



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Blandin Foundation awards \$1.7 million in grants, continues with broadband

GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. (April 3, 2012) – Key local initiatives were awarded grants during the Blandin Foundation’s March 23 board meeting, according to Mike Johnson, chairman of the Foundation’s board of trustees.

Arrowhead Economy Opportunity Agency (AEOA) will receive \$350,000 over two years to continue the Adult Scholarship Program. Through AEOA, scholarships are available for tuition, books, transportation, child care, living expenses and required equipment needed for a degree program. One of a series of programs, AEOA’s Adult Scholarships support approximately 60 low-income adults at a time in developing skills and opportunities needed for living-wage employment.

Trustees also continued the Foundation’s support for the **KOOTASCA** organization, which has been delivering programs and services to low- and moderate-income residents of Itasca and Koochiching Counties for 46 years. In support of the organization’s mission of “building community to end poverty,” trustees awarded \$590,000 over two years for five programs: Circles of Support, Crisis Nursery, Teenage Parent Program, Community Engagement and Homeless Prevention.

In support of engineering education, trustees awarded \$250,000 to help equip a new **Iron Range Engineering** program laboratory at Mesabi Community College in Virginia, Minn. Iron Range Engineering was launched in 2010 to deliver years three and four of a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering and is a collaboration of Itasca Community College, Mesabi Community College and Minnesota State University (Mankato).

A total of \$1,695,600 in grants were approved by trustees at the March meeting, all of which can be seen at the Foundation’s website, blandinfoundation.org. Grant guidelines and application deadlines also can be found at the Foundation’s website.

In other action, trustees chose to continue the Foundation’s investment in high-speed broadband through 2014. Through grants, program support such as a convening, and technical support for communities, the Foundation’s Broadband Initiative has worked since 2003 to: 1) Increase awareness about the value of broadband telecommunications use and services, 2) increase business and residential use of broadband in rural communities, and 3) increase public and private investment in rural broadband capacity. Program and grant-making details of this stage of the Blandin Broadband Initiative will be available at the Foundation’s website in fall 2012.

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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.

For additional information, contact:

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Full grants listing follows:

March 2012 grant awards

GiveMN \$75,000 over two years
To promote and reward nonprofit participation and usage of online giving in Itasca County and throughout rural Minnesota

Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency \$350,000 over 2 years
Continuation funding for the Adult Scholarship Program in Itasca County

KOOTASCA Community Action \$590,000 over two years
Continuation funding for Circles of Support, Crisis Nursery, Teenage Parent Program, Homeless Prevention and Community Engagement programs.

Northeast Entrepreneur Fund \$50,000 over 2 years
Project support for business peer groups for small entrepreneurs in northeast Minnesota

Northeast Service Unit \$250,000
Capital support for the Iron Range Engineering program on the campus of Mesabi Range Community and Technical College in Virginia

**University of Minnesota Duluth
Natural Resources Research Institute** \$150,000 over 3 years
Continued support for the Product Development Fund to spur economic growth in rural Minnesota

Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation \$50,600 over 2 years
For continued support for the Rural Access Leadership Fund for people to participate in community-based leadership programs throughout rural Minnesota

Brainerd Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce Education Association \$80,000 over 2 years
Continuation funding and expansion of the Workplace Connection program in the Brainerd Lakes schools

Organizing Apprenticeship Project \$100,000 over 2 years

Project support for the Equity in Education Benchmarks project in ten rural communities in Minnesota

Total

\$1,695,600