If you have further questions, please contact: grants@blandinfoundation.org

Sincerely,

Sonja Merrild
Director of Rural Grantmaking