



Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Blandin Foundation awards broadband grant for youth-run community news website in Cook County

GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. (3 March, 2017)– Blandin Foundation announced that it has awarded five grants totaling \$149,000 that assist rural Minnesota communities in advancing high-speed Internet access and use in their communities.

Boreal Community Media (BCM) is a nonprofit community organization based in Grand Marais providing affordable Internet access, services and support to organizations, individuals and businesses throughout Cook County. BCM will benefit from Blandin Broadband Innovation grant funding to create a youth-driven civic digital news service called Boreal Corps.

Formed in 1995, Boreal Community Media originally was formed to bring Internet service to Cook County. Nearly a quarter century later, BCM is a vital community connector, offering robust, locally-produced community news, information and interactivity.

The Boreal Corps project will boost youth participation in civic life by producing local news, as well as develop their digital skills by inviting them to create community-driven content. There will be two cohorts: grades 4-8 in the spring and 9-12 in the fall.

“Rural students often face an opportunity gap in terms of learning to master rapidly-evolving digital media technologies. This innovative Blandin-supported program is intended to close that gap and to help Cook County students be in the vanguard of youth who possess the critical skill set needed for 21st century success,” said Jeff Latz, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Boreal Community Media.

Learning and applying digital communication skills helps close the opportunity gap between rural and urban students, making the transition to future education and careers easier.

“Blandin Foundation stands with rural communities as they name and claim their vibrant futures,” said Kathy Annette, president and CEO of Blandin Foundation. “Boreal Community Media plays a vital role in the future of the members they serve by providing important technology services. We are excited to support the improvement of their services and a new, innovative Boreal Corps program to teach young people how to communicate and interact in the digital age.”

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About Blandin Foundation: *Blandin Foundation works for vibrant rural Minnesota communities by investing in community leaders and working with partners to expand opportunity for all residents. Located in Grand Rapids, Minn., it 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. Information on Blandin Foundation grant-making, leadership development programs and public policy initiatives:*

www.blandinfoundation.org. Information about the Blandin Broadband Communities Program:
<http://broadband.blandinfoundation.org/>

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