



Blandin Foundation™  
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Blandin Foundation awards \$4.4 million in grants, 328 education grants

GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. (June 26, 2014) – During their summer meeting in Grand Rapids on June 12 and 13, Blandin Foundation trustees approved 52 grants totaling \$4.4 million that strengthen rural Minnesota communities, especially the Grand Rapids and Itasca County area. Trustees also chose to extend by another 10 years and \$21 million the Foundation’s decade-long investment in local early childhood programming for at-risk children and their families through the Invest Early initiative.

In separate action, the Foundation will share with 328 local students over the next two weeks that they have been awarded education grants of up to \$4,000 for their education after high school. Blandin Foundation’s education awards are its longest-running program, with the first awards given in 1956 by founder Charles K. Blandin. Since then, more than 19,000 area youth have received scholarships totaling more than \$21 million. The program awards grants based on unmet need, geared to students for whom education after high school is otherwise out of reach. The application deadline always is May 1.

Blandin Foundation also awards grants directly to institutions for need-based scholarships. At its summer meeting, Blandin Foundation trustees awarded nearly \$400,000 over two years to the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA) for continued support of its adult scholarship program. This program assists low-income Itasca County residents to acquire education needed to secure a living wage job. Scholarships of up to \$4,000 are available for tuition, books, transportation, child care, living expenses and required equipment needed for a degree program. At any given time, approximately 60 participants are enrolled in the program and involves a range of AEOA partners, from human services providers, area employers, Itasca Community College and a growing list of post-secondary institutions.

Trustees approved an award of \$2.1 million to the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative on behalf of **Invest Early** for its tenth year of programming that prepares at-risk children for success in Kindergarten and beyond. Invest Early braids initiatives and supportive resource streams for children ages 0-5 and their families, providing transportation, family development, extended day services and mental health support in addition to high-quality early childhood education. Invest Early is governed by the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative, advised by a local family services collaborative, and operated by a multi-discipline Invest Early leadership comprised of representatives of KOOTASCA Community Action, Head Start, Itasca County Public Health, local school districts, Blandin Foundation and Itasca Community College.

A variety of highly focused, “quick response” grants were ratified by trustees. Among those grants were \$20,000 in project support to the City of Grand Rapids as it develops a ten-year strategic arts and cultural plan for Grand Rapids, \$50,000 to the Headwaters Regional Development Commission for project support as they create a Greater Minnesota Economic Development Strategy throughout rural

Minnesota, and \$10,000 to supplement the Rural Access Leadership Fund in 2014 for people to participate in community-based leadership programs throughout rural Minnesota.

“Here, and statewide, we see every day what local leaders can do,” said Dr. Kathleen Annette, CEO and president of Blandin Foundation. “Wise leaders know that creating a shared vision for the future, a vision arising from and embraced by the community, is the engine that powers change. Through these grants and in many other ways, we are thankful to be able to stand with hopeful, rural communities and leaders who are accomplishing amazing things.”

Full details related to the Foundation are online at [www.blandinfoundation.org](http://www.blandinfoundation.org), with special sections of the site dedicated to the Itasca area, broadband and other programs.

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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.*

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## **June 2014 grant awards**

### **Local Grants**

#### **Area of focus: Vibrant Itasca County**

##### **Bigfork Valley Foundation**

Donation for youth and family programs in the Bigfork area in Itasca County **\$250**

##### **City of Grand Rapids**

Project support to develop a ten year strategic arts and cultural plan for Grand Rapids in Itasca County **\$20,000**

##### **City of Keewatin**

Donation for handicapped accessible doors for the Keewatin Library in Itasca County **\$1,000**

##### **City of Marble**

Donation for upgrades to the Marble library's computers in Itasca County **\$1,000**

**Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation**

Donation in support of the Reusable Bag campaign in Itasca County **\$400**

**Independent School District 316**

Donation in support of the 2014 Greenway Post Prom event in Itasca County **\$500**

**Independent School District 316**

Operating support for Children First! activities through June 2016 in Itasca County **\$7,000**

**Independent School District 318**

Operations support for Baby Steps in Itasca County **\$92,000**

**Independent School District 318**

Operating support of the Step Ahead program for 2014-2016 in Itasca County **\$65,000**

**Independent School District 318**

Operating support for Children's First! activities and events through June 2016 in Itasca County **\$72,000**

**Independent School District 318**

Donation for the Grand Rapids High School 2014 Post Prom event in Itasca County **\$750**

**Independent School District 319**

Project support for Children's First! activities through June 2016 in Itasca County **\$5,000**

**Independent School District 32**

Capital support for a new tower at the Blackduck football field in the Itasca County area **\$3,000**

**Independent School District 32**

Donation to educate students on mental health issues in the Blackduck School District **\$400**

**ISD 317 Deer River**

Donation in support of Deer River High School's 2014 post prom event in Itasca County **\$500**

**ISD 317 Deer River**

Project support for Children's First! activities through June 2016 in Itasca County **\$7,000**

**Itasca Hospice Foundation**

Donation to provide an educational conference on end of life care for the Itasca area **\$500**

