



## Northland Foundation takes three-pronged approach to COVID-19 relief in northeastern Minnesota

With targeted grants, small business assistance, and support for child care providers

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the [Northland Foundation](#) has shifted and ramped up its programs to support relief efforts in northeastern Minnesota. In the weeks since Governor Walz instated statewide measures to slow the spread of COVID-19, the foundation has focused available resources on supporting the people, businesses, and communities in the region being hit hardest by the crisis.

*“Northland was formed in response to the economic crisis of the early 1980s. That’s our history. We’re wired to step up when times are tough,” stated Northland Foundation President, Tony Sertich.*

By partnering with almost two dozen other organizations, the Northland Foundation has been able to rapidly raise over \$2M in funding resources, as well as provide information and technical assistance throughout the seven-county/five Tribal Nation region for response and recovery efforts.

### 1. Targeted Grants

In the first quarter of 2020, the Northland Foundation awarded 129 grants totaling more than \$551,000 ([see January-March grants here](#)). Northland then put its usual grantmaking process on hold to devote funds to essential needs for people most vulnerable to the impacts of the pandemic. Northland also gave current grantees flexibility with timelines and use of funds as they try to meet increased demand for their services.

- In early April, eight strategic grants totaling \$171,000 were awarded. Four grants are in support of survivors of domestic or sexual abuse—a growing area of need during the shelter-in-place orders. Those grants went to **Advocates for Family Peace**, Grand Rapids; **American Indian Community Housing Organization**, Duluth; **Friends Against Abuse**, International Falls; and **Advocates Against Domestic Abuse (HOPE)**, Aitkin. The remaining four strategic grants support food assistance and other critical aid: **Falls Hunger Coalition**, International Falls; **United Way of Northeast Minnesota**, Chisholm; **Second Harvest North Central Food Bank**, Grand Rapids; and **Second Harvest Northern Lakes Food Bank**, Duluth.
- [Three Tribal Nation partners in the region received \\$30,000 each](#) to provide meals and essential services to Elders who are sheltering-in-place during the pandemic. **Bois Forte Band of Chippewa**, **Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa**, and **Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa** received grants through Northland’s Integrated Rural Community Aging Program.

### 2. Small Business Assistance

The Northland Foundation has leveraged its role as a nontraditional business development lender and economic development partner in the region to help small businesses during this crisis.

- The Northland Foundation was named a certified lender for Minnesota’s [Small Business Emergency Loan Program](#) to aid businesses affected by shut-down orders, and received

\$1M to lend in northeastern Minnesota. **To date, 30 loans totaling \$897,500** have been approved for submission to the DEED with more in the pipeline. Northland's own business finance program has originated another 10 loans totaling \$703,000. To put these numbers into perspective, Northland typically processes five or six small business loans per quarter. Northland is also a participant in the State's new [Loan Guarantee Program](#) which will help businesses access more capital than they otherwise could.

- The Northland Foundation also hosts the [Northeast Minnesota Small Business Development Center](#) (SBDC), supporting a regional team of consultants providing technical assistance to small businesses looking to adjust to our changing world and access federal and state programs.

### 3. Support for Child Care Providers

Governor Walz reached out in March asking if Northland and the five other [Minnesota Initiative Foundations](#) could help child care providers serving children of emergency and essential workers.

- The [Emergency Child Care Grant Program](#) was set up within days, offering immediate support to Greater Minnesota providers. Nearly 300 applications flooded in from all across the seven-county region, far exceeding available dollars.
- Northland has **awarded 152 grants totaling \$208,000** so far, to providers throughout northeastern Minnesota, and the Northland Foundation is working to secure more funds to help applicants on the waiting list. Reaction from providers receiving grants – \$1,000 for licensed family child care and \$3,000 for licensed center-based child care – has been one of great appreciation.

*"This is a joint effort. We have incredible philanthropic, public, private, and economic development partners here in our region and statewide," said Sertich. "By coming together, we can have a bigger impact than any one of us could on our own."*

Partners in the Northland Foundation's response efforts include:

- Blandin Foundation
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation
- City of Duluth
- City of Ely
- City of Virginia
- Compeer Financial
- Cook County Grand Marais Economic Development Authority
- Entrepreneur Fund
- Granite Equity Partner Fund
- Itasca Economic Development Corporation
- Koochiching Economic Development Authority
- McKnight Foundation
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Minnesota Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation
- Minnesota Disaster Recovery Fund - Saint Paul and Minnesota Foundation, and Minnesota Council on Foundations
- Natural Resources Research Institute
- Northspan
- Patrick and Aimee Butler Family Foundation
- University of Minnesota Duluth
- Wells Fargo Community Giving