



Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Blandin Foundation awarded \$7.7 million in Itasca area grants last year

GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. (January 9, 2015) – Including awards made at their December meeting, Blandin Foundation trustees approved 113 grants totaling \$7,682,081 in 2014 specifically for the benefit of the Itasca County area. In addition, 329 local students received Blandin Foundation education grants last year totaling nearly one million dollars.

The Foundation has committed to local communities that an average of at least 55% of its grants be paid in the Itasca area, measured on a six-year rolling basis. For the six-year period ending Sept. 30, 2014, the percentage of grants paid for the Foundation’s local giving area is 71%.

As they do every December, Blandin Foundation trustees met in Grand Rapids to consider grants, conduct annual business and set the budget for the year ahead.

Among 42 grants (totaling \$2.7 million) approved in December were Itasca Community Television (\$160,000), Legal Aid Service of Northeastern MN (\$349,124), Ground Floor Youth Center (\$85,000), Greater Minnesota Housing Fund for the Beacon Hill development (\$300,000), and Itasca Community College financial aid programs (\$375,000). Complete lists of grants paid, back to Blandin Foundation’s first grant for Blandin Beach in 1943, are available at the Foundation’s website home page (see “Where We’ve Been” option).

“We are amazed and impressed by the ambitious leadership of this area,” said Dr. Kathleen Annette, Blandin Foundation CEO. “Truly vibrant communities are those where every member has both options for their life and the ability to pursue those paths to the fullest end. The Foundation and its trustees are grateful to stand with communities and leaders, in whatever ways we can, to expand opportunities in rural Minnesota—especially here in Grand Rapids and throughout the Itasca area.”

As part of its annual decision-making, trustees chose to extend the term of Dr. Mike Johnson (Grand Rapids) as chair of the board through 2015. Trustees also elected to conduct a search process, with the goal of electing at least two new board members for terms beginning in 2016. A public announcement of the application process will be made later this winter. At the end of 2015, Marian Barcus and Dr. Tim Bonner will complete 12 years of dedicated service to the Foundation as trustees.

Trustees reaffirmed the Foundation’s four areas of focus: Vibrant Itasca Area, Invest in Leadership, Expand Opportunity, and Effective Stewards. Specific work approved for 2015 includes:

- Grants of \$13.2 million (an increase of \$1.5 million over 2014), at least 55 percent of which is reserved for the benefit of the Foundation’s home communities in the Itasca County area. Application deadlines for major grants are March 15, June 15, Sept. 15 and Dec. 15.

- Education Grants of up to \$4,000 per local student per year for education programs following high school, based on needs not met through family resources and other financial aid and scholarships. Applications always are due by May 1.
- An update of the Foundation's infrastructure, including reconstruction of its auditorium into more accessible and adaptable meeting space for use by the community's nonprofits.
- Continuing partnerships to strengthen the local community of nonprofits, their boards and their capacities to tackle local needs.
- Support of local leaders in hosting effective and inclusive community conversations.
- Delivery of eight Blandin Community Leadership Program trainings, including a cohort from Grand Rapids. Other leadership programs in 2015 will include the Blandin Reservation Community Leadership Program, Leaders in Ethnically Diverse Communities, Leaders Partnering to End Poverty and Academy for Community Engagement (including Grand Rapids).
- Continuation of the Blandin Community Broadband Program, which focuses on 10 Blandin Broadband Communities (including Itasca County) and offers a series of broadband-related grants.
- Sustained commitment to the Itasca Area Initiative for Student Success, which builds on the success of the collaborative Invest Early program to engage whole local communities in the success of every child, along the pathway from birth to early career.
- Engaging rural partners in raising the voice of rural communities and demonstrating rural Minnesota's vibrancy and relevance.

Full details related to the Foundation are online at www.blandinfoundation.org, with a special section of the site dedicated to the Itasca area.

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Located in Grand Rapids, Minn., Blandin Foundation is one of only a handful of foundations in the U.S. focused exclusively on rural communities and the largest rural-based private foundation in Minnesota. The Foundation seeks and supports vibrant rural Minnesota communities, especially the Grand Rapids and Itasca County areas.

