



Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

Blandin Foundation encourages Minnesota to set a high bar with broadband

GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. (June 23, 2009) – As part of Blandin Foundation’s continued commitment to helping Minnesota’s rural communities access and deploy ultra high-speed, next-generation broadband to ensure a high quality of life and a globally competitive future for its citizens, businesses and communities, Bernadine Joselyn, director of public policy and engagement, provided formal testimony to the Minnesota Ultra High-Speed Broadband Task Force at its June 19 meeting, held in Grand Rapids, Minn.

She outlined lessons learned from the foundation’s six-year-old Broadband Initiative.

“Broadband is becoming more important for rural places because in the new wired future, quality of place will replace location as a key driver of economic activity,” Joselyn said. “In this new world, communities that have made the necessary investments in technology infrastructure, training and education can turn their traditional challenges into advantages.”

Joselyn also announced that Blandin Foundation is calling for partners to join in a collaborative effort to apply for rural stimulus funding in order to help rural Minnesota communities maximize the potential of broadband for improved economic and educational purposes.

She said large-scale projects like expansion of broadband networks require multi-faceted, sustained collaboration, and encouraged task force members to set a high bar for state broadband policy goals.

“Don’t be deterred by what’s difficult politically – help the state set an ambitious goal to ensure a competitive future and quality of life for all Minnesotans into the future,” she said.

Additional task force meetings are being held July 16 in Mankato and August 20 in Fergus Falls; public comment will be taken at each. Anyone interested in broadband access across Minnesota can also visit the Connect Minnesota web site <http://www.connectedmn.org/> to test their internet access speed. Results from this site also are tracked by the task force

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Blandin Foundation, Minnesota’s largest rural-based private foundation is located in Grand Rapids, Minn. Its mission is to strengthen rural Minnesota communities,

especially the Grand Rapids area, through grants, leadership development programs and public policy initiatives. www.blandinfoundation.org.

The mission of the Minnesota Ultra High-Speed Broadband Task Force is to make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature regarding the creation of a statewide high-speed Internet access goal, and a plan for implementation by 2015.

<http://www.ultra-high-speed-mn.org/>

Photo caption:

(Left to right) Fred Bobich of Ruttger's Sugar Lake Lodge, Bob Fenwick, Cook County commissioner and Bernadine Joselyn, director of public policy and engagement at Blandin Foundation, discussed the growing significance for rural places to harness the power of world-class connectivity during a broadband task force hearing held in Grand Rapids.

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