



For immediate release

Blandin Foundation awards \$11.7 million in grants \$1.5 million for collaborative effort focused on early childhood development

GRAND RAPIDS MN (December 7, 2004) – The Blandin Foundation Board of Trustees today approved more than \$11.7 million in new grants of which more than 63 percent directly benefit the Grand Rapids area.

Local grants include a \$1.5 million grant to underwrite the Invest Early program, which represents one of the Foundation’s most ambitious and innovative efforts ever, according to Jim Hoolihan, president of the Foundation. The Invest Early grant was awarded to the Family Services Collaborative, composed of eight Itasca County school districts, agencies and community groups dedicated to the development of a comprehensive early care and educational system.

“Early investment in at-risk children can improve individual achievement and behavior,” Hoolihan said. “Data shows that an investment of \$12,000 per year will result in an annual return-on-investment of 16 percent from this program – yet it’s more than dollars and cents – it’s about the child, family and a thriving community.”

“The collaborative brings people together – as never before – to provide community solutions to a pressing community economic and human need,” Hoolihan said.

Invest Early aims to prepare 100 at-risk pre-school children for high achievement in school and in the community. Four locations will serve 25 children each. The locations are Grand Rapids, Deer River, Nashauk/Keewatin and Greenway/Coleraine.

“Early childhood development, sustaining local organizations, and developing the community’s economic advantages were key grants that the board approved,” said Jim Hoolihan. “The board also approved \$995,000 in scholarships for local students for 2005-2006. These grants indicate our commitment to a strong community – today and well into the future.”

Other major local Community Economic Advantage grants include \$450,000 over two years to the Itasca Development Corporation and \$2.5 million to Minnesota Diversified Industries, a non-profit business that specializes in employing and training disabled and disadvantaged workers, to expand its manufacturing capabilities in Grand Rapids and Hibbing.

In addition, the board approved nearly \$1.8 million in responsive grants to meet critical needs and to sustain high-performing local organizations including \$500,000 to the Reif Arts Council; \$216,000 over two years to Itasca Community TV; \$150,000 over two years to Youth for Christ for the Ground Floor Youth Center.

“These are but three of more than 30 local organizations receiving grants this time around,” Hoolihan said. “The entire list follows this news release below.”

In addition to the local grants, the board approved \$4.3 million in statewide grants including a four-year grant of \$4 million, continuing Foundation support of the Greater Minnesota Housing

Fund, and a \$100,000 two-year grant for continued support of Ready for K, which supports early childhood education throughout the state.

Mahnomen MN was awarded \$75,000 over three years to cultivate the Stewards effort, an effort to mobilize and align various jurisdictions that lay within the boundaries of the White Earth Reservation to work together “to agree on a common future, help find ways to work together, recruit and strengthen leadership capacity and sustain action on initiatives that move the community closer to its vision.

Blandin Foundation is a private independent foundation based in Grand Rapids MN. Its purpose is to strengthen rural Minnesota communities, especially the Grand Rapids area, through grants, leadership programs and public policy initiatives. The Foundation is focused on its Community Economic Advantage strategy, which aims to help build strong local economies where the benefits are widely shared.

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Blandin Foundation Grants Approved in December 2004

The Blandin Foundation Board of Trustees approved grants totaling \$11,710,470 at its December 2004 meeting.

Of the total grants awarded at the December meeting, 63 percent was for the Grand Rapids and Itasca County area.

Grand Rapids Area *Economic Advantage* Grants – Grants that assist the community identify and mobilize its economic assets.

Organization	Grant Award
Independent School District 317-Deer River	1,535,000
Itasca Development Corporation	450,000/2 yrs
Minnesota Wood Education Project	76,000
MN Diversified Industries	2,500,000
Itasca Development Corporation -- Community development feasibility study	2,500
-- Expand private sector business leadership efforts	5,000
Arrowhead Regional Development Commission	10,000
Itasca Community College	

--Financial Aid	295,000
--Supplemental support for part-time scholarships	10,000
	Total \$4,883,500

Grand Rapids Area Responsive and Sustaining Grants – Grants that are responsive to critical area needs, and that help sustain high performing local organizations.

Organization	Grant Award
Reif Arts Council	\$500,000
Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation --Baby Steps Boutique and Step Ahead	136,200
Habitat for Humanity of Itasca County	196,300/3 yrs
Itasca Community Television	216,000/2 yrs
Youth for Christ --Ground Floor Youth Center --Campus Life	150,000/2 yrs 25,000
Independent School District 318-Grand Rapids	3,000
U of MN Extension Service	2,500
United Way of 1,000 Lakes (technical assistance)	9,700
Action through Churches Together	25,000
Community Café	20,000
Advocates for Family Peace	40,000
American Cancer Society	25,000
Bigfork Valley Hospital (Home Visitor Program)	8,000
Bovey/Coleraine Youth Center	55,000
Bridges: Kinship Mentoring Program	20,000
Camp Fire USA	20,000
Cooperative Solutions	40,000
First Call for Help of Itasca County	35,000
Friendship Ventures	1,700
Girl Scouts-Land of Lakes Council	7,000
Itasca Alliance Against Sexual Assault	25,000
Itasca County Historical Society	35,000
Itasca Orchestral Society	40,000
MN Special Olympics, Inc.	30,000
Northern Community Radio	40,000
Second Harvest North Central Food Bank	40,000
United Way of 1,000 Lakes	20,000
Voyageur Area Boy Scouts	6,500
	Total \$1,771,900

Grand Rapids Area Education and Scholarships – The Board of Trustees approved a new educational and scholarship grant for local students for the 2005-06 school year. Since 1956 the Foundation has awarded more than 11,500 scholarships totaling almost \$13 million.

Organization	Grant Award
Blandin Foundation Educational Awards Program	\$700,000

Community *Economic Advantage* Grants – Grants to communities outside the Grand Rapids/Itasca County area.

Organization	Grant Award
City of Mahanomen	\$75,000/3 yrs
	Total \$75,000

Statewide *Economic Advantage* Grants – for statewide efforts to identify and mobilize economic assets that strengthen rural communities.

Organization	Grant Award
Greater Minnesota Housing Fund	\$ 4,000,000/4 yrs
MN Department of Natural Resources	47,000
College of St. Scholastica --Conduct feasibility of health care information technology	10,000
--Project support for implementation of health care information technology	50,000
Ready for K	100,000/2 yrs
UMD-Natural Resources Research Institute	10,000
	Total \$4,217,000

Miscellaneous Statewide Grants

Organization	Grant Award
Charities Review Council of MN	\$3,000
Council on Foundations	\$5,670
Duluth-Superior Educational TV Corp.	\$15,000
Foundation Center	\$2,500
MN Council on Foundations	\$21,900
Northern Minnesota Public Television	\$15,000
	Total \$63,070

Total Awards \$11,710,470

*According to a December 10, 2003 Foundation Board of Trustees resolution, the Foundation will dedicate at least 55 percent of its grants paid to the Grand Rapids area. That resolution was agreed to and ratified by the Ramsey County District Court, which has probate jurisdiction of the Blandin Trust. Compliance with the resolution is determined on the basis of a six-year rolling average starting with and including grants paid in 2003. To assure compliance, the Foundation will review its distributions annually with the Minnesota Office of the Attorney General. In addition, the Court appointed a special master to also review the Foundation's distributions annually for court review.