Photo attached. Possible caption: Blandin Foundation trustees hear from local economic development experts about progress, as well as persistent employment challenges, during a visit to the Itasca Economic Development Corporation.

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Grant Awards - September and December 2014

[This list includes some smaller grants from the fall that had not yet been published.]

Local Grants

Area of focus: Vibrant Itasca County

Ball Club Local Indian Council

Donation in support of Ball Club's 52nd annual Mii-Gwitch Mahnomen Days pow wow in Itasca County **\$1,000**

Bigfork Valley Foundation

Project support for the engineering and planning of the Bigfork RiverWalk project in Itasca County **\$2,000**

Bovey/Coleraine Youth Center Inc

Project support for the 2014 New Year's Eve community celebration in Itasca County **\$5,750**

City of Warba

Project support for the Warba Feeley Sago Fire Department's safety education event in Itasca County **\$200**

Deer River Area Health Care Foundation

Donation in support of increasing patient access to cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation in Itasca County **\$250**

Edge of the Wilderness Community Center

Project support to host the Ragamala Dance Company in October 2014 for one public performance and two school activities in Itasca County **\$3,000**

ElderCircle

Project support for the 2014 annual community Thanksgiving dinner in Itasca County **\$2,200**

First Call for Help of Itasca County

Project support for the 2014 Community Connect event in Itasca County **\$5,000**

First Call for Help of Itasca County

Donation towards bullying prevention and suicide awareness training in Itasca County **\$500**

Grand Itasca Foundation

Donation in support of the High School Scholarship Fund in Itasca County **\$250**

Grand Rapids Band Boosters

Donation to advertise the 2015-16 Blandin Education Grants program in the Grand

Rapids High School band calendar in Itasca County	\$550
Grand Rapids Show Boat Inc Donation in support of repairs to the stage and bleachers in Itasca County	\$1,000
Greater Pokegama Lake Association Donation towards the Annual Independence Day fireworks on Pokegama Lake for the Grand Rapids area in Itasca County	\$1,000
Greenway Joint Recreation Association Donation in support of the second annual Fishing Tournament for the Greenway Sports Complex in Itasca County	\$500
Independent School District 318 Donation in support of Grand Rapids High School's safe driving campaign "Celebrate My Drive" in Itasca County	\$500
Independent School District 318 Donation for advertising the 2015-16 Blandin Education Grants Program in the Grand Rapids High School yearbook in Itasca County	\$325
Inger Local Council Donation for Inger's 2014 Cha Cha Bah Ning Pow Wow in Itasca County	\$1,000
Itasca Area Schools Collaborative Donation towards providing Question, Persuade and Refer (QPR) training to all school district staff in suicide awareness in Itasca County	\$927.35
Itasca Choral Society Donation for the fall and spring concert programs in Itasca County	\$200
Itasca Community Television, Inc. Operating support over two years in Itasca County	\$160,000
Itasca County Family YMCA Inc Operating support over two years for the child care, youth and senior programs in Itasca County	\$170,000
Legal Aid Service of Northeastern MN Operating support to continue to provide legal assistance to low-income individuals and the Native American Outreach project in the Itasca County area	\$270,000
Legal Aid Service of Northeastern MN Project support for a new Domestic Violence Court in Itasca County area	\$79,124
Pengilly Booster Club Donation towards upgrades to the Pengilly Community Center in Itasca County	\$1,000

Reif Arts Council

Project support for a visual humorist and musician for the New Year's Day 2015 performance at a reduced price for the Itasca County area

\$6,500

Youth for Christ

Operating support in 2015 for the Ground Floor Youth Center in Itasca County

\$85,000

Area of focus: Expand Opportunity**City of Grand Rapids**

Project support for facilitation services for government entities on potential collaboration efforts in the Grand Rapids/Itasca County area

\$2,500

GiveMN

Project support for training and technical assistance for nonprofits and schools in the Itasca County area to successfully transition to the new giving platform and to prepare for Give to the Max Day 2014

\$10,000

Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation

Project support for the Grand Gathering and conversation event at Grand Rapids High School in Itasca County