**Itasca Orchestra and Strings Program**

Donation for facilitation assistance to create strategic plan in Itasca County **\$1,000**

**MN Council On Foundations**

Project support to provide database subscriptions to Minnesota Grantmakers Online for 25 nonprofits serving Itasca County **\$6,200**

**Northern Itasca Joint Powers Board**

Donation for upgrades to the Marcell Lodge in Itasca County **\$1,000**

**Pine River Backus Family Center**

Donation in support of community education and capacity building in Remer in the Itasca area **\$500**

**Reif Arts Council**

Operating support through June 2016 in Itasca County **\$340,000**

**Remer Centennial Library**

Capital support for library signage, equipment and supplies in the Itasca area **\$1,000**

**Support Within Reach**

Donation in support of a conference to address sex trafficking in Itasca County **\$500**

**Area of focus: Expand Opportunity****Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency**

Operations support for the Adult Scholarship Program through June 2016 in Itasca County **\$399,585**

**Boys & Girls Club of Leech Lake Area**

Operating support for the Deer River unit through June 2015 in Itasca County **\$56,500**

**Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation**

Project support for continued funding of the Itasca County Trails Task Force in Itasca County **\$150,000**

**Itasca Area Schools Collaborative**

Operating support of the Invest Early program through June 2016 in Itasca County **\$2,100,000**

**Rural Minnesota****Area of focus: Vibrant Itasca County****Artists of Minnesota**

Donation towards the Spring Show featuring local artists at Sugar Lake Lodge in Itasca County **\$200**

**Area of focus: Expand Opportunity****Center For Rural Policy & Development**

Operating support from June 2014 through May 2016 throughout rural Minnesota **\$140,000**

**City of Albert Lea**

Project support to conduct a feasibility study for a community/recreation center near Albert Lea as part of the Rural Quick Start Program **\$5,000**

**City of Crosby**

Project support to assist with the establishment of a shared services police Department between Cuyuna, Deerwood, Crosby and Ironton as part of the Rural Quick Start program **\$5,000**

**Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation**

Project support to supplement the Rural Access Leadership Fund in 2014 for people to participate in community-based leadership programs throughout rural Minnesota **\$10,000**

**Hackensack Senior Citizens Club**

Donation to offset attendance costs for seniors to participate in the 2014 Minnesota TRIAD conference in rural Minnesota **\$1,000**

**Headwaters Regional Development Commission**

Project support to create a Greater Minnesota Economic Development Strategy throughout rural Minnesota **\$50,000**

**Itasca Community College**

Project support to bring the "Why Treaties Matter" exhibit for the next two years to communities throughout northern Minnesota **\$30,000**

**Latino Economic Development Center**

Project support for the 2014 National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders national conference in Minneapolis **\$5,000**

**Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Housing Authority**

Project support for the 2014 spring pow-wow in rural Minnesota **\$1,000**

**Longville Area Community Choir**

Donation towards the 2014 Music in the Park series in the Longville area **\$500**

**MN American Indian Chamber of Commerce**

Project support to establish a Procurement Technical Assistance Center to assist American Indian-owned businesses with procuring government contracts in rural Minnesota **\$45,000**

**MN Council of Nonprofits Inc.**

Project support for the OneMinnesota Nonprofit Support Initiative in rural Minnesota **\$150,000**

**Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians**

Project support for the Master/Apprentice Language Preservation project on the Red Lake Reservation **\$25,000**

**Second Harvest North Central Food Bank**

Donation for creating a sustainable food system for the Cass Lake area **\$800**

**U of M Carlson School of Management**

Project support for the 2014 Minnesota Cup Business Plan Competition in rural Minnesota **\$5,000**

## **Area of focus: Invest in Leadership**

### **Minnesota Public Radio**

Operating support for the rural news reporting network in rural Minnesota **\$200,000**

### **Tiwahe Foundation**

Project support to build an American Indian leadership alumni network in rural Minnesota  
**\$225,000**

## **Broadband**

### **Rural Minnesota grants**

#### **Deer River HealthCare Center, Inc.**

Broadband Program: Project support to establish a telehealth demonstration site at the Deer River Clinic for rural Minnesota **\$45,000**

#### **Goodhue County Education District #6051**

Broadband Program: Project support to provide Goodhue County Education District's 596 licensed staff members access to online professional development courses in rural Minnesota **\$50,000**

#### **Headwaters Regional Development Commission**

Broadband Program: Project support to complete an action plan for developing community technology/telework centers in the Headwaters region of rural Minnesota **\$10,000**

#### **Lac qui Parle County Econ Dev Authority**

Broadband Program: Project support to provide incentives for citizens gaining digital literacy by using the mobile computer lab, LqP Computer Commuter, in rural Minnesota **\$25,000**

#### **Northwest Minnesota Foundation**

Broadband Program: Project support to increase the number of area business using broadband, and increase sophistication of use in rural Minnesota **\$9,750**

#### **Region 5 Regional Dev Commission**

Broadband Program: Project support to develop a rural telehealth program for the Region 5 area in rural Minnesota **\$8,000**

**Total 52 grants \$4,378,835**