



Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

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Northern Minnesota leader named Blandin Foundation President and CEO

Tuleah Palmer has decades of experience leading impactful, complex nonprofits and programs

GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. (May 8, 2020)—Trustees of Blandin Foundation have selected Tuleah S. Palmer of Cass Lake, Minn., as the foundation's next president and CEO following a national search.

Palmer currently serves as executive director of Northwest Indian Community Development Center in Bemidji, a member of the Governor's Workforce Development Council, advisor to the Future Services Institute of the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, and in many other roles. Palmer has been a leader and advocate throughout northern Minnesota over her 27-year career. She originally is from Deer River, Minn., and is a graduate of Bemidji State University.

Among many accolades and awards, Palmer was recognized in 2019 by The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation as its Facing Race Statewide Award honoree. The Bush Foundation also recently recognized Palmer's leadership and the work of her organization, awarding the Northwest Indian Community Development Center with their annual Bush Prize and \$500,000 in recognition of proven community impact. Featured as one of 2019's "Voices of Inspiration," *StarTribune* writer Gail Rosenblum described Palmer as one of the "quiet heroes eager to improve the lot of others."

"Tuleah is an absolute rock star," said Heidi Korstad, Blandin Foundation board chair. "Her vision, energy, and innovation will lead the Blandin Foundation to a whole new level of impact and relevance. Even better, she is of rural Minnesota."

Palmer emerged from a 10-month national search yielding more than 100 candidates. Blandin Foundation is one of only a handful of private foundations in the nation focusing its resources and work exclusively for the benefit of rural communities. The foundation, founded in 1941 by Charles K. Blandin, works to strengthen rural Minnesota communities, especially the Grand Rapids and Itasca County area.

“What really stands out about Tuleah is her proven track record of creative problem-solving,” said Korstad. “Excellent candidates emerged from our search, and it’s a real credit to our region that the visionary, thoughtful, equitable leader we were looking for was right here in our backyard. Our trustees were impressed by her extensive networks and her ability to find solutions that work for everybody.”

“I am incredibly honored to move from serving a high performing team doing incredible community work to another high performing organization that has such a critical role in elevating rural and tribal communities,” Palmer said. “This decision represents critical affirmation by the Blandin Foundation to continue efforts to advance rural and tribal community vitality locally and statewide.”

Palmer succeeds Dr. Kathleen Annette, who joined Blandin Foundation in September 2011. During Annette’s 10-year tenure, Blandin Foundation awarded 1,798 grants, trained 667 rural community leaders statewide through its leadership programs, and engaged hundreds of rural Minnesotans in key rural issues around broadband access and use, early childhood, quality youth programming, economic development, education, healing from racial and cultural division, and the 2020 Census.

“We will certainly miss Kathy Annette’s leadership as we transition to Tuleah Palmer,” said Korstad. “Kathy has had a remarkable career with the Blandin Foundation. She has been the courageous, trusted voice for rural equity in our local area, the State of Minnesota, and at a national level. Because of her outstanding leadership, the foundation is in great shape for the upcoming transition. We have a committed and talented staff, we are in a strong financial position and have a strong reputation and meaningful relationships.”

Palmer will step into her new role with Blandin Foundation on July 13.

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Note to editor/producer: Photos available. Bio: <https://blandinfoundation.org/about/our-people/staff-members/tuleah-palmer/>

Blandin Foundation, Minnesota’s largest rural-based private foundation, is located in Grand Rapids, Minn. Its mission is to be a trusted partner and advocate to strengthen rural Minnesota communities, especially the Grand Rapids area. Blandin Foundation is one of only a handful of private foundations in the United States entirely committed to rural communities through grantmaking, community leadership training programs, community engagement and advocacy.

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