

Blandin Foundation awards grants to Kanabec County to put broadband to work in their community

GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. (January 24, 2014) – Blandin Foundation announced today that it has awarded 32 grants totaling \$472,930 that assist rural Minnesota communities in advancing high-speed Internet access and use in their communities. Kanabec County was the recipient of three broadband grants, totaling \$47,165, which will support local residents and community leaders in reaching their goal to utilize broadband (Internet) technology to remain economically competitive.

Projects chosen by local residents during a community meeting held this fall, and which will be supported in part through Blandin Foundation Community Broadband grants, are:

- **Kanabec Broadband Initiative (KBI) Google Site Claiming:** use current technology to furnish businesses with a web presence, share information and elevate importance to the area.
- **KBI Telework Center:** provide a space, equipped with high capacity bandwidth and technology, for tele-commuting and after-school homework.
- **KBI Community WiFi:** to increase public access to internet, and increase traffic to local businesses.

“One of Kanabec Broadband Initiative’s (KBI) goals is to utilize existing broadband to help make Kanabec County a great place to live, work, play, and visit. Providing our local businesses with a web presence will assure that they can be found by residents and visitors alike,” said Marc Johnson, KBI Chairperson.

“Providing WiFi hotspots will increase traffic in local establishments, and the tele-commuting center will provide additional options for modern workers to stay and even more into the Kanabec County area. We are excited to continue our partnership with the Blandin Foundation through these projects.”

Kanabec County was named a Blandin Broadband Community in November 2012, one of nine selected across rural Minnesota. Since that time, they have convened a leadership team and engaged the community in a two-year project to make the best use of information and services that broadband can deliver.

“Our experience tells us that, especially in broadband work, leadership matters,” said Dr. Kathleen Annette, CEO of Blandin Foundation. “We were delighted to see how Kanabec County leaders engaged their community to imagine possibilities that come with high-speed Internet.

Competitive rural economies demand connected rural communities. We’re excited by this work and how it will bring vibrancy to the region.”

