



Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Carlton County selected as a Blandin Broadband Community

Two-year partnership provides planning, technical and financial support to help county meet its digital technology goals

Brainerd, Minn. (November 20, 2014) – Blandin Foundation announced today that Carlton County leaders were successful in their application to become a Blandin Broadband Community, one of only 10 selected in the state. The announcement was made today in Brainerd, before more than 160 participants in the *Border to Border Broadband: No Community Left Behind* conference, co-sponsored by Blandin and Connect Minnesota.

The Blandin Broadband Communities program is an intensive, two-year partnership between the Blandin Foundation and selected rural Minnesota communities. The program provides planning, technical and financial support to communities that demonstrate the determination to bring the benefits of a broadband-enabled economy to their communities.

Carlton County is one of ten new rural Minnesota communities that will join nine previously-named Blandin Broadband Communities in the state. Other Blandin Broadband Communities announced today are the Central Woodlands (east central Minnesota), Resilient Region 5 (north central Minnesota), Sherburne County, Chisago County, Redwood County, Renville/Sibley Counties, Red Wing, Nobles County, and Martin County.

“At Blandin Foundation we recognize that broadband access – and the skills to use it -- are essential to expanding opportunity for all. Thanks to community leaders in Carlton County and in the other communities with whom we partner, Minnesota is making important strides toward ensuring that rural places and the economically and socially disadvantaged are not left behind,” said Bernadine Joselyn, Director of Public Policy and Engagement.

Communities were selected based on demonstrated commitment to work together across sectors to set and meet information technology goals and bridge digital divides.

Carlton County plans to stimulate community conversation that looks beyond infrastructure to innovative ideas about how to reduce the county’s digital divide. A key focus of their efforts will be to identify opportunities that will benefit the unserved and underserved areas in the county.

Carlton County Commissioner Marv Bodie expressed his excitement on the invitation to participate, “The Blandin Broadband Communities Program is the vehicle that will help Carlton

County explore its future. We will bring together individuals who normally do not have the opportunity to interact but who will now provide new energy and creativity on this common issue. We recognize that by working together greater benefits will be generated for all of Carlton County.”

Leading their work is the Carlton County Economic Development Authority. Together, with government, education, nonprofit and business partners throughout the county, the EDA will rally local leaders to develop a sustainable model for broadband access and use in Carlton County.

“It takes strong local leadership and commitment from whole communities to tackle the tough issues related to Internet access and use,” said Dr. Kathy Annette, Blandin Foundation CEO. “We’re honored to stand with Carlton County as they design and claim a vibrant, connected future.”

Next steps in the Blandin Broadband Community partnership include assessing the community’s current broadband access and adoption and, in early 2015, a series of public planning meetings.

- END -

PHOTO CAPTION: Leaders from 10 rural Minnesota communities gather to accept the invitation to become a Blandin Broadband Community.

Pictured

Front row (L to R): Anna Gruber, Stacey Stockdill, Melissa Radermacher, Eva Wilson (all representing Region 5), Nancy Hoffman (Chisago County), Connie Christenson, and Brenda Nyberg (both representing Carlton County)

Middle row (L to R): Steven Pierce (Martin County), Jennifer Russell (Central Woodlands), Pam Mahling (Region 5), Julie Rath, Jim Salfer (both representing Redwood County), Sally Fineday, Tony Mayer, and Sandy Voigt (all representing Region 5)

Back row (L to R): Mark Erickson, Jacob Rieke (both representing RS Fiber Cooperative), Dan Weber (Sherburne County), Tom Johnson, Rod Sankey (both representing Nobles County), and Scott Adkisson (Red Wing)

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/>

About Carlton County Economic Development Authority: The Carlton County Economic Development Authority's mission is to develop, encourage, promote, and protect the business interests of the Carlton County area; to encourage the development of the county's employment base; and to provide centralized services for local communities and Developers. For more information about the EDA's role in Carlton County: www.carltoncountyeda.com.

Media contacts:

Blandin Foundation

Allison Ahcan, Director of Communications

T: 218-327-8717

C: 218-259-2893

arahcan@blandinfoundation.org

Blog <http://outposts.blandinfoundation.org> and www.blandinonbroadband.org

Twitter @BlandinFound

Carlton County Economic Development Authority

Connie Christenson, Economic Development Director

T: 218-384-9597

Connie.christenson@co.carlton.mn.us