\$5,000

Grand Rapids Economic Dev. Authority

Project support for a comprehensive building assessment of Central School so as to preserve and improve it as an economic and cultural community asset in Itasca County

\$18,000

Greater MN Housing Fund

Project support for supportive services to residents of the Beacon Hill housing development in Itasca County

\$300,000

Itasca Community College

Project support for activities associated with the shared text project, Rez Life, for students, staff and community members in Itasca County

\$6,250

Itasca Community College

Project support for the 2015 Career Fair in Itasca County

\$10,000

Itasca Community College

Project support for continuation of financial aid programs for Itasca County high school graduates for the 2015-16 academic year

\$375,000

Itasca Community College

Project support for developing programming to improve the success rate for students of African descent and improve cross-cultural competency

within both the college and the surrounding community in Itasca County **\$50,000**

Itasca Community College

Project support for FIRST Robotics teams from Grand Rapids, Deer River and Northome high schools in Itasca County **\$15,000**

Nashwauk Township

Capital support for citizen-led efforts to establish a new community center for Nashwauk Township in Itasca County **\$50,000**

Trout Lake Township

Donation towards technology equipment to expand computer literacy in the Trout Lake community in Itasca County **\$1,000**

Rural Minnesota

Area of focus: Expand Opportunity

Advocates For Family Peace

Project support to explore whether a merger or alignment with Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP) would be a positive strategic opportunity to families experiencing domestic violence in Itasca, St. Louis and neighboring counties in rural Minnesota **\$17,000**

Anishinabe Legal Services

Operating support to provide free legal representation to indigent parents in child protection matters before the Leech Lake Tribal Court in rural Minnesota **\$50,000**

Citizens League

Project support for the Taking on 2025 initiative to make Minnesotans aware of the enormous demographic changes taking place in the next 11 years in rural Minnesota **\$30,000**

City of Grand Marais

Project support to finalize bidding, secure customer agreements, and finalize financing options for constructing and operating a biomass district heating system for the rural community of Grand Marais **\$50,000**

College of St. Scholastica

Project support to develop an Ojibwe curriculum for Niigaane immersion school teachers at Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School in rural Minnesota **\$10,000**

Dovetail Partners

Project support for collaborative work to address the northern Minnesota forest dependent community's concerns and opportunities related to the proposed addition of the northern long-eared bat to the federal list of endangered species in rural Minnesota **\$35,000**

First Children's Finance

Project support over two years for the expansion and reach of the

Greater than Minnesota Project in rural Minnesota	\$100,000
Greater Bemidji Capital support to develop an R&D incubator/accelerator for emerging high-tech manufacturing companies with a focus on entrepreneurship development in the Bemidji area	\$225,000
Greater MN Housing Fund Operating support over two years to promote the creation of affordable housing in rural Minnesota	\$900,000
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Project support for the Leech Lake Tribal Administrative Internship Program	\$3,880
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Project support for cultural exchange activities in rural Minnesota	\$10,000
Minnesota D.A.R.E., Inc. Donation in support of D.A.R.E programs in rural Minnesota	\$1,000
MN Council of Nonprofits Inc Project support for the 2014 annual nonprofit conference in rural Minnesota	\$5,000
MN Council On Foundations Project support for the summer 2014 issue of <i>Giving Forum</i> focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion throughout rural Minnesota	\$3,000
MN Dept of Natural Resources Project support to publish, print and distribute a forest management guide book for loggers, managers and foresters in rural Minnesota	\$3,000
MN Diversified Industries Project support to build capacity in marketing, communications, and fund development to strengthen MDI's ability to pursue business opportunities and to provide meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities in rural Minnesota	\$50,000
MN Minority Education Partnership, Inc. Project support for developing a Brainerd race equity plan and implementing the Mille Lacs Region race equity plan	\$50,000
Navigate Donation for sponsorship of the Latino Heritage Celebration event in rural Minnesota	\$250
Northern Minnesota Public Television Project support for new programming, research, development and implementation as part of the Program Future Fund in rural Minnesota	\$50,000

PFund Foundation

Project support for PFund's expanded work in Minnesota (QReach) to map LGBT organizational infrastructure, networks, and approaches to social change work in rural Minnesota **\$30,000**

