



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **City of Wabasha receives \$50,000 Blandin Foundation Leadership Boost Grant**

Wabasha, Minn. Oct. 5, 2022) – The City of Wabasha will use a \$50,000 Blandin Foundation Leadership Boost Grant to help local leaders and emerging leaders to return to much of the organizing that was disrupted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Leadership Boost Grants were launched to encourage Minnesotans living in rural and Tribal communities to be visionary and creative as they move their communities forward after two years of snowballing challenges.

Wabasha’s “Happier and Healthier in Community” project will support a return to collaboration among community members on projects which lead to successful strategy and planning for the community’s future. “Rather than funding a one-time project, we seek to build enduring community capacity that will perpetuate collaboration for future work,” says Mayor Emily Durand, adding, “The Blandin Foundation truly understands the dimensions of rural communities that need support and realizes barriers small communities face when seeking funding.”

“The last two years of complex crises have taken a toll on leaders across rural Minnesota,” said Sonja Merrild, director of rural grantmaking at Blandin Foundation. “In times like this, of great challenge and opportunity, the resilience and fortitude of rural people and places shines through. Yet, we recognize the critical need for more resources to move small communities from where they are to where they want to go.”

More than 300 Letters of Interest were submitted for funding, far more than anticipated. Based on the type of requests received, Blandin Foundation opened three grant rounds for Community Planning, Capital Projects in small towns under 3,000 people, and Creative Placemaking. To better support the many strong requests, the total amount of funding available increased from \$1 million to \$5.5 million after Blandin Foundation’s board approved an additional \$3 million in June and a \$1.5 million grant was secured from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies.

“Rural and Tribal places simply don’t get their fair share of funding and resources,” said Merrild. “When we see stats like only 5 percent of philanthropic dollars and 10 percent of federal small business loan funds go to rural, this creates resource roadblocks to future opportunity. While the leaky pipes intended to bring resources into rural communities need a complete overhaul, Leadership Boost Grants are one way we can spark energy and action toward sustainable rural futures.”

The City of Wabasha was invited to submit a full application for a Community Planning grant.

The City intends to foster projects that support capacity building with this award. “With a locally-led committee reviewing project possibilities, we will also plan to assist applicants to engage other local funding partners such as the Wabasha Kellogg Area Community Foundation, Wabasha County Statewide

Health Improvement Partnership, and Wabasha Main Street when appropriate to seed and expand projects that arise from this program,” said Durand, “Collaboration will be key at every step.”

For more on Blandin Foundation’s Rural Leadership Boost Grants, and to see other grantee projects, visit <https://bit.ly/RuralBoostGrants>.

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