Second Harvest North Central Food Bank

Project support for the Cass Lake Area Food Shelf to cover food costs for three months during the summer of 2014 in rural Minnesota **\$6,000**

Second Harvest North Central Food Bank

Project support for the Kids Packs To Go Backpack program and Cass Lake Food Shelf in rural Minnesota **\$3,000**

United Way of Freeborn County, Inc

Donation in support of the Freeborn County Leaders Partnering to End Poverty steering committee in rural Minnesota **\$1,000**

Walker Area Community Foundation

Donation in support of public art depicting the cultural heritage of the Leech Lake area in rural Minnesota **\$1,000**

Area of focus: Invest in Leadership**City of Ely**

Project support to create a downtown plan with the help of the Minnesota Design team as part of the Rural Quick Start program **\$5,000**

City of Waubun

Project support for a forum to address local community issues as part of the Rural Quick Start program **\$2,500**

Cook County Community Radio

Project support for strategic planning assistance as part of the Rural Quick Start program **\$3,500**

Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation

Project support over two years for continued operations of the Rural Access Leadership Fund for people to participate in community-based leadership programs throughout rural Minnesota **\$80,000**

Independent School District 544 Fergus Falls

Project support for curriculum development of "Skills for Tomorrow Today" as part of the Rural Quick Start program **\$5,000**

LEAP, Inc.

Project support to obtain nonprofit status for the Staples-Motley Beyond Poverty group and convene focus groups as part of the Rural Quick Start program in

rural Minnesota **\$1,500**

LEAP, Inc.

Project support to implement the Bridges of Hope Mentoring Program in Staples-Motley as part of the Rural Quick Start program **\$5,000**

Northfield Area Foundation

Project support to develop an environmental scan for the greater Northfield community as part of the Rural Quick Start Program **\$5,000**

St Joseph's Area Health Services Inc

Project support for the Park Rapids Food Angels Backpack Program as part of the Rural Quick Start program **\$4,800**

Broadband

Local grants

Itasca County

Project support to gather data on areas in Itasca County that are underserved and unserved by broadband in addition to identifying strategies for development of a robust network throughout Itasca County as part of the Broadband Program **\$6,000**

Rural Minnesota grants

City of Monticello

Project support to research and review the benefits and potential structures of creating an organizational entity to support collaboration between municipalities, co-ops and other publicly oriented broadband providers as part of the Broadband Program **\$10,000**

City of Starbuck

Donation towards conducting a series of four e-marketing workshops for area businesses as part of the Broadband Program in rural Minnesota **\$900**

Employment Enterprises, Inc

Project support to provide clients with disabilities and mental illness access to online job training skills as part of the Broadband Program in rural Minnesota **\$4,790**

Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

Project support to upgrade the currently deployed unmanaged and limited wireless network at the FDL Ojibwe School to a modern, centrally managed network with greater capacity as part of the Broadband Program in rural Minnesota **\$10,000**

KOOTASCA Community Action, Inc

Operating support for the Circles of Support PCs for People affiliate operation as part of the Broadband Program in rural Minnesota **\$12,500**

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

Project support to begin deployment of a wireless network across the reservation to provide quality broadband to tribal members at affordable prices as part of the Broadband Program in rural Minnesota

\$50,000**The Brainerd Baxter Youth Center**

Project support to establish a PCs for People affiliate office at TheShop youth center where youth will be trained to refurbish and redistribute the computers as part of the Broadband Program in rural Minnesota

\$25,000**Regents of The University of Minnesota**

Donation for sponsorship of the Telecommunications and Information Society Policy Forum to hold a Broadband Roundtable discussion on June 17, 2014

\$500**Winona Senior Friendship Center Activity Council, Inc**

Project support to provide videoconferencing technology to older adults no longer able to travel to the Friendship Center, while engaging young adult volunteers as trainers as part of the Broadband Program in rural Minnesota

\$10,000**September subtotal****39 grants****\$773,120****December subtotal****42 grants****\$2,743,526.35****Total****81 grants****\$3,516,646.35**